

# **Personal Development 101:** *A Self-Help Manual For A Positive Life!*

JUDITH A. BELMONT, M.S.



# Personal Development 101: A Self-Help Manual For A Positive Life

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*Life skills training is rarely a part of formal education, yet is so vital to success in any realm of life. This workbook is in no means a substitute for therapy, but it can serve as a therapeutic companion to boost your "emotional wellness" in enhancing your life wellness skills.*

*Judith A. Belmont, March, 2013*

# Introduction

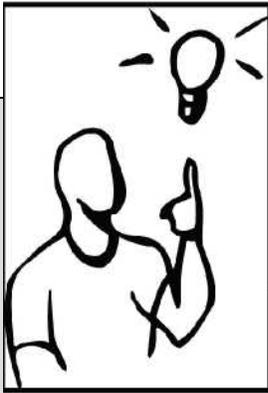
- *Do you find that despite the fact that you "know better," you keep on lapsing into old, unhealthy patterns of behavior?*
- *Do you find yourself circulating the same unhealthy thoughts in your head and can't seem to "snap out of it?"*
- *Do you want to learn new ways to handle conflict in order to get along with important people in your life?*
- *Are you stuck in a rut and have no clue how to get out of it?*
- *Have you found yourself acting in ways that bring only more problems, but you can't seem to stop yourself?*
- *Do you make resolutions, promise yourself you will act differently, have great intentions, but keep on repeating the same unhealthy patterns?*
- *Have you given others too much power to affect your moods?*
- *Do you have a habit of condemning yourself for past mistakes and can not let yourself off "the hook" of regret?*
- *Do you have a hard time letting go of grudges?*
- *Do you feel more disappointed in life than appreciative?*

***If you answer yes to any of these questions, this workbook is for you!*** Consider this workbook as your blueprint for mental wellness. All too often people know what they need to do to feel better, but they do not know how to get themselves into gear. This workbook gives practical exercises and visual techniques to take action right away! Through use of experiential activities, exercises, self-help worksheets, and educational handouts, you can experience change—not just think or talk about it. Unfortunately, life skills training is rarely a part of formal education, but it is these basic life skills that are vital to success in any realm of life. This workbook is in no means a substitute for therapy, but it can serve as a therapeutic companion to boost your "mental fitness" in enhancing your life wellness skills.

***Judith Belmont, March 2013***

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# Chapter 1: Tips to Improve Communication

*Ineffective Communication is the root of conflict*

- Communicate Effectively! .....Page 5
- Three types of Communication ..... Page 6
- Turn "You" Messages into 'I' Messages ..... Page 7
- Effective Vs. Ineffective Communication..... Page 8
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## ***Identify Your Communication!***

**Aggressive** - The focus is on changing the other person and is characterized by “you” statements. Honesty is geared towards controlling or changing the other person’s mind or behavior, or “getting them to see” a point of view leading to disrespect of the other person and communication is tactless and blunt.



***The Aggressive motto is “I’m OK - You’re not unless you think like me!” A lion represents the aggressive personality.***

**Non-Assertive** - The focus is on protecting oneself and people pleasing. Fear of disapproval or conflict ends up with tension building and later blowing up or keeping feelings in, leading to depression and anxiety. Fear and inhibition reign.



***The Non-Assertive is “You’re OK - but I’m not unless you like me!” A turtle represents the non-assertive personality.***

**Assertive** - The focus is on showing respect while expressing oneself. “I” statements are spoken, focusing on only expressing oneself, not changing others.



***The Assertive motto is “I’m OK - You’ OK” and is represented by the wise owl.***

# Communicate Effectively!

We communicate all the time, yet are sorely lacking in instructions on how to communicate effectively. It is not uncommon for people to be misguided about healthy communication basics. Problematic, conflictual and unhealthy relationships are the unfortunate fallout from miscommunication.

## *If only there were easy guidelines!*

In actuality, there are! The following handouts clearly differentiate between the three major types of communication, i.e. assertive, non-assertive and aggressive. These handouts will help you improve the way you come across to others and allow you to express your thoughts and feelings constructively.

All too often people think they are acting in a healthy fashion, i.e. assertively, when in actuality, they are acting either non-assertively or aggressively. With non-assertion, one represses feelings and thoughts out of fear of disapproval, insecurity, concern about "making waves" or a need to be liked. It is also not uncommon for one to be aggressive, in which one tries to control and dominate others to have others see it their way. By giving others "You" statements, judgments are made about how the other person should act or feel. For example, parents often think it's perfectly fine to be dominating and controlling with their children since they are the parents (the "because I said so" mentality). However, intimidation leads to low self esteem in children. Much more effective is an assertive, democratic approach where rights are respected and kindness and respect reign. All too often people might start out assertively, but if they do not get their way - watch out! Then the "tit for tat" struggle ensues in which people try to win by "proving" themselves and defending themselves at the expense of the other person. Use the following handouts as your guides to gain insights into the difference between the three major types of communication.

Often these patterns are learned early on and often are a product of socialization - for example women are more rewarded in society to be non-assertive, men to be more aggressive. Once the basics of communication are understood, one can readily differentiate between the aggressive "you" vs. the assertive "I" focus. In no time, healthier patterns are put into practice!

*Just think - Much of the aggression and conflict of the world would be nonexistent if people had learned early on the healthy habits of assertive instead of aggressive communication! It is never wrong to be assertive!*

The importance of non-verbal communication is often overlooked. It is often not *what* you say but *how* you say it. It has been estimated that 80% of communication is non-verbal. For example: Read the following phrase seven times, each time emphasizing a different word. You will see that every time you emphasize a different word, there is a different meaning!

***"I never said he stole the money!"***

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# A Comparison of Non-Assertive, Assertive, and Aggressive Behavior

## Non- Assertive Behavior

Ignores, does not express own rights, needs, desires

Permits others to infringe on his/her rights

Emotionally dishonest, indirect, inhibited

Self-denying

Self-Demeaning

Allows others to choose

Hurt, anxious, disappointed in self at the time and possibly angry later

Does not achieve desired goal(s)

Avoids risky situations, avoids conflict, tension, confrontation, doesn't get needs met, accumulates anger, feels non-valued

## Assertive Behavior

"I" statements

Expresses and asserts own rights, needs, desires

Stands up for legitimate rights in a way that rights of others are not violated

Emotionally honest, direct, expressive

Self-enhancing

Chooses for self

## Feelings That Result

Confident, self-respecting, feels good about self at the time and later

## Outcomes

May achieve desired goal(s)

## Payoffs

Feels good, valued by self and others, feels better about self, improves self confidence; Relationships are healthy

## Aggressive Behavior

"You" statements

Expresses own rights at expense of others

Inappropriate outburst or hostile overreaction, intent to humiliate, to "get even," puts others down

Emotionally honest, direct, expressive at other's expense

Self-enhancing

Chooses for others

Angry, then righteous, superior, depreciatory at the time, possibly guilty later

Achieves desired goal(s) by hurting others

Saving up anger, resentment justifies a blow-up, an emotional outburst, "to get even, to get back at"

## Turn "You" Messages into "I" Messages

*This worksheet gives you the opportunity to transform aggressive communication ("You" statements) into assertive communication ("I" statements). Assertive communication is descriptive and factual, while aggressive communication is interpretive, judgmental and unfair to others.*

*Examples of "You" statements: Why are you acting so mean to me?  
Why are you being so nosy? It's none of your business!*

*Examples of "I" statements : I feel uncomfortable when you raise your voice at me.  
I do not feel comfortable sharing something so personal.*

YOU Message: You make me so mad!

I Message: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU Message: You have no right to say that to me!

I Message: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU Message: You never listen to me!

I Message: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU Message: You shouldn't feel that way!

I Message: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU Message: You're too sensitive!

I Message: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU Message: You should know better!

I Message: \_\_\_\_\_

# Effective VS Ineffective Communication

## Effective Communication

**“I” Statements** - Excuse me, I would like to finish my statement.

**Objective/Descriptive Statements** - You don't seem to be grasping my point.

**Non-Evaluative Statements** - I have the impression that you view women to be not as capable as men.

**Specific Statements** - I'm concerned that you've been late to work the last few days.

**Taking Responsibility** - I think we're going off the issue.

**Tactful Statements** - I don't agree with that.

**Asking/Requesting** - I got the coffee last meeting, so I'd prefer someone else got it today.

**Honest Statements** - I won't be able to make it at that time for the meeting, so I'd like to see if we could agree on another time.



## Ineffective Communication

**“You” Statements** - You're interrupting me again!

**Inferential Statements** - You're not listening to me!

**Evaluative/Judgmental Statements** - You sound like a male chauvinist!

**Over-Catastrophizing Statements** - You're always coming in late to work!

**Blaming/Giving “Shoulds”** - You're taking me off the issue!

**Tactless Statements** - That was a stupid thing to say!

**Demanding** - I got the coffee last time. Someone else should get it today!

**Dishonest Statements** - I wouldn't be able to make it at that time for the meeting, but it really doesn't matter to me, as long as it's convenient for everyone else.

**Minimizing/Devaluing** - Don't worry! It's not worth it!

# Communication Stoppers and Enhancers

## Communication Enhancers

I don't see it that way

I don't think that it will work.

I do not think I have made myself clear.

I'd be surprised if that happened.

I don't think that it's practical.

You seem unavailable to me.

That happens quite often.

It would be difficult to do that.

I get mad when you say that.

I would appreciate it if you didn't do that.

That sounds unrealistic to me.

I don't agree with you.

I am angry when you say that.

I don't appreciate your behavior.

I am concerned about you.

Do you really think so?

## Communication Stoppers

That's ridiculous!

That will never work!

You're not listening to me!

That's impossible!

It's just not practical.

You're never available!

That always happens!

There's no way that can be done!

You make me so mad!

You shouldn't do that.

Let's go back to reality!

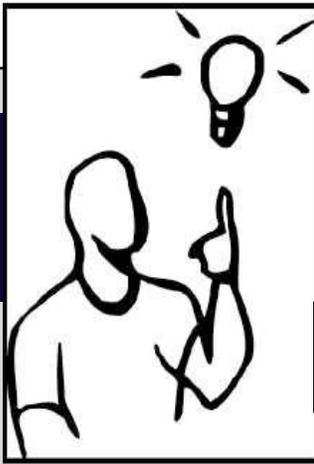
You're wrong!

You make me so mad!

You are a disappointment!

What's wrong with you?

Stop kidding yourself!



## Chapter 2: Listen up with Active Listening!

*Listening is not just hearing!*

- Listen up! .....Page 11
- Active Listening Techniques .....Page 12
- Tips for Effective Listening .....Page 13

***People don't always hear what you are saying because they do not necessarily think like you do!***

So often we are so pre-occupied by what we want to say that we are not attentive and open to what others are picking up and interpreting from our words! Likewise, we might often miss what others are really saying to us because of this preoccupation with our own words. We might also misinterpret due to our filter of expectations, interpretations, mood, etc. These factors are highly underestimated facets of human communication and cause countless problems in interpersonal relationships. All too often we are intent on speaking rather than making sure we are being understood or truly understanding what the other person is telling us. Good listening skills require a suspension of being judgmental and requires an open mind to look at things from another's point of view. Too often we think people think like us, and only by suspending our idiosyncratic mental filter can we truly understand what another is saying. The exercise below gives you a "hands on" tip for keeping flexible in your thinking!

***Get a grip?*** The following is a quick and simple exercise to help you actively listen, as it can remind you about the importance of keeping an open mind and remembering that people don't always think like you!

Clasp your fingers so that your fingers interlock. Which thumb is on top? In a group situation, about half have their left thumb on top and half the right, regardless of right or left-handedness. Note what is natural for some is not natural for another. This represents our perceptions— we think people see things the same way and by this "hands on" exercise we realize this is not true! Now shift your fingers in the opposite way (make sure all fingers are clasped differently, not just the thumbs). How does it feel? Common responses are "weird, strange, uncomfortable." However, for some people it is effortless and natural! Thus, this "hands on" exercise serves as a metaphor of how we need to shift our thinking just so slightly in order to be able to actively listen and really hear what others are saying—not what we want to hear!

***Want an advanced version? Try the same exercise with folding your arms! Most people find to make an even greater impact, as only about half of people fold their arms like you!***



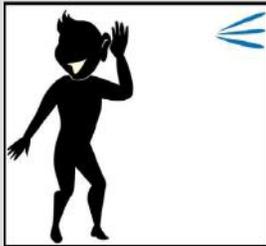
**Activity**



# Listen up!

**Give the gift of truly listening.** It requires an interest in others and a lack of self-absorption. All too often we confuse listening with hearing! People "hear" audible sounds but that does not mean they really "listen." Listening can be one of the greatest gifts you give to someone. Listening requires more active attention to both non-verbal and verbal messages when someone speaks, as one deciphers actively the message being expressed both verbally and emotionally. Just think of how many altercations and misunderstandings people could avoid just by using good listening skills. In "active listening" one hears not just what you want, but understands more what message is being conveyed. When one actively listens you do not take words at face value but clarify, reflect and restate what you are hearing, taking into account emotions and feelings behind the words. Active listening is not judgmental, but rather validating. It is not self absorbed and insensitive. By feeding back what you hear on a verbal as well as feeling level, the person can then clarify and sense that they are being valued. Keep in mind much of listening to others is not focusing on merely what is being said - develop the ability to look behind the obvious and really listen to what someone is conveying to you with their mood and non-verbal behavior!

90/10



### ***Understand the "90/10 Principle!"***

One factor that prevents people from active listening in times of conflict is the "90/10 Principle." Ten per cent of what we argue about is really about the topic at hand, such as your family member not taking out the trash, but ninety percent is our unresolved issues, past hurts, emotional baggage, unresolved

expectations, and echoes from our past being played out in the present situation ... all which lead to conflict. Thus, the following handouts will help in limiting this "90/10" principle by helping you stick to the situation at hand in a non-biased way using Active Listening skills!

*The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer." - Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)*

# Handout

## Active Listening Techniques Statements That Help the Other Person Talk

| <u>STATEMENT</u>   | <u>PURPOSE</u>  | <u>SKILLS</u>   |
|--------------------|---|---|
| <b>ENCOURAGING</b> | To convey interest.<br><br>To encourage the other person to keep talking.   | Non-judgmental<br><br>Use neutral words.<br>Use varying voice intonations.              |
| <b>CLARIFYING</b>  | To help you clarify what is said.   | Ask questions.<br><br>Restate wrong interpretation to force speaker to explain further. |
| <b>RESTATING</b>   | To show you are listening and understand what is being said.<br>To check your meaning and interpretation.   | Restate basic ideas, facts.<br><br>Be able to express self in different ways.           |
| <b>REFLECTING</b>  | To show that you understand how the person feels.<br><br>To help the person evaluate his/her own feelings after hearing them expressed by someone else. | Reflect the speaker's basic feelings  |
| <b>SUMMARIZING</b> | To review progress.<br>To pull together important ideas including feelings.<br><br>To establish a basis for further discussion.                         | Restate the major ideas expressed.<br><br>Looking for the main idea.                    |
| <b>VALIDATING</b>  | To suspend judgment.  | Acknowledge the value of their issues and feelings.                                     |

# Tips for Effective Listening

## LISTEN FOR THE MESSAGE BEHIND THE WORDS

Hear the other person's feelings, concerns, questions, joys, and fears.

## SHOW THAT YOU CARE

Focus on the other person, not yourself.

Show concern through body language and attentiveness.

## SHOW THAT YOU BELIEVE IN THE OTHER PERSON'S ABILITY TO SOLVE HIS/HER OWN PROBLEMS

Suspend your judgments, evaluations, opinions, beliefs, theories, and solutions.

## AVOID "YES OR NO" QUESTIONING

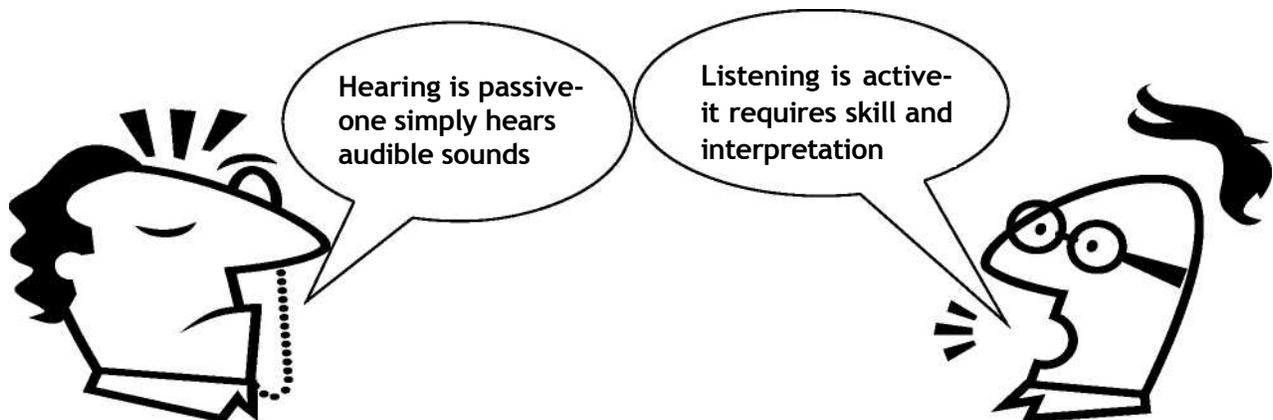
Use questions to clarify so you can hear the other person better.  
Keep questions open-ended. Do not demand reasons or justifications.

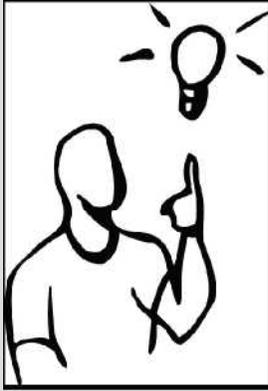
## HELP THE PERSON TO FOCUS ON PARTICULAR PROBLEM AREAS

Summarize and clarify.

## STOP WHEN THE PERSON WANTS TO STOP- YOU DO NOT NEED CLOSURE AT THAT INSTANT.

Let things settle—you can revisit later. Be patient—don't get the last word!





## Chapter 3: Taking The Angst Out of Anger

*Anger is one letter short of DANGER!*

- Curb your Anger! ..... Page 15
- Bully Buttons! ..... Page 16
- Anger Diary ..... Page 17
- ACT NOW! Control that Temper! ..... Page 18
- STAR TIPS for Controlling Anger..... Page 19

***You have a right to be angry-but you do not have a right to be aggressive!***

***Anger is a feeling - Aggressiveness is a behavior.***

Except in the example of self-defense to prevent physical harm, aggression is never constructive. Most people lump anger (a feeling) and aggressiveness (a behavior) together and think they can act the way they feel. This tendency causes untold human suffering and conflict. You can express your anger assertively without launching into destructive attacks characterized by a "you" focus. Don't hide your anger – but express it assertively!

Change "You make me so mad" to "I am mad when you say that." Who has the control? The more you think others control your anger, the more you will be aggressive! Ask yourself "who owns the problem?" All too often we allow someone else's problematic behavior to become our problem which is not in our control. No one can push our buttons unless we give them the buttons to push!



**So don't let  
others  
push your  
buttons!**



# Curb your Anger!

*„Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal: you are the one who gets burned.“*

*- Buddha (1887 B.C.–1814 B.C.)*



***Is your anger in your control or does it make you „out of control?“*** Anger can be an adaptive reaction to what is unfair and unjust. However, all too often we let anger control us rather than us being in control of our anger. At times our anger arises not from healthy reasons, but from intolerance, disgust, narrow-mindedness, and the refusal to let go of unrealistic expectations of self and others. The ability to keep our thoughts in perspective in order to combat irrational thinking is of prime importance to control anger. Getting rid of unrealistic "shoulds" of how you think others "should" be, as well as combating one's own need to be perfect, will provide the foundation for healthy thinking. Watch your words as well as your irrational thoughts. Once the words come out you can never get them back! Resist the temptation to express anger in an aggressive way.

**Some sample anger-reducing rational beliefs are:!**

- I can put up with a negative person even though I wish he/she would act better
- I will not let someone else set the tone for my behavior
- I really *can* stand what I don't like - it just is upsetting
- I need to forgive the other person for not being as healthy as I would have wished
- I will work on merely observing what the other person is saying, not on judging the person

Don't get caught in the "Chinese Finger Trap!" This favorite carnival prize can teach us a lot about conflict. Put your fingers into the trap and pull, to represent what happens in an argument. The more you pull, the tighter it gets and the more you are trapped! However, even if one side is being pulled, if you refuse to pull in response to another's aggression, you do not get stuck and are set free! So the next time you might be tempted to get in the game of "tit for tat" remember not to get stuck in the trap!



*„Anger dwells only in the bosom of fools.“*

*- Albert Einstein (1879-1955)*

*Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame.“*

*- Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)*



# Bully Buttons



*No one can make us angry! We are in charge of our emotions and reactions. People do not have to push your buttons. Do not make them so accessible! Ideally, they are only yours to push!*

Directions: Write below the "buttons" that we allow others to push that cause emotional distress. Then write how you can change your usual response.

*Example:* I am so angry when my mother makes a comment about my weight.

*My Usual Response:* Tell her it is none of her business, tell her to leave me alone, stomp off

*Changed Response:* Tell her assertively I do not appreciate her comments and please keep them to herself. This requires no yelling or childish behavior

*Your Example:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Usual Response* \_\_\_\_\_

*Changed Response:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Your Example:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Usual Response* \_\_\_\_\_

*Changed Response:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Your Example:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Usual Response* \_\_\_\_\_

*Changed Response:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Your Example:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Usual Response* \_\_\_\_\_

*Changed Response:* \_\_\_\_\_

# Worksheet

## Anger Diary

Identify my "anger trigger" \_\_\_\_\_

Describe how it feels \_\_\_\_\_

Describe my irrational self-talk \_\_\_\_\_

Describe my rational self-talk \_\_\_\_\_

What are other ways to handle it? \_\_\_\_\_

What can I learn from this situation? \_\_\_\_\_

Check off ideas that can help me to manage my anger:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Count to ten before responding     | <input type="checkbox"/> Write a letter (I don't have to send it) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write feelings in a journal        | <input type="checkbox"/> Confront someone assertively             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remember "I" statements            | <input type="checkbox"/> Draw what I am feeling                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk it out with a friend          | <input type="checkbox"/> Look behind someone's difficult behavior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk to cool down           | <input type="checkbox"/> Identify self-imposed "shoulds"          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgive others for being unhealthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Use relaxation techniques                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remove myself from the situation   | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise, discharge energy               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Role play ways to handle anger     | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask myself "what can I learn from this?" |

*Pick two items and elaborate below.*



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*How will my life be different if I am able to put these ideas into practice?* \_\_\_\_\_

# **ACT NOW!! Alter that Thinking**

## **Alter that thinking!**

1. No one makes you angry except yourself!
2. Don't let your irrational thoughts take over - control them!
3. It's okay to be angry, but not to be aggressive! One is a behavior, the other is an emotion.
4. Change yourself, not the other person!

## **Change the emotions!**

1. Replacing irrational thoughts with more rational thoughts will result in healthier emotions.
2. Try to accept those for who they are and develop compassion.
3. Try techniques such as deep breathing, counting to 10, and visualization or imagery

## **Tone down the behaviors!**

1. Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements.
2. Role-play and rehearse how to act more appropriately.
3. Reduce the intensity by using a sense of humor.
4. Talking louder will not make people hear you better.

## **New Habits can be developed**

1. Develop new habits and patterns of responding when upset.
2. Reward yourself for new actions taken and little steps towards success.
3. Have confidence in yourself that this can be achieved.

## **Overcome the obstacles**

1. See obstacles as another opportunity to learn and grow.
2. Avoiding the situation might be easier in the short run but is harder in the long run.
3. Allow yourself to be empowered by being more "in control" without being controlling.

## **Win - Win**

1. With new habits of thought, emotions and behavior, it's a win - win situation for all.
2. Mutual respect gives way to compromise, which is valued over being "right."

## S.T.A.R. T.I.P.S. for Controlling Anger



### **Stop**

*"I'm not going to allow myself to let someone 'push my buttons.'"*

### **Think about what will happen if you lose control**

*"If I lose control and lose my temper it will likely lead to an argument..."*

### **Ask yourself why you're really angry**

*"The real reason I'm angry is . . ."*

### **Reduce anger**

*"I will take some deep breaths. I will walk away. I need to cool down. I'm going to . . ."*

### **Tell the person how you feel**

*"I feel very lonely and sad"*

### **Identify the specific event that made you feel that way**

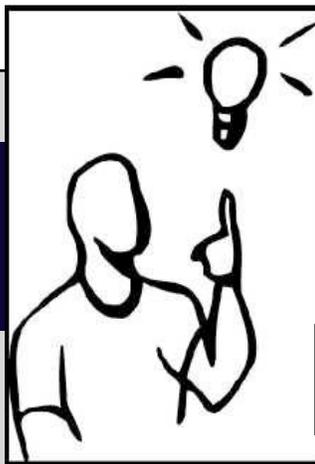
*"I'm upset because I felt angry when you did . . . because ..."*

### **Process why this triggered anger in you**

*"I think when you yell, I feel like I am a child again being punished"*

### **Success! Reward yourself!**

*"I did a good job! I could control my emotions and take responsibility for them"*



# Chapter 4: Change Those Thoughts!

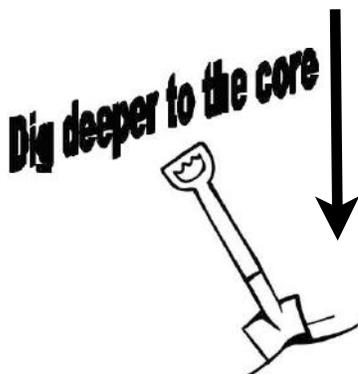
Watch out for "Stinking Thinking!"



- Combat Pessimism! .....Page 21
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*"Whoever is happy will make others happy too. He who has courage and faith will never perish in misery." Anne Frank (1929-1945)*

**Dig Deep to the Core!** Core irrational beliefs guide us down the wrong path. For example, if one uses a failure or disappointment as one's defining moment, then distorted thoughts will form the **Core Belief** that "I am a failure" or I am inadequate." Unaware of one's **Core Belief**, one might be easily distracted by focusing on other "stinking thoughts" that result from that underlying false belief. For instance, one might focus on wanting people to like them, over-rating the need for approval. Unaware that the anxiety about these issues results from the **Core Belief** that one is inadequate, or worse yet, a failure, distracts one from tackling the root problem. So dig deep and find out what is lying at the core to explore!



### Example:

- "I hope they like me"*
- "It would be terrible if they did not like me."*
- "They are better than me"*
- "I am inferior"*
- "I am not a good person"*
- "I am a failure"*



# Combat Pessimism

## *Replace it with positive self-talk!*

Replace negativity with rational, hope-inspiring thoughts. We often sabotage our happiness by thinking in negative, blown-out-of-proportion ways. Often, these thought habits and negative "self-talk" become so ingrained that we do not realize that we have the power to change them! Pessimistic thinking is inflexible, extreme and self-defeating. Unwarranted irrational thoughts and emotion: immobilize one from constructive action and are the sources of much personal suffering. The following handouts and worksheets on subsequent pages can help you to identify unhealthy thinking patterns.

## *Keep these points in mind:*

Negative thinking leads to negative emotions

Replace irrational thoughts with more rational thoughts

Clear thinking is the cornerstone for effective behavior and healthy emotions

Eliminate the idiosyncratic filtering that so often underlies negative perceptions

By thinking in healthy ways, one becomes solution-focused instead of problem-focused!

*"Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so" - Shakespeare (1564-1616)*

*I don't think of all the misery but of the beauty that still remains." - Anne Frank (1929-1945)*

## **Activity**

*"People are not disturbed by things, but the views they take of them" - Epictetus (c. 60-120)*

Put a drop of food coloring in a glass and see the water discolor. Thoughts are like that! Only one negative thought could discolor your whole perspective! So don't let one nagging thought or concern discolor the big picture! Now imagine dropping many drops of different colors, representing many negative thoughts. You can imagine the muddiness of those toxic thoughts mixed together!



## **Activity**

*Put yourself in the corner!* All too often irrational tunnel-vision thinking boxes one in, limiting options for happiness and growth. One way to impress oneself with this reality is to literally put yourself into the corner! Give yourself 10 minutes or so to focus on your irrational thinking. Make that your "worry time" for the day. Now look behind you at the room around you. Realize how much more there is to see and experience. Notice where the door is. What is it like to paint yourself in a corner? There is no opening, no opportunity for change. Only a Dead End! *Get out of the corner and into your life!*

# Common Irrational Beliefs

*Thoughts that cause Unhappiness, Anxiety and Depression  
Based on the works of Psychologist Albert Ellis*

## Irrational Belief

One should always be approved of and liked.

To be worthy and have self-esteem one must be competent in all respects.

Some people are just plain bad!

Things should be the way we want them to be - it's terrible when they aren't.

Individuals have little internal control over their personal happiness or misery.

if there is some possibility that something can go wrong, it's okay to worry excessively although you can't change it.

It is easier to avoid than to face difficulties and problems - hopefully it will be forgotten.

We're all products of our past history; we can't change anything. I've always been that way!

There is a right and perfect way to do everything, and it's catastrophic if we don't find that way.

## Rational Counterpart

No one is liked by everyone. It's not realistic! One cannot expect to be perfect in all respects - it's okay to make mistakes!

Behaviors are bad, people might be extremely unhealthy.

Things are not always the way we want them to be, but that's not the end of the world. We can still function.

We can exercise a great deal of control over our own happiness or make our misery worse.

it is good to be proactive if we can "do" something, but excessive worrying won't help and is in fact destructive.

in the long run, it's better to face difficulties and accept responsibilities - only then can there be resolution and healing

Certainly past events influence our behavior, but we can modify how we think and react if we work at it. People can and do change.

There is not always the ideal solution. To be inflexible will only set one up for "failure" and perfectionism that is unhealthy emotionally.

## Rational Vs. Irrational Thinking

### Irrational Thoughts that Cause Disturbance

How *awful*

I can't stand it

I'm stupid

He stinks!

This *shouldn't* have happened

I am to be blamed

He has no right to be so arrogant  
and rude

I *need* him/her to do that

Things *always* go wrong

*Every time* I try, I fail

Things *never* work out

I can't forgive myself for all my  
mistakes

This *should* be easier

I *should* have done better

I am a failure

### Rational Thoughts Promoting Emotional

This is disappointing

I can put up with what I don't like

What I *did* was stupid

He's not perfect—neither am I

I wish it did not happen

I am responsible for my shortcomings but  
blame and shame are a bit strong

He has every right to act like he is  
even if I would prefer different behavior

I wish he/she would do that

Things do not go the way I wish at times

Sometimes I do not succeed but at least I try

Things do not always go my way—that is  
unrealistic

I am worthy of forgiveness—I am human

I wish it were easier but I have no reason to  
expect it

I would have preferred to do better but I did  
my best

I am a person who is not perfect and makes  
mistakes

# Counter-Productive Thinking

## *Common types of thinking patterns that underlie depression and unhappiness*

1. **ALL OR NOTHING THINKING** - One sees things in "black or white" categories. If mistakes are made, one might view oneself as having "failed" or, worse yet, being a "failure."
2. **OVERGENERALIZATION** - One thinks in absolutes, like "always" and "never," and sees a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of failure- generalizing from a specific situation.
3. **MENTAL FILTER** - One picks out a negative single event and dwells on it, like a drop of ink that discolors a whole beaker of water. One is stuck with an inflexible attitude and viewpoint.
4. **MAGNIFY AND CATASTROPHIZE** - Events are blown out of proportion. A good rule of thumb is that if you won't remember this a year from now, it is not worth being upset about.
- e. **SHOULD STATEMENTS** - Living in the world of "woulda, coulda, shoulda" becomes tedious and sets a person up for perpetual misery. Accepting things that cannot be changed is more adaptive than getting stuck on why things "*should be different.*" As Thoreau once said, "Things do not change - we change." Let go of the "tyranny of the shoulds."
6. **PERSONALIZATION** - All too often there is self-blame for what is out of one's control. It is common to take things too personally. People have a hard time giving up the notion that they are the "center of the universe." In all honesty—sometimes it doesn't have to do with you!
7. **PLAYING THE COMPARISON GAME** - Comparing oneself to others and needing to keep up with or outshine others in order to feel good about oneself is a sure set-up for feelings of inadequacy.
8. **PROJECTION**-Unacceptable feelings and thoughts about oneself is projected on others, leading to defensiveness and lack of insight.
9. **REGRETTABLE REGRET**— How easy it is to get stuck on what missteps one has taken, and past decisions are revisited as if it would change things! Use past missteps as learning tools and building blocks to move forward and make better choices NOW! Forgiveness is key- for oneself as well as for others not knowing any better at the time.

### *What negative thought patterns create stress in you?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

### *How could you replace those thoughts with more positive, rational thoughts?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

# Worksheet

## Survey on Thought Habits

- 1. How many people at work make you upset?
- 2. How many people cause you emotional upset?
- 3. How many things in your life are totally unbearable?
- 4. Count the things you are faced with that are awful and terrible.
- 5. How many things can you not stand?
- 6. Estimate how many times in a week things don't go the way they should?
- 7. How many people do you know who are always critical?
- 8. In a given month, how many times do you think that awful things are happening to you?
- 9. Count how many of your family members upset you.
- 10. How many times in a week do people disappoint you?
- 11. Estimate the number of times you've completely failed something important in your life.
- 12. Estimate how many times in a given week you can not control your feelings.
- 13. How many times in a given week do you feel hopeless?
- 14. How many times on average in a week do you think "I can't take this!"
- 15. How many people do you think are causing you to be miserable?

Add all the numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

0-4 Extremely healthy thought habits

5-8 Mildly distressing thought habits

9-12 Moderately distressing thought habits

13-19 Severely distressing thought habits

20 + Danger Zone! Unhealthy thought patterns that are so inflexible and pervasive paves the way to depression, anxiety, distress and untold human suffering!

*Do you notice that each items contains out-of-control, exaggerated thinking? None of these items are rational! Those type of thought habits are sure to cause unspeakable pain if they dominate your thoughts. Immobilizing, distorted thinking is harsh, judgmental, and critical. Learn to be your own best friend and eradicate this way of thinking that is often so automatic you do not even realize how irrational it is!*

## Rational Self-Help Form

### *Dissecting an Irrational Event*

Activating Event Boyfriend breaks up with me

Beliefs I can't live without him. He was the only one for me—I'll never love again!

Consequence (feelings and behaviors)

Feelings Devastated, depressed, hopeless, anxious

Behaviors Lose sleep, cry, miss work, become short with people, withdraw

Disputing There is no one true love—I need to make an effort to meet others.

I can live without him – it will just be tough

Effect of more Rational Thinking Composed, feeling stable, joining with others, more animated

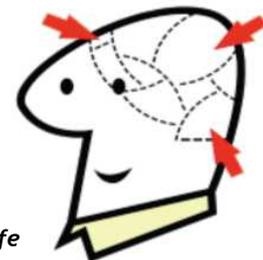
Learn your life skills ABC'S by dissecting a situation as shown by the example above. The point is demonstrated quite clearly that no one is disturbed by an event in itself—it is the interpretation and perception about the event that determines one's feelings and behaviors. That means that short of physical harm, no one can make you feel bad, upset, or cause you to behave in any way. You have the control! Thus, the key to feeling better and acting in a healthy manner is to identify beliefs and perceptions, detecting those irrational thoughts that lead to immobilizing and destructive feelings and behaviors.

The diary on the next page will help you dissect your problematic situations as you separate thoughts from feelings and behaviors. Identify those automatic thoughts that are causing you sadness and difficulty and replace any irrational or immobilizing thoughts with more rational ones to gain a sense of personal mastery. Thinking clearly is a vital ingredient in your "mental fitness!"

*"We are shaped by our thoughts -we become what we think." - Buddha (563-483 B.C.)*

*"Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference" - Winston Churchill (1874-1965)*

# Learn the ABCS of Rational Thinking!



Personal Development 101: A Self-Help Manual For A Positive Life

# ABCDE DIARY

(Diary for Identifying, Challenging, and Changing Irrational Beliefs)

*Activating Event*

*Belief*

*Consequences*

*Disputing Irrational*

*Effects of Rational  
Belief*

# Quell the Inner Critic



Confront and quell the critic from within! Self confidence and self-acceptance weakens with internal self-judgments. Make an effort to quiet the critic and unleash the nurturer from wit. All too often people have kinder, nurturing thoughts for others, while reserving the harshest critical thoughts about themselves. Replace negativity with more soothing self-statements - you deserve it!

*You might write down some messages from your inner critic and refute these toxic thoughts with more positive self-statements. Write these positive self-affirmations separately on note cards and put them in a jar. Each day take one out and read it, to remind yourself about the importance of nurturing yourself before you can really effectively nurture any one else. An example of a negative self-judgment could be, "I failed at this" or worse yet "I failed, therefore I am a failure." More positive self-affirmations are "I will use this setback as an opportunity to learn and grow" and "I love myself the way I am."*

Identify a negative thought and then replace that thought with a more rational alternative - train yourself to have healthy thinking habits!

## Replace

*"I'll never trust her again"... with "It will be hard to trust her again."*

*"How Awful" with "This is disappointing,"*

*"I can't stand it".... with "I don't like this,"*

*"I'm stupid".....with ...."I do not like what I did."*

*"He makes me so mad" ...with ...."I am upset when he puts me down"*



Get rid of the "shoulds" of the inner critic! Have a jar with the word "should" taped on it. On a note card, write one negative "should" message you give yourself or others that makes you "stuck" (ex. "I should be popular like so and so..." or "he shouldn't have said that to me.") When you are ready to give up that "should" put the card in the jar- **Get it out of your head!**

# "You Are Your Own Worst Enemy" Checklist

Check off if you identify in yourself any of these negative thought habits:

If I make a mistake, I feel like I failed

If things don't go well, I feel hopeless

If I get rejected by people, I feel like a loser

When people are more accomplished than me, I feel inadequate

If someone rejects me, I think it makes me unlikable

If I did something foolish, I feel like a fool

I feel disappointed in myself—I should be further along now than I am

If I am wrong, I need to prove why I am right

I can't stand being wrong, since that would reflect badly on me as a person

If someone else is right - that means they are better than me

I think I need to get "the last word" so that no one puts anything over me

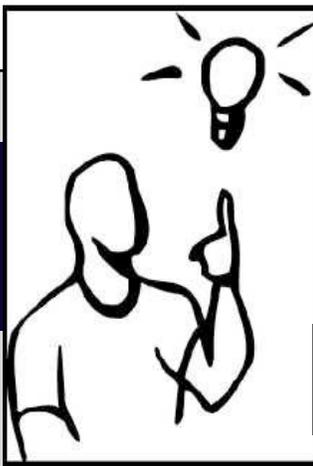
I do not like where I am in my life - I feel like I failed

For any item checked, rephrase the sentence into a less punitive and more rational alternative. For example, for the first item a rational alternative can be *"It is human to make mistakes, it does not spell failure, and I will use these setbacks as stepping stones for growth and learning."*

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Chapter 5: Destress For Success!

*Be a "Stress Manager" and Not a "Stress Carrier"*

- Stress Success! .....Page 31
- Tips for Mental Fitness .....Page 32
- Hardiness Skills - The 4 C's .....Page 33
- Tips for Emotional Resiliency .....Page 34 & 35



The Serenity Prayer—The Cornerstone of Stress Management

*"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." - Reinhold Niebuhr*

## Stress Emergency Kit

Make up your own kit to combat stress for you and others at the workplace. Don't leave home without it!

Examples:

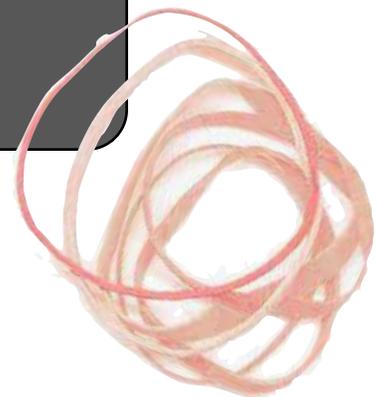
- Rubber Band – *reminds you to seek the right level of tension—the optimal level of stress*
- Hershey Kiss and Hug – *everyone needs affection—spread love*
- Crayon – *color your world, color your perceptions away from "black and white" thinking*
- Paintbrush – *attitude is the mind's paint brush!*
- Eraser – *erase your old irrational thoughts to make way for new ones*
- Mini Ball – *reminds you to play, roll with things and bounce back!*
- Smiley Face Stickers – *to remind you to smile!*
- Band Aid – *heal the hurts of those around you—make amends—apologize*
- Audio Tape – *reminds you to make new messages for yourself and erase or not replay the old ones!*
- Comics Clipping – *remember to laugh as life is too serious to be taken seriously!*
- Post-it-Note – *write rational reminders, i.e. not to take things personally*
- Playing Card – *it is not the cards we are dealt, but how we play out the hand that counts in life*



# Stress Success!

Stress is a fact of life - watch out for those who say they have no stress in their lives - that's because they are too busy giving it to others! We need stress to be vibrant and adaptive, involved and charged. However, if stress is in our control we can manage it, but if our stress feels out of our control we feel "distressed." Stress is usually viewed in a negative way - however, stress can also be positive and healthy. If one has too little stress, one can be bored, uninvolved and depressed. With too much stress, both negative and positive, one is "burnt out", tense, and overwhelmed. Examples of positive stress include being exhilarated before a performance, playing competitive sports, going to party, having company for dinner, going on vacation and even getting married.

Try to imagine holding a rubber band. If it is not stretched at all, it is limp, unstructured, and without much form. Just as with the string of a musical instrument, with too much stretch it will "snap". Finding that happy medium in which the elastic has form, function, and has "give" either way will bring one into balance. In the case of a guitar string, only then can beautiful music be made. Thus, don't avoid stress: Learn to manage it by finding involvements which are meaningful and give you a sense of purpose and belonging. Without that, our lack of life balance might lead us to become "stress carriers."



***Did you know.....?***

***Stressed Spelled Backwards is***



**DESSERTS?**

# **Handout**

## **Tips for Managing Stress**

### ***Change Toxic Thought Patterns***

Attitudes such as, "I must be competent in every situation," are quite unrealistic. Sometimes people do not have conscious thoughts like this, but upon examination of behavior and attitude, find that they are holding themselves to a standard of absolute perfection. If certain standards are not met, they feel like "failures." This type of thinking can be changed, with practice, to more humane patterns such as, "I am a work in progress, and am not perfect." Tackle the "pathological shoulds" and irrational thinking that undermines your well-being.

### ***Get Fit!***

Adhere to an exercise routine that you enjoy. The benefits of physical exercise can not be overstated—for health in mind as in body. Break a general goal into small, manageable parts. When you make specific goals, don't be a weekend warrior! Slow, steady progress will win the race! Be mindful of what you eat and use portion control.

### ***Go from Creed to Gratitude!***

Instead of focusing on what you lack, how about focusing on what you do have? Look for opportunities to be thankful rather than bitter. Stop having stipulations that you see as "must haves" for your happiness. So often people get on a cycle of wanting more and more they do not appreciate what they have. Stop thinking life owes you something!

### ***Learn to "Let Go"***

If "Plan A" doesn't work, have the courage to go to "Plan B." Losses are necessary for growth, and it is in these inevitable losses that we gain wisdom and maturity. Don't hang on to an unhealthy life situation due to "security" and comfort." If a situation is toxic, let go of it while keeping the lessons of what you have learned to serve as guides for the future.

### ***Shift from being a "Victim" to a "Victor!"***

Self-pity and helplessness never amounted to much gain! Why is it so common for many people to be steeped in a pool of self-pity? One reason might be is that all too often people possess an unhealthy sense of entitlement. Many people carry the erroneous notion that life should have been more fair and that one is at the mercy of cruel fate. However, being proactive while controlling what you can control, makes all the difference. Even with an abusive childhood in the background, one can learn to stop being a victim in the present. We all can think of courageous people either in the media and news or in our own lives that had tremendous obstacles to overcome to come out on top rather than under the weight of it!

### ***Seek Support—You don't have to go it alone!***

Establishing good relationships with people, family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, can reduce stress immensely. Anyone who wants to develop a deep, mutually supportive relationship must take time to work on it, while developing empathy and being able to self-disclose to show the person "inside. Numerous studies have shown that loneliness and isolation leads to sickness and early death. We all need to have at least one person with whom we can self-disclose.

**ONLY BY FOSTERING WELLNESS CONCEPTS IN OURSELVES CAN WE ACHIEVE A BETTER BALANCE  
IN OUR LIVES AND BE EMOTIONALLY OPEN AND AVAILABLE TO OTHERS**

## Hardiness Skills - The 4 C's

*Dr. Suzanne Kobasa depicted 4 factors of the Stress Hardy Personality, each beginning with "C." In each of the following write one or two ideas of how you can develop these skills in your own life.*

**Commitment:** Those who feel a sense of commitment have a sense of involvement in something outside of themselves. They, therefore, tend to not feel isolated but rather sense that their actions have a purpose towards a greater good.

*Ways I can feel more "committed":*

---

**Control:** This is perhaps the key factor in emotional health - a sense that you can control the things you can, but that does not mean controlling others! Rather than feel a victim of circumstance or a pawn in the lives of others, stress-hardy people feel an internal locus of control, in which they are the ones that "make things happen."

*Ways I can feel more "in control":*

---

**Challenge:** In the face of adversity, people feel challenged and not overwhelmed. They feel empowered to meet adversity with enthusiasm rather than fear. They are growth oriented and eager to meet new challenges.

*Ways I can feel more challenged:*

---

**Connection:** People who feel a sense of connection with others, who do not feel isolated, open up their hearts to others, tend to be "stress-hardy." Those who isolate themselves and have a sense of alienation tend to feel more depressed, lonely and anxious.

*Ways I can feel more connected:*

---

# **Resiliency Skills:**

## ***Growing and Healing through Change and Uncertainty***

### **USE FLEXIBLE THINKING SKILLS - IN DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY, SEE THE OPPORTUNITIES.**

Instead of looking at the glass half empty, look at the glass half full. From adversity comes opportunity to change, to grow, to connect with others in a way that you might not have connected before. Change and growth can be exciting and make one feel energized - allow yourself to learn and heal in times of change. Embrace change! Don't fight it!

### **SEE STRESS AS YOUR FRIEND!**

Stress is often thought of as only negative - but stress can also be positive. Stress can be invigorating -such as playing on a sports team or working hard to complete a project you are proud of! A lack of positive, healthy stress leads to a lack of involvement, depression and isolation. Without stress, you have no motivation to grow and change. Stress can help you think in creative ways. Differentiate between stress that works for you and distress which works against you!

### **FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL, NOT WHAT YOU CANT CONTROL- DON'T TRY TO CONTROL THE UNCONTROLLABLE!**

Too often in the face of uncertainty one feels at the mercy of fate or circumstance, losing a sense of personal control. It is important to exercise control in taking steps to make life improvements. Clinging to hope in itself rarely yields positive change. Hope alone all too often is just delayed disappointment. For example, in the face of possible job layoff, develop a plan of action such as looking into other job options "just in case," develop your resume, and look into avenues such as federally funded job training programs or schooling to improve skills. If change seems too overwhelming, break a problem into small steps rather than tackle the whole problem at once.

### **PERCEPTION IS IMPORTANT! CHANGE TOXIC THOUGHT PATTERNS.**

In times of change, it is important to realize that it is the interpretation and attitude that we have that determines how changes affect us. For example, self-talk such as "I can't stand any more changes" is immobilizing and irrational. Replace these absolutes with "change is difficult" or "I am upset about the changes." When you think in absolute, "over-catastrophizing" terms, rational and healthy coping skills escape you. Tackle paralyzing and irrational thinking that undermines well-being.

### **DEVELOP A SENSE OF SELF WORTH THAT IS NOT DEPENDENT ON EXTERNAL SUCCESS OR THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS**

We are human "beings" and not human "doings." Self-esteem should never be contingent on wealth, relationship, status, job or material success. Healthy self-worth is unconditional. Too often self worth is measured on material or tangible success, and one feels like a "failure" if the objective measurements do not "measure up" to their ideals. Severe disappointment follows and often cripples one's chance for happiness and self-fulfillment. When an unconditional sense of self-worth is not realized, one is vulnerable to depression and anxiety.

## **Resiliency Skills (continued)**

### **BEWARE OF THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE!**

In times of uncertainty, it is common to consume excessive alcohol or drugs. Escape and avoidance through illicit drugs and excessive alcohol leads one down an unhealthy path of life impairment. Healing one's pain by substance abuse invariably begets more pain, dysfunction, bad choices and fractured relationships.

### **ACCEPT AND MEET PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS FOR EXERCISE, REST, GOOD NUTRITION, AND RECREATION.**

Practice self-care techniques and attempt to nurture and nourish your body as well as your mind. Know your own physical limits and requirements and make them a priority. Be realistic on how to accomplish your goals. Exercise regularly. Eat moderately.

### **ACCEPT YOUR FEELINGS - DO NOT JUDGE THEM. FEELINGS ARE NOT BEHAVIORS!**

At times the best one can do with unpleasant feelings is to acknowledge them and accept them. Many times people deny their feelings and criticize themselves for feeling a certain way, and they become defensive. It also makes it difficult to accept and be open to the feelings of others. Unpleasant feelings are normal and unavoidable, and only exacerbate when they are repressed. It is not easy, but people who do not judge their feelings learn to accept their own fears, doubts, and discomforts and will have less distress.

### **SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP.**

All too often people think it shows weakness to seek counseling or even seek help from a physician when they feel in need. It is not a weakness to get help - it shows strength and courage to realize that one recognizes a need for help. You need not suffer alone! Sometimes medication might be indicated—be open to it! Personalized "coaching" as to how to deal with uncertainty can make times of change and stress a very positive and enriching experience.

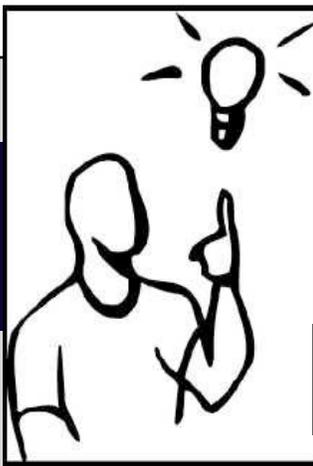
### **CONNECT, CONNECT, CONNECT! DEVELOP GOOD, WARM, SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS.**

Establishing supportive relationships is vital in stress resiliency. A sense that you are not alone is important for mental well-being. It is important not to keep your feelings in, and talking to others in a mutual give and take relationship can help one become more stress resilient. Do not use the time of severe stress to isolate yourself! Connect!

### **HUMOR AND LAUGHTER HELPS!**

No matter how stressful things can be, do not forget to laugh or use a sense of humor. Looking at the humorous side of things can help get you through tough times! Too often with change and stress people feel humorless and forget how to have fun. Nothing should rob you of that ability!

### **DON'T LET THE WAVES OF CHANGE PUSH YOU UNDER-LEARN TO SURF!**



# Chapter 6: Letting Go Of Regret: *Grieving and Forgiveness*

*Learn from the past - don't get stuck in it!*

Heal from Within... *with Forgiveness!* .....Page 37

Five Stages of Grieving .....Page 38

Anyway .....Page 39

Give up the Habit...*of Regret Activity*.....Page 40

Giving up the Rear View Mirror Syndrome .....Page 41



***Learn from the past,  
but live in the present!***

*The past is a great place to visit—but you don't want to live there! Living with regret means living in the past. There is nothing you can do about it now except learn from it!*

Indeed, you have no control of the past, and it is this sense of hopelessness that leads to depression and personal helplessness. It is so easy to fall into negative thinking habits in which regret over foolish choices or unintentional errors in judgment, or even mistakes or accidents, render you powerless in the present. You can not turn back the wheels of time. With that understanding let yourself off the hook—forgive yourself for not being perfect!

Regret implies, "I should have done better." Giving up regret means giving up the notion of being perfect. Being a fallible human being is not the end of the world!

There is healing after loss if you make peace with regretful decisions and actions - there are few mistakes as long as you learn from them.

# Heal from Within....with Forgiveness

A lack of forgiveness is often the root of problems with others as well as within oneself. All too often failed expectations, poorly chosen words and thoughtless actions lead to difficulties in achieving a sense of forgiveness. However, a lack of forgiveness hurts the person who holds grudges more than the "transgressor!" The gift of forgiveness enables one to let go of unproductive negativity and anger. Refraining can help one forgive. Too often we see ourselves or others as "bad" rather than "unhealthy." It is easier to forgive someone for being *unhealthy* than for being *bad*. ***Only by this type of re framing can judging and labeling give way to empathy.***

The ability to reframe and re-label transforms resentments into opportunities for growth and understanding. In the act of forgiveness, one learns to accept what can not be changed, and is set free from what is out of one's control.

- Forgive yourself for not being "perfect" and for making poor choices in the past
- Forgive your children for not being exactly how you thought they should be
- Forgive your parents for doing the best they could although they were quite imperfect
- Forgive your friends and neighbors for slighting you or not acting in a way you had hoped
- Forgive your higher power for not making you immune to loss, tragedy or adversity
- Forgive others for not being like you or not seeing it "your way"
- Forgive yourself for being immobilized by anger or bitterness, but try to stop NOW!

***The grudge you have for others will burn more intensely in you than in them!***

***Forgiveness is a gift you give to yourself! It will help you move ahead rather than stay stuck in the past. Don't forget to forgive yourself!***

***"Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds to the heel that has crushed it."***

***- Mark Twain***

***"First mend yourself, then mend others"***

***- Ancient Proverb***

***"Forgiveness means giving up all hope for a better past." - Lily Tomlin***



# Handout

## Five Stages Of Grieving (Based on teachings of Kubler-Ross)

|                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <p><b>Denial</b></p>     | <p>I avoid facing the likelihood of my death.</p> <p>I can not face mortality and I feel like I am invincible.</p>  | <p>I don't admit I am or ever was hurt.</p> <p>I don't face the reality of my unrealized dreams and illusions.</p> <p>I see things like I want to see them, and not as they are.</p>            |
| <p><b>Anger</b></p>      | <p>I am angry at life's unfairness.</p> <p>I am filled with resentment and can't forgive.</p>   | <p>I blame others for hurting me.</p> <p>Others are responsible for my pain, I can't forgive. Anger consumes me.</p>  |
| <p><b>Bargaining</b></p> | <p>I set up conditions to be fulfilled before I die.</p> <p>If I act or think certain ways, I can change and control the impossible.</p>  | <p>I set up conditions to be fulfilled before I'm ready to forgive.</p> <p>If I act in a certain way, perhaps I can get others to change their mind or behaviors.</p>                           |
| <p><b>Depression</b></p> | <p>I blame myself for not fulfilling my dreams.</p> <p>I failed in my life - I didn't accomplish what I had hoped.</p> <p>I have much regret.</p>   | <p>I blame myself for letting hurt destroy me.</p> <p>I failed and am ashamed of myself.</p> <p>Regrets consume me and I can not live fully in the present.</p>                                 |
| <p><b>Acceptance</b></p> | <p>I'm have prepared for my death and made re quests of how my affairs should be handled.</p> <p>I've made peace with others and myself.</p> <p>I have come to terms with my mortality.</p> | <p>I look forward to growth from hurt and I can accept and forgive.</p> <p>I can let go of impossible dreams, illusions, "shoulds", and expectations</p> <p>I have accepted my limitations.</p> |

# Handout

## Anyway

*Mother Theresa (found on the walls of her Calcutta convent)*

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered;

*Forgive them anyway.*

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;

*Be kind anyway.*

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;

*Succeed anyway.*

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;

*Be honest and frank anyway.*

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;

*Build anyway.*

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;

*Be happy anyway.*

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;

*Do good anyway.*

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;

*Give the world the best you've got anyway.*

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;

*It was never between you and them anyway.*

## Activity

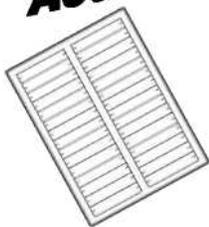
# Breaking the Habit... of Regret

Write one of your regrets that still actively haunt you at present. Write at least five phrases depicting the negative consequences to that regretful act—or perhaps for an action not taken. Look at each item—How rational is it? Is it really fact or "fiction?" Is each regret truly horrible or is it your own spin that makes it so paralyzing? Then write a response to counteract that negative thought. What are ways to reframe or relabel?

*Example: A blown-out-of-proportion regret might be, "I regret that I did not take that job and realize now that I would be happier working there than at my present job." Rational responses include "I made the best decision at the time and I have no idea what it really would have been like at the other job," "I forgive myself for making the best decision I could at the time," "I will use this disappointment as a time to re-evaluate my life and make different decisions now—including looking for another job," or "How do I know I would be happier?"*

How could looking at things more rationally and positively help you to make your life better? What doors can it open? Is it perhaps not as bad as you think? Whether it be a missed opportunity or a step taken that you regret, use these pieces of what "would have been" as jewels of wisdom to a better future. Turn these learning experiences into building blocks, not boulders that oppress you. Our "failures" and regrets need not define us, but rather they can be seen as rich opportunities to acquire wisdom as we move forward and evolve, turning adversity into opportunities for growth.

## Activity



**Relabel! - Use a file label and write a regret that you have. Put it on a piece of paper. With another label, put that label over the other one - and thus literally relabel the regret with a new thought that has a kinder, more flexible, and nurturing spin. That is what you literally call relabeling! Change from being a *victim* to a *victor*!**

We have no choice but to live in the present. Learn from the past, but do not keep on re-creating it and reworking it— it never gets better! It is too late to rewrite history—don't even try! With this present focus one can hopefully not repeat the same mistakes over and over. Living in the past guarantees retraumatizing oneself over and over. Habits are hard to break—but they are not impossible. Resolve to have right this moment be the pivotal point in time when you decide to break the habit ..... of regret! Get out of the Quicksand!

Harold Kushner, in his book "Overcoming Life's Disappointments," urges his readers to use the pieces of broken dreams, the "shattered fragments" of unrealized expectations as "*stepping stones*" to a new, more realistic dream. Use these fragments of unfulfilled hopes and dreams to learn life lessons that can pave the way to wisdom and maturity. With inspiration from your earlier dream, proceed to "Plan B" in which you create a more realistic, attainable dream. Don't fall into a sea of regret over choices that seem poor only in retrospect. To reach high means at times you will fall short—and these disappointments offer opportunities for growth and healing.

# Worksheet

## Giving up the Rear View Mirror Syndrome!

*WOULDA, COULDA, SHOULDA  
IF ONLY THINKING...  
YOU FEEL SAD OR DEPRESSED OFTEN  
YOU TRY TO RE-WRITE HISTORY  
YOU THINK IT'S TOO LATE TO CHANCE  
YOU SPEND TOO MUCH TIME IN THE PAST*



**Write your most common two thoughts in each category:**

Thoughts of things I "Woul'da" done: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thoughts of things I "Cou'da" done: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thoughts of things I "Shoul'da" done: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Transform these regrets into Self-Help Goals**

How much does forgiveness of self and others play into my reworking of old issues?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How can I focus on what is in my control instead of what is not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What have I learned in order to go forward, creating new dreams and \_\_\_\_\_

# Chapter 7: Reminders for Wellness

## Strategies for Healthy Living

- Watch What You Say!.....Page 42
- Give a Hug, Share a Smile ! .....Page 43
- "If I had to Live my Life Over" .....Page 44

## Watch What You Say!

### *Don't underestimate the power of the spoken word!*

There is a 19th century folktale about a man who went about town slandering the town's Wise Man. One day, he went to the Wise Man's home and asked for forgiveness. The Wise Man, realizing that this man had not realized the gravity of his transgressions, told him that he would forgive him on one condition: that he go home, take a feather pillow from his house, cut it up, and scatter the feathers to the wind. After he had done so, he should then return to him.



Though puzzled by this strange request, the man was happy to be let off with so easy a penance. He quickly cut up the pillow, scattered the feathers, and returned to the house.

"Am I now forgiven?" he asked.

"Just one more thing," the Wise Man said. "Go now and gather up all the feathers."

"But that's impossible. The wind has already scattered them."

"Precisely," the Wise Man answered. "And though you may truly wish to correct your misspoken words, it is as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover the feathers. Your words are

*"A bird that you set free may be caught again, but a word that escapes your lips will not return."*

*- Ancient Proverb*

How quick we are to speak without thought of the effect this will have on others. Especially in times of stress, we are all too free to speak what is on our mind carelessly. It is so easy to believe the bad that others say about someone; so ready to accept the "news" contained in print and television tabloids, and so quick to assume the worst regarding another's actions.

*So watch what you say! You can't take it back!*

# Give a Hug, Share a Smile

*The best things in life are free! Have frequent attacks of appreciation!*

When we are children, we are not stingy with hugs and smiles. They occur spontaneously, and without self-consciousness. It's a normal kind of thing. Kids do it all the time. They crawl into your lap; they touch you; they hold onto your hand. It would seem neglectful if we did not touch our kids or hold them regularly. As we grow into adults, warm smiles and touching fall by the wayside. But we still need them! Throughout the world, embracing is a symbol of togetherness and belonging.

Here are two things you can do:

First, begin today to give regular hugs to the loved ones in your life. It may be uncomfortable at first, but you'll learn to love it in no time. Try to hug and smile more regularly with your friends and coworkers also!

Second, touch the important people in your life, gently, on a regular basis. Human contact is as necessary to others as vitamins and minerals.

You can build a connection with another person in our own community with a hug or a smile. You can even hug with your eyes! A caring look will not go unnoticed! It feels good to both the giver and the recipient, takes only a moment, and costs nothing!



## **If I had my Life to Live Over • By Erma Bombeck**

*Written after she found out she was dying from cancer*

**I would have gone to bed when I was sick, instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there for the day.**

**I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage. I would have talked less and listened more.**

**I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained, or the sofa faded.**

**I would have eaten the popcorn in the 'good' living room, and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.**

**I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.**

**I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.**

**I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.**

**I would have cried and laughed less while watching television - and more while watching life.**

**I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil, or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.**

**Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment, and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.**

**When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner."**

**There would have been more "I love you's". More "I'm sorry's". But mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute ... look at it and really see it ... live it ... and never give it back.**

**Stop sweating the small stuff. Don't worry about who doesn't like you, who has more, or who's doing what.**

**Instead, let's cherish the relationships we have with those who Do Love Us. Let's think about what God HAS blessed us with.**

**And what we are doing each day to promote ourselves mentally, physically, emotionally, as well as spiritually.**

**Life is too short to let it pass you by. We only have one shot at this and then it's gone. I hope you all have a blessed day.**



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**In her interactive keynotes, seminars and radio and TV appearances, she provides “hands on” ideas and life skills that improve resiliency and life satisfaction.**

**Her [website](#), [guest blogs](#), [Daily Positive Inspirations](#) and [Pinterest Boards](#) are all designed to promote the message of emotional health and wellness and positive living!**

### ***Judy’s Other Books published by PESI Inc.***

***123 Tips and Tools For The Therapeutic Toolbox: CBT, DBT and Beyond (2013)***

***The Swiss Cheese Theory of Life! Judy Belmont, MS and Lora Shor, MSW (2012)***

***86 TIPS and Tools for the Therapeutic Toolbox (2006)***

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