

What Are You Thinking?

Taking a look at common types of negative, self-defeating thoughts, are there any that you have found yourself thinking in the past? What are some ways to counter these self-defeating thoughts?

Self-Defeating Thoughts:	Try this <u>Helpful</u> Response Instead:
All-or-nothing thinking	<i>Either I'm perfect on my diet and activity plan or I've completely failed.</i> Making a mistake is definitely not the same as failure.
Jumping to conclusions	<i>I ate chocolate today, so reaching my healthy eating goals is impossible.</i> I don't have to be perfect. I make healthy food choices most of the time.
Negative fortune-telling	<i>I won't be able to resist the desserts at the party.</i> No one will force me to eat. I need to prepare myself in advance.
Discounting the positive	<i>I only walked for 100 minutes this week. I deserve credit only if I reach my activity goal.</i> I deserve credit for every positive action that I take.
Emotional way of thinking	<i>Since I feel so hopeless about reaching my goals, it really must be hopeless.</i> Everyone gets discouraged from time to time. My goals are unreachable <u>only</u> if I decide to give up.
Labeling	<i>I'm a failure for overeating or skipping my workout today.</i> Of course I'm not a failure. I reach my goals most weeks.
Believing in food myths	<i>I can eat whatever I want, as long as it is not after 9 pm.</i> A calorie is a calorie, no matter how or when I consume it.
Excuses & Rationalizations	<i>It's okay to eat these sweet foods because I'm so stressed out.</i> Emotional eating is a habit I need to break. I need to cope with my stress in a healthier way.
Overstatement	<i>I'm totally out of control with my eating and lack of activity!</i> I may have strayed from my plan, but I can start following my program again right away.

Excuses and Rationalizations

Making excuses and rationalizations for a slip from healthy eating or activity is a normal type of thought pattern for people engaged in behavior change. The more you give into these thoughts, the more likely you are to regain weight as well as establish a pattern of accepting excuses.

However, the more often you practice **not** giving in, the more likely you are to strengthen the behavior of self-restraint and self-control.

Take a look at this list of typical excuses and identify any that you have used yourself.

It's okay to stray because.....

- It's just one little piece.
- It's not *that* fattening.
- It won't matter in the long run.
- It'll go to waste.
- I'll disappoint someone if I don't eat it.
- Everyone else is eating.
- I burned a lot of calories on my walk today.
- I'll be careful tomorrow.
- No one will see me eating it.
- It's free.
- It's a special occasion.
- I'm upset, and I just don't care.
- I'm craving it, and I'll probably just eat it eventually.
- I paid for it and I want to get my money's worth.
- I'll do physical activity tomorrow.
- I might not be able to eat this again for a while.



Assertiveness

Imagine that you have been invited to a dinner party by a friend. You call the host before accepting the invitation to tell her that you are enrolled in a lifestyle program to change your eating behavior.

Hi Carol, I would love to come to your dinner party, but wanted to let you know something ahead of time. I am currently in a lifestyle program that has helped me change the way I eat. I am not calling to ask you to serve anything special at the party, but just wanted to let you know that I will probably be taking smaller portions and avoiding alcohol. I wanted you to know ahead of time so that you would understand my reasons.

Now imagine that when you arrive at the party the host begins to pressure you to eat and drink by telling you to “eat hearty” and “one drink won’t hurt you.”

There are several ways that you could respond to the host:

Give in:

- Okay, if you insist.
- I guess you’re right - one night won’t hurt me.

Talk back:

- If I had known you were going to push food on me, I would have stayed home!
- What’s the matter with you? I told you I’m trying to eat less!

Be assertive:

- No, thank you, I can’t, but I will certainly enjoy what I do eat.
- I would like nothing better than to eat all of this delicious-looking food, but this program is very important to me. So I’ll have to say no.

What is Assertive Behavior?

Successfully dealing with situations such as these requires an important skill: **assertiveness**.

Assertive behavior refers to exchanges between people that involve honest and straight-forward communication.



Why Don't People Assert Themselves?

We don't want to be aggressive. We have all been taught not to be aggressive, and people frequently confuse aggression with assertive behavior.

We worry something negative will happen. People often worry that others will become angry or dislike them if they are assertive. They feel that others may view them as “pushy” or “selfish.”

We don't want to be impolite. People may mistake being passive with being helpful, kind, and “nice.” For example, “I'll eat this dessert because I know you worked hard to make it.”

We never learned how to be assertive. If you have never learned how to be assertive you may not have the skills, and it may feel unfamiliar or strange to respond to people in this manner.

Tips for Assertive Behavior

Practice these tips for asserting yourself in challenging situations:

- ✓ **Use “I” statements to express your feelings and choices.** Use the words “I feel...” or “I would like to...” as opposed to “You should...” or “You shouldn’t...”
 - **Appropriate:** “I would appreciate it if you didn’t tease me about my lifestyle changes. It makes me feel self-conscious.”
 - **Inappropriate:** “Stop acting like such a jerk. You could stand to lose some weight yourself.”

- ✓ **Talk about the action or behavior and not the personality of the person to whom you are speaking.**
 - **Appropriate:** “John, I would like you to help me with kitchen cleanup so that I can avoid the temptation to snack while putting away leftovers.”
 - **Inappropriate:** “John, if you weren’t so lazy and helped more around the house, I would have an easier time sticking to my lifestyle changes.”

- ✓ **Consider your manner and tone of voice.** It is important to look at the person you are speaking to, and to speak in a pleasant - but firm - tone of voice.

- ✓ **Practice assertive behavior.** Assertive behavior skills can be learned, but like other skills, practice makes perfect!

Worksheet: Assertive Behaviors

Try to think of situations that have occurred since you started this program. When have you struggled to assert yourself, and how might you respond in the future?



- 1. Describe one social situation that makes it hard for you to be assertive about your new eating behaviors:**

What might be an assertive response in this situation?

- 2. Describe one social situation that makes it hard for you to be assertive about your new physical activity behaviors:**

What might be an assertive response in this situation?