

## Reframing our Thoughts during a Stressful Event: A Guide for Parents and Educators to Help Children

Reframing thoughts involves changing how we think about a situation using rational thinking. This can lead to a more positive and proactive mindset.

### Reframing Anxiety

The anxious thought cycle is overwhelming because it causes feelings of helplessness. When anxiety spikes, children get caught in a cycle of “what ifs” and “I can’ts”. Carving out regular time to work on positive reframing empowers your anxious child to take control over [their] anxious thoughts. It works like this:

1. Name a worry floating around in your brain right now.
2. What is the worry telling you?
3. Let’s break it down and see if that worry is 100% right.
4. How can we take that worry thought and change it to a positive thought?

### Reframing Anger or Depression

If your child often seems withdrawn, sad or angry, you may be able to identify a problematic thinking pattern by listening closely. Here are two key styles of negative self-talk to listen for:


**Catastrophizing:** One common thought habit is the tendency to jump to the worst-case scenario ("What if I fail the test? I'm never going to get into college!") Scanning constantly for disaster ahead acts as a huge contributor to anxiety. Catastrophizing often leads teens to avoid people or become reluctant to try new things.

**Zooming in on the negative:** Ruminating on a disappointment without taking into account the many positive and neutral aspects of one's experience is often associated with sadness and depression. A missed soccer goal might overshadow everything else that happens one day – the lunch with friends, the good grade on a test, the hilarious TV show – and consume your high-schooler for days.

For parents, the idea is not to squelch the negative thought. Research has found that attempted "thought stopping" can make the idea stickier. Rather, you want your child to face the thought, thoroughly examine it and replace it with a more realistic and helpful perspective.

Source: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/09/09/549133027/for-teens-knee-deep-in-negativity-reframing-thoughts-can-help>

### Reframing Thoughts Specific to COVID-19

What They are Saying		What You Can Say to Help Reframe
I am stuck and bored at home.		You are in a safe space with your family. Let’s find an activity together.
I’m going to get sick!		We are self-isolating and washing our hands often which will decrease our chances of getting sick.
We will run out of food!		We are preparing for this and we will use our items wisely. We have everything we need now.
The whole world is going to stop!		We are being placed on a temporary hold, but important places like hospitals, grocery stores and pharmacies are still open!
I feel like I don’t know what is going on!		I am keeping track on what is happening. Do you have specific questions?