

## Change Your Thoughts and Reduce Stress

Real stress comes from what is going on inside our minds. Thoughts and beliefs such as “I should..., I must..., if only . . ., you better. . .” activate the body’s stress response. Changing one’s thoughts takes awareness, practice and patience.

Is there one self-critical thought that you can change in order to have less stress?

Automatic self-critical thought patterns have been a part of us for years. Becoming aware of these thoughts and replacing these negative thought patterns is not easy. Often it is a voice inside our head being critical; noticing the voice is the first step. Pay attention to how many times during the day you think, “I should be . . ., I must . . ., if only . . ., you better. . .” The second step is to stop the thought. Once you notice the critical thought, stop and take a breath. Ask yourself:

- What are you doing right now?
- Where is your mind right now? Is it focused on what you are doing, or is it focused elsewhere?
- How is your body responding now?

Focusing your attention on the task, slowing your breath and relaxing your body will take practice, so be patient with yourself. You do not have to live with self-critical, negative thoughts that create stress. Changing these thoughts to positive reappraisals is one of the most important methods for reducing stress.

If you would like assistance in developing this thought stopping techniques, EASE has counselors available to talk and meet with you, please call 800-882-1341 to schedule an appointment.



*“Strength is the courage...to reach out!”*