

FEELINGS MATTER: ADJUSTING OUR PERSPECTIVE AND INNER DIALOGUE



We can feel spring coming in and with it we find ourselves feeling the need or capacity for change. Winter can leave us feeling sad, anxious, and unmotivated. As we move into this new season, it can be easier for us to see the positives in our lives and gain a sense of renewal.

Winter can drain us of our energy and positivity, leaving us to feel like we are simply trudging through the endless snowstorm. As the sun begins to shine, the snow begins to melt, and the buds on the trees emerge, we can begin to see a path toward positivity and optimism that can be hard to find throughout the dreary winter. This is a time that we can capitalize on the positivity and hopefulness of spring to build more positive thought patterns.

While there are things that we cannot control in our lives, there are also many things that we can control. We can spend our lives worrying about the things outside of our control and easily forget the things that are within our ability to manage. Those who live with anxiety know all too well, that things we cannot control can often take over our thoughts and feelings. We cannot control the weather, other people's actions, or the things that happen in the world around us.

We can make space to consider our feelings, using this awareness to adjust our thought patterns and inner-dialogue as we work to keep moving forward in our lives and wellness journey.



*Iowa Family
Counseling*

409 B AVE
KALONA, IA 52257
641.777.2774
IOWAFAMILYCOUNSELING.COM

**SUPPORTING CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES WITH
GENUINE, EMPATHETIC,
AND COLLABORATIVE
MENTAL HEALTHCARE
ACROSS RURAL IOWA**

FOLLOW US:
@IOWAFAMILYCOUNSELING

Recognizing and Making Space for Our Feelings

There have been so many things in the past year that have been out of our control and it has been hard for everyone. Our lives have shifted in large and small ways. We have had to cope with feelings of anxiety, anger, frustration, grief, and loss. These are feelings. It is okay to feel these feelings. We will feel both positive and negative emotions in our lives and we are entitled to all of our feelings.

We may not be able to control our circumstances or even our emotions, but we can work to make space for our all of our feelings. Far too often, we place judgment on whatever we may be feeling. We see our feelings as understandable and valid or overblown and unwarranted. Society has given us the notion that feelings can be right or wrong. This is simply not true. All humans have a variety of emotions at any given time. When we adjust our mindset to recognize that our feelings are just our feelings, we are better able to make space to work with our full range of feelings.

Feelings are like clouds in the sky. They are there, we see them, but they will also move on and change. Feelings are neither right nor wrong- they are a part of life. When we allow ourselves to look at our feelings without judgment, we take away some of the control that they have over us. We also begin to be able to work with our emotions to improve our overall well-being.

When we are Mindful of our Positive Feelings, We Can Amplify Them

When we are aware of our feelings, we can work with them. When we become mindful of positive feelings, we can amplify them. Taking time to notice things that bring us comfort, joy, and gratitude can immediately boost our mood, but we can also use this skill of noticing in times where negative feelings are threatening to take over our thoughts. With practice and mindfulness, we can take time to notice the good things in our everyday lives.

We can take time to notice physical comforts like the feeling of a favorite shirt or blanket, but we can also note the pleasantness of our surroundings. Maybe we appreciate the gentle spring breeze or the birds chirping outside. We can also try to sit in the warmth of positive emotions like love, connection, and gratitude.

NOTICING THE GOOD



When we learn to notice and appreciate the small joys and comforts in life, we can hold onto those good feelings and help them grow.

WE CAN TAKE TIME TO NOTICE PHYSICAL COMFORTS:

- The feel of a favorite shirt
- The way cozy socks feel like a hug to our feet
- The warm kisses of sunshine on our faces
- The comfort of a favorite meal
- The cleansing refreshment of a shower after a long day
- The softness of our favorite spot on the couch



WE CAN TAKE NOTE OF OUR SURROUNDINGS:

- The trees beginning to bud
- The bright sun in the sky
- A fresh breeze on our skin
- The things about your house that make you feel at home
- Times of quiet peace

WE CAN PAUSE TO NOTICE OUR POSITIVE EMOTIONS:

- The connection of someone that understands you
- The pride of accomplishment
- The love we have for our family
- The warmth of feeling gratitude
- The peace of a quiet mind



With practice, we can get better at focusing our thoughts on the positives we see around us.



Noticing and Adjusting the Way that We Talk to Ourselves

When we are more aware of our feelings, we may also notice the way that we talk to ourselves. Instead of beating ourselves up, we can practice talking to ourselves as you would talk to a close friend or a child. It can be easy for us to overthink or doubt our actions and our thoughts, which can lead us to be pretty unkind to ourselves. When we pause to notice the voice in our head, we can make adjustments to the words and tone that we are using.

Sometimes it can be hard to find the words we need to feel encouraged, comforted, or inspired. Luckily, there are many websites, bloggers, and social media influencers that specialize in offering ideas, words, and quotes. It can be helpful to write down, screenshot, or share quotes that really resonate with you. These can be put on a post-it on your mirror or anywhere that your eyes are likely to catch them. Reading these messages can be truly uplifting and saying them aloud can amplify this even more.

Self Affirmations

I am worth all the love I receive.

I am a beautiful creation.

I am smart and resourceful.

I can do great things.

I am going to be successful.

I do my best.



When we recognize our negative emotions, we can make adjustments to meet our needs.

We will feel negative emotions and that is okay. It is important for us to notice these feelings too. We might notice that we are feeling anxious, overwhelmed, sad, angry, or just not like ourselves. When we put a name to our feelings, we are more equipped to deal with them in healthy and effective ways and we can communicate our needs more clearly with others. We can make adjustments in order to meet our current emotional needs.

- We can accept the negative emotions and try to recognize that they will not last. It is okay to say, "I am just having a hard day."
- We can make a conscious effort to focus on positive feelings.
- We can evaluate our needs and take action to implement appropriate and healthy self-care actions.
- We can adjust our expectations. It is okay to let things go. We can let commitments go for a bit, change our priorities, or understand that things won't be perfect right now.
- We can ask for help. We can talk to friends, family, counselors, spiritual leaders, or therapists. We can ask for help from spouses or partners to lighten our load and allow us the space that we need to care for ourselves.

Negative emotions are natural. We cannot live our lives without experiencing difficult times. When we give ourselves permission to feel the spectrum of emotions, we also can give ourselves permission to care for ourselves. We can make the adjustments that we need to keep going.

Offer Yourself Encouraging Words

There are also times when things aren't going smoothly that we need encouragement. Again, we can find it hard to find the right words. We can get started by having some go-to phrases ready and practiced. The more we say these words, the more natural it becomes:

When you lose your patience:

It's okay. There is a lot going on and you are doing your best.

When you are scared of failing:

You can do this! You will make it through.

When you are not feeling confident:

I can do amazing things!

When you are feeling inadequate:

I am doing a great job, even with all of the challenges.

When you are just struggling:

It sucks right now, but I keep going!

There are hard times in life. There are really hard times in life. We make mistakes, we screw things up, but we are still good people who are trying to do our best. You are a person and you matter. We may not be able to control everything in our lives, but we can control how we speak to ourselves.



References:

Berry, W. (2015, June 27). Acceptance: It Isn't What You Think. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-second-noble-truth/201506/acceptance-it-isnt-what-you-think>

Downs, R. C. (2020). The feel good effect: Reclaim your wellness by finding small shifts that create big change. Emeryville, CA: Ten Speed Press.

Kim, J. (2020, August 17). The Secret to Mastering Acceptance. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/valley-girl-brain/202008/the-secret-mastering-acceptance>



Reframing Negative Thoughts

Reframing negative thoughts is another strategy that we can use to change the way that we talk to ourselves. When we talk about reframing our thoughts, we mean that we notice our negative thoughts and then try to look at them through a different perspective or frame. When we notice that we are speaking to ourselves with unkind words we can take a moment to pause, breathe, and try to reframe our thoughts. This can be very difficult to do and it might not be possible to feel the benefits of our kind words, but it is still worth trying. With practice, we can build a more positive self-talk habit.

Negative Thought: This is terrible

Reframed: *This is terrible, but I will make it through.*

Negative Thought: *This is never going to end*

Reframed: *One more (hour, day, week, year.)*

Negative Thought: *It is never going to get better*

Reframed: *It can only get better from here.*

Negative Thought: *This was an awful day*

Reframed: *Yes, it was awful, but you made it.*

Reframing our thinking takes mindfulness and practice. Noticing when we are falling into negative thought patterns is the first step to adjusting the way that we talk to ourselves. Writing the positive responses, reading them routinely, and saying them out loud can all help to build a habit of positive thinking.

Feelings Matter

The way that we talk to ourselves matters. Our relationship with ourselves is what matters the most. When we notice negative thoughts or self-talk, we can work to make adjustments. We can speak these words silently, aloud, or write them out. The more you say them, the more you will believe them. The more you practice self-kindness, the easier it will be. Small adjustments in the way that we talk to ourselves can lead to big changes.

