

MOODS

Serving People with Unipolar and Bipolar Illness, Their Families and Friends, since 1981

May 2021

Items of Interest

Riley, Alex. [A Cure for Darkness: The Story of Depression and How We Treat It](#). Scribner, 2021. 464p. Riley has spent the last six years dealing with depression. Because of his experience with many medications and talk therapies, he has written this history of depression, the treatment options and the many antidepressant drugs, and the hopeful future.

Barton, Laura A. "Effective Communication Is Important When Combating Stigma" HealthyPlace. <https://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/survivingmentalhealthstigma/2021/5/effective-communication-is-important-when-combating-stigma>

"What To Do When You Can't Afford Therapy" PsychCentral <https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-to-do-when-you-cant-afford-therapy?>

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**May is Mental
Health Awareness
Month**

“ STINKIN THINKIN”

HOW WHAT WE SAY TO OURSELVES DIRECTLY IMPACTS OUR MOODS

By Tory Masters, CPS, CPRP

Ask yourself the following questions:

- If a situation turns out less than perfectly, do you see it as a failure?
- Are you quick to make assumptions and judge others without having any real evidence?
- Do you assume others are judging you?
- Do you have regrets, wishing you could have, should have done something differently?
- Do you call yourself names – “I’m stupid”, “I’m no good”.
- Do you often feel guilty and blame yourself even for things you can't control?
- Do you focus on the negative? Do you see your glass as half empty, not half-full?

Our thoughts impact our moods! A lot of emotional suffering comes from the way we talk to ourselves in our own minds. Psychologists call it negative self-talk which fuels emotions such as anger, depression, anxiety, hostility and feelings of worthlessness. By contrast, positive self-talk fuels emotions such as joy, self-love, happiness, contentment and optimism. In other words, you are what you tell yourself you are. You become what you believe. It may surprise you to know that you are in charge of what thoughts you choose to have. You CAN “change the channel”. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as well as Mindfulness exercises have proven to reduce mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety by 50%!

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The 10 most common types of negative-self talk that keep us from a meaningful recovery

- 1. All-or-nothing thinking** – You see things in black-or-white. If a situation falls short of perfect, you see it as a total failure. After getting a B- on a test, you say to yourself: “I am so stupid”.
- 2. Overgeneralization** – You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career mishap, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as “always” or “never” when you think about it. Examples: When the new position at work is given to someone else, you say: “I’ll never get offered a promotion”.
- 3. Minimization** – You diminish the meaning or importance of a positive event. Example: You receive an award at work for many accomplishments, but decide that the award is given out to anyone who didn’t get one previously. You obsess only about the criticism and not all the positive feedback you received.
- 4. Magnification** – You exaggerate errors or flaws. You take small events and turn them into disasters in your mind. Example: You are late in turning in a work assignment and think the mistake is so bad that you will be fired.
- 5. Discounting the positive** – When you discount the positive it means you invalidate good things that have happened to you. If someone tells you that you did a good job, you may tell yourself that they were just too afraid to tell you did not do well.
- 6. Jumping to conclusions** – You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion. For example: *Mind Reading*: Without checking it out, you arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you. *Fortune telling*: You predict that things will turn out badly. If you’re depressed, you may tell yourself: “I’ll never get better”.
- 7. Emotional Reasoning** – You assume that your negative emotions reflect the way things really are: “I feel guilty. I must be a rotten person”. Or, “I feel inferior. This means I’m a second-rate person”.
- 8. “Should” statements** – You are in the habit of telling yourself that things “should have gone better”. “I should have been more talka-

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Griffith, Megan. “I’m Always Exhausted Because of My Mental Illness.” HealthyPlace <https://www.healthypromotions.com/blogs/recoveringfrommentalillness/2021/5/im-always-exhausted-because-of-my-mental-illness>

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tive at the party” as opposed to being okay with being in a quiet mood. “I should never have eaten that cake. I have blown my diet”.

9. Labeling – Labeling is the habit of seeing yourself or others in one extreme way. Instead of saying “I made a mistake,” you attach a negative label to yourself: “I’m a loser.” After a fight with a friend, you say: “He’s such a jerk”.

10. Personalization - Personalization comes when you hold yourself responsible for an event not completely under your control. For example: When your child is being difficult you blame yourself and say “I am a bad mother”. Or you blame others for your problems. Example: “The reason I am not getting along with my wife is because she is unfair and unreasonable”.

The good news is that negative thinking is a habit that can be broken. You can train your brain to think more positively.

Here’s the proven science: *Every thought you have releases chemicals in your brain.* Being focused primarily on negative thoughts literally depletes the brain of its existing positive

pathways and energy and can create depression and anxiety. On the flip side, thinking positive, hopeful, optimistic thoughts decrease cortisol, the primary stress hormone, and increase the brain transmitter, serotonin, which creates a sense of well-being. This helps your brain function at peak activity. Bottom line: positive thinking in general, supports healthy brain growth. Just the way you would train for a marathon by focused, repetitive physical activity, you can train your mind through focused, repetitive mental activity to make your brain start firing in the regions associated with well-being and happiness and stop firing in the areas associated with unhappiness and discontentment.

So where do you start? Attacking negative thinking is associated with and the crux of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. It begins with learning how to identify when you do it, catching yourself doing it, and tracking it. Some methods of CBT will have you write down these thoughts and start to match each thought with a feeling. Other methods have you rate how strong the feeling is while you have the thought so that you can track your progress. Usually, it helps to note and keep track of what situa-

tions trigger you the most. You won’t change negative thinking overnight, but even beginning a program of addressing it can start to change how you feel. It can be very worthwhile to find a skilled therapist to guide you. There are also a number of books on how to challenge negative self-talk. They are listed below.

Rewire: Change You Brain to Break Bad Habits, Overcome Addiction, Conquer Self-Destructive Behavior by Richard O’Connor, Ph.D

Self-Coaching, Self-Talk: The Powerful Program to beat Anxiety and Depression by Joseph Luciano

The Feel Good Handbook By David D. Burns, MD

The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself From Chronic Unhappiness by John Kabat-Zinn

The Peace of Mind Prescription: An Authoritative Guide to Finding the Most Affective Treatment for Anxiety and Depression by Charles Nemeroff and Dennis Charney

Tory Masters is Vice-Chair of the MDSG Board.,