



HOW TO STOP YOUR NEGATIVE-THINKING SPIRAL

And be more positive.

By: Noah Lehava

Credit it to the flurry of information by way of social media, or the tense political climate, or to personal shit that accompanies this thing we call life—whatever it is; falling into the trap of negative thinking happens to all of us. Sometimes it's just something small that sets our mood off kilter and into a spiral. But getting out of that headspace is important for your health. It's why we tapped Dr. Sanam Hafeez, neuropsychologist and faculty member at Columbia University, and The Ranch co-founder & CEO, Alex Glasscock, for tips on how to break through the negativity and practice healthy thoughts, even in tough times.

EVERYDAY TECHNIQUES TO STAY POSITIVE

1. "Make a gratitude list. This may sound corny, but research has shown that doing so every day is helpful. It can be simple things like 'I'm grateful for my cat, for the ability to breathe, for having a bed to sleep in,' etc."
2. "Consider who and what you let into your mind. What are you watching on TV? What music are you listening to? What friends are you hanging around? Are you being leveled up or brought down?"
3. "Slow yourself down. When you are moving so fast, your mind and body are on overdrive. Slowing down gives the mind and body time to calm down."
4. "Another technique is not to sweat the small stuff. Although this sounds morbid, when a situation arises, think to yourself, *If I am on my deathbed, will this be among my last few thoughts?* Doing so can really put things into perspective." —Dr. Hafeez

HOW TO AVOID A NEGATIVE SPIRAL IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

“The last thing you need when you have a lot on your plate is too much caffeine in your system. Caffeine will only further stimulate the areas of your brain that are causing you to feel overwhelmed in the first place. Opt for water instead,” says Dr. Hafeez. “If you practice meditation or mindfulness, this would be a good time to use it.”

“Find the humor in the moment, or look around and see if you can discover a gift in your surroundings. Who knows—you might meet someone, find the answer to a question, or realize how fortunate you may be,” says Glasscock.

“Reframe the situation,” adds Dr. Hafeez. “If you are stuck on a highway because there has been a fatal crash, for you this is an inconvenience. For someone else, this is a loss of their life or a loved one. Take this moment to count your blessings instead of cursing the traffic. Don’t catastrophize. Once you realize the very worst that can happen is you miss a flight, or you’re going to be 10 minutes late for an appointment, that is all it is. There will be likely another flight. You can take those 10 minutes sitting in traffic to start a new podcast or catch up on social media.”

GET YOURSELF OUT OF THE RUT

“Negativity feeds on inactivity. Most people’s inclination when they are down in the dumps is to stay in bed and hide. There is nothing worse you can do for yourself,” Dr. Hafeez says. “As hard as it might be, go and exercise—the exercise will produce endorphins that will give you energy and make you feel better.” Glasscock agrees and recommends, “Rigorously exercise, and hike in nature.”

CHANGE UP YOUR ENVIRONMENT

“Remove all clutter in rooms, closets, drawers, garages, one’s yard, and car,” Glasscock recommends. “Open your blinds and windows, and let the light and fresh air come flooding in!” Dr. Hafeez adds, “Re-decorate. This can be done even on a budget to spruce things up. If you want to turn a gold mirror to silver, don’t buy a new one; spray paint it! Rearrange the existing art in your home. Change your home accessories. Do whatever you can to make your space more inviting, neat, and calm. It should always be a clutter-free zone!”