

UNCOVERING MEANING IN YOUR THOUGHTS

Meaning often comes from our beliefs and past experiences and has a significant impact on whether or not a thought is stressful.

1. Choose one stressful thought. You might choose a thought that is a self-judgment, is particularly bothersome, or one that is repeated often. For instance, "I'm a failure."

Stressful Thought	
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2. Identify what that thought contains fear of ("X") so that you can make it the subject of the following sentence: "X" means (or would mean) that _____. In the case of "I'm a failure," you might think "being a failure means that I'm incompetent."

Stressful Thought	Fear
<i>Example: I'm a failure</i>	<i>Being a failure means I'm incompetent as a person</i>

3. Now repeat step 2, only this time using the fear contained in the thought you just wrote down as "X." Repeat this process until you get to the heart of your worry about yourself.

Stressful Thought Cont.	Fear
<i>Example: I'm incompetent</i>	<i>Being incompetent means I can't hold down a job. Not holding down a job means I am irresponsible, being irresponsible means I am a disgrace to my family, being a disgrace means my family won't love me.</i>

Once you have uncovered meaning in your thoughts, you can begin to label those thoughts as they occur in your mind. Simply labeling the patterns of your thinking will help create distance and reduce reactivity to your thinking.