

Interrupting Negative Patterns

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Thoughts activate emotions, and emotions drive behaviors. Instead of allowing feelings to control our actions, we can **Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage** (Psalm 27:14, ESV). Before acting on how you feel:

- Take a moment to pause and pray.
- Identify your emotion’s source. Is it mental, emotional, physical, social, or spiritual?
- Choose an effective opposite action to transform the emotion and resultant behaviors.

To reverse destructive thoughts:

1. Begin with a **grounding** exercise (such as breathing deeply or counting backwards from a hundred by fives). For other grounding exercises, see *Core Healing from Trauma*.
2. Once you’re grounded in the present and thinking clearly, **notice what emotion(s) you’re feeling** (e.g. anger, shame, fear, depression, anxiety, etc.)
3. **Pause and practice the opposite emotion.**

Emotion	Opposite	Biblical Response
Fear	Instead of being frozen in fear, trust in God for strength and courage. Face the challenge, steadily moving forward into a healthy “new normal,” walking by faith, not by sight!	<i>When I am afraid, I will put my trust and faith in You. In God whose word I praise: in God I have put my trust; I shall not fear. What can mere man do to me?</i> (Psalm 56:3-4, AMP). Be strong and courageous. <i>Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go</i> (Joshua 1:9, ESV).
Anxiety	Talk back to distressing thoughts, being intentional, focusing on God’s Word instead of anxious thoughts. Stay in the present. Breathe deeply. (For more help managing anxiety— https://cutt.ly/udP31Ts).	<i>When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your comforts delight me</i> (Psalm 94:19, AMP). ... <i>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</i> (Philippians 4:8, ESV).
Depression	Get active (especially when you don’t feel like doing anything) —go for a walk, read a book, call a friend, sing, etc. Identify automatic negative thoughts and replace them with Truth. (For more information on overcoming depression— https://cutt.ly/NdP8Lh4).	<i>For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope</i> (Jeremiah 29:11, NKJV). <i>But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us...</i> (2 Corinthians 7:6a, NASB).
Anger	Do the opposite—show kindness/concern [or walk away for 10 minutes if you’re losing your temper or if you’re being bullied. Set physical, mental, social, and spiritual boundaries between yourself and a bully, being kind to yourself].	<i>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you</i> (Ephesians 4:32, NIV). <i>These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world</i> (Jesus, in John 16:33).

For additional help, you can work through *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook I wrote for individuals or groups, available on Amazon. To reduce the impact of trauma, you can also watch “Strengthening Your Core,” my 12-video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW>. You can subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>.