

## TIPS FOR INCREASING POSITIVE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS WHEN EXPERIENCING PAIN

Pain and mood are closely connected. Lifting your mood can actually help your pain. Below are some things that can have an impact on how you feel and that you can do yourself



## POSITIVITY AND STATE OF MIND

Positivity is incredibly important in managing your pain. Positive thinking can help reduce negative feelings, pain, stress, and increase your motivation to make healthy choices. This may seem like a hard thing to do, but it is a skill that you can get better at with practice.

You can improve your emotional state by doing things like spending time with friends and family, doing things that you are passionate about more often, and calming your mind by learning relaxation techniques like meditation. Changing your long-term mood may also require targeting how you think about situations. One way to do this is to challenge your negative automatic thoughts.

## THOUGHTS

Automatic thoughts can often be negative and affect your attitude towards the world and your life. Individuals who have pain may struggle with negative thoughts, which can cause more stress and make behavior change more difficult. It is possible to address your automatic negative thoughts by thinking about how you could reframe them to be more positive. Below are some common forms of negative thinking that often plagues individuals with persistent pain. After reviewing and reframing the examples in the list below, try reframing your own negative thoughts with the ABCD stress diary on the next page.

### ➤ CATASTROPHIZING: Imagining the worst possible outcome of any event.

- Example: “I’m probably going to have to get surgery now!”
- Positive Framing: “I am experiencing a flare-up, I will feel better after a day or two of rest.”

### ➤ POLARIZED THINKING: Viewing everything as black or white, good or bad; not seeing any gray areas.

- Example: “If I can’t bike like I used to, I am never going to do it at all.”
- Positive Framing: “I’m not as good at riding my bike, but at least I can still ride.”

### ➤ FILTERING: Focusing only on the bad and ignoring the positive in situations.

- Example: “Why am I still in pain? Nothing good ever happens to me.”
- Positive Framing: “I may have never joined this wonderful book club if it weren’t for the pain.”

### ➤ “SHOULD” STATEMENTS: Beating yourself up for not doing things the way you think they ought to be done.

- Example: “I should be able to clean the house or mow the lawn like I used to.”
- Positive Framing: “I don’t need to complete everything today. I will do a little each day until it is done.”

### ➤ OVERGENERALIZING: Believing that what happens during one event will happen in all future events.

- Example: “I tried that breathing exercise before, and it failed. Trying again is pointless.”
- Positive Framing: “Maybe I missed something with the breathing exercise. I am going to try it again.”

### ➤ BLAMING: Blaming yourself, other people, or something else for your pain.

- Example: “It’s all my coworker’s fault that I got hurt.”
- Positive Framing: “Accidents happen to everyone.”

### ➤ CONTROL FALLACIES: Believing you have no control over your own situation.

- Example: “If this doctor doesn’t fix my pain, there’s no hope!”
- Positive Framing: “I’m going to ask my doctor what I can do to reduce my pain.”

### ➤ MIND READING: You make assumptions about what other people are thinking about.

- Example: “The way she looks away when she speaks to me... she doesn’t care.”
- Positive Framing: “She looks distracted. I am sure she has a lot going on in her life.”

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To learn more about the importance of beliefs in pain management, look for a book titled “The Explain Pain Handbook” by David Butler and Lorimer Moseley.



# ABCD STRESS DIARY

WEEK OF ____	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>A</b> Write down the <b>STRESSFUL EVENT</b> that happened.							
<b>B</b> Write down your <b>THOUGHTS</b> about this stressful event when it happened.							
<b>C</b> Write down your <b>FEELINGS</b> about the stressful event when it happened.							
<b>D</b> Think about and question your thoughts in "B". REFRAME it to be more positive.							

Adapted from information in Dennis Turk and Frits Winter, *The Pain Survival Guide: How to Reclaim Your Life* (American Psychological Association, 2006), with permission of the authors.

