

The Healing Journey: Erase negative thoughts with five healing attitudes

By Thomas Wood MSW, LCSW



You can give your thoughts an upgrade, and it won't cost a thing. The Five Healing Attitudes will exclude toxic thoughts from your mind, allowing you to erase the negative thoughts that are holding you back. This process rests on a simple truth: You can't hold two opposing thoughts in your mind at the same time.

If you focus on a healing thought, the toxic thought is erased from your mind, at least for the moment. When it returns, you can refocus on the healing thought to make it go away again. Eventually it will lose strength and vitality, because you are no longer feeding it your energy and have carved out a new neural pathway for your brain — a new mental habit.

Here's how to erase the most common toxic thought patterns.

1. Replace self-pity with gratitude: Self-pity can turn any happy scene into a crap-fest. If you are feeling sorry for yourself, consciously switch to gratitude by making a list of the things you have to be grateful for.

Who are the people you are glad for in your life? Do you have any material blessings that give you safety and comfort? What has happened, or is happening now, that makes your life positive and worth living? Focusing on these positive things will crowd out the self-pity.

The pitfall: Don't switch to gratitude to avoid feelings of sadness, grief, and depression. If a loss is triggering your self-pity, you may be grieving and just need to accept the feelings, knowing that eventually they will end. As for depression, the signs and symptoms are well-known; go to www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression for more information. And if it seems hard to figure out on your own, see a therapist or ask a trusted friend.

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2. Resentment vs forgiveness: These are mutually exclusive too — you can't resent someone and simultaneously forgive them.

There is nothing more corrosive to peace of mind than a carefully-nurtured grudge. Bitterness can throw shade on even the brightest day. Often the poison spills over into our other relationships, making it even worse.

You can let go of resentment by choosing to see the person in a positive light and wishing for them that they have all the good experiences you want for your own life. That may sound crazy, but it works. If you do this consistently for 2 or 3 weeks, it will dissolve your resentment.

The pitfall: You need to feel your anger as it comes up. Some of my patients tell me, "I want to forgive him/her/it, but I'm just not ready." That's fine. You can't rush through anger; it takes its own time to unfold, wax, and wane. You will know you are ready to forgive when you get tired of the anger and want to move on.

3. Fear vs trust: If you trust that you are ok, things are ok, and that they will stay ok, there's no room for fear.

Anger and fear ultimately boil down to one thing: fear of loss. But some people seem able to shrug losses off. It is almost as if they see behind the current tragedy or suffering to a higher or

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What to expect when you take your pet to the vet for a dental cleaning

Oral health is as important for companion animals as it is for their owners. Left unchecked in pets, periodontal disease can lead to pain, trouble eating and other issues.

Pet owners are urged to brush their pets' teeth to help remove bacteria that can lead to tartar buildup. If oral hygiene is ignored, pets can develop tooth decay and other issues. People know what to expect when they go to a dentist for a cleaning and can still experience anxiety. This is true of your pet as well. Most cleanings follow a similar pattern and recognition of that pattern can give pet owners an idea of what to expect at a veterinary dental cleaning.

Anesthesia

One of the main differences between a dental cleaning for a person and one for a pet is the use of anesthesia. According to Kulshan Veterinary Hospital, pets do not willingly open their mouths to give veterinary dentists access to perform cleanings. Anesthesia ensures that the animal will remain still and the vet can remove any plaque and tartar that has built up. If a tooth needs to be extracted, sedation ensures that will go smoothly.

Pre-testing

Since anesthesia will be used, vets often will run lab work and an EKG to determine if a pet is healthy enough to receive anesthesia. Testing ahead of time also helps the vet make the best decisions regarding which types of anesthetics to administer and in what quantities.

Examination and cleaning

The vet will conduct a thorough examination of the pet's mouth, noting any abnormalities. A dental probe is often used to evaluate bleeding gums and detect pockets in the gums where food can accumulate and potentially lead to decay. After the examination, VCA Hospitals says tooth scaling will be performed, using both ultrasonic and hand scalers to remove plaque and tartar above and below the gum line. Teeth will then be polished to remove any microscopic scratches that can snag bacteria and lead to subsequent build-up.

Monitoring

Throughout the procedure, a pet's vital signs are monitored and IV fluids are administered to keep the animal comfortable and safe. Before the pet is brought out of anesthesia, dental x-rays also may be taken to check for problems not visible to the naked eye. The pet also will be monitored after anesthesia in the recovery room.

At home

When the pet is released to go home, it is important for pet owners to keep up with dental cleanings. Do not use toothpaste designed for humans, as there are special animal-safe products for this purpose. Depending on what was done during the cleaning, the vet may prescribe antibiotics and/or pain medications.

Dental cleanings are an important component of overall pet care. Consult with a vet to learn more about pet dental cleanings.

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deeper reality, and know that on that level they are safe.

Trust like this takes many forms — faith in God, confidence in the Universe, reliance on others, or simple belief in yourself. It is a powerful force, giving you the strength to ride out terrible setbacks.

The pitfall: Be careful what you put your faith in, and recognize that your fear may have important information for you. When crossing a river, it is not wise to use a bridge that gets swept away by high water. Make sure that you are relying on someone or something that is worthy of your trust. Similarly, give your fears a thorough examination through a fear inventory to see if they have anything important to tell you.

4. Self-hatred vs self-love: I've worked with patients who told me straight up, "I hate myself." Loving yourself is one of the hardest tasks of all, because it is so easy to beat yourself up for flaws or shortcomings that seem major to you.

You may view yourself as unlovable because of something you did or failed to do, or a decision or choice that led you down a bad path. Even so, you can forgive yourself and learn to love yourself. You might start by making a list of the people who love you. Are all of them wrong to view you as a lovable human being? Probably not. So why do they love you? If you're not sure, ask them.

The pitfall: Stick with people that you know with certainty love you. There's nothing worse than turning to someone for help and support and discovering that they have none to give.

5. Connection vs separation. Humans are social animals. We need to be "a part of" and not "apart from." Membership in a community of people who are at least somewhat similar to you can soothe some of the hurts you experience in the world.

Family can give you this sense of connection, but you may need to search beyond your biological kin and find a "family of choice" — people who welcome you as their brother or sister and give you that sense of belonging that you crave.

The pitfall: Avoid groups with a reputation for rejection. There's no sense setting yourself up for someone to whack you emotionally, much less physically.

Next time on The Healing Journey we will talk about 4 life-giving actions you can take to improve your mental health. ■

This article provides a general overview of certain mental health issues. It is not advice to take any specific approach to diagnosis or treatment. You should consult your mental health provider for a detailed assessment of your own symptoms and circumstances before embarking on any treatment.



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