

How to Break a Cycle of Negative Thinking

Negative thoughts lead to negative feelings, impacting our overall mental health overall.

When your mental health is good, everything else in your life feels easier. When you're happier, people respond more positively, giving you more confidence.

When you're in good spirits and clear-headed about your sense of self, your feelings reinforce those feelings.

Unfortunately, your thoughts can have a negative effect, too. Unhealthy thought patterns can lead to negative feelings and actions or decisions that make it easier to keep thinking that way.

Thankfully, you can break this cycle and gain more power over your mood and your overall mental health. First, you must understand the chain reaction you're trying to break.



The chain reaction of your reactions

Your thoughts influence your feelings, your feelings influence your decisions, your decisions affect outcomes.

Your thoughts create a certain feeling. Your feelings lead to actions. If your negative thoughts are running wild, it's easy to get caught up and act based on those feelings. Poor decision-making can lead to negative results, which reinforce the negative thoughts and beliefs, and the cycle keeps going.

For example, say you have an event to attend. Beforehand, you worry what you'll say to people and that you won't feel comfortable enough to anyone to have fun. You think maybe you were invited out of pity. Your stomach turns from the stress. You decide not to go to avoid more headache, but your absence keeps you from getting closer to the people at the party and remembering that parties can be fun. And the next time there's a party, you may not be invited because you didn't come to the last one. So those negative feelings will only build.

THOUGHT → FEELING → ACTION → OUTCOME *repeat*



How to break the cycle

You can get out of a cycle of negative thinking by gently redirecting your thoughts.

For example, if you're invited to an event and you start to worry, stop and notice your thoughts. Practice replacing those negative thoughts with reassuring ones. You can think about a person you'll see that you really like and who makes you feel comfortable.

Here are a few good ways to break negative thought patterns.

Mindfulness

When you catch yourself having a negative thought, you can redirect it with mindfulness. This is really just a way of saying that you can redirect your focus to something else that's happening at that moment, like what your hands are doing, or the rise and fall of your breath. The more you practice bringing your attention back to your breath, the easier it will be to bring yourself out of negative thought patterns.

Journaling

Keeping a journal can be incredibly helpful, even if you're only logging the times you feel a strong emotion or get into a pattern of negative thinking. This can help you track your progress and identify situations that trigger these thoughts. If you'd like to learn more about how to redirect your thoughts and track your mental health with journaling, (stop by our journaling webinar).

Therapy

Therapy can be an incredibly effective way to improve your mental health and break free from negative thinking. You can work out whatever's bothering you in a safe, confidential environment. If you'd like to try therapy, book a free session with Spring Health, your mental wellness benefit.

[Book a free session](#)