

## Does a Negative Feeling Silently Control My Life? Change my thinking and change my life

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Our thoughts control our feelings and our feelings determine how we experience life. Sometimes our thoughts are accurate barometers and sometimes they are reflections of outdated beliefs which we accepted early in life. Fortunately, we can change our thoughts because we control them. There may be times, however, when we feel that our thoughts and feelings control us.

In these difficult economic times, organizations want to retain the best people. Therefore, if you experience any of the feelings listed below or work with colleagues who demonstrate any of these feelings, this article may help shift your/their thoughts and move you/them along the desired spectrum.

- A. **Boredom** (lack of interest; no enthusiasm; unchallenged)
- B. **Hatred** (life; certain people; workplace)
- C. **Isolation** (left-out; by-passed; passed-over)
- D. **Overwhelmed** (personally or professionally)
- E. **Stifled** (dead-ended; working with a controlling boss; living with a controlling partner; general unhappiness)

Each of these feelings is addressed below. Skip to the section which will help at this time.

### A. Boredom

Bored ←————→ Enthused

Every emotion or feeling is on a spectrum. We feel bored for many reasons. Read the following list and check those which apply in your situation. Remember to be really honest. No one is going to read this except you. You are doing this for you. Do not worry about what other people think. You are the most important person you know.

REASONS WHY I AM BORED	APPLIES	DOES NOT APPLY
I cannot afford to do the things I value or enjoy		
This job does not enable me to use my talents or strengths		
I have spent years being reminded of my weaknesses		
I don't know my strengths		
I don't know what would enthuse me because I am afraid to take risks		
I don't have any friends who share my passion for (insert my own interest here)		
I am in a dead-ended job		
Life is routine		
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

Now that you have been honest with yourself, think about your choices. There are options which are within your sphere of control and options which are within your sphere of influence (someone else is in control but you can provide input or change your behaviour

to cause improvements to occur). Move to the table below and review the options listed, then write my own plan. Ensure it is realistic and achievable. Take pride in each step you accomplish.

<b>WHY I AM BORED</b>	<b>I COULD</b>	<b>I WILL</b>
I cannot afford to do the things I value or enjoy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change jobs</li> <li>2. Improve my educational level or technical ability</li> <li>3. Look for ways to generate more income</li> <li>4. Look for things which are inexpensive or free to challenge my interests (e.g. Volunteer to teach others)</li> </ol>	
This job does not enable me to use my talents or strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify my professional strengths and discuss those with my boss.</li> <li>2. Ask to be considered when an opportunity arises where my strengths are needed.</li> <li>3. Actively look for a job which enables me to use my strengths</li> <li>4. Really analyze my job and ask myself whether there are ways I could make it more fulfilling.</li> </ol>	
I have spent years being reminded of my weaknesses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Think of these people and remember that we are mirrors of each other (in other words do these same people have these same weaknesses)</li> <li>2. Write down my weaknesses and my strengths and determine ways I can use my strengths to compensate for my weaknesses.</li> <li>3. Accept my weaknesses (we can't all be great at everything)</li> </ol>	
I don't know my strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask trusted others to write down what they perceive to be my strengths</li> <li>2. Read Tom Rath's Book, "The Strengths Finder" and complete the free strengths finder exercise</li> <li>3. Identify my own strengths and list all the ways I demonstrate these strengths in each aspect of my life</li> <li>4. Talk to a consultant who specializes in this area (one person I know is Gail Carroll of GM Carroll and Associates at 709-739-4245)</li> </ol>	
I don't know what would enthuse me because I am afraid to take risks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write down my fears and determine whether they are real or imagined</li> <li>2. Identify one area where I am willing to take a safe risk and take it</li> </ol>	
I don't have any friends who share my passion for (insert your own interest)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify organizations, committees, websites, on-line groups which have similar interests.</li> <li>2. Determine which group I will join.</li> </ol>	
I am in a dead-ended job	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Question whether the job is dead-ended or whether I have decided that it is dead-ended and I have stopped giving my all to my work.</li> <li>2. Determine what I could do to improve my working conditions</li> <li>3. Determine what my boss could do to help improve my working conditions and have an honest conversation with him/her (Your boss may be totally unaware of how I am feeling)</li> </ol>	
Life is routine (the same day after day)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine what I can do to change my routine and make minor changes one at a time.</li> </ol>	
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

## B. Hatred

hate ←————→ like/love

We dislike, hate, despise, and resent others and ourselves for numerous reasons. We may be jealous for some reason. We may fear another's perceived power 'over' us, take exception to their relationships with others, or resent their talents and skills. Whatever the reason, it is important to identify what we hate and why and, for my own health and wellbeing, move to a healthier place on the spectrum.

REASONS WHY I HATE	APPLIES	DOES NOT APPLY
I hate the fact that s/he is always seems to get ahead		
I hate the fact that s/he is rude to me		
I hate the fact that s/he has more money than I		
I hate the fact that s/he brown-noses the boss		
I hate the fact that s/he does not work as hard as I do		
I hate the fact that s/he is more beautiful/handsome than I		
I hate the fact that s/he has the perfect family/life		
I hate him/her because he/she reminds me of (insert the person's name)		
I hate the fact that s/he hones in on my relationships		
I hate myself		
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

Now that you have been honest with yourself, think about your choices. There are options which are within your sphere of control and options which are within your sphere of influence (someone else is in control but you can provide input or change your behaviour to cause changes to take place). Move to the table below and review the options listed, then write your plan. Ensure it is realistic and achievable. Take pride in each step you accomplish.

WHY I HATE	I COULD	I WILL
I hate the fact that s/he is always seems to get ahead	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assess my contribution and determine whether I am giving every effort my all</li> <li>2. Analyze the characteristics that s/he demonstrates and cultivate those strengths</li> <li>3. Demonstrate that I have strengths by excelling in those areas</li> </ol>	
I hate the fact that s/he is rude to me	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Respond to rudeness with dignity and positive behaviours</li> <li>2. Determine whether this person is jealous and is demonstrating an inferiority complex</li> <li>3. Release all negative feelings when leaving this person's presence and not let his/her behaviour affect all of my day</li> </ol>	
I hate the fact that s/he has more money than I	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do something to earn more money</li> <li>2. Write out what it is about money that would make me happier, what I have to be happy about right now, and what I would have to give up in order to increase my income; then determine what I really want and be happy with that decision</li> <li>3. Find out whether people with more money are always more content than people with less money</li> </ol>	
I hate the fact that s/he brown-noses the boss	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review how I treat others and if it is with respect and dignity be proud of myself</li> <li>2. Determine what positive behaviours I need to demonstrate to get that person's attention and do them</li> <li>3. Let the other person live with their insecurities and weaknesses without judging them or reacting to them</li> </ol>	
I hate the fact that s/he does not work as hard as I do	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine whether it is possible to work smarter rather than harder</li> <li>2. Determine whether I am working hard to please myself or to please someone else (The only person who can be truly proud of you is you)</li> <li>3. Find out whether others recognize my hard work and whether this is something they value</li> </ol>	
I hate the fact that s/he is more beautiful/hand some than I	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write down my positive characteristics/features and celebrate those</li> <li>2. Appreciate the other person's beauty</li> <li>3. Celebrate each person's uniqueness and strengths</li> </ol>	
I hate the fact that s/he has the perfect family/life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write out what I really want out of life (define perfection)</li> <li>2. Determine what I have now and what I want next and develop a plan to gain it</li> <li>3. Question why I am jealous and determine whether I need to work on these reasons</li> </ol>	
I hate him/her because he/she reminds me of (insert the person's name)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write out the person's strengths and commit to focusing on those strengths</li> <li>2. Question whether I would want someone to dislike me because I remind them of someone else</li> <li>3. Determine whether the person I dislike has qualities similar to those I dislike about myself and make a plan to work on my own growth (we cannot change others, we can only change ourselves)</li> </ol>	
I hate the fact that s/he hones in on my relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Select when I include this person in my relationships</li> <li>2. Talk to this person about my feelings</li> </ol>	
I hate myself	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write out the 10 key events in my life (I will know what they are because they pop into my head when I least expect them), determine what message I took from each event, and analyze it to see if it is factual or my interpretation</li> <li>2. Write out all the reasons why I do not like myself, put the list away in a safe and private place, and in one week pull it out read it and determine whether it is accurate. If it is make a plan to change those things I can control.</li> </ol>	
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

### C. Isolation

Isolation ←————→ Inclusion

The feelings of isolation can be awful. They are not to be underestimated. We can feel this way for a number of reasons. Read the following list and check those which apply in your case. Remember to be really honest. No one is going to read this except you. You are doing this for you. Do not worry about what other people think. You are the most important person you know.

<b>REASONS WHY I FEEL ISOLATED</b>	<b>APPLIES</b>	<b>DOES NOT APPLY</b>
1. I live so far from others		
2. I work on my own		
3. My family are grown up and gone		
4. My friends moved		
5. I am not included in social events		
6. Others don't ask my opinions		
7. I don't have anyone with whom to share my real needs		
8. I do most things on my own		
9. My best friends moved to other departments/places of employment		
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

Now that you have been honest with yourself, think about your choices. There are options which are within your sphere of control and options which are within your sphere of influence (someone else is in control but you can provide input or change your behaviour to cause changes to take place). Move to the table below and review the options listed, then write my plan. Ensure it is realistic and achievable. Take pride in each step you accomplish.

WHY I FEEL ISOLATED	I COULD	I WILL
1. I live so far from others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Move</li> <li>2. Arrange times to meet with others on a regular basis</li> <li>3. Use other ways to stay in contact (other than face-to-face only)</li> </ol>	
2. I work on my own	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Join an organization of individuals doing similar work</li> <li>2. Invite a group to advise me in my work</li> <li>3. Find one thing to do each day which brings me in contact with other people</li> </ol>	
3. My family are grown up and gone	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cultivate new friendships</li> <li>2. Volunteer to help others</li> <li>3. Learn new activities</li> <li>4. Use strengths that were dormant</li> </ol>	
4. My friends moved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Join a new activity or club</li> <li>2. Find ways to stay in regular contact with friends</li> <li>3. Write down the names of all the people I know and determine whether there are people who have similar interests to mine and contact them</li> <li>4. Offer to help others</li> </ol>	
5. I am not included in social events	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make a list of the social activities I really enjoy</li> <li>2. Question why I am left out (the reason I think may not be the reason at all)</li> <li>3. Ask what I can do to contribute to the group</li> <li>4. Develop a sense of humor</li> <li>5. Take an interest in subjects which interest other people</li> <li>6. Focus on others rather than on myself (nurture and question)</li> <li>7. Do some of the inviting</li> </ol>	
6. Others don't ask my opinions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Offer constructive comments</li> <li>2. Offer solutions</li> <li>3. Point out realistic risks and how they can be addressed</li> <li>4. Give others credit where credit is due</li> <li>5. Say thank-you often</li> <li>6. Ask others opinions and let them know when I used their input</li> </ol>	
7. I don't have anyone with whom to share my real needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognize that I am the only person who can fulfill my needs.</li> <li>2. Do one good deed every day (however small)</li> <li>3. Write down my needs and after each write 'w' or 'n'. W stands for want and N means need. Make sure that my needs are really needs, and then recognize that one person /group may not meet all of my needs. Seek out a support individuals/groups where each need can be met.</li> <li>4. Write down the names of persons who cry on my shoulder and determine whether they could meet some of my needs</li> <li>5. Take advantage of the Employee Assistance Program</li> </ol>	
8. I do most things on my own	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. List all the benefits of doing things on my own.</li> <li>2. Write down the things I would like to do that could benefit others and find a way to do just that</li> <li>3. List all the things I could contribute to make others' lives better and do those things</li> <li>4. List my strengths and determine which activities I would really like to do with others and which I would like to continue to do alone, and then make a picture board of me doing those collaborative activities. Focus on this.</li> </ol>	
9. My best friends moved to other departments/places of employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine whether I want to move or stay. If I stay, I commit to be happy.</li> <li>2. Make a list of the strengths of the people with whom I work, determine which strengths are complimentary, and find ways or ask to collaborate with these people and get to know them better.</li> </ol>	
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

## D. Overwhelmed

overwhelmed ←————→ relaxed

Many of us feel overwhelmed when we take on too much responsibility or function in areas which are not founded on their strengths. Some of us have superman or superwoman complexes. The main thing is to recognize that we are overwhelmed and attempt to move along the spectrum toward a state of relaxation.

REASONS WHY I AM OVERWHLEMED	APPLIES	DOES NOT APPLY
1. I get assigned too much work		
2. My time-lines are too tight		
3. I am not given enough resources to do my job well		
4. I am expected to work 12 hours a day and fulfill my personal responsibilities without question		
5. I have too much debt		
6. I can't relax because I work for a bully		
7. Others expect me to meet their needs and they have no real regard for my needs		
8. I have anger-management issues which have never been addressed		
9. I have developed an addiction to deal with the feeling		
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

Now that you have been honest with yourself, think about your choices. There are options which are within your sphere of control and options which are within your sphere of influence (someone else is in control but you can provide input or change your behaviour to cause changes to take place). Move to the table below and review the options listed, then write my own plan. Ensure it is realistic and achievable. Take pride in each step you accomplish.

<b>WHY I AM OVERWHELMED</b>	<b>I COULD</b>	<b>I WILL</b>
1. I get assigned too much work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outline the time frame that it will take to accomplish each assignment and work with my boss to set priorities</li> <li>2. Say “No” when I have a full load of responsibilities</li> <li>3. Ask others for help</li> <li>4. Learn to set more realistic time frames based on my past experience or the experience of others</li> <li>5. Continue to accept the assignments but determine to be relaxed as I complete the work</li> </ol>	
2. My time-lines are too tight	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learn what I can accomplish within the given timeframe and state that clearly</li> <li>2. Negotiate what is realistic</li> <li>3. Ask for help</li> <li>4. Find short cuts or tools to help lessen the load</li> </ol>	
3. I am not given enough resources to do my job well	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State clearly what I need to do the job well</li> <li>2. Note any shortfalls in performance which were due to resource shortages</li> <li>3. Take part in the budgetary process by making my case for the resources I need</li> <li>4. Find out what others do in similar situations</li> </ol>	
4. I am expected to work 12 hours a day and fulfill my personal responsibilities without question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine my priorities</li> <li>2. Set boundaries and stick to them</li> <li>3. Explain my situation and if others don’t understand that is their issue – I have been honest and up-front</li> <li>4. Refuse to accept guilt from others and I could pass it back</li> </ol>	
5. I have too much debt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set spending priorities and stick to them</li> <li>2. Develop a debt repayment plan</li> <li>3. Seek professional guidance</li> <li>4. Increase my income</li> </ol>	
6. I can’t relax because I work for a bully	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain to the bully how his/her behaviour affects my performance</li> <li>2. Speak with my boss about the effect of this behaviour</li> <li>3. See advice from a professional</li> <li>4. Move</li> <li>5. Register a complaint</li> </ol>	
7. Others expect me to meet their needs and they have no real regard for my needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify my needs and articulate them clearly before stating them to others. If they do not acknowledge them that is their issue not mine</li> <li>2. Determine those needs I have the resources to meet and set and maintain my boundaries</li> <li>3. Set realistic limits and respect the limits of others</li> </ol>	
8. I have anger-management issues which have never been addressed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek professional guidance within or outside the organization</li> <li>2. Join a support group</li> <li>3. Write down all the triggers and question whether the behaviours are symptoms rather than the real issues</li> </ol>	
9. I have developed an addiction to deal with the feeling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek professional guidance within or outside the organization</li> <li>2. Join a support group</li> <li>3. Write down all the triggers and questions whether they are symptoms or the real issues</li> <li>4. Be patient with myself</li> </ol>	
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

## E. Stifled

Stifled ←————→ Freedom

When we feel stifled, we have to pinch ourselves to see if we are still alive. We can feel as if we buried alive or caged in. We need to find the key and move along the spectrum to freedom and choice. We need to reconnect with our creativity and positive feelings.

<b>REASONS WHY I FEEL STIFLED</b>	<b>APPLIES</b>	<b>DOES NOT APPLY</b>
1. I feel as if my opinion doesn't count		
2. I feel as if my ideas are rejected without investigation		
3. I feel as if nothing I do is good enough		
4. I feel alone		
5. I feel angry		
6. I feel as if there is no way to escape		
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

Now that you have been honest with yourself, think about your choices. There are options which are within your sphere of control and options which are within your sphere of influence (someone else is in control but you can provide input or change your behaviour to cause changes to take place). Move to the table below and review the options listed, then write my own plan. Ensure it is realistic and achievable. Take pride in each step you accomplish.

WHY I FEEL STIFLED	I COULD	I WILL
1. I feel as if my opinion doesn't count	1. State my opinions clearly and positively, and in writing if necessary 2. Reserve my opinions to topics where I have considerable expertise/experience 3. Determine whether this is a fact or my perception	
2. I feel as if my ideas are rejected without investigation	1. Meet with my supervisor, express my concerns, and reach a common understanding 2. Support ideas with research 3. Present ideas with associated pros and cons	
3. I feel as if nothing I do is good enough	1. Determine standards which are realistic, compare my work/contribution with those standards, and if it meets the standard feel satisfied with my outputs 2. Praise myself for jobs well-done	
4. I feel alone	1. Note the amount of time I am alone and ask others how much time they spend alone. If I am spending too much time alone develop a realistic plan to change that situation 2. Decide how I can help/support others and do good deeds with grace 3. Seek out people/groups who enjoy the same things as I do	
5. I feel angry	1. Write out the things that cause me to feel angry, determine what I can and cannot change, and change those I can 2. Find a constructive outlet for my feelings (e.g. exercise) 3. Leave my angry feelings where they belong and not bring them into other situations 4. Find a way to get rid of those feelings before going to sleep each night 5. List all the things I feel good about or grateful for each day	
6. I feel as if there is no way to escape	1. List all the reasons why this is a good place to be at this time and all the negative reasons. See if there is a way to build on the positive 2. Describe exactly where I would want to escape and seek out opportunities 3. Seek professional counseling	
Other (insert my own reasons here)		

Negative thoughts ruin many lives. We do not need be among those numbers. Take action today.

Kelleher-Flight, Brenda (2009) *Does a Negative Feeling Silently Control My Life? Change my thinking and change my life*, St. John's, GDP Consulting Inc., <http://www.gdpconsulting.ca>