



Saying No to Negative Thinking



Negative thinking is often a symptom of depression and bipolar disorder (manic depression). These illnesses can make it more difficult to see things in a positive way, feel hopeful about the future or believe your life is worthwhile.

Illnesses like depression and bipolar disorder cause *cognitive distortion*, which means many of your negative thoughts may not be completely true, and some may not be true at all. These thoughts might be automatic and lead to feelings of sadness or hopelessness before you're aware of them.

What can you do about negative thinking? You can't just "think positive" and overcome your mood disorder. But you *can* learn to spot negative thoughts, see them for what they are and confront them with more realistic ideas.

What can I do?

- Learn the types of negative thinking. Pay attention to your own thoughts and look for this type of thinking.
- Find reasons your negative thoughts are not based on reality (rational response).
- Change your thoughts to something more realistic based on the rational responses.
- If you are seeing a therapist, ask for help with cognitive therapy.
- Keep track of your thoughts and feelings in a journal or calendar.
- Ask friends for help recognizing negative thoughts.

There are many types of negative thoughts. Some include:

1. **Thinking things are all good or all bad:** *My friend didn't agree with me... he hates me.*
2. **Coming to general conclusions based on a few examples:** *I had a bad week at work so I need to quit.*
3. **Believing you know what other people think and feel about you:** *People think I'm stupid.*
4. **Expecting disaster:** *I won't get this job because nothing good ever happens to me.*
5. **Believing everything around you is a reaction to or because of you.** *My spouse is in a bad mood – I must have done something.*
6. **Believing you or those around you should act or feel a certain way:** *I should be able to get over my fears. or People should have more patience.*
7. **Labeling:** *I'm a loser.*

When you spot a negative thought, respond to it as if you were talking to a good friend – tell yourself it isn't true and why. This is your *rational response*. Then form a new thought that is closer to reality. This won't be easy right away. It will take some practice before you're able to spot negative thoughts and form rational responses easily – don't give up even if you're tempted to. Use the chart below to get started.

Recognizing your negative thoughts is part of a treatment called cognitive therapy. It is helpful to work with a therapist, counselor, social worker or other mental health professional who can help you recognize your negative thoughts. A closely related type of therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, helps you work on negative thoughts and then change the behaviors caused by the negative thinking. Both therapies can help treat depression and bipolar disorder.

Negative thought	Rational response	New thought
I'm a failure at everything.	I haven't failed at every single thing I've done.	I'm not always successful but I have some abilities.
I will never feel better.	Never is a long time – I don't know how I'll feel tomorrow.	Even though I feel terrible right now, I won't always feel this way.

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The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading patient-directed national organization focusing on the most prevalent mental illnesses. The organization fosters an environment of understanding about the impact and management of these life-threatening illnesses by providing up-to-date, scientifically-based tools and information written in language the general public can understand. DBSA supports research to promote more timely diagnosis, develop more effective and tolerable treatments and discover a cure. The organization works to ensure that people living with mood disorders are treated equitably.

Assisted by a Scientific Advisory Board comprised of the leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders, DBSA has more than 1,000 peer-run support groups across the country. Over four million people request and receive information and assistance each year. DBSA's mission is to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.

Download this brochure and find important information,
breaking news, chapter connections, advocacy help and much more at
www.DBSAAlliance.org

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We can help.



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