

Week 9: Walk to Wellness

Overcoming Negative Thoughts

Positive thoughts are thoughts that make us feel good about our progress. Negative thoughts cause us to lose hope or to stand in the way of our progress. A negative thought is usually a criticism of ourselves. We become angry with ourselves for something as simple as eating a piece of cake or not going for a walk.

We are all human, so we all have negative thoughts from time to time. However, we must try to overcome them because they often lead us into doing even more eating and less activity rather than the reverse.

The Negative Spiral

Suppose you come home after a hard day at work. You think to yourself, "I am tired of working so hard. I am sick of this program. I can never eat what I want."

This negative thought might lead you to eat some potato chips. And then you think, "I did it again. I will never lose weight." So you go on to eat more chips. Does this sound familiar? We've all done this, so please don't give up just because you ate one or two unhealthy items.

If you begin to lose hope because of this chain of thoughts and unhealthy actions, take a deep breath and start again. You are worth it!

The Habit of Negative Thoughts

Negative thinking can become a habit. For many of us, negative thoughts occur automatically. We tend to believe and act on our negative thoughts without being aware that we are doing so. One goal of this program is to help you recognize negative thoughts as they occur and to teach you to talk back to them.

Talking back to negative thoughts means that you must first catch yourself having the negative thought. Imagine saying "Stop!" to yourself, and picture a huge, red stop sign. Then, talk back with a positive thought. An example of a positive thought would be to praise yourself for what you've already accomplished. Doing so will help stop the cycle of negative thinking we all experience.

Negative Thoughts

Everyone has negative thoughts. This table helps explain the different types of negative thoughts.

Type of Negative Thought		Example
Good or Bad	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Divides the world into good or bad foods• Sees self as a success or failure• Is on or off the program	"Look at what I did. I ate that cake. I will never be able to do well in the program."
Excuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blames others for problems• Claims to not be able to help or control situations	"I have to buy these cookies just in case friends drop in."
Should	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expects to always make the right choice• Gets set-up for failure• Leads to anger	"I should have eaten less dessert."
Not As Good As	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compares self to someone else• Blames self for not doing as well as someone else	"Martin lost two pounds this week, and I only lost one."
Give Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beats self up• Often follows the other kinds of negative thoughts	"This program is too hard. I might as well forget it."

Talking Back to Negative Thoughts



We can talk back to negative thoughts. Here are some examples of how it works for the different types of negative thoughts.

General way to stop negative thoughts:

1. Catch yourself. Think, "I am being negative about myself."
2. Say "Stop!" to yourself. Say it out loud. Picture a huge, red stop sign.

Negative thought	Talk back with a positive thought
<p>Foods are either "good" or "bad." "I can never eat dessert again." "Look at what I did. I ate that cake. I will never do well."</p>	<p>Work toward balance "I can eat dessert and cut back on something else." One slip-up is not the end of the world. I can get back on track."</p>
<p>Excuses "It is too cold to take a walk." "I do not have the willpower."</p>	<p>It's worth a try "I can go for a walk and stop if it gets too cold." "It is hard to change old habits, but I will give it a try and see how it works."</p>
<p>Should "I should have eaten less dessert." "I haven't written down everything I eat."</p>	<p>It is my choice "It was my choice. Next time I can decide not to eat so much." "I'm writing down everything I eat because it helps me eat better."</p>
<p>Not as good as "Martin lost two pounds this week, and I only lost one."</p>	<p>Everyone is different "It is not a race. Martin and I can lose weight at different rates and both do well."</p>
<p>Give up "This program is too hard. I might as well forget it." "I will never get it right."</p>	<p>One step at a time "I've learned something about what is hard for me." "I will try something different next time."</p>