

## CHANGING COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS INTO CLEAR THINKING

The following 5 steps offer a means to change cognitive distortions and automatic reactions into clear thinking and conscious responses.

1. Stop: Before your thoughts create the worst possible scenerio and your body's stress reaction escalates, pause. Be still.
2. Breathe: This will bring your attention into the present moment. This will also release physical tension and decrease your body's stress reaction.
3. Be Mindfull: With your breath as your mind's foundation, observe your thoughts. Observe your physical sensations and feelings. Be open, accepting and non-judging.
4. Reflect: Once you have broken the pattem of automatic reactions, you can focus your attention in a conscious and constructive manner. The following questions may be helpful:
  - What is happening here?
  - Why am I reacting this way?
  - What are my automatic thoughts?
  - Am I exaggerating the situation with negative thinking?
  - Can I be more clear or constructive in my thinking?
  - Is there a constructive or positive way to frame this situation?
  - What is my intuition telling me?
  - What is my heart telling me?
  - What is most important to me?
  - What are my options?
5. Choose: Instead of automatically reacting, you can make a conscious and constructive choice.



## Change Your Mind

### **Automatic Thinking Habits that Increase Stress**

1. All or nothing thinking  
You assess people and/or situations to be black and white, all good or all bad.
2. Focus exclusively on the negative or "The cup is half empty"  
You place your attention on what is negative, unwanted or unpleasant.  
Water the weeds.
3. Discount the positive  
You reject or diminish positive experiences.
4. Jump to conclusions  
You conclude the worst when there is no evidence to support your judgement.
  - a. Mind/emotion reading  
You assume someone is reacting negatively to you without checking it out.
  - b. Fortune telling  
You assume things will turn out poorly.

### **Conscious Choices that Decrease Stress**

1. Open to the whole spectrum  
Rarely are things in life all good or all bad. You are sensitive to the whole picture, with its many shades of gray.
2. See the whole picture  
You keep a negative event, quality or problem in context.
3. Affirm the positive  
You fully acknowledge and let yourself be nourished by the good things that happen.  
Water the seeds of joy.
4. Remain open  
You gather information and are open to the process.
  - a. Seek clarification  
You check out your impressions.
  - b. Live in the present and be open to the outcome  
You address the situation in the present and refrain from predicting the future. None of us know what tomorrow may bring.