

# The Truth Shall Set You Free

By Angela Poch, RPC

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[feelinggreat@angelapoch.com](mailto:feelinggreat@angelapoch.com)

Revised 2024-05-09 v7

Printed in Canada

*This booklet is a compilation of two handouts: “The Truth Will Set You Free” first edition and “CBT & the Bible”. While this booklet is written from a Christian perspective, TEAM-CBT is not religious.*

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*“Buy the truth and do not sell it— wisdom, instruction and insight as well.” Proverbs 23:23, NIV.*

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# **FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY MIND IS REASON!**

I'll admit I avoided psychology because so much of what I saw contradicted God's word. Add to that I thought if I just had enough faith, and prayed hard enough, I didn't need help from anyone else. I was able to avoid, hide, and push through until I faced clinical depression. I couldn't hide any more.

Then, when I was open and ready, God put Dr. Neil Nedley's, "Depression the Way Out" program in my path and Nedley recommended Dr. David Burns, book "Feeling Good". Through these tools I learnt to analyze and control my thoughts which in turn gave me peace, calm, and greater joy. I thought it was all the bullying, rejections, and hurt I experiences to blame for my pain. And while those impacted my life, it was my thoughts about these event that caused my suffering.

This is Biblical psychology. God commanded us to use reason to connect deeper with Him. Isaiah 1:18, KJV. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:..." I experienced God can empower us to change! In this handout we will look at Cognitive Behaviour Therapy or CBT, and in particular TEAM-CBT\* (by Dr. David Burns), in the light of God's word. CBT uses reason at its core.

The foundation of CBT is that in general our thoughts "cause" our emotions. When our thoughts get distorted or filled with error, this can lead to painful emotions and unhealthy guilt, sadness, feelings of worthlessness, constant worry or phobias, and so much more. Positive distortions lead to habits & addictions, selfishness/narcissism, and even set us up for disappointment. Using CBT we learn how to argue against our distorted, untruthful, or misapplied negative thoughts. This isn't toxic positivity though, no, sometimes it's healthy and important for use to feel all the emotions. See Ecclesiastes 3. This requires wisdom.

Most of us want to have more wisdom, but wisdom isn't some arbitrary bucket of knowledge. "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good

fruits, impartial and sincere.” James 3:17, ESV. If we unpack this verse we see wisdom is *first pure*, that is there is no fault in it – no distortions. Then *peaceable, gentle, full of mercy*, done warmly with self-compassion. *Open to reason*, we use logical tools and questions to unpack knowledge and turn it into wisdom. It is *impartial*, thus no

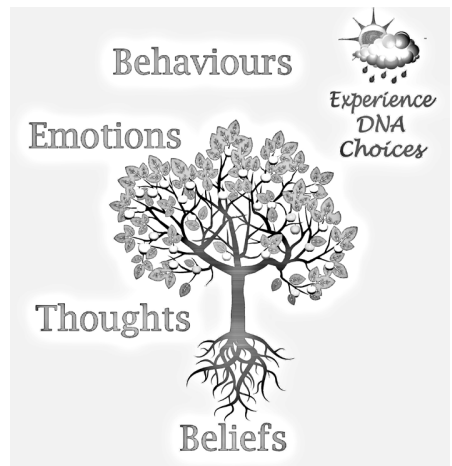
*Disclaimer: No human is perfect, and David Burns is NO different. I don't agree with everything he says. Warning he does use foul language at times and jokingly, sometimes seriously, mentions Buddha on occasion. James 1:17, KJV, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above ..." where there is truth, one can assume God had His hand in that part. Throw out the rest!*

bias, and it is *sincere*, or we might say genuine. All of these are critical components of TEAM-CBT. Dr David Burns MD, one of the original founders of CBT. It is an evidence based approach using 4 processes: Testing, Empathy, Assessment of resistance, and over 100 Methods including CBT, that work together as a team to achieve therapeutic success. The empathy and assessment of resistance takes CBT to a whole new level and have many Biblical qualities which we will touch on in this handout.

As I mentioned, thoughts lead to emotions and those combined lead to actions/behaviours. The Bible talks about this principle. 1 Peter 1:13, ESV. “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Prepare your mind, the mind is the starting point. Set your hope, you can choose your emotions and beliefs. And be sober-minded or studious. Thus even habits start with our thoughts. Job 31:1, NIV. “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman.”

Making a covenant,



purposing in one's heart, these are choices.

God's word can help us examine our thoughts. Hebrews 4:12, ESV. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." In fact we are told to "...take every thought captive to obey Christ," 2 Corinthians 10:5 ESV.

We can't trust ALL the thoughts and feelings we have because we have a sinful nature to contend with. Some of our thoughts will be true while others will be partially true or not true at all. Proverbs 28:26, ESV. "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered." Mark 7:21-22, ESV. "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness." Note: the words heart and mind are used interchangeable in scripture and refers to thoughts, choice, and feelings combined. Romans 8:6, ESV. "For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

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*Philippians 2:5, ESV. "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,"*

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We choose on which thoughts to dwell on and whether or not to believe them. Colossians 3:1-2, ESV. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." We can change our minds and be a new person. Ephesians 4:23, ESV, "...be renewed in the spirit of your minds," 1 Corinthians 2:16, ESV, "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

## **HOW THE BRAIN WORKS (POSSIBLY, AS**

## **FAR AS WE KNOW)**

The mind is incredibly powerful. There are many scientific research projects that give evidence of this. Just one is the placebo effect. This is where the person's beliefs in a treatment, and not the treatment itself, give positive results. Current research suggests the overall placebo effect ranges up to 75%! <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/306437> That means in those cases, the benefit of a drug, treatment, or herb is often because a person believes it will help and not because the drug, treatment, herb is actually doing anything. Don't get this wrong. This doesn't mean people are faking, or they are underrating what they are going through, or that "it's all in their head". Well it is in our head since our brain is the center of all our thoughts, feelings, and sensations, even if you break your leg, you are feeling it only because the brain tells you to, but that's not to say we are to blame, or it's not real!

This also doesn't mean something physical isn't happening in the brain, quite the contrary. In one pain study, researchers discovered even when the individuals knew it was a placebo, the inert pill still cause the brain to give off endorphins and other chemicals that lowered the pain. It was a physical reaction. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mental-health/the-power-of-the-placebo-effect>

The reverse is also true. If we don't think something will be helpful it can limit the effectiveness of that. Hope is not just a religious concept but it is being studied by psychology scientists as a part of good therapy. One study reports hope offers improvement in depression of approximately 20%. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6034523/>

But beyond that, there are some intricate chemical connections between the brain and the body. For example scientists have discovered when we deep breathe to the point where it lowers our heart rate, the heart sends a chemical messenger to the brain through neural pathways to tell it it's relaxing. This actually has a calming affect physically which produces a more relaxed state emotionally. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5709795/>

There are several diseases that are adversely affected by stress as well

and stress management can help to alleviate some of the symptoms and even reduce the risk of these diseases. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3341916/> Do we need any more proof our minds and body is intrinsically linked?

It is all truly amazing, and the good news is we can have control over it once we are aware of the process and how it works. We are going to look at some powerful tools that can help you with self-awareness and your thinking process. Because if we work on your thinking process we in turn work on your emotions and behaviours. But before we do that let's talk a little bit about cognitive behaviour therapy because you're going to hear me say that a few times and I'm going to shorten it to CBT. And in the process we can talk about how the mind works in terms of the thought emotion behaviour triangle. An event happens (sometimes even a random thought can be an event), we have a thought about that event, that thought illicit one or more emotions, and then we act on those thoughts and emotions. The action can be more thoughts and emotion in a looping cycle or it can be stress eating, having a drink, kissing someone we are attracted to, the list is endless! This is the constant cycle going on in our brain. I'm being rather simplest, and life is more complex, nuanced, but you get the general idea.

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*"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

*John 8:32, NIV.*

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What about desires, genetics, and situations. Don't those cause emotions too? Yes, they affect our thinking and thus our emotions but also we are affected by drugs, alcohol, lack of sleep, hormones, and other factors. But they are generally limited in their influence without our own beliefs and judgement about events and how we feel.

I often get asked by potential clients but why do I feel this way, or why do I think this way? Don't I have to unpack all the trauma and life experiences to get well emotionally? Yes and No! These all have a role to play in our mental health, for good or bad. But the power of

choice should not be underestimated. I've seen many people recover from life long trauma in a very short period of time by choosing to embrace some of their healthy emotions, learning how to hold onto their good values, and crushing their negative thoughts. Some of those thoughts are about their past, but make no mistake, **ONLY** the thoughts you have right now affect you right now. It's this moment that causes your suffering.

Recently I did a coaching session with a mental health clinician and she was surprised how much she felt better at the end of the session "without looking at all my childhood trauma." She realized her current thinking pattern had been holding her back from recovering. Once she crushed the distorted thoughts her anxiety was reduced from 80 to 35 (out of 100) and her guilt went from 80 to 10 in just one 3 hour session.

### **Let's lay it out like this:**

1. Why do we act/behave the way we do? Because of what we choose, both to believe and to do.
2. Why do we feel the way we do? Because of what we think about ourselves, others, things, and circumstances.
3. Why do we think the way we do? A combination of underlying beliefs (subconscious or conscious, good or unhealthy), desires, and the influences/evidences around us.
4. Where do our beliefs come from? Nature (genetics), nurture (upbringing) & choices
5. Where do our desires come from? Nature (genetics), nurture (upbringing) & choice
6. Where do our influences/evidences come from? Those around us, situations, what we see and hear, our perception of the past and present, and so on.

Notice, many of these have an element of choice. This gives us **HOPE!** These all do have a part to play but we are not completely at the mercy of our genetics, personality, or past. I've been bullied. I've experienced rejection. I had a perfectionist mother, I am now

also perfectionistic. I am ADHD. I have a brain injury. I have to work within the confines of all of this. BUT, my overall peace and happiness are not determined by these things, rather by how I think when I am triggered by the beliefs I have formed from these things.

This is also the good news of the gospel. Satan's accusation of God is, God is unfair. We are preprogrammed but God expects us to choose. The Bible tells us we can choose, even if the programing is faulty! Amazing Grace!

We start making choices the moment we are born. At what age can a baby make cognitive choices? I can't answer that but a baby chooses to cry or not cry based on certain stimuli. That's not bad or good it just is. They can't reason right from wrong yet. But it is a choice. I have colleagues that do cognitive work with children as young as three and four using TEAM-CBT. This kind of blows my mind. But it also shows we cannot blame God or others for our sins. **IMPORTANT POINT:** not all pain is bad! Not all negative emotion is bad. More on this later.

But what about circumstances? Yes these play a role in feelings and influence, but even then we have choice how we view the situation. IE: Paul & Silas. Check out my YouTube channel @higherpath for more on this topic.

I don't want to be dismissive of how painful situations can be. You have every right to feel the way you do in that moment. I'm talking in this handout about continuing to feel painful, negative emotions long after the event has passed.

## **COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (CBT)**

A cognition is a fancy word for thought. CBT is basically understanding and using thoughts to deal with problem emotions and behaviours. Our thoughts control our emotional state which influences our behaviour. CBT can also frees us from self-defeating beliefs, or unconscious thoughts, that limit our ability to be happy, do the things we want to do, and sabotage our relationships. "As a man thinketh..." Who we are is developed in our own minds and we can take that back from circumstances and situations by how we think about those experiences.

The information in this handout is from a few sources I need to give credit to: Dr. Albert Ellis, Dr. David Burns, Dr. Neil Nedley, and those who taught and inspired these men Dr. Aaron Beck. I highly recommend the books listed in the resources section. I use a framework called TEAM-CBT that was developed by Dr. David Burns. This is not a school or type of therapy, but rather a structure on HOW to do therapy or life coaching. TEAM is an acronym that stands for Testing, Empathy, Assessment, and Methods.

## **THE ABC'S OF THOUGHT**

Dr. Albert Ellis lays out the ABC's of thought something like this:

A - Action - Something happens to trigger a thought or perhaps an automatic thought may pop into your mind.

B - Belief - You have a belief (thoughts, conscious or subconscious, good, bad, or indifferent) about this "action".

C - Consequences - There are consequences, again good, bad, or indifferent, to your belief. They can be physical/ behavioural responses (crying, sweating, heart rate increase/ decrease, shaking), emotional (feeling depressed, worthless, anxious, worried, angry, frustrated), or a combination.

**Optional, D - Determine** - You can reflect on what is happening in your mind and decide if what you believe is accurate. Then you can determine if you should dispute that thought. If you discover what you believed was wrong, or overstated in some way, you can choose to disagree with it and bring it back to a more realistic truth. This is where you can apply various techniques to help you re-frame your thoughts in a more realistic or positive way. If the thought was correct, then you can determine what to do next regardless of how you feel. We often omit D in our everyday life and this is totally ok. We only need D when we notice things are not quite right.

Sometimes the ABC's happen so fast, or B is so ingrained, that we think A to C. There is an activating event and the consequences or emotional responses just follow suit. We often don't realize B exists until we stop to think about it. As you practice self-thought

awareness, it will become more clear. It is true, we can go from A to C in an instant, for example if a 4” spider dropped in your lap, you are likely to be surprised and jump in an automatic response, but your emotions after that initial gut reaction, will be based on your belief of how dangerous you think that spider is. You may laugh because it was a toy, or get angry at the person who threw it because you think they are being mean, or you may be very anxious or stressed because you thought it was real. There are other combinations but you get the basic idea, your beliefs create a lasting response.

### **An Example of the ABCs of thought**

A – Action. You are riding your bike and a dog runs out. This is the A - action, a dog running out toward you.

B - Belief. You remember the last experience with a dog, or a post you read and you form a belief. Perhaps that the dog might bite you.

C – Consequences. Thus you become nervous or even afraid. The consequence of your thought “The dog might bite me.” is fear. Keep in mind this happens in milliseconds.

D - Determine. Is the dog really going to hurt you? You start thinking about the situation in a rational manner. The dog is friendly and wagging his tail. You’ve met him before and he was gentle. Now you can disagree with your thought “The dog might bite me”. You might tell yourself, “He was friendly before and I have no reason to think that has changed.” This is called straightforward thinking. Straightforward thinking doesn’t always work, but that’s ok, there are well over 100 other tools, we’ll talk about a few of these in the coming sections.

But what if the dog looks aggressive? What if your thoughts maybe right, that there is something to fear? What then? Get out of the situation of course! If your thoughts are realistic and true, there is no need to change them. Only the TRUTH will set you free. This is the danger of “the power of positive” thinking or toxic positivity. We don’t need to be “positive” just realistic and honest with ourselves. It’s OK to be afraid of things that can hurt us!

However, once you process your emotions (never stuff them, that can lead to anxiety, obsessions, and bitterness) you can control your thoughts after a stressful or traumatic event to prevent long term emotional upset. It's a good idea to talk to someone about what you've gone through so you can process the pain of what happened. Don't let the fear, anger, or worthlessness stay buried inside!

You are still in control of how you think even if you can't control the circumstances. You may not be able to prevent the dog from coming out, but you can control how you treat your neighbour or if you will be afraid of all dogs after this. You can turn your thoughts into right thinking and this will work to calm your emotions and curb negative reactions in the future. Again, life can be more complicated than this!!! I am oversimplifying to help you see how it works.

## **NEGATIVE, UNTRUTHFUL THOUGHTS**

Our thoughts can be truthful and positive or negative, or they can be distorted and positive or negative. For example: "I am so grateful for my husband." This is true and positive. A person who just lost their mom to cancer might think, "My mom won't see my son grow up." Is true but comes with feelings of sadness. Both of these are normal and healthy. Even though truthful thoughts may not always feel positive, they have a function. However, the thought, "I can't handle my mom's death" is distorted with thinking errors. This negative thought will be painful for as long as one believes it!

You can also have positive distorted thoughts, "I'll never be depressed again." This can lead to hopelessness when feeling blue comes upon you. Another example of a distorted positive thought is "This cookie will taste sooooo good, I'll eat just one." When in the past you've never stopped at just one. You are ignoring the reality and magnifying how good it will feel over how rotten you'll feel for eating too many calories. Many habit and addiction thoughts fall into the "positive distortions" category.

Some of our thinking errors are connected to some long held beliefs about ourselves and develop into what psychologist's call schema or self-defeating beliefs. What makes all this so powerful is, when you

deal with the here and now, you can rewrite your future, and rethink your past.

Our thoughts move in patterns. Taking apart one, small event and your thoughts about that event, can unravel the whole pattern. Many

people have an epiphany over what seems to be one random event, which rewrites the whole schema that person holds by tackling that one event.

Of course negative thoughts seem real. In fact, we often believe them 100%. We see this is not new. Proverbs 14:12 tells us, “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” NIV. This verse is almost word for word the same in both places. Bible writers would often repeat things that were of extra importance, thus we can deduce God is really cautioning us to be careful of “going with our gut.”

Being open to exploring what we believe is the only safeguard. What we believe about ourselves, others, or even how we understand the Bible, can be wrong. This would explain, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18, KJV. Reason, prayer, surrender, along with continued study are vital to know truth.

The Bible teaches us to dispute our negative thoughts. 1 Corinthians 3:18 ESV. “Let no one deceive himself...” 1 John 4:1, ESV. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” We can be influenced by the spirits/Angels around us for good or bad. We could also see this verse as our own spirit and thoughts. Replace the word spirit with thought and this is how it reads, Beloved, do not believe every thought, but test the thoughts to see whether they are from God, for many false theories have gone out into the world.

Proverbs 3:5 ESV, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”

OK, so we have to trust God, and examine our thoughts to see if they are true. How do we do that? One very simple way is to just ask yourself, Is what I’m thinking true? What evidence do I have for this thought? Are there any distortions in my thought? Sometimes when our thoughts cause painful emotions they have some truth but many distortions. Ever notice that when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness he used Bible verses??!!?

Before we go on to look at how our thoughts get messed up, I want

to look at some very important key points about facts and feelings:

✔ Facts about a situation are definable and observable. They are not relative and they don't change. IE: "I bumped my keyboard and it fell and broke."

✔ Facts (situations/events) don't cause emotions, what we think about the facts does. IE: "I'm wasteful for breaking my keyboard." which makes me feel bad, guilty, or ashamed.

✔ Feelings have benefits, advantages, and show positive things about us. IE: Guilt shows I take responsibility for breaking the keyboard. It helps motivate me to be more careful.

✔ Feelings can be healthy and appropriate OR too intense, inappropriate, and painful. IE: Mild guilt, then move on. Verses feeling worthless and ashamed for breaking the keyboard.

It can be hard to see the distortions though unless we are looking.

## **COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS**

List of distortions from David Burns, M.D. "Feeling Great." You can learn in detail about these distortion on David's website: [www.feelinggood.com](http://www.feelinggood.com). There are also others who have similar lists, I've included those in brackets.

### All or nothing thinking (or polarized thinking)

This is where you have very black and white ideas in a grey situation or for things that are on a scale. You think in extremes and either/or. We are a perfect or a complete failure. Example: If I don't pass this test I am a complete failure. I'll admit, this was my go to distortion. I had a hard time letting go of this one. When we're not willing to surrender to truth we have a hard time seeing truth. My mind really clung to it because black-and-white thinking is often equated with scripture and Christianity. This is because God is never confused or unsure. There is no relativity or relative truth for God. He sees all truth all at once. But, I didn't take into account we are human finite beings. We cannot see all truth all at once. Paul refers to this as "...see through a glass, darkly;..." in 1 Corinthians 13:12, KJV.

Once I realized I needed to sit back and trust God, not myself, that gave me the freedom to embrace seeing twisted thoughts. This doesn't mean being doubtful or wishy-washy. Which was another reason I was resistant to the idea. I didn't want to be wishy-washy! I wanted to stand up for what's right. Let's be clear, when talking about the grey areas in our daily experience, we're not talking about the laws of God which are black-and-white and immutable. Rather we're looking at how those laws might practically apply to us.

Black and white is rare when it comes to our day-to-day life. What if I said NEVER leave the house in a rush? Well what if your wife was pregnant would it be OK leave the house in a rush then? What about principles that we cling to? Each one of these you'll need to decipher for yourself.

While I don't have a specific Bible verse for this distortion when I look at the various Bible stories and how God was flexible based on circumstances, I know for me, that's evidence we too must be flexible in our thinking. Solomon writes "Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. ..." Ecclesiastes 7:16, NASB. Extremes are not in our best interest.

One more illustration. Let me ask you, Can you be patient or impatient? Ok, right we can be either. That seems black and white right? Ok, well can you be a little patient, a lot patient, or very patient? Sure. We can be a little generous, moderately generous, or very generous, can't we? We are to grow in grace, sanctification is the work of a lifetime. But All or Nothing distorts our thinking so that if we are a little less patient we slam ourselves with, "I was so impatient!" Rather than stating a fact. "I only waited 10 minutes." Facts don't hurt us. Remember the truth will set us free.

## Overgeneralization (or Patterns of Defeat)

Always/Never thinking is when we take one event, or specific thing, and using it to judge, or analyze creating a never ending pattern of defeat. IE: I always forget my devotions vs I forgot my devotions this morning.

Numbers 14. When the Israelites got to the promised land they

heard how big and strong the Canaanites were. They were afraid they too would be defeated by this mighty people. Joshua and Caleb had to step in and remind them, just because these people were successful winning wars, didn't mean they could never be defeated.

Another Bible verse that comes to mind for this distortion is 1 John 1:9, KJV. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Just because we've sinned in the past does not mean we have to live a life trapped in those sins, repeating them over and over.

## Negative Mental Filter

Only thinking on the negative. We filter out all, or most of, the positive be they examples, evidence, or possibilities. While the "bad" does exist, the thought becomes untruthful because we dwell only on one part. We are not looking at the whole picture.

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*Philippians 4:8, ESV. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."*

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It is a common trait for human nature to dwell on mistakes, hurts, and problems. This can filter our thinking leading us to the next distortion, discounting the positive.

I think about the story of Elijah. During the dark time In Israel's history, queen Jezebel and King Ahab had threatened the lives of God's prophets. Many prophets went into hiding, while others were killed. Elijah makes a statement there's nobody left but me. "Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only prophet of the LORD who is left, ..." 1 Kings 18:22, NLT.

That wasn't the case, there were other prophets God hid in the caves but Elijah felt very alone and mentally filtered out that fact,

reasoning because he was the only one up on the mountain that meant he was all alone.

## Discounting the Positive (or “the Yes, but...”)

Making light of, or dismissing, positive examples and related situations when they come to mind. Making justifications for them not being relevant or important. IE: Well I might have passed the exam, but a C- is terrible.

God says He can work all things for good. Romans 8:28, NLT. “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

And in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 KJV, we are told “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” There is usually something you can find in most situations to be grateful for in some way. This is NOT always easy and should not be used to minimize the pain you or others may be experiencing which would be another distortion, minimizing!

## Jumping to Conclusions

There are two forms of jumping to conclusions:

- ✔ Mind reading - where we assume what someone else is thinking and
- ✔ Fortune telling - we predict the future or outcome of a situation.

Ecclesiastes 8:7 NIV “Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come?” Proverbs 27:1 NIV “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.”

The entire book of Job is a good study for this topic. Job’s friends were convinced Job wasn’t telling them everything. But God vindicated Job. There are several other stories in the New Testament of “church people” where were sure they knew what someone else was thinking only to discover they were wrong.

## Magnification/Minimization (or catastrophizing)

Dwelling on, or making the negative or positive, of more importance than it really is, or increasing the risk of bad circumstances past what is logical or statistically realistic.

There are some pretty catastrophic events in Scripture. But often in our personal lives we can blow things out of proportion or minimize the positive things. I wonder if this is what Abraham did when he was approaching Egypt. He was so in love with his wife Sarah and found her so beautiful he was really afraid the king would take her from him. He was magnifying how intensely beautiful she was, thinking the king would not be able to resist such beauty. He was also minimizing God's hand to protect him. Could it be, it became a self-fulfilling prophecy? After all that was the custom in those days. Kings could take what they wanted. But in relationships we often cause the very thing we are concerned about.

## Emotional Reasoning

This is where you feel like something is true so you believe it to be so, the "follow your heart" or "trust your instincts" worldly philosophy. Watch for "I feel" or emotional words in your thoughts. Humans are quick to believe their own feelings about someone or something. We call it 'gut instinct' and rely on it heavily. Proverbs 16:25, ESV. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." Jeremiah 17:9, 10 ESV "The heart is deceitful above all things, and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, ..."

2 Timothy 1:7. KJV "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." We are often so sure it's impossible to get past something. This is often due to emotional reasoning.

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*Matthew 19:26 ESV "But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'*

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## Should Statements (Oughts and Musts)

Shoulds and musts demand we, other people, or the world, be a certain way. There are legitimate “shoulds” and “should nots”. The laws of God (moral law) and the universe He created (natural law). IE: The 10 Commandments or the law of gravity. IF I drop my pen it should fall down. We could also include laws of the land or legal shoulds since God tells us to “...Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” Matthew 22:21, KJV.

This distortion has two parts. 1. when we create “rules” of our own and 2. when we forget humans are not perfect and yet demand perfection in following that “rule”. IE: We’ve all seen “life isn’t fair” yet we can expect it to be fair which is illogical.

I think of the story of Saul when he was waiting for Samuel to come offer a sacrifice before going into battle. Samuel appeared to delay in coming so Saul took it upon himself to offer up a sacrifice. This was a job only for the priest. When Samuel arrived and told Saul what he had done was wrong, Saul defended himself. I had to offer a sacrifice before we could go to battle. He also was upset and didn’t think it was fair that he wasn’t allowed to offer the sacrifice being he was the king. He figured he should have the right.

Shoulds and musts are rules that we create for ourselves, others, and the world around us. But these rules our own manufacturing And as we’ve already seen as human beings we can err.

## Labeling (and Mislabelling)

Labels are where we create a pattern of thought about ourselves or others around a single word or idea. They are general and usually negative or demeaning such as idiot, failure, jerk, etc. Labeling is an extreme form of overgeneralization. We take something specific, fact or event, and generalize it into a judgement. IE: I can only read 150 words a minute or I forgot my lines during the play. That’s a fact about one aspect of a person, but when it turns into, “I’m so slow and inadequate, I’m an idiot” or “I’m a failure.” That’s labeling!

Jesus talks about us not labelling others in the sermon on the

mount in Matthew 5:22 where He says not to call anyone a fool. It's so important He says one would be in danger of hellfire. Perhaps this is because once we label a person it changes our view of them and how we relate with them.

But we can also label ourselves. I think Moses did this when he was called upon by God at the burning bush. He talked about being slow of speech, not as a specific flaw, but rather he labelled himself as all-together inept even though God had saved him for this purpose and was preparing him. Sometimes when we label ourself stupid or defective it gives us permission to not work toward our goals along the journey of life.

This is the problem with distortions. They cause us all kinds of painful emotions and often hold us back from accomplishing what God wants for us in our life.

## Self Blame & Other Blame (Personalization)

We are very good at beating ourselves up, or even worse, beating up others. For other blame there are quite a few Bible verses. Here are just a few. Matthew 7:1-2, NIV. "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

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*Luke 6:37, NIV. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged.  
Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive,  
and you will be forgiven."*

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Once we start blaming it gets pretty hard to forgive. Jesus said that we would be forgiven as we forgive others and if we couldn't find it in our heart to let go of bitterness it would consume us to the point of losing our own salvation. Matthew 6:15.

But these can also apply to ourselves. Holding ourselves accountable is helpful in making sure we are being honest and growing in faith. But when we practice self blame we are blaming ourselves for things

outside of our control, things we aren't responsibility for.

Another form of blame, is when we take something personally that was meant in a general manner. For example. Someone less deserving gets a promotion. We then feel slighted by God, the universe, and our employer. We take it personally. IE: I must be defective and unworthy because I didn't get that promotion.

### Important note about distortions:

By the way all of these 10 distortions can be turned on their head in the reverse as Positive Distortions, remember I mentioned we can have positive distorted thoughts? This can lead to crushing blows when they are revealed false or to habits and additions or even narcissism, self-sufficiency, and judging others.

Positive distortion examples:

Over-generalization - I always get good grades. (Can you see how defeated this person would be if they get a less than good grade?)

Magnification - "This doughnut will taste soooooo good! Minimizing the sugar and calories will have.

Labelling - "June is perfect." Sounds great, but no one is perfect and when June does something a miss we might feel hurt or betrayed. Or we can't see her flaws and then judge ourselves, "Why can't I be more like June?"

For every negative distortion there are positive ones. I'm not going to cover them all here as they tend to be more problematic when trying to change bad habits or in relationship issues rather than in dealing with emotions. More in David's FREE book chapter, [www.feelinggood.com](http://www.feelinggood.com) and scroll to the bottom of the page, let me know if you can't find it!

## **WORKING ON OUR BELIEF SYSTEM**

We are working on a spiritual level when we are working on our thoughts. Colossians 3:2 ESV. "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Conversion is a change of heart (mind) and humility is critical for God to work in us. 1 Corinthians

3:18 ESV. "...If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise."

God has something better for us than our current old patterns of thought. Isaiah 55:8-9 ESV. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Ephesians 5:17, ESV. "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Self-control (controlling our thoughts) is in our reach. 2 Timothy 1:7, ESV. "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." Romans 8:38-39, ESV. "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We can restrain our words. Which I realize is in the context of speaking to others, but our own inner voice has a lot of things to say too!

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*Proverbs 17:27-28, ESV. "Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent."*

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One of the hardest parts of doing all this work is life isn't fair, but the good news, neither is God! God isn't limited and He doesn't deal out what people deserve, rather He works to do as much good as we will allow. James 1:2, ESV. "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,". Trials and challenges shape us, and if we allow it, make us better people. God can turn bad experiences into a positive outcomes for those that are willing to trust Him. Romans 8:28, NIV. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Likewise we can turn our bad thoughts and self-defeating beliefs

around and in the process be even happier than before we had the negative thought in the first place!

### **There are three parts to changing the way we think.**

Part 1: Awareness & Specificity - Get specific about what you are thinking and feeling.

Part 2: Acceptance - Accept who we are, our values, and God's love and assess our resistance to change.

Part 3: Action - Create Realistic Helpful Thoughts to crush the distorted negative ones and practice the healthy thinking!

My goal for you is to get so good as "reasoning with God" that when your inner critic or Satan belittles you, you can do battle in that moment quickly. But initially you'll need to work through a bunch of steps, so buckle up. This will take some effort to learn and practice!

## **PART 1 - AWARENESS & SPECIFICITY**

Often we have multiple thoughts that attack us. We can do battle with one at a time, but not with an army of assaults! Jesus only took on one Pharisee at a time so what makes us think we can crush all our bad thoughts at once?!

When we are feeling sad, anxious, or upset, it's important to break down our thoughts and really think about what is bother us. Why write it down? Because they can morph and go weird in your head or they can flutter about like a butterfly, impossible to catch and nail down. I've had clients say, CBT doesn't work, only to find out they tried to do it only in their head or they didn't pick a specific moment or they move from one negative thought to another. The process matters!

Of course, once you use these tools enough, often you can remember or create a Realistic Helpful Thought without the pen and paper. But you need to train your brain in healthy thinking before this happens. Even then, sometimes I have to get out paper and work on them in writing, and I've been doing this for years!

**How to get specific:** Pick one moment in time when you felt bad, anxious, depressed, angry, etc. We are who we are ALL the time so the moment you pick isn't that important. Think about what day was it, what time of day, who you were with, what was happening. Write this moment down at the top of a piece of paper.

Next write how you were feeling in that moment. Were you sad, down, unhappy, anxious, worried, nervous, guilty, ashamed, inferior, inadequate, defective, worthless, lonely, abandoned, foolish, embarrassed, hopeless, discouraged, frustrated, stuck, defeated, upset, angry? List each emotion you felt. It's also good to rate the intensity of each emotion from 0-100 (none to worst ever).

Finally write out all the negative thoughts (NTs) you can come up with and rate how much you believe each of these NTs from 0-100. Keep each NT as short as possible, just one short concise sentence, and write out as many thoughts as come to mind.

### **There are three rules to negative thoughts:**

1. They are not facts.
2. They are not feelings.
3. They are not questions.

#1. Facts do not cause irrational thinking or unrealistic emotional distress. When someone passes away we are sad but that's not unhealthy. What's unhealthy is five years later still feeling guilty because you tell yourself, "I should have done more to show them I cared." or "I'll never be happy without them in my life."

If you put a down a fact, like "Joe yelled at me," think about that fact/situation and ask yourself, 'why does that bother me?' 'What is it about this is causing me to be upset or distressed?' 'What am I telling myself about \_\_\_?'

#2. Keep your emotions out of your negative thought list. The only way to change emotions is to either ride the emotion until it's loses its power, or to dig into the thought causing the emotion. See above.

#3. If you put down a question, reword that into a statement. You can ask yourself: What do I mean by that? and/or Why is that upsetting

to me? What story am I telling myself with this question? Example. “Why did Sue get cancer?” Here it could be we are wondering why God would allow such a beautiful person to experience such a horrible health problem. The hidden thought might be, “it’s unfair.”

## **PART 2 - ACCEPTANCE - GOD CREATED YOU!**

Without learning to accept ourselves we will find it hard to have healthy thinking. Jesus when asked what is the greatest commandment He said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.” Mark 12:30, 31 NIV. Know this, God loves you so His word is for you!

We do need to love ourselves. This was VERY hard for me because I saw it as selfish. But love is transformative. Love doesn’t exist in a vacuum. God IS love, as we behold Him we also become loving. This is not turned on and off like a switch, given only to those who deserve it, but becomes a way of being. Thus when we can love ourselves with all our flaws, we can also love others with their faults too.

Another part of acceptance is seeing our dichotomous nature. We were born “sons of Adam” meaning our human nature is tainted. But we were also created in God’s image. Not all of who we are is bad. David talks about this push and pull between our corrupted DNA and God’s Spirit. Psalms 51:5-6, NIV. “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.”

Without reflection on the good and the bad our subconscious can resist change because our emotions and negative thoughts are connected to our value system, they don’t just happen out of nowhere. Thus we can have subconscious resistance to change.

Dr. Burns calls this Outcome Resistance, and he has a very helpful tool to flush out our good values from our negative thoughts called Positive Reframing. In short, you look at all the good reasons to have

the emotions, and thoughts, you have in that moment or situation. You can do this by asking yourself, “What are all the benefits and advantages of feeling \_\_\_ (pick one emotion).” Then ask yourself, “What does this say about my positive core values?” This is NOT an easy process and sounds a little counterintuitive so let’s look at an example.

John has the NT, “I’m a failure.” He feels sad, worthless, unhappy, inadequate. Well, believe he is a failure protects him from being arrogant. Shows he is honest about having flaws. Feeling sad shows he doesn’t accept being a failure, that he knows there’s something more he can do and feels sad he hasn’t done it yet. Feeling worthless shows he values being humble and that he need to rely on God. Feeling unhappy motivates him to change. We could write many more!!

Ok, so now you have your moment in time, with a list of negative thoughts relating to that moment, and you’ve unpacked the benefits of EACH emotion and what those say about your values. Now pick ONE thought to work on and move onto Part 3: Action - Creating Realistic Helpful Thoughts.

## **PART 3: ACTION - CREATING REALISTIC HELPFUL THOUGHTS**

After you have your moment in time and ONE negative thought to work on, there are 5 steps to change your thinking errors:

1. Use a tool, IE: Identify the Distortions or other tool.
2. Come up with a Realistic Helpful Thought.
3. Rate this new thought. Must believe it 100% or go back to step 1.
4. Re-rate the negative thought. If not crushed, go back to Step 1.
5. Repeat till all your NT’s are crushed!

### Step 1. Use a Tool/Method

The first tool we always use is to identify all the distortions. It’s likely you will have 3, 5, or even all of them in your NT. This may

take some time to really unpack. Don't skim over this step, often it is enough to crush your NT.

I like to combine this tool with Explain the Distortions, IE: Pick one distortion you found in the NT and ask yourself: 1. Why is this thought and example of this distortion? 2. Why is that an error in your thinking? 3. Why would that be self-defeating? Go through all the distortions you found asking these questions for each. Keep notes on your answers.

There are many tools you can use to get through the errors in your thinking. Some will work better on certain thoughts. In fact, often particular methods work well with specific distortions. For example: Kind Words (Semantic Technique) is often helpful for Should Statements. See "Tools to Get to the Truth" section for more ideas. Use one tool at a time following these same 5 steps.

It may take 1, 2, 5, 10, or even more tools or tries to crush one negative thought, especially the first one. Don't give up too soon! In TEAM-CBT we have the motto, Fail as fast as you can! Dr. David Burns has over 100 tools and there are many more in other books and the Bible. But I find, if you are having trouble crushing a negative thought after you know the basics, it's likely your inner resistance. If you sense this might be the case do a CBA - Cost Benefit Analysis of the NT, see page 31.

## Step 2. Create a Realistic Helpful Thought

Next, using your notes from step 1 try to come up with a new more helpful, more Realistic Helpful Thought. What could you say to yourself instead of that NT?

For Realistic Helpful Thoughts to be powerful enough they have to be both 100% true and apply directly to the NT you are working on. Half truths or cheer-leading mottoes won't work. This is why some Bible promises don't seem to help us feel better. They are 100% true, but they don't directly address the error in our thinking. We use Step 3 & 4 to determine if the Realistic Helpful Thought is powerful enough to change your mood.

### Step 3. Rate the new Realistic Helpful Thought

Ask yourself, how much do I believe this new thought? If the answer is 100% then go on to Step 4.

If the answer is under 100% ask yourself: Is there something not true about it? What is missing? What would make it 100%? IF you can't tweak it to get to 100%, go back to step #3 and try another tool.

### Step 4. Rate the old Negative Thought

Now that you have a counter thought, and you believe it 100%, let's weigh it against your negative one.

Ask yourself, "How much do I believe \_\_\_\_\_ (negative thought) right now, from 0-100?"

Did it go down a bit? Stay the same? Get crushed to 0? If your NT is over 20-30% go back to step #3.

If it's under 20% you can choose to go back and see if you can get it lower or move onto a new negative thought, your choice. Usually a NT under 20% is less powerful and painful. There can be some lingering truth that you don't want to ignore. The goal is to reduce it's impact, not always get to 0.

### Step 5. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat!

But just crushing one NT will not likely make you euphoric! You'll need to repeat this process, with all the NTs you wrote down for that one upsetting moment to get full emotional peace.

In addition, you'll need to put these new Realistic Helpful Thoughts into every day practice. I suggest reading them over each day for a week, then each week for a couple months. We have to cultivate healthy thinking, that takes work.

Here is one 100% money back guarantee, that your negative thoughts will come back and you will believe them 100% in that moment. But it's also true whatever worked to crush the NT the first time will also work again.

It's important to build good neural pathways in your brain. By going over your Realistic Helpful Thoughts and comparing them to your

negative ones each day for at least a week, then once a week for a month, you are imprinting the new realistic thinking into your mind. “By beholding we are changed!”

## **TOOLS TO GET TO THE TRUTH**

There are literally hundreds of tools we can use to combat negative thinking and emotional pain. In the book “The Feeling Good Handbook” Dr. Burns walks you through several methods and activities step by step. He calls them 10 Ways to Untwist Your Thinking, here is a very brief overview of a few:

**1. Explain the Distortions.** Choose one distortion from your list of distortions then ask yourself these three questions:

- Why is this an example of this distortion?
- Why is that a thinking error? or What is that invalid? or Why is that not true?
- Why would that be self-defeating? or Why would that be a problem?

**2. Double-Standard Method** - would you talk to a close friend the way you are talking to yourself? What would I tell a friend if he/she had the same thought? What would a friend say about my thought? Does God have a double standard, with different rules for everyone else but me?

**3. Thinking in Shades of Grey** - good for all or nothing thinking. Often life is not so black and white. Imagine a scale for this thought. Does it have a beginning and an end or is it endless? Where do you (your thought) fit on this continuum? IE: “I’m stupid” is anyone 0% smart? Even a baby has some intelligence. Can we ever know everything, that is be all knowing? No. So this means we have an endless scale. Where do I fit on this scale? Not at the bottom, in the middle perhaps? Another example: “I’m a bad mother.” If 100% bad is at one end and 100% good is at the other end, where do I land?

**4. Examine the Evidence** - good for Magnification, Discounting the Positive, or Mental Filter distortions. See page 32.

5. **Let's Define Terms** - good for distortions involving Labeling or Blame. E.g. I'm an idiot for thinking that dog is a problem. What exactly is an idiot? Do they have to make 1 mistake a day, 10? Perhaps you could say, It would be better if I didn't fear that dog, but I'm human and it's ok to be fearful. That doesn't make me an idiot.

6. **Be Specific** - good for Overgeneralization. What do I mean by\_\_? What exactly is \_\_? What specifically happened or what are my specific flaws? How can I avoid generalizing specific flaws or mistakes to my whole person/situation?

7. **Cost Benefit Analysis** - good for sticky thoughts you are having trouble crushing. What are the benefits and disadvantages of believing this (make sure you ONLY consider the costs/benefits of BELIEVING the thought, not the benefits/cost of the thought itself), What is believing this thought costing you? e.g. Benefit: my fear of dogs protects me from getting near dogs and in turn avoiding all possibilities of getting bit. Cost: I don't go visit my friend. You would continue to list as many as possible. Look them over and give each side a rating that will add up to 100. IE: 45 benefits, 55 disadvantages.

8. **What If Technique** - good to explore your worst fears that might be driving anxiety. What is the worst that could happen? If it did happen, what could I do to cope with or handle it? Is \_\_so important that my future depends on it?

These 8 tools are adapted from, "The Feeling Good Handbook" by Dr. David Burns.

## **TOOLS FROM THE BIBLE**

### Test It (Examine the Evidence\*)

Test your thoughts to see if they are true. Romans 12:2, ESV. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Acts 17:11, ESV. "... they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." 1 Thessalonians 5:21, NLT. "but test

everything that is said. Hold on to what is good.”

To do this technique\* take a piece of paper and write the negative thought at the top. Then draw a line down the middle dividing the page into a left and right side. Write down all the evidence for and against your negative thought in the respective columns. Remember this has to be evidence not conjecture. IE: “I’m stupid for getting a C- on my test” then evidence for this thought can’t be, “Smart people never get C-” because Albert Einstein got poor grades and even failed a couple classes. An example of evidence AGAINST this thought might be, “I’ve gotten A’s and B’s, stupid people don’t get B’s”.

Another example: “I’m failing God” then evidence for this thought can’t be, “I didn’t trust God yesterday” because Sarah didn’t trust God, yet in Hebrews 11:11 ESV, we are told “By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.” \*by Dr. David Burns.

## Kind Words

Words we choose matter. Proverbs 12:25, ESV. “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.” Proverbs 15:4, GNT. “Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit.” Proverbs 16:24, NLT. “Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.”

Try using kinder, gentler language. IE: Instead of “I’m failing God when I skip my devotions” how about “I don’t like to miss my devotions. I feel closer to God when I study and pray.” As a side note, which of these is more motivating to not miss your devotions?

## Trust God & Accept Your Humanity

Romans 12:16, ESV. “...Never be wise in your own sight.” Proverbs 3:5, ESV. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”

Confession changes us not God. When we confess our sins we are expressing our faith. That God can forgive and save us from our sin. It also requires us to be self-aware. Proverbs 28:13, NIV. “Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and

renounces them finds mercy.” 1 John 1:9, NIV. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. “

When we can accept that we are fallible human beings we are then empowered by God. 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9, BSB. “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.' Therefore I boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me.”

## Who Is In Control

Blame and anger go hand and hand, whether that is directed inward or outward. Proverbs 19:11, ESV. “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” Here David is saying good sense helps prevent anger from becoming a problem and that it’s in our best interest to move on when something bugs us. When we consider who is in control, we are considering are we trying to take on God’s role in fixing others. Are we doing the job of the Holy Spirit? Are we considering the weakness of others when they hurt us? There are lots of benefits to hold onto anger such as feeling superior, honouring justice, and protecting truth, however in a world of sin if we forget who is in control we can become overwhelmed with the injustice of it all. “...Vengeance is Mine, ... says the Lord.” Romans 12:19, NKJV. God has given all free will, it’s not up to me to control others, that mindset is from the enemy.

## Who Owns This

When a thought is true but the results are mostly out of your control, (such as an adult child taking the wrong path) ask who owns this you or God? Explore: Who has the power to control it? Who laid down their life to save them? Try to defeat it by giving it to God because He is all powerful and all loving. It is silly to think I can do more than God to fix anything.

## Applying Forgiveness

For someone struggling with burden of sin (guilt) they don’t think

they can be forgiven from. Ask God, “Can you forgive anyone?” “Are there some sins you won’t forgive?” Do a Bible study on sin to find answers for these questions. 1 John 1:9, ESV. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” What about the unpardonable sin? I don’t have space in this short booklet, except to say, if you are worried you’ve committed it, you haven’t. God has already forgiven. We don’t have to do anything for it, it’s already done. However, we do need to receive it in faith. The unpardonable sin, is when you no longer wish to receive God’s grace and have decided to do it all on your own.

## Reason With Faith

When someone is struggling with faith and reasoning as conflicting concepts (I should have faith, fear of CBT going against God, etc. think about this verse, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Isaiah 1:18, KJV. Reason is the foundation of human thought. It’s what makes us different from the animals and enables us to have faith. We can’t have faith without reason! Thus reason is linked to forgiveness and redemption. Ask yourself what does that mean to me personally? How can I can reason in and with my own faith?

I’d be remiss if I didn’t share one Bible verse, well story really, that I used many times when feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness encompassed me. There once was a desperate father who cried out to Jesus, “...I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” Mark 9:24, NIV. Jesus honoured this admission of weakness and healed the man’s son.

Good news, to each of us is given some faith! “God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” Romans 12:3, NKJV. That means I can hold on by grace to God’s promises even when I don’t feel like it, when emotional reasoning is pulling me down.

Building your faith is the work of a lifetime but you can start small. Just use the little you already have to build more. How? Romans 10:17 tells us how. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” NKJV. The NLT puts it this way, “So faith comes from

hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.” I like both of these. We need to daily think on the Good News about Jesus. But also, the word of God comes in other forms. “... a still small voice.” 1 Kings 19:12, KJV. And nature speaks of God’s love too. “Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. Let the fish in the sea speak to you.” Job 12:8, NLT.

Another way to build faith is to explore the Bible in a deep and meaningful way such as studying by topic or even the prophecies. For me this was the single most important faith builder as a young child. Bible prophecy was so amazing. There are so many out there, here is one of my favourites: [www.bibleschools.com](http://www.bibleschools.com) or check out [www.biblehealth4u.com](http://www.biblehealth4u.com) for Bible marking on various topics include emotional and spiritual health.

## Focus Rather Than Filter

While we should not filter out any truth, we can focus on Realistic Helpful Thoughts rather than distorted ones. Philippians 4:8, ESV. “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

## Encompassing Empathy

Agape love combined WITH forgiveness. A spiritual technique based on forced empathy and Jesus prayer “father forgive them” while he was on the cross. It is where the person causing you distress becomes the object of your empathy. Take your mind off of self and what you are going through and focus on the other person and what they are and will go through if they continue this destructive behaviour.

Consider the repercussions of their actions if they are to continue hurting you or others in this manner. We know no one can do something hurtful to someone else without it blacking their own soul. “For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone.” Romans 14:7, NIV. “See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble

and defile many.” Hebrews 12:15, NIV.

- ✔ What will this lead to in the future?
- ✔ Will this hurt or help them?
- ✔ What will this behaviour do to their other relationships?

Think on and pray for the salvation of this person. Like Jesus getting nailed to the cross, you can pray for the other person. While we can't read motives we can err on the side of liberality and grace. If you feel this person has evil intentions and does know what they're doing, You might be saying to yourself, "but Jesus prayed, 'forgive them because they know not what they do.' But, you might say, the person hurting me is wilfully doing this. And you might be 100% right about that. There are people doing evil in this world fully aware of what they are doing.

Some of the most vile human beings turn to God by His grace. 2 Chronicles 33 BSB, tells of wicked king Manasseh, verses 2, 9, 10, "And he did evil in the sight of the LORD..." So Manasseh led the people of Judah and Jerusalem astray, so that they did greater evil than the nations that the LORD had destroyed... And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they did not listen... Yet, he finally repented and God heard his prayer, verse 13, "And when he prayed to Him, the LORD received his plea and heard his petition; so He brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God."

The question is how powerful is your God? Can He influence anyone to change or just some people? As you're reading this you are thinking Yes but... Then this tool is not right for the situation. It may be you don't want to grow closer to this person and that's OK.

There's some people in our lives that are toxic to us and it's OK to move on. We do not have to reconcile and become best friends with all those who hurt us. But if you move on, you will need to fully move on and forgive 100%. Holding on to any condemnation can leave you feeling miserable and bitter. It will also hurt your spiritual walk with God, "forgive us as we forgive others." If we believe some people aren't worth forgiving, it can undermine our own faith that God can forgive us! Consider, if that person repents and is saved, will

you feel free to love them when you meet in heaven?

## Bible Promises

Two rules to making Bible Promises work as a CBT tool:

- ✔ Find one specific to your thought, not just the emotion you are experiencing.
- ✔ The promise has to crush or offset the NT.

Let's break these down further. FIRST, find Bible promises that are specific to your thought, not just the emotion you are experiencing. IE: you might feel inadequate but what is the NT behind that? Is it, "I should be better at this." or more like "I'm never going to amount to anything."

NEXT look for the specific promise (or Bible story) that will crush this NT. For the first one we might look for Bible promises where God will give us strength or work through us despite our failings, like God giving Jacob the ladder vision while he was fleeing in fear after he didn't trust God to come through. Jacob should have trusted God, but he took matters into his own hands and terrible results ensued (never saw mother again, lived in fear, stayed in an abusive relationship with Laban for fear of Esau, etc.).

For the latter NT, we might look for Bible promises or stories relating to God working through failing humanity such as Moses not feeling he could speak on God's half to Pharaoh because of his speech impairment.

## Reminders & Tips

One of the benefits to Faith Tools is you don't necessarily need to write out and crush a specific NT, but rather these tools can work on the underlying self-defeating beliefs.

But we also want to focus as much as possible on crushing specific NTs! And to crush a NT it must reduce your belief in the NT to 20% or below. This is the same for all counter thoughts (positive, healthy, realistic, or helpful thoughts are all different ways of saying the same thing). Remember you have to believe the counter thought 100%

AND it must reduce your belief in the negative thought. Dr. Burns calls these the necessary and sufficient conditions for change.

## **MORE FAITH BASED TOOLS**

Broad Strokes aim at our predisposed nature to certain negative thinking patterns and create an overall conducive environment to change. These tools are not aimed as specific beliefs but rather set us on the path for healthy thinking. Our soul is ONE unit, all connected. God's spirit was breathed into the dust and created a soul. All the parts work in harmony. God saw it was good. We are told our bodies are the temple of God. Let's keep the temple in tip top shape.

### Prayer

Prayer can help us on our mental health journey. It connects us with the power source! In addition it uplifts our mind. Of course how we pray will affect how effective it is. Prayer is not to make God willing, but us willing. We don't need to beg God to DO something FOR us, but rather prayer is the avenue for us to surrender something IN us. We always have the power of choice! Prayer enables that's choice to do God's will in us.

Matthew 6:6-13, KJV. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Of course prayer is often the topic of entire books, but Jesus kept it simple so I will too! I want to break it down so you can use this as

a template for powerful prayer! I like to pray in this format (not all the time) since this was Jesus answer to the disciples question, how should we pray? See Luke 11:1.

### 13 Principles Found in the Lord's Prayer:

1. *PREAMBLE: Pray in secret* doesn't mean we can't ask for the prayers of those we love. The context was to contrast the bold arrogance of the Pharisees and the idea the prayer had value in itself. We don't gain merit by praying.

2. *Shut thy door*, put away distractions, including NTs! You don't have to be in a closet to do this. In fact you can do it driving down the road. This is about focus. Training your mind to put full attention on God.

3. *Not vain repetitions/much speaking*. God is ready to answer our prayer, begging is not required to move His hand. We don't need to divulge details because God is ignorant but rather the expression of our deep fears and sins changes us.

4. *PRAYER: Our Father which art in heaven*. Abba or daddy would be a more accurate translation according to many Bible scholars. God is personal, relational, and tender. He can be all that your worldly father isn't.

5. *Hallowed be Thy name*. We reverence and honour God by putting Him first. This gives us access to unlimited power! "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Matthew 6:33 NASB.

6. *Thy Kingdom come* (both God living in our heart and looking to God's ultimate cleansing of the sin in this world.) We can "fortune tell" this!!!

7. *Thy will be done*. Live out thy life within me! Surrendering our heart to God's will builds our faith and pushes away darkness.

8. *On earth as it is in heaven*. We can have a little piece of heaven here on earth. When God's will, the law of love, is fulfilled there is peace, joy, and love abounding.

9. *Give us daily bread.* God can sustain us physically and spiritually. Bread is often symbolic of the word and the word is Jesus!

10. *Forgive us our debts.* We all have need of a Saviour, a redeemer.

11. *As we forgive others.* Asking God for empathy helps to crush Other-Blame thoughts. Let's face it all the distortions we can have for our own NTs can be applied to others too. "He ALWAYS leave the trash by the door." "She is so petty."

12. *Lead us not...Deliver us from evil.* We don't need to ask God to not tempt us, this is an acknowledgement that it's so easy for us to fall into old patterns. Faith comes by asking and then remembering how God has led.

13. *For thine is the kingdom, power, glory forever.* Acknowledging our God is the Creator, Re-Creator, Redeemer, and LORD. His kingdom is one of the heart. See the Sermon on the Mount to unpack this further. Jesus had just given the sermon on the mount before giving this prayer template.

## Gratitude

This technique works especially well for those with many thoughts that have the distortions Negative Mental Filter or Discounting the Positive. It helps you to focus on what you are thankful for. This must be real and genuine but it can be about the superficial or transient. IE: Hot shower or seeing a rainbow. "And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:20, NLT. Some may ask do we give thanks for sin, pain, or evil? Of course not, "...an enemy has done this!..." Matthew 13:28, NASB. I think the context of this verse is that we don't need some grand event to be thankful for. Remember during Jesus time there were a lot of misconceptions of how and when to approach God.

Ways to do it: you can defeat hopelessness and despair caused by negative mental filter or discounting the positive by keeping a daily record of the blessings around them. You can keep a gratitude journal to redirect your thoughts and help to retrain the brain to think on

positive things. Write in it each morning or evening. Another way to practice this tool is when a blessing happens record it on a little note and place into a blessings jar. Be sure to pull some out and read through them occasionally as well. A third option is to include something to be thankful for every time you pray.

Science reports gratitude does help with several aspects of mental health and even help with physical pain caused by inflammation, but it's not a cure all anymore than any other technique or tool. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

Word of caution: This is NOT positive thinking, nor should gratitude be used to invalidate our emotions or the experiences of others. We don't will good things to happen, nor do we ignore things that cause us pain or irritation, but rather see reality as a whole. Filtering out good things is a common self-defeating process gratitude can offset but we can error on Pollyanna syndrome which is equally as bad.

## Service

This is another tool that works well for Negative Mental Filter or Discounting the Positive, but also for Labeling, Over Generalization, Self blame and even Other Blame. Depending on the NT's around those distortions. Matt 25:35-36 "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." There is something very therapeutic when we reach out to service others in compassion. This is not about duty but connecting with others.

"People who volunteer actually experience a boost in their mental health—good news at a time when more than a third of Americans are experiencing symptoms of anxiety or depression. In a study published this year in the Journal of Happiness Studies, researchers examined data from nearly 70,000 research participants in the United Kingdom, who received surveys about their volunteering habits and their mental health, including their distress and functioning in everyday life, every two years from 1996 to 2014." <https://greatergood>.

## Lifestyle Choices

I won't go into detail except to say, we all know how grumpy we can be with lack of sleep or making bad choices when under the influence of alcohol. Many lifestyle choices impact our health both physical and mental. Over and over research shows just how connected the mind and body are. "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31, NLT.

## **BIBLICAL HEALTHY THOUGHT CHECKLIST**

We can approach good mental health from what to do, prevention model as well! Here are seven keys to being proactive in keeping your thoughts reasonable, rational, right, and righteous.

1. Truthful
2. Balanced
3. Loving
4. Humble
5. Faithful
6. Complete
7. Hopeful

Truthful. Does the thought makes sense overall? Are there aspects of the thoughts that are distorted or unrealistic? It's the thought based purely, or a great deal, on emotion? Will this circumstance pass? What does your past evidence and the evidence around you say about this that? Are there other things to consider? Is it ignoring other facts?

Balanced. Is your thought balanced? Is it leaning toward an extreme? Are the words always or never present? Does it to put something as overly important? Does it minimize something that is important?

Loving. Is it overly harsh? Either towards self or someone else. Is it

putting self on the throne? Is the language kind or harsh? Could there be a nicer way to word the thought?

Humble. Does the thought put yourself above others? Does it acknowledge your, and others, current human condition? Is it accepting of others with human frailties? Is it judgmental or critical?

Faithful. Does the thought negate a Bible promise? Does it embrace the power of God? Is it in line with your own spiritual values? Does it ignore your spiritual growth potential?

Complete. Is the thought complete or is something being overlooked? Are you seeing the big picture? Are there missing details? Is it ignoring something to be grateful for? Is there another way to look at it?

Hopeful. Does the thought block out evidence for new possibilities? Does it predict only poor outcomes?

Each of these seven positive traits come from the Bible and have infinite growth. You can have a little or a lot or a lot more. That means just because you are improving doesn't mean you are failing. Character is not an on and off switch. It's like a dimmer switch. It can be off, but once on, it can get brighter and brighter!

If you'd like to learn more about faith and mental health, upcoming workshops, my online courses, or would like to become a health coach yourself: please visit my website: [bodymindhealth4u.com](http://bodymindhealth4u.com)

## **CHALLENGES & CAUTIONS**

**Should we have some fear?** Yes! of course, all emotions have advantages. Proverbs 1:7, ESV. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Fear can, and should, drive us to God, but we don't need it to stay there forever. The goal is not to stay in that state, but rather transcend to a new way of thinking that will empower us to either deal with distorted thinking, we don't need to hold onto fear, or modify our behaviour, stop habits that pull us away from God. How do we know we don't need to continue to fear? Because John tells us, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He

that feareth is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18. KJV. Also 2 Timothy 1:7 NLT, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.” God can give us a transformation which modifies our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

**What about Bible verses like** Philippians 4:6, ESV. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Many Christians use Bible promises like big clubs, pummeling themselves and others into submission. This verse is a Bible promise, not a commandment. From my clinical experience using TEAM-CBT we know acceptance combined with exposure can actually defeat anxiety thus fulfilling this verse. We may not use prayer and supplication, but paradoxical agenda setting is like being grateful for the anxiety (thanksgiving) and it is voicing the concerns (let your requests be made know to God).

**Choose a safe therapist.** Colossians, 2:8 ESV. “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” Some modern therapist are big on trying to rid us of all our inhibitions.

**Keep our eye on Christ, not self.** Psalm 119:15 ESV. “I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.” With all this self-examination, one can get to the point where they are focusing on themselves. Here is where those with a Higher Power diverge from others, we have a source of wisdom and power from above. I don’t need to constantly focus on myself but I can look up to better, more healthy thoughts from God.

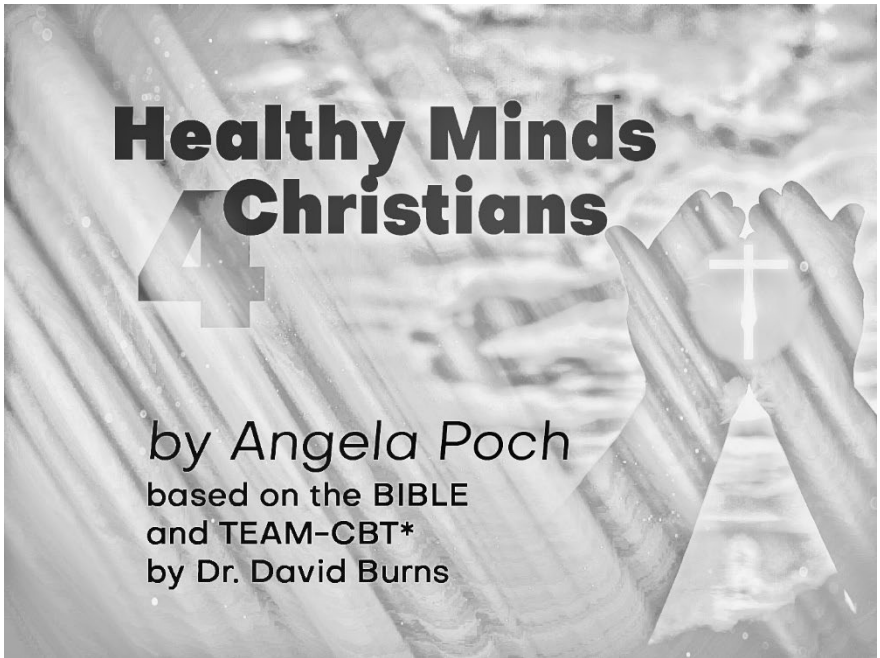
## **NOW WHAT? WHAT’S NEXT?**

This short handout is not intended as a substitute for consulting a mental health professional. I hope it will motivate you to seek help from a therapist or mental health coach who understands CBT, and better yet TEAM-CBT, as it adds several additional powerful components that increase the success.

BUT be warned. If you choose a TEAM-CBT clinician you will have to put in work too. We use a collaborative approach. Imagine you wanted to learn to play piano and the piano teacher said, it's ok, you only have to work on your piece when you come to lessons. How long would it take you to learn to play on your own? A lifetime, if ever!

And just like piano, if you don't practice you'll lose what you learned. Mental wellness is a lifelong journey. While you don't need to be in therapy for years, you will need to continue to practice what you learn for the rest of your life!

I also offer a self-help program for individuals with some limited one-on-one coaching/counselling AND I offer training for coaches and therapists. Visit [www.bodymindhealth4u.com](http://www.bodymindhealth4u.com)



This self-help video course comes with step by step instructions and MANY more tools to help you have healthy thinking! This course does cost a bit to take, but if you can't afford the price listed, please use the 50% off coupon in the course description or contact me to get this course FREE of charge!!! Mention you read this booklet!

## CREDIT & COPYRIGHT OF TEAM-CBT

The TEAM-CBT and CBT framework I've described in this handout is by Dr. David Burns and was used by permission. To learn more visit: [www.feelinggood.com](http://www.feelinggood.com) for lots of free resources on TEAM.

I highly recommend you check out:

- ✔ For depression, “Feeling Good” or “The Feeling Good Handbook”
- ✔ For anxiety, “When Panic Attacks”
- ✔ For relationships, “Feeling Good Together”
- ✔ MORE tools, lots of stories, NEWEST book “Feeling Great”
- ✔ Hundreds of free podcasts, on iTunes, “Feeling Good” or on his website, [www.FeelingGood.com](http://www.FeelingGood.com)
- ✔ FREE anxiety course on his website.
- ✔ FREE depression course on his website.
- ✔ In addition, Dr. Burns is currently working on an exciting new self-help app, which so far has been very effective in defeating feelings of depression and anxiety.

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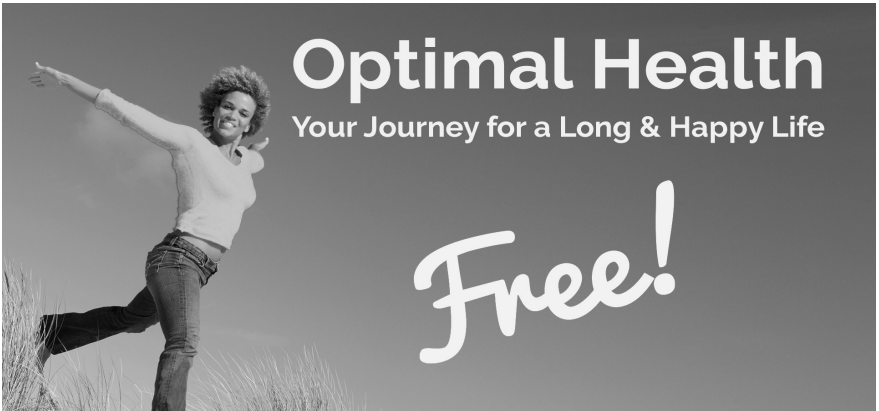
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Most health research experts agree millions die each year from preventable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and even many cancers. Many of these diseases can even be reversed with simple lifestyle changes which is what this course is all about.

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*Sandra Denninger*