The Five Areas Approach (CBT Style)

1. **Understanding your feelings** – Find out key information about what makes you tick
2. **Doing things that make you feel better** – Plan activities that make you feel happier
3. **Looking at things differently** – Learn how to change negative or stressful thinking
4. **Building inner confidence** – Walk confidently, talk confidently and act confidently and slowly you’ll gain confidence
5. **Asking for what you need** – Being assertive and respecting what both you and others have to say
6. **Getting a good night’s sleep** – A key to a good day is a good night’s sleep
7. **How to fix almost everything (tackling problems)** – Break problems down into manageable chunks
8. **The things you do that mess you up** – How some things we think help are actually part of the problem
9. **1,2, 3 breathe (tackling anger)** – Sort out your feelings of irritability and anger
10. **10 things you can do to help you feel happier straight away** – 10 small steps to feeling fitter and happier.

Containment of negative thoughts:

Try these 7 ways to manage (and decrease) your negative thoughts:

1. Recognize thought distortions. Our minds have clever and persistent ways of convincing us of something that isn't really true. These inaccurate thoughts reinforce negative thinking. If you can recognize them, you can learn to challenge them. Here are four common thought distortions:

* *Black and white thinking.* Seeing everything as one way or another, without any in between.
* *Personalizing*. Assuming you are to blame for anything that goes wrong, like thinking someone did not smile at you because you did something to upset her. (It's more likely that person is having a hard day and her mood had nothing to do with you.)
* *Filter thinking.* Choosing to see only the negative side of a situation.
* [*Catastrophizing*](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/catastrophizing). Assuming the worst possible outcome is going to happen.

2. Challenge negative thoughts. Whenever you have a distorted thought, stop and evaluate whether it is accurate. Think about how you would respond if a friend spoke about herself that way. You would probably offer a good rebuttal to his or her negative view. Apply the same logic to your own thoughts. Ask yourself if you are assuming the worst will happen or blaming yourself for something that has not gone the way you wanted. And then think about other possible outcomes or reasons that something turned out differently than you hoped.

3. Take a break from negative thoughts. It is possible to learn how to separate from negative thoughts. One way to do this is to allow yourself a certain amount of time (maybe five minutes) with the thought. Then take a break from focusing on it and move on with your day.

4. Release judgment. We all judge ourselves and others, usually unconsciously. Constantly comparing ourselves to other people or comparing our lives to some ideal breeds dissatisfaction. When you are able to let go of judgment (not easy, but possible), you will likely feel more at ease. Some ways to take a break from judgmental thoughts include recognizing your own reaction, observing it, and then letting it go. Another helpful technique is to "positive judge." When you notice you are negatively judging a person, yourself, or a situation, look for a positive quality, too.

5. Practice [gratitude](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/gratitude). Research shows that feeling grateful has a big impact on your levels of positivity and happiness. Even when you are experiencing a challenging time in your life, you can usually find things (even small things) to be grateful for. Noticing the things that are going well and making you feel happy will keep you in touch with them. Keeping a gratitude journal and writing a few things in it every day is one easy and effective way to do this.

6. Focus on your strengths. It's human nature to dwell on the negative and overlook the positive. The more you can practice focusing on your strengths and not dwelling on mistakes you've made, the easier it will be to feel positive about yourself and the direction your life is taking. If you find yourself thinking harsh thoughts about your [personality](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/personality) or actions, take a moment to stop and think about something you like about yourself.

7. Seek out professional support if you are unable to manage your thoughts or find they are interfering with your ability to meet your daily responsibilities or enjoy life. [Counseling](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/coaching) and [therapy](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/therapy) can help you weather life changes, reduce emotional suffering and experience self-growth.