

Daily Mood Log (Part 2): Positive Reframing

By exploring the hidden benefits and core values within our negative thoughts and emotions, we can set meaningful goals for change.

What Is Positive Reframing?

Positive reframing in TEAM-CBT involves taking a closer look at our negative thoughts and emotions to understand why it might actually be a good thing that we are experiencing them. We wouldn't hold onto an emotion or a thought if it weren't helpful to us in some way.

While it sounds counterintuitive, exploring the positive aspects of our pain can bring immediate relief. It also makes the rest of our therapy tools significantly more effective. Ultimately, this step helps us set our emotional goals by determining exactly how much of each emotion we want to decrease, eliminate, or keep exactly the same.

Why Is This Step Important?

Early in my career as a therapist, I worked with a patient who wanted to completely eliminate his anxiety. When I suggested we look at the good reasons to hold onto that anxiety, he assured me there were none, and I reluctantly agreed to skip the step. We successfully used therapy techniques to drop his anxiety all the way down to zero, and he left the session feeling on top of the world.

However, he returned the following week furious with me. Without his anxiety, he had become far too carefree. Because he was no longer anxious about what others thought, he spoke with absolutely no filter, saying whatever came to his mind to everyone including his wife. It created a tremendous amount of distress and led to daily arguments at home.

Fortunately, we backtracked and used positive reframing to identify the hidden benefits of his anxiety. The most important realization for him was: "My anxiety helps me filter what I say around my wife so I don't hurt her feelings." Instead of eliminating his anxiety completely, he realized he wanted to keep about 10% of it to maintain those positive benefits.

Uncovering the Good in the Bad

Feel free to use any combination of the questions below to help navigate what might be beneficial about your negative emotions and thoughts.

How does this thought or emotion help me?

- *Example: "How does my anxiety help me?" → It motivates me to study for my exams.*

What beautiful things does it say about me and my core values?

- *Example: "What does the thought 'My parents must be so disappointed' say about me?" → It shows that I deeply love my parents and value their opinion.*

If the opposite were true, why might that be a bad thing?

- *Example: "If I didn't feel guilty for lying, why would that be bad?" → It would mean I lack a moral compass. Feeling guilty proves I have strong personal ethics.*

Why would a higher power allow me to experience this?

- *Example: "Why am I experiencing this unhappiness?" → To help me grow, build resilience, and develop empathy for others who are hurting.*

What is the evolutionary benefit?

- *Example: "What is the survival benefit of feeling hopeless?" → It signals my brain to stop wasting energy on something that isn't working so I can try a different approach.*

Goal Setting: The Magic Dial

Our thoughts directly influence our emotions. By establishing clear goals, we decide how much impact we want those negative thoughts to have.

After completing the positive reframe, ask yourself: Given all these advantages and beautiful core values, why would I want to give these feelings up?

If you decide you don't want to give them up, that is wonderful! You have learned to accept things as they are. If you decide they are causing you too much distress, you can use the "Magic Dial" technique.

Ask yourself: If I had a magic dial that could turn down this emotion so I still get the benefits but avoid the heavy distress, what percentage (between 0% and 100%) would I dial it down to?

How You Can Use This Technique (Part 2)

Step 1. Reflect back on the emotions and thoughts you identified in Part 1. Write them in the chart below. Then, using the questions above, jot down the specific benefits and core values associated with each one.

Negative Emotions & Thoughts	Positive Reframe
<input type="checkbox"/> Sad, blue, depressed, down, unhappy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious, worried, panicky, nervous, frightened	
<input type="checkbox"/> Guilty, remorseful, bad, ashamed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Inferior, worthless, inadequate, defective, incompetent	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lonely, unloved, unwanted, rejected, alone, abandoned	
<input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassed, foolish, humiliated, self-conscious	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless, discouraged, pessimistic, despairing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated, stuck, thwarted, defeated	

<input type="checkbox"/> Angry, mad, resentful, annoyed, irritated, upset, furious	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____ _____	

Step 2. Ask yourself: "Given all the good things about these emotions and thoughts, why would I want to change them?"

If you don't want to change them, you can stop here. If you do still want to change, note your reasons why and proceed to Step 3.

Step 3. Copy your emotions and their original intensity percentages from Part 1 into the chart below. Now that you understand their hidden value, what is your new "Goal Percentage" for each? Where do you want to set the dial?

Negative Emotions	Percentage	Goal
<input type="checkbox"/> Sad, blue, depressed, down, unhappy		
<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious, worried, panicky, nervous, frightened		
<input type="checkbox"/> Guilty, remorseful, bad, ashamed		
<input type="checkbox"/> Inferior, worthless, inadequate, defective, incompetent		
<input type="checkbox"/> Lonely, unloved, unwanted, rejected, alone, abandoned		
<input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassed, foolish, humiliated, self-conscious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless, discouraged, pessimistic, despairing		
<input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated, stuck, thwarted, defeated		
<input type="checkbox"/> Angry, mad, resentful, annoyed, irritated, upset, furious		

<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____		
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What Comes Next

This second part of the Daily Mood Log focuses entirely on finding the good in the bad. While we haven't actively changed anything yet, people often feel a profound sense of relief simply by uncovering the hidden benefits of their distress. The next step will involve actively revising our negative thoughts so you can reach the new goals you set today.

Important Things to Keep in Mind

- **Staying the same is okay:** There are often very good, healthy reasons not to change.
 - **Honor your values:** We would not experience these difficult emotions if they weren't highlighting something deeply important to us.
 - **Seek support:** This is often the most challenging part of the treatment to learn. Having a therapist guide you through uncovering these benefits can be incredibly helpful. You might also explore a technique called "Externalization of Resistance" together for even more clarity.
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Final Note

Every person's emotional goals are completely different because they are driven by unique values and life experiences. It is a beautiful thing that our goals vary so much. It highlights our individuality and exactly what makes us who we are.