How to Overcome Trying Situations by Changing Your Mind

Carina Beck

ABC CONSULTATIONS

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"You are always free to change your mind and choose a different future, or a different past."
~Richard Bach

If you've ever been frustrated or disappointed in your own thoughts, this guide will help you make some alterations in thinking. Changing your mind can be a challenge, especially when you're in trying situations.

Because you're human, you'll experience struggles from time to time. But when you commit to apply these healthy strategies, you'll discover success comes with controlling what you think. Each section illustrates situations in which you can benefit, simply by changing your mind.
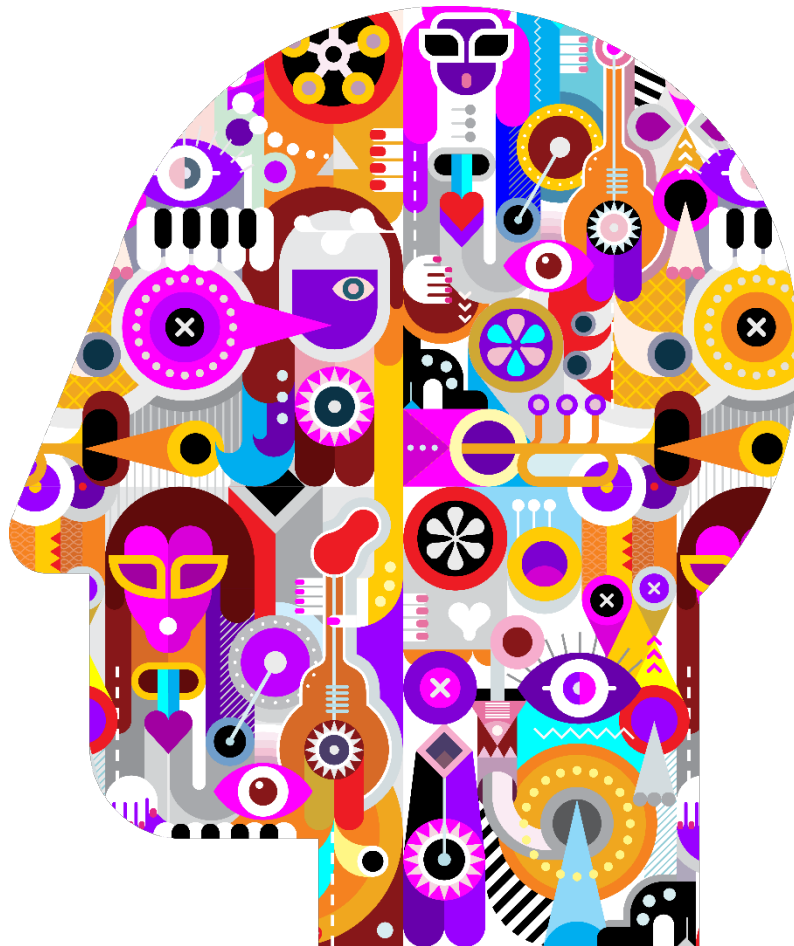
When You Feel Afraid

Fear is one of the strongest emotions you'll ever feel. When you experience fear, your body can go into a state where you either want to fight someone or something or run away from what's triggering your fear. This fight or flight syndrome is a normal response, which happens automatically when your body's autonomic system takes over during a crisis.

Yet, there might be other times when you feel fear and then experience frustration with yourself for feeling it. You might notice others around you don't appear to be afraid and you're a bit vexed about your own emotions. Your emotions may generate fear whenever the source of that fear isn't generating fear in others.

For example, you're on a walk with three other friends. Night is starting to fall, and you still have a half-mile to go to get back to your house. You feel a bit anxious about getting "caught" out after dark, but you're unsure about why you feel this way.

When you feel fear in situations, but believe it's unwarranted, take these steps:

1. **Confront your fear.** Identify that you're feeling fearful. Label it.

2. **Ask questions.** Ask yourself, "Why am I feeling this way? What is the source of these feelings?"

3. **Examine your past.** Perhaps you've had a prior experience where something scary happened to you when you were in a situation like the one, you're in now.

Continuing with the above example, maybe you were walking after dark twenty years ago and someone came up behind you and snatched your purse.

If there's something traumatizing in your past and it's causing you to feel an overabundance of fear in certain situations, you might want to talk to a professional therapist to see if you can get help in alleviating your unwarranted fears.

4. **Be realistic.** When you're in the situation, *do you really seem to be in imminent danger?* A good clue might be looking at those around you to further assess the situation.
If others appear relaxed and seem to be having an enjoyable time, consider the possibility that your fear is misplaced in this instance.

5. **Share your fears.** When you're open about your fears, it truly helps to dissolve them. Tell your friends when you're feeling fearful. They'll reach out to comfort you through a tough situation.

6. **Learn to soothe yourself.** *It helps if you realize that you're in the best position to calm your own thoughts.* Tell yourself you've made it through many things, and you'll make it through the current situation unscathed.

If you conclude there's no real reason to feel afraid, tell yourself it will be okay.

Although you're entitled to your feelings, take the time to explore the reasons for your troubling emotions. Once you determine your feelings may not have a real, believable source, you'll be in a better position to conquer them by controlling your thoughts.

"It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." ~Aristotle

When You're Consumed with Negativity

Some of us, even though we may not know why, are often focused on the negative aspects of life. Do you notice more of the not-so-good elements of your existence rather than focus on the important things happening around you?

Or you might find yourself being negative in certain situations, like only when you're with your brother or your spouse's family. Consider the situation that's triggering your negativity. If you're consumed with it, then you're not noticing the positivity and brightness around you.

Apply these tips when you recognize you're thinking negatively:

1.   **Stay in tune with yourself.** Are you often disagreeing with others or bringing others down by your negative comments? Watch what you're saying to others. Reflect on the reason you might want to bring this negativity.

2.   **Ask yourself, "why."** What are the reasons you're being negative in the situation? Are you a bit envious of your brother because he's doing so well financially? Maybe you didn't really feel like visiting your in-laws so you're directing your negative feelings toward your partner at the moment.

When you figure out whether your negativity is situation-related or maybe because you're just not feeling well this day, you're in a better position to take some steps to control it.
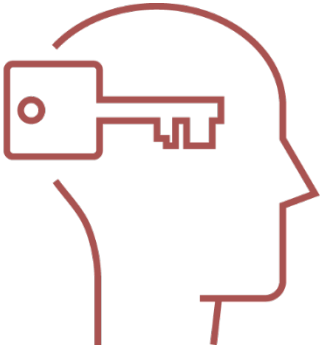
3. **Tell yourself to stop the negativity now.** Although it sounds overly simple, *you're the only one who can truly decide to stop these thoughts.* If it will help, visualize a red octagonal stop sign in your mind's eye. Focus on the stop sign to arrest those negative thoughts.

4. **Recognize.** Rarely does anything positive come from your negativity. Plus, those thoughts stand to make you feel worse about whatever situation you're in.

When you can say to yourself, "My attitude's not helping anything," it shows you recognize the impact of your negativity on yourself and others.

5. **Challenge yourself.** When you're in a situation that typically triggers your negativity, focus on finding the positives. You may be surprised at what you discover.

For example, if you have only tepid feelings about spending time with your in-laws, decide to discover something positive about them next time.

Maybe you share a love for the same type of music, or your mother-in-law loves Marlon Brando movies just like you do. When you challenge yourself to find the positive aspect in a situation, your negativity will dissipate.

Only you have the power to flip your world from darkness to brightness. *Simply by refusing to take the route of negativity, you'll discover the magic of your personal strength.* When you leave the negative behind, you'll discover nothing but positive waiting for you. That's when you know you've taken control of your thoughts in the strongest sense.

"Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens." ~Khalil Gibran

When You Lack Confidence

Although it would be a lot to ask of yourself to be confident in every situation, it's important to feel as self-assured as possible, regardless of whatever's going on around you. Maybe you occasionally notice you lack feelings of confidence in specific types of situations, like when you're in a group of co-workers or when you're with someone you see as having the perfect life.

Regardless of what's taking place at the time, control your feelings of low confidence by:

1.   **Identifying with your strengths.** *It's good to acknowledge your strengths so you can rely on them when you need some extra confidence.*

2.   **Realizing the unique differences among people.** One of your friends might have an expensive car and a fantastic job and you may envy him for those reasons. But why not change your focus? You have a spouse that you love, three kids who adore you, and a comfortable home with a yard that brings you hours of pleasure and replenishment.

Although your existence is quite different from your friend's, you still have your own set of benefits. Even though you see the remarkable things about the lives of others, you still possess the ability to acknowledge your own treasures.

You can feel confident for completely different reasons than your friends do. Their lives have their own special elements, as does yours.

3. **Use journaling.** *Get to the root of what's blocking your confidence by writing about your thoughts.* Include what happened in your day, what you thought, how you felt, and the behaviors you displayed.

Seek self-understanding in your writings. Learn as much about yourself as possible.

4. **Consistently move forward, even if it's a little at a time.** The times you're lacking in confidence may be in conjunction with time periods when you feel your life is stagnant.

When you make this connection, you'll be more likely to keep pushing forward to achieve your goals.

In the process, you may re-discover your self-assuredness and the will to keep excelling so you can rise to the top of your game.

You can bolster your own confidence by accepting the fact your levels of self-assuredness will move up and down over time. However, remain steady on the path of the life you strive for. This ensures your confidence will be consistently there for you.

"To enjoy good health, to bring true happiness to one's family, to bring peace to all, one must first discipline and control one's own mind. If a man can control his mind he can find the way to Enlightenment, and all wisdom and virtue will naturally come to him."
~Buddha

When You Wish to Get a Good Night's Sleep

One of the biggest challenges to controlling your thoughts is when you've just laid down to sleep. Depending on the excitement of the day and the events you've been involved in recently, your thoughts can rob you of a decent night's sleep.

Put these tips into action to control your thoughts and enjoy a good night's sleep:

1. **Allow your thoughts to flood in.** Initially when you lie down, let your thoughts come into your mind. Give them five or ten minutes to just do their thing. They'll likely fizzle out during those moments.

2. **If your mind is active after ten minutes or so, take control.** Tell yourself you want to settle down. Acknowledge your day was full or exciting, but now you want to get calm and go to sleep.

3. **Take four or five deep breaths.** Breathe air in through your nose and release it through your mouth. *When you breathe deeply, it relaxes your body and you'll be more likely to fall asleep quickly.*

4. **Count backwards.** Start at 500 and count backwards to yourself. Rather than fighting against your thoughts, let them flow in and out as you refocus on your counting. Chances are good you'll fall asleep before you get to zero.

But if not, simply start at 500 again and go backwards. Visualizing the numbers in your head will combat your intrusive thoughts.

5. **Sit up and read a book.** *If you've gone through counting 500 backwards three times, you may want to sit up and read a book.* If you are relaxed or tired enough, you'll notice your eyelids starting to get droopy after you read for a few minutes.

As soon as they do, turn out the lights, and repeat your deep breaths and counting.

Fighting your thoughts at bedtime can work against falling asleep. Instead, allow in your thoughts, take some deep breaths, and start counting to take control of your mind. You have the power to attain the good night's sleep you're after.

"Any idea, plan, or purpose may be placed in the mind through repetition of thought."
~Napoleon Hill

When You Want to Be More Productive

Your level of productivity isn't about how much you work, but also about what's going on in your mind. *The level of productivity you achieve is dependent upon how you think.* Your mind can be your best friend, your worst enemy, or somewhere in between when you want to put forth your greatest work effort.

If you want to be more productive, put these strategies into play:

1. **Set a specific goal.** In your mind, tell yourself, "I want to make ten sales calls today," or "I will type a five-page report before I leave today." *Establish a productivity goal for yourself.*

2. **Avoid feeling overwhelmed.** Instead of allowing those feelings of, "I can't do it," or "This is too much to do," refrain from overthinking. Instead, tell yourself, "This is a lot to do, but I am up for the challenge," or "In due time, I'll get this work done."

Changing your thoughts about large projects can make them seem much easier, enabling you to approach them with gusto and get them done.

3. **Acknowledge the progress you've made.** At the end of the day, think about what you achieved. "I completed half of the ten-page report that's not due until next week!"

Resolve to focus on what you've accomplished rather than on what you have yet to do.
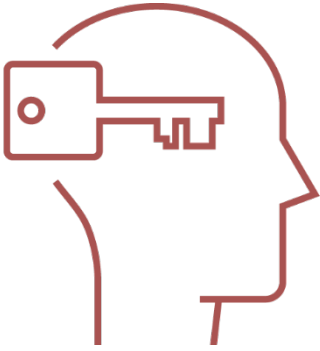
4.   **Block out the negative vibes.** If you dwell on negative thoughts and feelings, you'll only get bogged down. Instead, refuse to let them in and be relentless about charging forward and getting things done.

5. **Practice meditation.** Those who meditate on a regular basis experience many benefits: they live calmer lives, have the confidence to make it through the tough spots, and are less affected by overwhelming situations.

By simply meditating twice a day for 10-30 minutes, you can gain back your power and give 100% to your work.

Achieving the level of productivity, you want is completely up to you. Your mindset and thoughts make all the difference when it comes to accomplishing what you hope to achieve. When you recognize the results you can achieve, it will be easier to make a consistent effort to alter your focus, change your feelings, and become more productive.

"Nobody can change your mind. You must take that responsibility all by yourself."
~Anonymous

When Your Anger is Ruling Your Life

We all feel angry occasionally. Anger is a normal human feeling. However, does your anger seem like it has crept into every corner of your life? Is it taking over?

It may be your family, co-workers, friends, or even yourself that's causing you anger. If this anger is overflowing into other facets of your life, do something about it. *A life filled with anger is a life requiring changes.*

Apply these strategies when you feel angry and wish to change how you feel:

1.   **Localize it.** Spend some "alone-time" thinking about who or what is triggering the anger. Are you angry at a situation or a person? Rather than spreading your anger throughout your life, get it focused so you understand exactly why you're angry.

2. **Acknowledge your lack of control over certain situations and people.** When you acknowledge that you're unable to control some events and other people, you can let it go and focus on moving forward with things you *can* control.

It's true that you can't control what another person says or does. So sometimes, you just need to remind yourself of this to help you better control your anger.

3. **Tell yourself you have the power.** You're the only one who can make the decision to stop your anger. Will it be easy? Probably not. But a big part of being angry is feeling powerless over a situation.

Tell yourself that you have the power to curb your anger. It will make you feel better.

4. **Release it.** It's easier said than done to just "let go" of your anger. But the reality is that if you can begin practicing this technique, *your life will get easier.*

For example, if you're mad at your parents for telling you they're leaving $50,000 to their favorite animal charity instead of to you, accept the situation and move on with your own life.
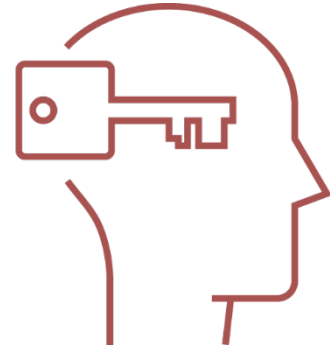
Think of things you can do instead of being angry: be proud of your parents for caring about animals, be awed by their generosity to others, and follow in their footsteps when it comes to being kind to animals.

5. **Change the scenery.** Remove yourself from a situation or people who are triggering your angry feelings. For example, take a walk, go for a bike ride, or go work in your yard.

6. **Focus on yourself.** What are your goals? What do you hope to achieve? Put your emotional energy back into your own life where it belongs. Rejuvenate your spirit and move toward achieving your dreams.

There's no room for anger in a life well-lived. When you promise yourself, you won't be consumed by the poison of anger, you'll become tranquil and more pleased than you ever thought possible.

"Your heart will try to change your mind, but your mind knows what's best for you."
~Sonya Parker

When Determining if You Should End an Unhealthy Relationship

Although you might think you're stuck in a relationship that brings you down, the fact is your mind is what's stuck. You keep thinking the same particulars repeatedly and you've convinced yourself that you're unable to change or end the relationship.

The good news is you can control your thoughts when it comes to trying to figure out how to manage unhealthy relationships. However, it isn't always easy.

To make relationship decisions that serve you well, try this process:

1. **Review the pros of your relationship.** Write down the positive aspects of your relationship. Does your current relationship allow you to enjoy 75% of what you're after in a relationship?

2. **What leads you to believe the relationship is unhealthy?** Also, write down those cons of your relationship. How do your two lists measure up? Are the items on your con list fixable?

If you find yourself feeling afraid of your partner or being concerned about your children, these are red flags to break away from that person or at least seek expert guidance.

3. **Look at the bottom line.** What will you lose if you end the relationship? What will you gain if you choose to stay and work things out? *Refuse to allow sympathy or concerns for your partner to determine your final decision as to whether you should stay or go.*

Although they may love you and you may love them, sometimes love isn't enough.

If your partner is threatening you or constantly making remarks which are damaging to your self-esteem, consider the ultimate results of their behavior.

4. **Remind yourself you're only as trapped as your mind allows you to be.** Situations can always be changed. Regardless of whether you live in the same home, or are just dating, there's a way out for you. It just depends on whether you choose to pursue it.

Never remain in an unhealthy relationship you really want to escape from because of feeling trapped.

Some people use a lack of money as an excuse for staying in a contentious relationship. If this factor concerns you, make a financial exit plan that could work for you.

Use your mind to "un-trap" yourself by changing how you're viewing the situation.
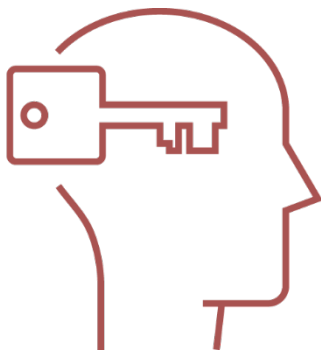
5. **Make an exchange in your thoughts.** You can switch your thinking from, "I'm caught up in this unhealthy relationship," to "I have the power to change this relationship by changing my outlook." Decide to think about creating the positive relationship you want and doing what's necessary to meet this goal, rather than going over and over the negatives of it.

6. **Change your behavior now.** If you're in a troublesome relationship, you can switch how you behave and react. This may allow you to overcome some of the difficulties.

If you normally argue back when your spouse raises their voice to you, stop and listen to what they have to say instead. Make a concerted effort to understand your partner.

7. **Find a neutral person to talk to.** It can help immensely to speak to someone who's completely uninvolved with you and your situation.

- You may want to consider talking to a therapist or counselor who is a neutral party and trained to listen.

- Sometimes it really helps to hear yourself saying aloud what conditions you've been living in, thinking about, and being a part of in a questionable relationship.

- Verbalizing this may help compel you to making the best decision for yourself, whether it's staying in or getting out of the relationship.

Controlling your thought process when it comes to relationships can be quite a challenge. You may have gotten used to how things have been. Or you may simply feel unsure about what to do next. After you identify the pros and cons of remaining in a relationship or leaving it, you can then proceed to the next steps to determine what you should do next. By following these strategies, you'll be able to clarify in your mind what is best for you and your specific situation.

"Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future,
concentrate the mind on the present moment."
~Buddha

When You Want to Feel Comfortable Being Alone

One of the most trying situations for many of us is learning how to be alone. Your mind may interpret spending time alone as, "Nobody wants to be with me," "I must be a loser," or "I feel unsafe when I'm alone."

Yet it's wise for us to get comfortable with solitude, quiet, and aloneness. *We can find peace and time for our solitary pursuits when we're by ourselves.* There are plenty of reasons to get comfortable with being alone.

If you're struggling to cope with being by yourself, employing these strategies will help:

1. **Acknowledge alone time is different.** No one else is present for you to watch or listen to. You have no one to talk to in person. Being alone is in a class all by itself.

2. **It's okay to be alone.** Simply tell yourself that everyone's alone from time to time and there's really nothing unusual about it. *Recognizing and accepting solitude as part of the human condition will help you adjust to the experience.*

3. **Consider being alone as a time to focus on yourself.** Learn to cherish your alone time. It belongs only to you, and you can think or do whatever you like during those times. While you're alone, ask yourself what you hope to achieve within the next six months or year and make exciting plans to move forward toward your dreams.

Another wonderful use for time alone is to take advantage of the time to engage in activities that bring you joy. Perhaps you would like to pursue a new hobby or art. You'll reap happiness, serenity, and contentment from your time alone.

Whatever you decide, even if you just want to take a nap in your alone time, *you'll feel rejuvenated and ready to face the world when you take time just for you.*

You *can* change your thinking about spending time by yourself. One key to a happier life is learning to take advantage of time you have alone to do as you wish.

"The need for change bulldozed a road down the center of my mind."
~Maya Angelou

Summary

You set the pace for exercising the power to control your own thinking. Although you can seek out guidance or assistance from others, you're the one to make the final choice about changing your thinking. You're responsible for everything going on in your head.

Step up to take control and change your thoughts from the negative feelings and beliefs that hold you back to positive thoughts that will serve you well for the rest of your life.

"As a single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk repeatedly. To make a deep mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives." ~Henry David Thoreau