

Stop Self-Sabotaging

A 5-Day Mini-Program
to Challenge Your
Thought Patterns

Identify the thoughts that keep
derailing you

Replace your faulty thoughts with
more accurate and rational thoughts

Let your thinking work for you
rather than against you

Your Guide to #StopSelfSabotaging

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Is it the end or the beginning?

Introduction

Hi, I'm Kimberly. As a Therapist and a Lifestyle & Creativity Coach, I work with people who want to make changes in their lives but struggle with the process. They know there's an easier way to **do** life, but find that they keep repeating the same patterns and stumbling over the same obstacles.

Can you relate?

Are you frustrated and discouraged with your inability to stay motivated and stick with changes long enough to see real results?

Maybe the problem isn't so much a behavioral problem, but a problem with the thoughts and beliefs that are driving your behaviors. Your beliefs are powerful and influence your behavior in ways in which you may not be consciously aware.

I can help you access those limiting beliefs. I work with clients from the inside out by shifting beliefs first so that behavioral change becomes much easier.



"I know what to do, so why don't I do it?"

This is something I hear **all the time**—usually it's attributed to lack of motivation, but the reality is that it's often due to dysfunctional thinking. Dysfunctional thinking messes with our good intentions and sets us up for failure...and it's a pattern that repeats itself again and again.

How does this happen?

Thoughts occur as we interpret the events and circumstances around us. The problem is that we tend to believe our thoughts even though they're not necessarily accurate.

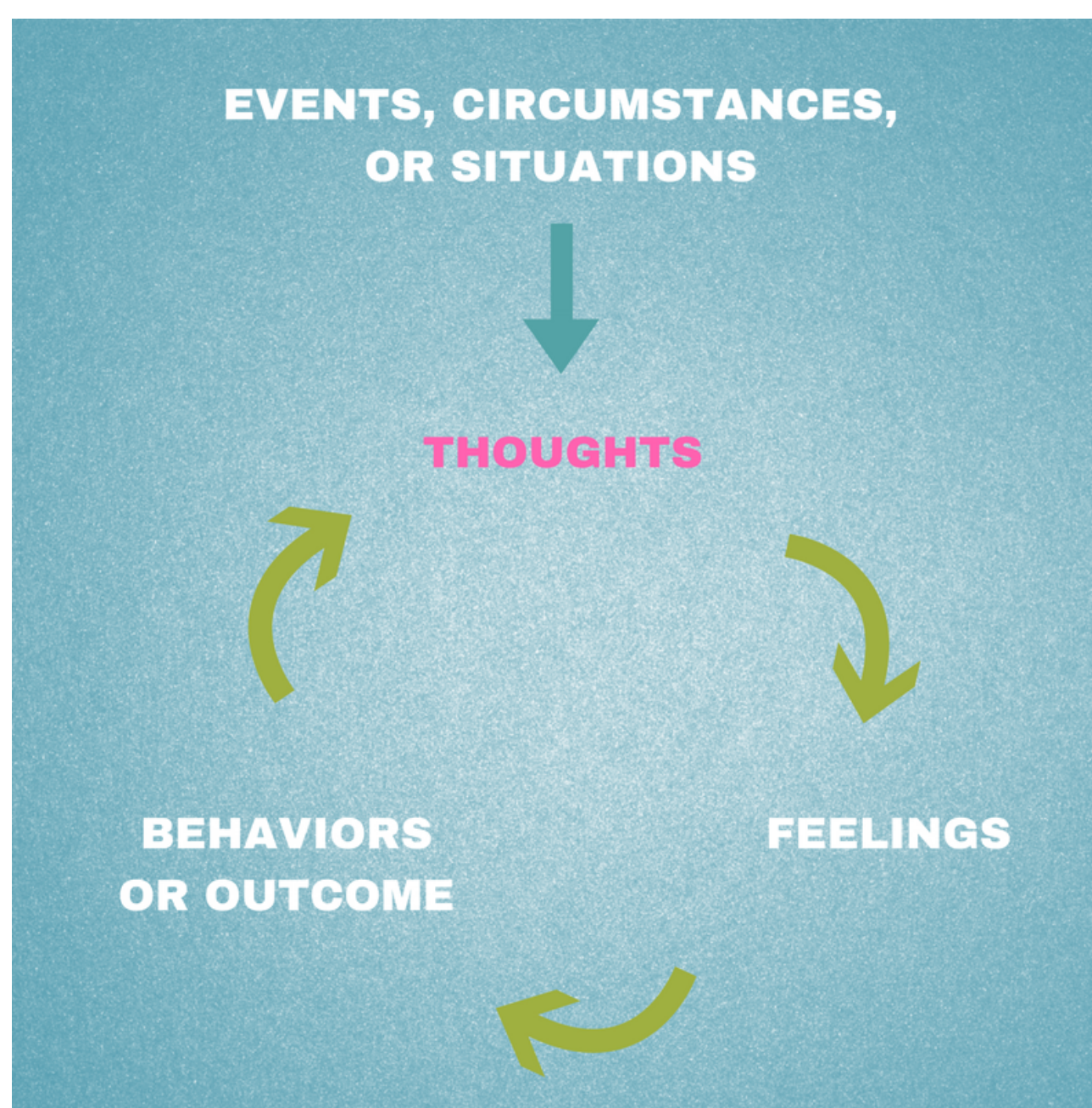
Believing our inaccurate thoughts leads to negative feelings and non-productive or even destructive behaviors.

In this guide I am going to be sharing a lot about how our thoughts can totally trip us up. We all like to believe that we take action based on a rational decision making process and an accurate perception of reality, but is that really true?

Nope. Thoughts are squirrel-y. Thoughts can be mundane, complex, repetitive, fantastical, arbitrary, and frequently illogical.

Each of us has negative thought patterns that we habitually engage in of which we are generally not aware. Since these thoughts are pretty compelling, we tend not to challenge them and simply go where the thought takes us—that is to feelings and actions based on that particular thought.

Here's the cycle:



- Events, circumstances, or situations are things that we have varying degrees of control over, but frequently we feel like things/life/sh*t happens to us.
- These situations trigger a thought or multiple thoughts. Thoughts tend to come into our heads unbidden. Once the thought is present, we consciously or unconsciously choose whether or not to believe the thought or thoughts associated with the event.
- The thoughts we choose (again consciously or unconsciously) cause us to feel and act a certain way.

Have you heard of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)? It's one of the most popular therapeutic approaches because of its proven effectiveness. CBT is based on the idea that by challenging our negative thought patterns we can alter both our undesirable moods and unwanted behavior patterns .

Pretty powerful stuff!

CBT calls these negative thought patterns "cognitive distortions". In the next five days, you will be working with some of the more common cognitive distortions or faulty thinking patterns.

Day 1

All-or-Nothing Thinking and Overgeneralizations

All-or-nothing thinking and overgeneralizing are two of the most common cognitive distortions:

- **All-or-nothing thinking** occurs when we view things in extremes. Something is either perfect or an utter failure. Molehills become mountains. Babies get thrown out with the bathwater. There is no happy medium here.

Examples:

"Well, I already ate 3 cookies, I may as well finish the bag."

"This isn't a good week to start exercising. I have so much going on."

"If I'm not going to win, I'm not going to try."

- **Overgeneralizations** occur when we come to an overarching conclusion based on one incident or one piece of evidence. Frequently the words "always" or "never" are involved.

Examples:

"I never have enough time to workout."

"I have no control around food."

"I'm always running behind."

"Meditation doesn't work for me."

When we recognize how we use these extreme and inaccurate ways of thinking, it becomes very clear why they throw us off of our game.

The antidote to all dysfunctional thought processes is awareness. We need to be aware enough to question the thought and ask ourselves, "is this really true?"

So, that's what we're going to be practicing over the next 5 days—thought awareness and questioning. Are you ready?

Journal Work 1:

Awareness

Overgeneralization and all-or-nothing thinking are super common thought patterns and all of us fall into their trap occasionally. I want you to think about your own history of self-sabotage. When have you used these faulty thought processes?

- **Think of 3 examples from your own life (the more recent, the better) when you engaged in all-or-nothing thinking. Write them down.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- **Now consider 3 examples of recent overgeneralizations you have made. Write them down.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Awareness is the first step. Try to pay attention to your thoughts over the next few days and see if you can "catch yourself" in these faulty thought patterns. When you do, simply acknowledge it "*I'm thinking in all-or-nothing terms*" or "*I am overgeneralizing right now*".

Day 2

Focusing on the Negative and Discounting the Positive

Focusing on the negative and discounting the positive are kind of flip sides of the same coin and frequently co-exist:

- **Focusing on the negative** occurs when we give more weight to the perceived negatives in our lives versus the positives. It's like we are walking around looking for the negative and then shining a big beam of light on it making it stand out even more.
- **Discounting the positive** occurs when we minimize the positive aspects of our lives. We downplay the positives by suggesting that they are not enough or don't really count.

Examples:

"I know that almost everyone said they really liked my presentation, but that one guy's negative comment just sticks with me."

"My plan was to go for a walk every night after work. I missed both Tuesday and Friday—I'm so disappointed in myself."

"I've been so consistent with my diet the past 2 weeks and my energy is up for sure, but the scale isn't budging. I feel like this is pointless."

When we discount the positive and emphasize the negative, we are looking at the world from a skewed perspective. When these faulty thinking patterns are directed towards ourselves, we end up being highly self-critical and beating ourselves up.

Journal Work 2: Awareness

Now it is time to direct your awareness toward the ways in which you emphasize the negative and down-play the positive. How are you using these faulty thought processes?

- **Give 3 examples from your own life when you have discounted the positive and focused on the negative. Write them down.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Remember that awareness is the first step. You cannot do any work on your self-sabotaging thoughts until you become aware of them. Notice today any small or big ways that you might be using these thought patterns. Again simply acknowledge—non-judgmentally, please!—when you recognize that you are highlighting the negative and brushing aside the positive.

Day 3

Should Statements

How often do you find yourself upset when things are not as they "should" be? Whenever you use the word "should" you are in a state of resistance rather than acceptance. Essentially, you are arguing with reality.

- **Should statements** reflect our internal and external expectations. Whenever we compare our circumstances to what we believe they "should" be, we experience disappointment, resentment, and dissatisfaction.

Examples:

"I should be happy."

"I should be making a 6-figure income."

"I am 40 years old, I should know what I want to be when I grow up!"

"I shouldn't have to work so hard to lose weight."

Have you ever heard the phrase "don't should on yourself?" I think it's fitting because "shoulding" really is a sh*tty way to treat yourself. It's extremely judgmental and inherently self-sabotaging.

Some of us use this faulty thinking pattern as a means to try and motivate ourselves to do something that we "should" be able to do easily. Usually it backfires and has the opposite effect of making us feel resentful and rebellious.

Journal Work 3: Awareness

How are you "shoulding" on yourself? (You may find that you use words other than "should" such as "ought", "must", or "have to".)

- **List 3 examples from your own life when you have told yourself that you "should" or "shouldn't" be a certain way.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Awareness precedes choice and choice precedes change. If you want to change your faulty thinking patterns, you must become aware of what they are.

Day 4

Playing the Victim and Blame

With both playing the victim and blame, we refuse to take responsibility for our circumstances, behaviors, and feelings. We do not recognize our own power and level of control over the way we live our lives.

- **Playing the victim** occurs when we see ourselves as a helpless victim of circumstances or fate. **Blame** occurs when we hold others responsible for our pain and negative outcomes.

Examples:

"I hate my job, but I can't leave. I'll never find another job that pays this well with benefits."

"My husband makes me feel like an idiot."

"Everyone in my family is overweight, I can't help it."

"I can't go for a walk at lunch, my boss expects me to work through my lunch hour."

Giving up playing the victim and blaming others means that you assume full responsibility for your life circumstances. I know that might sound scary, but there is immense freedom that comes with that level of responsibility.

If you want to experience more freedom in your life (and a greater sense of control), you must take responsibility for your choices, your actions, and your emotional state.

Journal Work 4: Awareness

In what ways are you avoiding taking responsibility for your life? Are you playing the victim or blaming others for some of the circumstances in your life?

Of all the cognitive distortions we are focusing on in this program, these two tend to generate the most resistance. We can really get hooked on these thought patterns that tell us "it's not my fault" and "I can't help it".

See if you can open up to the possibility that you do have a choice. Remind yourself that taking responsibility for every aspect of your life circumstances will ultimately result in the freedom to create exactly the life you want.

- **Give 3 examples where you have shifted responsibility for your actions, feelings, or circumstances onto fate or other people.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Nice work!

Day 5

Challenging your Thoughts

After focusing on your thoughts for several days, have you noticed that you are more in tune with what you are thinking?

Don't worry if in practicing thought awareness what you really noticed is how often you are unaware. That is perfectly normal and natural.

This is not something you do once (or for 5 days!) and, then, *boom* you have undone all of your faulty thinking patterns. Nope.

That's why it called a "practice"...it is something that you will do over and over and over again. Eventually it will become easier to stay in a state of awareness.



The next and final step in this mini-program is all about challenging the faulty thinking that you have just uncovered. We will use a simple 4-step process to help you shift your distorted, unhelpful thinking to more accurate and beneficial thinking.

Here are the steps we will use:

1. Recognize that you are having a negative thought or caught up in a negative story-line.
2. Acknowledge the thought or thoughts non-judgmentally by saying (out loud or to yourself) "I am having a negative thought" or "I just realized I am caught up in a negative story".
3. Question the thought by asking yourself "Is this really true?" or "Is there another way that I could look at this?"
4. Replace the thought with another more accurate, positive and **believable** thought.

How to Challenge Cognitive Distortions

We challenge all-or-nothing thinking by looking in the middle.

From: "Well, I already ate 3 cookies, I may as well finish the bag."

To: "3 cookies was more than I had planned on eating. I'm going to stop now before this turns into a binge."

We challenge overgeneralizations by looking for exceptions or options.

From: "I never have enough time to workout."

To: "I have a very busy schedule and I'm going to have to make working out a priority in order to fit it in. I know I can get up earlier on Tuesdays and Thursdays and do a quick workout before work."

We challenge focusing on the negative and discounting the positive by flipping it around.

From: "My plan was to go for a walk every night after work. I missed both Tuesday and Friday—I'm so disappointed in myself."

To: "I walked 3 times this week after work, that is progress for sure. My goal is to walk 5 times and I'm getting there."

We challenge "should" statements by using words like "I choose to" or "I have decided to".

From: "I shouldn't have to work so hard to lose weight."

To: "It's harder for me to lose weight than it is for some people. I choose to work a little harder because I want to feel good in my body."

We challenge playing the victim and blaming by taking full responsibility for ourselves.

From: "I can't go for a walk at lunch, my boss expects me to work through my lunch hour."

To: "I am going to set better boundaries with my boss about my schedule."

Journal Work 5: Challenging Thoughts

I'm going to give you an example of the process I would like you to work through with a few of your own negative thoughts.

Have fun with this, don't overthink it or worry about there being a "right" or "wrong" way of doing this.

THOUGHT CHALLENGING EXAMPLE

1. Identified distorted thought:

I can never eat just one donut.

2. Acknowledge and label the distorted thought:

I am using the faulty thought pattern of overgeneralization.

3. Question the thought according to the type of faulty thinking:

Is this the truth or are there exceptions and options regarding this statement?

4. Change the thought to something more rational, more positive, and at least equally believable to you:

It is challenging for me to stop at just one donut—they just taste so good, but I can do it and I have done it in the past. I will commit to eating just one and stick to my intention. I know it would be helpful, if I bought just one donut and then took it some place else to eat it so that it would be more difficult to have another.

This is just a guideline for how you might work through your own self-sabotaging thoughts.

It's totally okay if your process looks different. Just keep at it...our thought patterns tend to be deeply ingrained so allow some time for the shift to become easy and natural.

Here's your opportunity to work through this process for yourself. I'd like you to choose 3 of the thoughts you identified from the first 4 days of your awareness practice.

DISTORTED THOUGHT #1

1. Identified distorted thought:

2. Acknowledge and label the distorted thought:

3. Question the thought according to the type of faulty thinking:

4. Change the thought to something more rational, more positive, and at least equally believable to you:

DISTORTED THOUGHT #2

1. Identified distorted thought:

2. Acknowledge and label the distorted thought:

3. Question the thought according to the type of faulty thinking:

4. Change the thought to something more rational, more positive, and at least equally believable to you:

DISTORTED THOUGHT #3

1. Identified distorted thought:

2. Acknowledge and label the distorted thought:

3. Question the thought according to the type of faulty thinking:

4. Change the thought to something more rational, more positive, and at least equally believable to you:

Is it the End or the Beginning?

So, what do you think? (Pun intended.)

As I mentioned earlier, becoming aware of our distorted thoughts and replacing them with healthier thoughts is both a process and a practice.

You may have a long history of self-sabotaging thoughts that have led to undesirable behaviors and outcomes. This will not change overnight, but with effort and consistency it **will** change over time.

Much of the pain in our life stems from our thoughts about circumstances rather than the circumstances themselves. In my opinion, it is worth every moment invested in learning to shift our thoughts to alleviate the suffering that they can cause.

I hope you found this helpful!

XO,

Kimberly

Life is Meant to be Enjoyed

Working on your thoughts and beliefs is something that requires time and practice. I hope you will make the commitment to become more aware of what's going on in your head and really start to question and shift those thoughts and beliefs that aren't serving you.

Let me share a little about myself...

As a **Lifestyle & Creativity Coach** who is passionate about personal growth and living to one's fullest potential, I combine my education and experience with intuition and soul wisdom.

As a **Therapist** with Masters degree in Counseling Psychology, I've gone deep in studying evidence-based systems like Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). I have been equally influenced by the work of great minds like Carl Jung and Abraham Maslow. I love to work with personality theory, archetypes, dreams and symbols.

I have a background as a **Personal Trainer** and **Nutrition Coach** resulting in a very holistic, mind-body approach to change and lifestyle. The body and mind are inextricably linked and often times it is our body that provides us with information of which our mind is not consciously aware.

I am a **Life-long Learner** with a passion for psychology, spirituality, and health. I am both classically trained and totally *woo woo*. I love challenging beliefs and the system and the status quo. I'm a work in progress moving toward my own self-actualization—the deeply fulfilling point at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

