

How to Avoid Toxic Thoughts

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Children are taught to avoid toxins—whether in plants or household chemicals. We’ve learned to steer clear of poison ivy and venomous snakes and avoid plunging our hands into boiling water or our forks into electric outlets. But we miss the deadliest toxins of all each time we think destructive thoughts. Toxic mental habits can fuel ever-increasing levels of depression, anxiety, self-pity, or despair.

“Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny” (attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson). Amid

fear, anxiety, depression, anger, discouragement, or despair, we can transform toxic thoughts by applying God’s Word to our concerns. *A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back* (Proverbs 29:11, NKJV). Choosing healthy thoughts can literally change our lives!

Here are some examples:

Toxic Thought	Negative Habits	New Thoughts and Behaviors
“I can’t help having painful emotions.”	Trusting in feelings rather than God.	Psalms 56:11-13
“I’m frightened about the future.”	Worry.	Psalms 94:19
“God is unfair. He doesn’t care.”	Doubt; drifting away from God.	Psalms 119:65-68
“People hurt me. People define me.”	Bitterness; intense focus on “success.”	Psalms 119:69-77
“No one cares about me.”	Living a defeated, isolated life.	Psalms 119:107-114
“I can’t get it right.”	Giving up, believing you’re a failure.	Philippians 4:13
“I should do better.”	Works-oriented living; forgetting grace.	Titus 3:5

1 John 3:13 tells us not to be surprised if the world hates us. 1 John 3:18 (AMP) says *Little children (believers, dear ones), let us not love [merely in theory] with word or with tongue...but in action and in truth [in practice and in sincerity, because practical acts of love are more than words].* We can avoid toxic thoughts by relying on God’s Word and loving His people, by living what we say we believe.

However, if you’re so discouraged that you’re thinking about suicide, it’s time to get help! You can call **988**, the national suicide and crisis lifeline. To find professional counselors in South Florida who can help, you could search the “Find a Counselor” link at <https://sfacc.net>.

For practical tools to help manage depression and anxiety, you could work through *Core Healing from Trauma*. Chapter Two, *Don’t Believe Everything You Think*, offers practical skills you can use immediately, learning how to replace cognitive distortions with healthy, healing thoughts. *Core Healing from Trauma* is a biblical counseling workbook for individuals or groups, available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/occdejH>). You can also watch “Strengthening Your Core,” a 12 - video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW> or subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>.

When anxious thoughts multiply within you...

Memorize and mediate on the following passages (either as written below or in your favorite version).

Psalm 56:11-13, ESV	<i>In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.</i>
Psalm 94:19, AMP	<i>When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your comforts delight me</i>
Psalm 119:65-68, TPT	<i>Your extravagant kindness to me makes me want to follow your words even more! Teach me how to make good decisions, and give me revelation-light, for I believe in your commands. Before I was humbled I used to always wander astray, but now I see the wisdom of your words. Everything you do is beautiful, flowing from your goodness; teach me the power of your wonderful words!</i>
Psalm 119:69-77, AMP	<i>The arrogant have forged a lie against me, but I will keep Your precepts with all my heart. Their heart is insensitive like fat [their minds are dull and brutal], but I delight in Your law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. The law from Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. Your hands have made me and established me; give me understanding and a teachable heart, that I may learn Your commandments. May those who [reverently] fear You see me and be glad, because I wait for Your word. I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are fair, and that in faithfulness You have disciplined me. O may Your lovingkindness and graciousness comfort me, according to Your word (promise) to Your servant. Let Your compassion come to me that I may live, For Your law is my delight.</i>
Psalm 119:107-114, NASB, 1995	<i>I am exceedingly afflicted; revive me, O Lord, according to Your word. O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me Your ordinances. My life is continually in my hand, yet I do not forget Your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not gone astray from Your precepts. I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, even to the end. I hate those who are double-minded, but I love Your law. You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Your word.</i>
Philippians 4:13, AMP	<i>I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]</i>
Titus 3:4-8a, Phillips	<i>But when the kindness of God our saviour and his love towards man appeared, he saved us—not by virtue of any moral achievements of ours, but by the cleansing power of a new birth and the moral renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he gave us so generously through Jesus Christ our saviour. The result is that we are acquitted by his grace, and can look forward to inheriting life for evermore. This is solid truth.</i>