

Part 1 Hints & Tips

In recent articles I've talked about stress and anxiety, loss and bereavement, and the need for control. Yet in my practice there is one issue that presents itself time and time again, the feeling of inadequacy. So many of my clients beat themselves up about not being good enough, or they never feel good enough because they think they should be perfect. Remember, perfection is the happiness thief, whereas not being good enough is more the insidious cousin. Such feelings come to visit as uninvited guests and refuse to leave however unwelcome they are.

So how can we learn to stop these negative emotions and feelings from seeping into our very being?

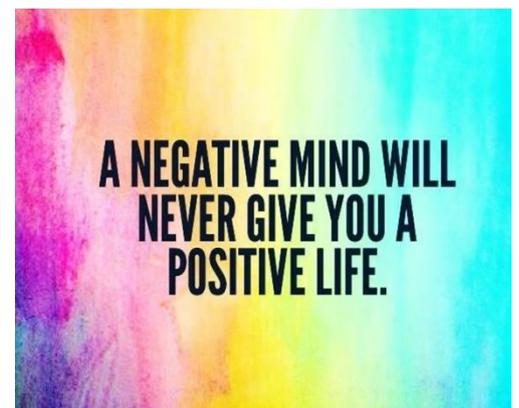
Well one way is to find a great therapist. Yes, just imagine someone who not only really believes in you, and always has your back, but is also available 24 hours a day (stay with me here you doubters). What's more that person is someone you can learn to trust, who you can really like, and if the relationship builds, love, yes really love. What's more you will be able to go to as many sessions as you like. Come on let's keep the imagination flowing. What we have here is a therapist who will build your confidence, self - esteem and help you to become more content, accepting and forgiving of yourself. Yes, folks I may have found for you the golden ticket to the best therapist you have ever met. And all you have to do to meet this therapist is **look in the mirror**.

Because that therapist is You!



As I've written previously, we talk to ourselves more than anyone else in the world. Nevertheless, we don't always talk nicely to 'us', saying things that we would never dream of saying to another person. This self - talk can be harsh, critical, even rude, and it often knocks our confidence and spirit, not to mention dampening down our aspirations, hopes and dreams. So, your new therapist, you, are going to learn to stop the negative chatter, the put downs, the confidence sappers and find a better, nicer way to communicate with yourself. Like any new skill it will take practice, patience, commitment and close attention to detail (I know this is a big ask right now!) but changing the way we think can have a wide ranging impact on our emotions and behaviour as evidenced by much of the neuroscience literature.

Understandably, change is hard for most people because it often means the loss of something, and we don't like to give something up before we know what is going to take its place. And of course the unknown can be scary. So we stay in an unhappy relationship, job, and/or life because it is familiar, and to a degree 'safer' than what may be out there in the anxiety inducing space that is the unknown and unfamiliar. We stay in our comfort zone, even if it's uncomfortable because we don't always realise or visualise what it could be like to step outside. But when it comes to learning to be nicer, more compassionate and forgiving of ourselves, trust me on this one it can only make for a safer, kinder place for us to inhabit.



Never

Most of the time

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Emotional reasoning: You believe something must be true because it 'feels' true. "I feel anxious so I must be in danger." "I feel this is going to go wrong so it will"	<input type="checkbox"/>									
'Shoulds' 'Musts' 'Oughts': Using critical words such as 'should', 'must', or 'ought' puts pressure on ourselves and can make us feel guilty and like we have already failed. If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration because of our expectations. "I should always do my best." "They should have done that for me." "I expected more from them"	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Personalization: Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for other people's behaviour when you are not to blame. "This is all my fault." "I must have done something to upset them." "They did that to me on purpose."	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Unfair comparisons: You interpret events in terms of standards that are unrealistic – for example, you focus primarily on others who do better than you and find yourself inferior in comparison. "She's more successful than I am." "Others did better than I did on the test."	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Catastrophising: Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen. "The holiday will be dreadful." "I will be fired for this mistake." "My celebration is going to be a disaster"	<input type="checkbox"/>									

If you have a score over 5 on any of the above you can now start to challenge that thinking next time you have that distorted thought. You can ask yourself these four questions:

1. What evidence do I have that this thought is true? If I don't have any real evidence or a lot of evidence, how do I know what I am thinking is correct?
2. Could I look at this situation in a different way, what different perspective could I have?
3. What would I tell a friend who thought like this?
4. Is this thought helpful to my wellbeing?

Simply **knowing** that your thinking can be negative and not helpful is the first baby step to feeling more in control of your thoughts and behaviour, and therefore more in control of your life, putting you on the path to restoring your own emotional health.

The second step is gently **challenging** your distorted thoughts with the above four questions. The more you challenge those distorted thoughts the more likely it is that over time you start to replace the negative thoughts with more realistic ones. I call it putting a new lens on your thinking, having a different perspective.

In summary by being more curious, and kind to ourselves we can start to challenge our negative thinking patterns. Through this process we can find a more understanding and compassionate way to think about our thinking and emotions, and therefore ourselves. This is you being your own safe, containing and non-judgemental therapist. **Welcome** to a new world of self-awareness and self-acceptance.

Change your
THOUGHTS
and you
change your
WORLD

Worry Box

Worrying is a normal part of life. We are evolutionarily wired to worry, by being in a constant state of alert our cave dwelling ancestors managed to live longer. But in today's society constant worrying is bad for our health and wellbeing. It distracts us from enjoying the positive things in our life.

One way to stop those ruminating worries is to distinguish between **solvable** worries you can do something about and **unsolvable** worries that are outside of your control. (Headspace.com)

Your solvable worries are those you can act on right away. For instance, if you're concerned about your finances, you can draw up a spreadsheet and a monthly budget to rein in your spending. If it's high cholesterol and your health, you can lay off the fast food, make better shopping choices at the supermarket, and start exercising.

Unsolvable worries are those which are out of your control and so there is not much you can do about them. You can't control the weather for your BBQ, prevent your company deciding to reorganise or restructure, nor control how another person wants to live their life.

By separating out the worries you can do something about, having a plan of action and getting on with it (procrastinating never made a worry go away) you will feel more in charge of the situation and your life, making you feel less anxious.

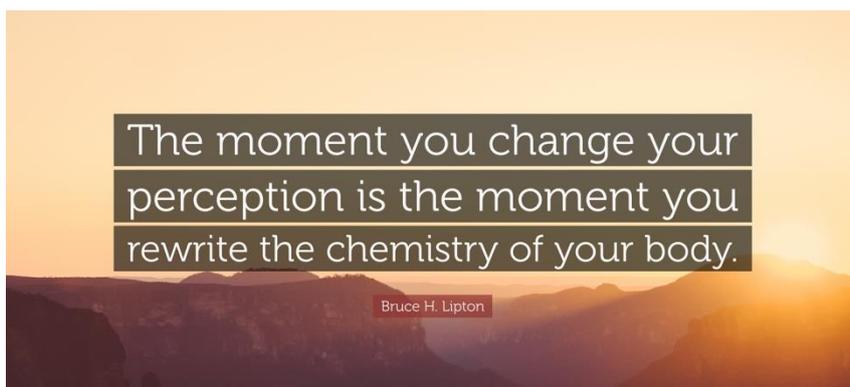
And by realising there are certain things you cannot control, that you are not able to influence or are (big gasp) none of your business, you will let go of those marring thoughts and have more time to focus on improving and enjoying your life in the best way you can.

Silver Lining

As individuals, we've already learned that can get by with much less than we are used to. So, going forward we don't have to complicate our lives with stuff we don't really need. Think about clearing out all the things you don't use or want and enjoying the space that's left behind.

Less possessions mean more energy, flow and space in your surroundings which gives a feeling of more peace and calm in your life!

Quote of the week (Thank you JF!)



Shared Space

This clip makes me smile every time I see it, 41 seconds of pure joy and you dog owners will really love it!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHvExOg4NI0>



Next week:

Next week in part 2 I will look at how you can learn to become an observer of your emotions so you learn to replace emotional reactivity with thoughtful observation and a calmer perspective.