

Handout

Learning Self-Control

1. Identify your negative thoughts when they first occur. Pay attention to how your body feels (for example, tenseness, fidgeting, anger, headaches).
2. Use one of the following constructive thoughts to replace the negative thought.
 - STOP the negative thought—“think STOP.”
 - Dispute the negative thought;
 - Substitute a positive thought or self-praise;
 - Substitute a coping or calming thought;
 - Use humor;
 - Think about a future time when this will not be a problem.

Non-constructive Thoughts

“Jack never helps. All I get is work, work, work. I fix the food, take care of the house, the kids, everything. Boy, would I like to throw this at him!”

“After working 10 hours, I’m tired and frustrated. When I get home, all I get are hassles. The kids interrupt and yell, and Joan criticizes me. This place is a mess. What does she do all day? I feel like screaming or walking out of here.”

Constructive Thoughts

I’d better watch it and calm down before I do something I’ll regret. What I need is help. Maybe if I ask Jack in a nice way, he’ll give me some help. That’s the best way. Then maybe I can have a relaxing bath.”

“Take it easy now. Take a few breaths. What I really need is a few minutes of peace to relax and read the paper. Maybe if I ask Joan nicely to play with the kids while I read, then I could give her a break and play with the kids later. She needs a rest too. That’s the most helpful way. I can already feel myself relaxing.”

“I can handle this. I can stay in control. “She’s just testing the limits. My job is to stay calm and help her learn better ways”.