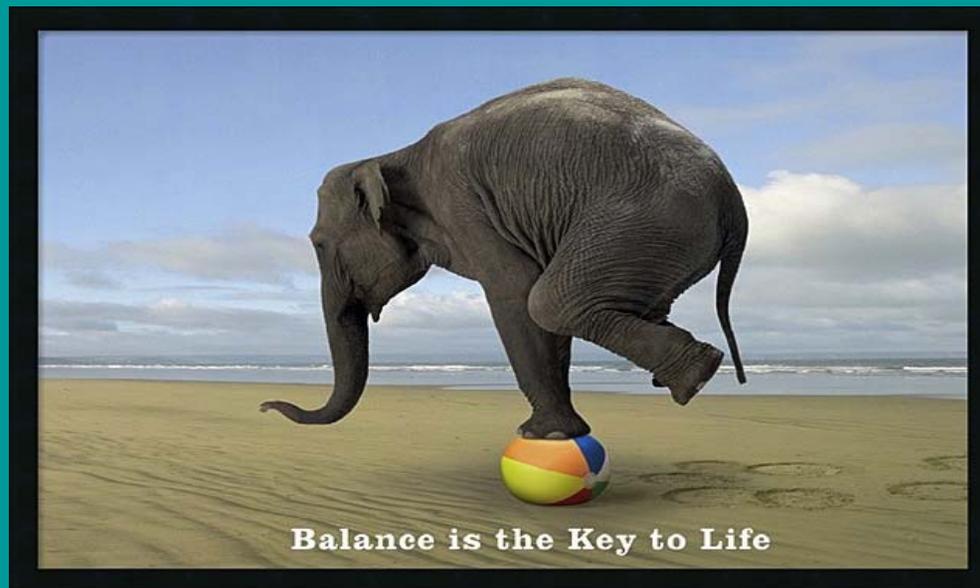


Finding Balance:
***How to start making positive
changes to improve your life***

by Richard Adler MA, c.o.



Source: www.anxietybc.com

Small Changes lead to Big Changes

- Making small positive changes can drastically improve your outlook on life and well-being, one step at a time
- Learning to cope with stress is a life-long process
- What are we going to focus on?...Balance in 4 areas:
 - 1. How you view and judge yourself
 - 2. Thinking in a more realistic, balanced way
 - 3. The basics of managing your time
 - 4. Self-Care and Self-Acceptance

WANTED

FOR BEING TOO HARD ON YOURSELF
JRHS STUDENT
CALL (514) 697-3210



\$1,000,000 REWARD



Self-Criticism: *Does this Sound like YOU?*

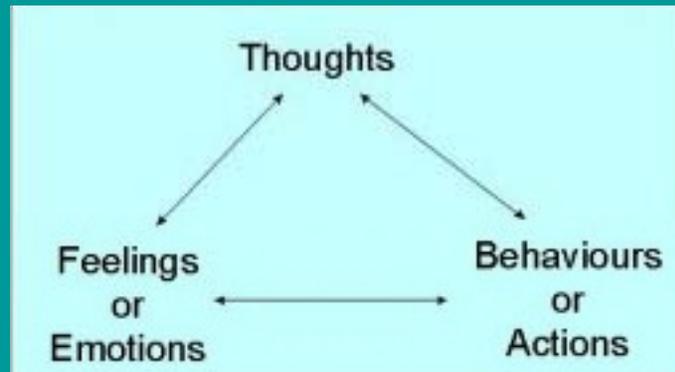
- “Marks are everything”
- “85% is not good enough, I won’t be satisfied until I get in the 90’s”
- “If I don’t get into physics and chemistry, I will never be a success”
- “Why can’t I do as well as Johnny? He studies less and gets better grades than me”
- “I need to study as much as possible. Free time is less important than high grades”
- “I planned to study for 6 hours and I only studied 4. Now there is no way I will pass!”
- “If I don’t get a good mark on this test, I will totally fail science”
- “I never pass tests, I know I’ll mess up”
- “I should never make mistakes in my schoolwork”
- “I will never get into science in CEGEP”

Constantly comparing yourself to others is a recipe for...?



Helpful, Realistic Thinking

- Realistic thinking means looking at all aspects of a situation before making conclusions or judgments
- Thinking about ones thinking!
- Thoughts are NOT facts
- Our thoughts have a large effect on how we feel and how we behave
- Perception is everything

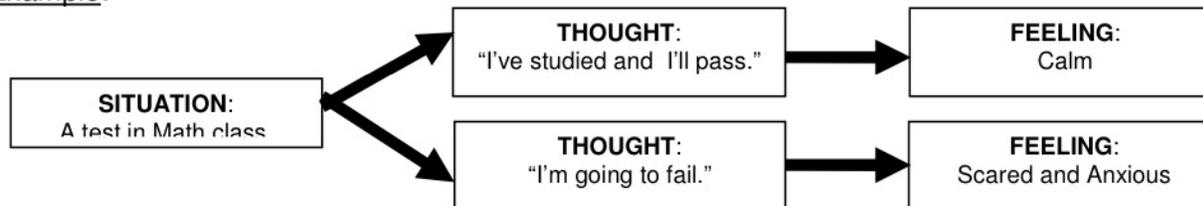




How do I begin to think in a more balanced way?

- **Step One - Pay attention to your self-talk:**
 - Self-talk is our internal dialogue
 - Our self-talk can have a huge effect on our emotional state and how we react in a situation, for example:

Example:



- “I’ve studied, and done well in the past, so I have a good chance of passing”
- Often we are unaware of our self-talk and our thoughts, but because they have such a big impact on our feelings, behavior, and daily life, we need to start paying more attention to them.



How do I begin to think in a more balanced way?



- **Step Two - Identify the thoughts that lead to stress and anxiety:**
 - The patterns of how we think about ourselves and situations can take a long time to change, like a bad habit! This will take practice.
 - The best way to identify anxious/stress-inducing thoughts is to **PAY ATTENTION** to changes in how you feel, no matter how small. At these times, ask yourself:
 - What am I thinking right now?
 - What is making me feel anxious?
 - What am I worried will happen?
 - How is this affecting my behavior?



How do I begin to think in a more balanced way?

- **Step Three - CHALLENGE your unhelpful, unrealistic thoughts:**
 - Thoughts are not facts, rather they are usually assumptions, guesses or predictions. That means - sometimes they aren't true
 - One step that you can take to improve your psychological well-being is to question your thoughts, beliefs and assumptions about yourself and situations in life and view them in a more HELPFUL way
 - So.....how can I begin to learn how to do this?



How do I begin to think in a more balanced way?

- **Example of an unhelpful, negative thought we can challenge:**

“I know I am going to do badly in Ms. Siever’s science class and not get into science in CEGEP”

- **What is the evidence for and against this thought?**
- **Am I jumping to conclusions? How? Why?**
- **Are there any alternative ways that I can look at this situation?**
- **If I were being more positive, how would I perceive this situation?**
- **What is the worst outcome that could happen? How would I cope with it?**
- **What is the best outcome that could happen?**
- **What is the mostly likely outcome that could happen?**
- **If my best friend was having this thought, what would I say to them?**

Now, come up with a more helpful, balanced thought to challenge this one



Thinking Traps



- We all fall into “thinking traps”:
 - Thinking traps are unfair, unhelpful and overly negative ways of seeing things
 - These “cognitive errors” contribute greatly to stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem etc.
 - The good thing is that these are traps that you can get out of, and learn to **AVOID**



Thinking Traps



- Here are some common “thinking traps”:

1. Fortune-Telling:

This is when we predict things will turn out negatively. But....none of us have a crystal ball - we can't predict the future!

e.g. “I’ll never get into health sciences in CEGEP”

“I know I am going to mess up on the final exam”

2. Black-and-white thinking:

This is the tendency for people to view situations as being all good, or all bad with no middle ground. Everything is either a complete success, or it is viewed as a total failure.

e.g. “If I don’t do well on this assignment, it’s all over”

“If I don’t get 90% on this exam, what was the point of even trying?”



Thinking Traps



3. Over-generalization:

We fall into this trap when we describe our lives using words like “always” or “never”. This is a very harmful way of looking at life, because it is highly unrealistic - it does not take into account the times when we are successful. We don’t ALWAYS make mistakes.

e.g. “I always mess up on short-answer questions”

“I never sound smart when I answer questions in class”

4. Negative Spotlight or “Filtering”

I see this A LOT in students. It is when we discount or ignore all the positives in our lives, and focus on the negatives.

e.g. A student says they are doing poorly in school, but in reality they are doing great, but they have low marks in one or two classes. What about all the other classes you are doing well in!?!



Thinking Traps



5. Catastrophizing:

This is when we think the worst possible scenario is going to happen and we feel that we will not be able to cope with the situation. However, this worst-case-scenario is HIGHLY unlikely to happen, and we would find ways to cope with it even if it would occur.

e.g. "If I don't do well in Secondary 5, I am going to end up unemployed and unsuccessful in the future"

And finally, the most common negative thought process.....

"WHAT IF?" THINKING



Thinking Traps



- Let's practice again. Here's another similar example of how to help you challenge your thoughts when you fall into a thinking trap. Let's make it simple:

You have a test tomorrow that is worth a lot and even though you have fully prepared for it you are very worried about how you are going to do on it....

You think to yourself:

"I'm so going to fail that test tomorrow. I'm screwed."



Thinking Traps



- To challenge your unhelpful thought - you can ask yourself:

Am I falling into a thinking trap?

Yes, I am fortune-telling, predicting that the test is going to go poorly before I even take it. I am catastrophizing as well because I am picturing the worst-case-scenario - that I am going to fail.

Am I judging the situation based on the way “I feel” instead of the “facts”?

I might truly feel and believe that I am going to fail the test miserably, but there is no evidence to support that. I studied for the test, I have done well on other tests and I will try my best!

Am I 100% sure that I will fail?

Nope, but what if? What if it happens this time? What will I do?

What’s the worst that can happen? If the worst did happen what could I do to cope with it?

Worst case scenario is that I bomb the test. This would suck in the moment, but I would accept it in time - it isn’t that bad in the long run. I could go seek out extra help from my teacher, get tutoring, or improve my study habits. I’ll work it out.

3 Habits of Highly Effective People (Steven Covey)





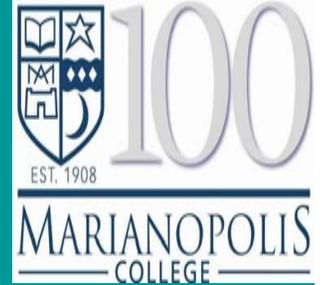
Marianopolis College:
The Top Five List of Major Time Savers!



- **1. Prioritize! Factors to consider: %, marks, time.**
- **2. Get Started Right Away! Stay with it regularly. Write down due date/start date.**
- **3. Breakdown the work into Manageable Steps. Be Realistic!**



Marianopolis College:
The Top Five List of Major Time Savers!



- **4. Use Study Blocks:**
 - 50 minutes study + 10 minute breaks.
 - ***Set *specific* and *attainable* study objectives for each block.***
 - **Study at times when you are most alert!**
- **5. Grab those small pockets of time and use them!**
- ***STOP STUDYING AND REWARD YOURSELF***

Self-Care



Self-Care





Balance in Self-Care:
Taking care of all aspects of yourself



- Keeping your “physical self” healthy:
 - Engaging in regular exercise
 - Practicing healthy sleeping habits
 - Eating well
- Find time for your “social self” ...HAVE FUN, ENJOY LIFE!
- Reflect on your psychological/emotional and spiritual self
- Work on self-acceptance and living one step at a time



What is one small change you are willing to make in your life?