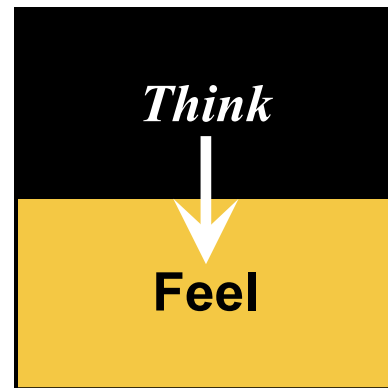# Changing Thoughts

What does "Changing Thoughts" mean?

- First you identify thoughts you had just before feeling bad

- Then you work on changing that thought to something that is more helpful

Think

Feel

Changing thoughts

How can "Changing Thoughts" help?

- Changing your thoughts about tinnitus can help you change the way you feel about it

When can I use "Changing Thoughts"?

- Any time you feel tension or stress when you think about your tinnitus

Thoughts Affect Feelings

What you *think* affects how you *feel*. For example, imagine you are expecting guests to come to your house for dinner and they don't show up on time. The thoughts you have about your guests being late will affect how you feel (your emotions). If you think "it's rude to be late," then you might get *angry*. If you think "it's nice to have extra time to clean up," then you may feel *relieved*. If you think "they could have been in an accident," then you might become *worried*. In this example, the event is the same, but your thoughts about the event are different. Sometimes the way you feel is caused by the *thoughts* about the event, not the event itself.

What thoughts do you have about your tinnitus? When you think about tinnitus, how do you feel?

Feelings Affect Health

What you think affects how you feel, and your feelings affect your health. Stress and negative emotions can lead to many health problems.[2] In times of stress our brains release hormones into our bodies. These hormones increase heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension. The changes caused by these hormones help us react to emergencies. However, if our brains release these hormones too

often it is bad for our health. People who are stressed for a long time may be more likely to get colds, heart disease, and other health problems. This is why it is so important to learn how to change your thoughts that cause negative feelings.
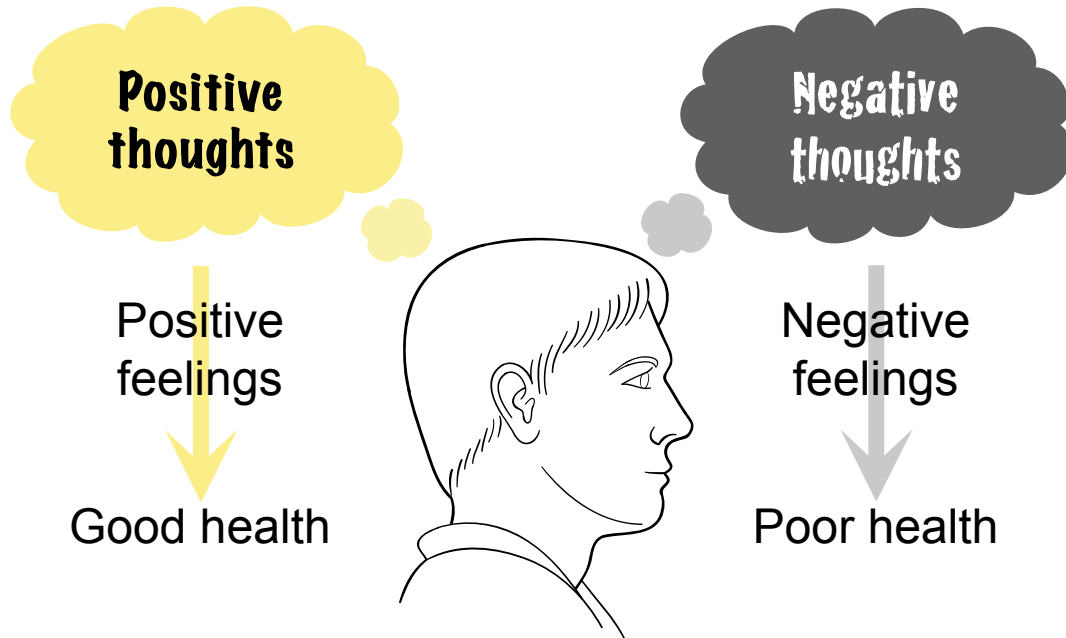
Thought Errors

Sometimes people get in the habit of having thoughts that are not helpful. Thoughts that are not helpful or unhealthy are called "thought errors." You may feel bad or get upset out of habit and find out later that the reason you got upset was your own "thought error."[11]

All people make thought errors from time to time. Many people make thought errors that cause them to feel sad or upset. If you are aware of the most common thought errors, you can catch yourself and correct your thinking. Read the list of thought errors below. Think about which ones are familiar to you.[11] Remember: thought errors are very common.

Twelve Common Thought Errors:

1   **All-or-nothing thinking:** When you see things in only two categories such as black or white.

Example: You see yourself as a failure if you are not perfect.

Example: "Nothing I ever do is right."

Tinnitus example: "If my tinnitus is loud when I wake up in the morning I know I will have a bad day."

Corrected thought: "I'm learning ways to have a good day even when my tinnitus is loud."

My example: _____

2   **Over-simplifying:** When you see one bad event as a pattern that never changes.

Example: You get on the wrong train one time and think, "I'll never learn how to use the subway."

Tinnitus example: "I was awake all night from my tinnitus. This will happen every night."

Corrected thought: "Last night my tinnitus kept me awake, but most nights I eventually fall asleep."

My example: _____

3   **Focusing on wrong details:** When you pick out a single detail and focus on it. You don't think about other more positive details.

Example: "I got a 60% on my math homework. I'm a terrible student."

Tinnitus example: "My tinnitus made it hard to enjoy dinner with a friend."

Corrected thought: "My tinnitus was really loud at dinner. However, it was great to see my friend again and to catch up."

My example: _____

4   Jumping to conclusions: When you think an event was unpleasant even though there are no facts to support that. You might assume that you know what someone else is thinking or assume things will turn out badly.

Example: "If I go to the party then I won't know anyone and will not have fun."

Tinnitus example: "My tinnitus kept me awake last night. The next day I met a friend for coffee. I was really tired and didn't talk much. I'll bet he thought I was boring."

Corrected thought: "It was difficult to be so tired all day. I told my friend about my tinnitus keeping me awake. He was very supportive."

My example: _____

5   Over-estimating: When you think things are more important than they really are (such as your goof-up or someone else's success).

Example: "She turned me down when I asked her to go on a date with me. I don't know how to talk to women. I'll be alone forever."

Tinnitus example: "My tinnitus makes me moody. No one wants to be around me."

Corrected thought: "Sometimes I'm moody and other times I am in a great mood. I have friends who know me and understand me."

My example: _____

6   Under-estimating: When you think things are less important than they really are (such as your success or someone else's faults).

Example: "I know I got a 95% on the test but I could have done better."

Tinnitus example: "I know I learned how to get to sleep even though my tinnitus is loud. I also started using soothing sound for my tinnitus at work. Even so, I'll never learn to deal with my tinnitus."

Corrected thought: "I can deal with my tinnitus by making small changes. It may not be gone, but I don't notice my tinnitus as often."

My example: _____

7   Assuming the worst: When you think something is much worse than it really is.

Example: A woman who got a low grade on a quiz thinks it's the end of her college career."

Tinnitus example: "I'm going to become deaf from my tinnitus."

Corrected thought: "My doctor said tinnitus won't make me deaf. It just feels strange to hear this ringing in my ears all the time and not know why."

My example: _____

8   Emotional thoughts: When you think that your emotions show the way things really are. You might think, "I feel it, so it must be true."

Example: "I feel like I'm the only one who cleans up around here so you must not be helping."

Tinnitus example: "I feel like no one knows what I am going through with my tinnitus. I feel all alone."

Corrected thought: "People know what I am going through when I explain tinnitus to them.

My example: _____

9   "Should" statements: When you say "should" and "shouldn't" to try to get yourself to do hard tasks. These statements tend to make you feel guilty. Also included are statements with the words "must" and "ought."

Example: "I should eat healthier and stop eating food I like."

Tinnitus example: "I should not have to deal with tinnitus during the best years of my life."

Corrected thought: "Tinnitus isn't what I expected when I retired, but I can deal with it."

My example: _____

10 Labeling: Attaching a bad label to yourself or others.

Example: "He lost his keys so he's stupid."

Tinnitus example: "I can't deal with my tinnitus so I'm a weak person."

Corrected thought: "Sometimes it's hard to deal with my tinnitus. I do my best to stay healthy and active. I practice methods for managing my reactions to tinnitus from the workbook. However, sometimes the tinnitus still bothers me. That is normal."

My example: _____

11 Making Things Personal: You see yourself as the cause of some negative event when you are not responsible. You ignore other details.

Example: "My doctor was not nice to me because I was sick."

Tinnitus example: "My tinnitus made it hard for me to enjoy the picnic. I caused everyone else to have a bad time, too."

Corrected thought: "My tinnitus made it hard for me to enjoy the picnic. No one can have fun all of the time."

My example: _____

12 Blaming: You blame others for your problems. You may also blame yourself for other people's problems.

Example: "I didn't get the job because you didn't call to give me a pep-talk before my meeting."

Tinnitus example: "My tinnitus wouldn't be a problem if my wife was more supportive."

Corrected thought: "It would be helpful if my wife was more supportive. Either way I would have to work at dealing with my tinnitus."

My example: _____