

CONCERN[®] Services

We're More Than An EAP...

Our Goal is to *Help People Live Better & Help People Work Better.*

The following information from the **CONCERN LifeHub™** Service is intended to help you accomplish that goal and remind you that, as your Employee Assistance Program, we are here for you and your family. Visit us on-line at www.concernservices.com or call (513) 891-1627 / (800) 642-9794 for no-charge, confidential assistance.

Improve your Mood by Changing your Thoughts

"I think you're imagining things."

"It's all in your head."

"That's not how it happened!"

We've all heard or said things like this. One person's viewpoint of a situation can be very different from another person's. Often you are not even aware that you may have patterns of thinking or "automatic reactions" to things that make you feel bad.



For many years, psychologists have been talking about how your thoughts affect or even create your feelings. What does that mean exactly? It means that certain ways of thinking can cause us to feel upset, unhappy or stressed. By understanding more about how you think, you can learn to think more positively and reduce your level of stress. Here are some common ways of thinking that can cause you to feel stressed and unhappy.

- **Filtering:** This means looking at only one part of a situation and leaping to a conclusion based only on that. It usually involves taking the negative details of a situation and magnifying them. For example, you come home from work and the kitchen sink is full of dishes and your partner is outside playing with the children. You could choose to focus on the dirty kitchen and feel angry, or you could choose to focus on your children having a good time and feel happy about your family.
- **Black and White Thinking:** Many people see things as either bad or good with no middle ground. However, in real life some things might just be "ok". Let yourself be fine with some things that are just average. If you don't allow yourself to "bend", you may wear down to the point where you "break".
- **Jumping to Conclusions and Expecting Catastrophes:** Just because something a little bad happens doesn't mean that the world is going to end. Try to look at more than one piece of evidence or look for the other side of the story before coming to a negative conclusion about something.
- **Mind Reading:** How many times have you thought you knew what someone was thinking and then reacted based on that, versus waiting to hear what they "really" had to say? "Mind reading" can cause you to become upset about something when you don't need to. Ask, don't assume. Wait and listen to the whole story.
- **Taking Everything Personally:** Many things happen around you that don't really have anything to do with you. When things go wrong, try hard not to take it personally. When you take the time to think about it, you usually realize later that it really did not have anything to do with you.
- **Believing you have all of the control or none of the control:** While none of us has total control over what goes on around us, neither are we helpless victims of fate. Try to take a realistic look at what you really have control over (like your thoughts, feelings and actions) and what you don't.
- **Believing that what you feel must be true:** Many people believe that what they feel must be true. For example, if you feel stupid, you must be stupid. Your feelings come from your thoughts. You can learn to be aware of and have control over your patterns of thinking.
- **Believing that others will change because you want them to:** While you can encourage someone to take better care of themselves or stop smoking, whether or not they do it is up to them.
- **Blaming others for our own thoughts, feelings or choices:** Many times it's very easy to try to blame someone else for something that is within your control. For example, blaming your friend for making you angry. But your thoughts, feelings and choices are your responsibility.

By avoiding some of the thinking described above, we can be much more productive at work and at home. The time you spend worrying needlessly about things beyond your control or imagined problems is time wasted, not to mention the stress it causes. By being aware of how you think, you can challenge yourself to look at situations differently and be more relaxed.