

Thinking Strategies



Strategy 1: Consider the Evidence

If you find yourself thinking negatively about an event or situation, ask yourself: What evidence do I have that this is actually true or going to happen? Chances are, you don't have any, and you're worrying without good reason. Ben wondered if Bennette had a nasty reason for wanting to meet him in the park. Was there any evidence she was going to chase him with a cricket bat? None he could think of.



Strategy 2: Is There an Alternative Explanation?

If you have it in your head that an event happened because of something you did or didn't do, ask yourself: is there an alternative to that explanation? Ben considered some other reasons Bennette may have wanted to meet him: perhaps to kiss and get back together, or perhaps to return his library card.



Strategy 3: What Would You Say to a Friend Who is Thinking Like That?

It is the easiest thing in the world to call yourself unpleasant names when you make a mistake. But as we've learned, unhelpful and negative self-talk can be really harmful and discouraging. So, if you find yourself in a situation like Ben's, where he was tempted to call himself an idiot for ruining his white clothes, act like your own best friend, and say something helpful like, 'Chill out. It was a mistake, you didn't do it on purpose.'



Strategy 4: What is the Likelihood?

Again, it is easy to imagine the worst when something important to you remains unresolved. In these situations where your imagination is tempted to run wild with negative possibilities, ask yourself 'What is the likelihood?' When Ben heard the fire engine sirens, he immediately thought it was his house burning down. But was that likely? No. When you think rationally and objectively, you can reduce your stress and help yourself feel a bit better.

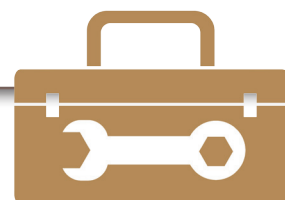


Strategy 5: Is There a More Helpful Way to Think About This?

This is a really valuable thinking skill to learn. This isn't about glass-half-full or looking on the bright side - it is about looking at an event (even one with a less than ideal outcome) and using your brain to work out if there is a way to think about it that isn't just going to make you feel miserable. Ben received a huge credit card bill in the mail and became really stressed. Was that going to make the bill disappear? No. Life is about making mistakes - they are how we learn! And a big part of learning is looking at everything that happens, good and bad, in helpful ways. When Ben thought helpfully that he would simply have to create and stick to a budget in the future, he felt a lot better.



If you find that you are talking unhelpfully to yourself a lot, and that these strategies aren't being as helpful as you'd like, don't wait for things to get better by themselves. Talk to a friend, school counsellor, GP, or other trusted adults. You should also consider:



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