

## Positive Self-Talk

Changing how you think about yourself can have a powerful effect on how you feel. When you're living with depression, it's easy to blame yourself when things go wrong or assume the worst. Over time, these thoughts can make it hard to see hope for the future.

Recognizing and challenging negative thoughts is a skill you can build with practice. The steps below can help you interrupt unhelpful thoughts and create a more balanced, realistic way of thinking.

### Acknowledge your thoughts

When you notice a negative thought, don't try to push it away. Say it out loud or write it down. The goal isn't to eliminate it, but to recognize that it's simply a thought — not a fact.

### Challenge your thoughts

If you often think negative thoughts about yourself, try questioning them to challenge your self-doubt. Ask yourself: "Is this really true?" Replace harsh or exaggerated thoughts with more realistic ones.

For example:

- Instead of saying, "I'm worthless," try "My kids need me," or "My employer values my work."
- Instead of thinking, "I fail at everything," remind yourself, "I walked the dog today," or "My manager thanked me for my report."

Every time you replace a harsh thought with a factual one, you take back a little bit more power over yourself.

## **Interrupt your thoughts**

When you catch yourself starting to spiral, use your imagination to stop the pattern. Picture a red stop sign, hear a buzzer, or visualize a light turning from red to green. Find a signal that works for you.

## **Step away from your thoughts**

If a thought feels too strong to challenge, shift your focus. Take a walk, call a friend, read a book, or pick up a small task. Even short breaks help your brain reset and make space for new perspectives.

**For more mental health educational resources, visit [depressioncenter.org/toolkit](https://depressioncenter.org/toolkit).**

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