

DOWNLOADABLE SELF-EXAMINATION PACKET

[I used all of the following material in working with teens with poor impulse control...; I am not doing much editing as I type, so if it sounds like something your grade school teacher spoke to you, remember my former audience.]

The following introduction is adapted from *Switching Channels*, by R.D. Friedberg, Ph.D. This information should provide some basic knowledge to help you understand the **value of learning to observe and process your thoughts and feelings so as to positively impact your behavior.**

Thoughts and feelings go together. Although it may be easier to notice one more than the other, you cannot have one without the other. The following information should help you understand **the difference** between thoughts and feelings and **the connections** that exist between them.

Thoughts are the things that go through your mind when you feel sad, mad, scared, and happy. Have you ever seen a cartoon? Did you notice the things in the bubble over the characters' heads when they did something or felt an emotion? Well, thoughts are the things in the bubble. There are many different thoughts, and people may say many different things to themselves.

An important skill you can learn is identifying the thoughts that cause unpleasant feelings.

Thoughts are very difficult to identify because they are automatic. You are not immediately aware of every breath you take, yet you go on breathing. However, if you **direct your attention** to notice each breath, you become more aware and able to identify each breath. Try that now, and see if that isn't so.

The goal of this information is to teach you to become more aware of the things that go through your mind **when you have painful feelings.** When you learn to notice your automatic thoughts, you can become more in charge of them.

In order to notice your thoughts, you need to ask yourself some questions that interrupt the familiar pattern. It is especially helpful to ask yourself these questions **whenever you have strong feelings.** When your feelings change, this is a **signal** that your thoughts have changed.

Ask yourself:

What am I saying to myself right now? (The self-exam form, on page 8, will give you other questions to ask yourself.)

Let's see how automatic thoughts and strong feelings are connected. The following is an example of automatic thoughts related to a situation.

Let's suppose that the following **situation** happened to you. We are going to examine your thoughts and feelings to give you some insight into the processes going on inside you all day long.

SITUATION: As you arrive at your girlfriend's house to visit her, she is on her front porch hugging another guy.

THOUGHTS (what automatically occurred to you):

1. She is cheating on me.
2. He is trying to play me.
3. They are both lying to me and sneaking behind my back.

FEELINGS (that flow from the specific thoughts above):

1. Betrayed, hurt, angry, confused, defensive
2. Betrayed, vengeful, duped, stupid, unimportant,
3. Betrayed, deceived, mistrustful, stupid, powerless

As you approach them, she parts from him and introduces you to the guy. He is her cousin who lives half-way across the USA, whom she hasn't seen for several years.

NEW THOUGHTS (based on this new information that you learned, you will automatically have different thoughts about this **same situation**):

1. She was not cheating on me; she was not being dishonest; she may be trustworthy
2. He was not taking advantage of me; sneaking behind my back;
3. That is nice that they are reunited and catching up on each other's lives

NEW FEELINGS (feelings that automatically come from these new thoughts):

1. Relieved, happy, trusting
2. Relieved, happy for both them, unguarded, relaxed
3. Happy, pleasant, guilty (for jumping to conclusions), sorry

What caused the changes in your feelings and thoughts?

The SITUATION above did not change.

New information that you discovered, enabled you to change your thoughts about this situation. When you experienced new thoughts, these CAUSED new feelings, automatically.

It is very important to understand that your feelings changed on their own when your thoughts changed.

Again, concerning the situation above, new information was the cause of the positive change that occurred inside you.

Presently, I want to introduce a few new terms to help you see the inner workings of this entire chain reaction process that we are trying to understand. The terms are **opinion, fact, and interpretation.**

What is an opinion? It consists of one or more thoughts you have about a given situation or event, or thing or person....

What is a fact? It is something that is true about a situation, event, thing, or person....

Let's go back to the above situation. Were **your initial thoughts** facts or opinions? They were opinions.

When you learned the facts, your thoughts automatically changed. At that same time, your opinions about your girlfriend and the guy changed too.

To break it down a little further, I will make a list of facts and opinions about the above situation.

FACTS: she was hugging another man. They were on her front porch.

OPINIONS: she is cheating on me; he is a player; they are sneaking behind my back.

NEW FACTS: she was hugging another man; they were on her front porch; he is her cousin; they have not seen each other for a long time; they are reuniting; they are catching up on each other's lives.

NEW OPINIONS: I jumped to hurtful conclusions about them; I wrongly mistrusted my girlfriend; she was not behaving deceitfully; they were not scheming behind my back....

What is an interpretation?

The mixture of facts and opinions you have about a situation, an event, a thing, a person....

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO FORMULATE **ACCURATE INTERPRETATIONS** ABOUT SITUATIONS, BECAUSE INTERPRETATIONS CAUSE FEELINGS, AND FEELINGS CAUSE BEHAVIORS.

These three have a relationship like **root, tree and fruit. Thoughts are the root; feelings, the tree and behavior is the fruit.**

In the situations that make up your life, you are constantly having thoughts and feelings. Your continual flow of thoughts and feelings greatly influences your behaviors. There is not a direct cause and effect relationship between your thoughts and feelings to your behavior; but continued negative thoughts and feelings about a situation, will sooner or later result in some negative behavior; and vice versa.

So, these ideas are relevant to your every-day life. All times of the day. At home, work, church...with family, friends, enemies....

Before we discuss behavior and learn the self-exam, feeling identification...I need to say a bit more about the above situation. **What I have already said remains true**, that when you discovered new information, this discovery automatically changed your thoughts and feelings. And that change was significant because painful, aggressive type feelings left you and were replaced with more pleasant, peaceful feelings which would have enabled you to more pleasantly interact with the two of them.

But, what if you discovered that they really were sneaking around behind your back; that she was cheating? Since you are a Christian, it is important to learn that you can **choose to interpret** situations in ways that enable you to maintain self-control even when you are dealing with painful situations.

You are responsible for the way you interpret a situation. Remember, an interpretation is a mixture of facts (you can't change) and opinions (that you can change). Feelings are mixed in there too, but those will change if you can adjust your thoughts.

So, regarding the above situation with your girlfriend, we know what the facts were; but as we make the painful discovery that our initial dreadful thoughts were accurate, we must still control ourselves—God commands that we are to love our enemies, Jesus' words from Matthew 6, for example.

What are some thoughts and opinions that you could have about this new painful situation that would enable you to conduct yourself in a godly manner?

- I need to be more careful in choosing my next girlfriend
- I cannot make them conduct themselves respectfully
- With God's grace, I can conduct myself as He would have me do
- I need to pray to God right now and ask Him to help me think differently about this problem
- I am going to go home and read God's word for help on how I should think about them
- I am thankful that I got a glimpse of her deceitful behavior before we married
- I don't want to be in a relationship with someone who doesn't want me

- I don't want to be in a relationship with a liar, deceiver....
- They and I have to answer to God for our conduct in relationships
- God is the avenger, I would be sinning against God if I retaliated
- This is an opportunity to learn a little bit about loving those who harm me
- Everything that comes into our lives is permitted by God, therefore, there must be a lesson in this for me to learn
- It is okay to be hurt, to mourn...but I need to depend upon God for comfort and self-control

These sorts of thoughts would certainly enable you to maintain self-control such that you would not bring any reproach upon Christ's name, or be arrested by the police for assault, e.g.

Thinking the above thoughts would also diminish the amount of pain you experienced.

However, there would still be residual emotional pain because of the betrayal. It would be **your responsibility to manage it** by turning to God, His word, prayer, Christian music, a confidant, etc. Yet, if you sin in some way, it is still essential that you turn to God, as there is forgiveness with Him that He might be feared.

REVIEW OF IMPORTANT IDEAS:

- All day long, every day of your life, situations cause you to have thoughts and feelings
- The thoughts you have cause the feelings you have
- The thoughts you have about a situation are made up of facts and opinions
- You can change your opinions
- Sometimes your opinions change automatically because you learn new non-threatening information
- Other times, you will have to deliberately re-interpret a situation so that you can maintain self-control and not behave in an ungodly manner
- To RE-interpret a situation is to have different, more reasonable thoughts about it
- It is important to practice re-interpreting unpleasant situations, even if they are minor things, because it takes effort and practice to learn these skills, and you will eventually need to use them in more painful situations
- You are responsible for how you think about a situation; having reasonable thoughts about a situation will cause you to have more reasonable feelings
- If you are able to maintain reasonable thoughts and feelings, then it is likely that your conduct will also be reasonable
- Seek help via God's means of grace to enable you to have appropriate conduct in painful situations; pray for understanding and enablement regarding learning these skills

LEARNING TO IDENTIFY FEELINGS

In this first lesson about learning how to identify feelings and what causes them, you will need to begin writing in a journal. Use a spiral bound notebook to keep track of the following information two times or more a day. For each journal entry, follow the examples below. Use the basic feeling word list (in the appendix) to describe the feelings that your situation caused you. As your skills improve, download a larger feeling-word list from the internet. Use as many different feeling words as you can so that you will develop a better feeling-word vocabulary.

FEELING + WHAT CAUSED THE FEELING

EXAMPLES:

1. I was HURT and ANGERED when he yelled at me.
2. I felt UNAPPRECIATED because of his ingratitude.
3. I felt DISAPPOINTED and AGITATED when my check did not arrive in the mail.
4. I felt RESENTFUL when she didn't help me clean up the mess.
5. I felt SATISFIED and GRATEFUL after that wonderful meal.
6. I felt EXCITED and ANXIOUS about starting my new diet.
7. I felt HURT and DEFENSIVE because of his cruel remark.
8. I felt REJECTED, EXCLUDED, and PUZZLED when they did not invite me.
9. I felt BETRAYED, HUMILIATED, HURT, INADEQUATE and DEFENSIVE after they used my disclosures against me.
10. I was ELATED to discover that he had spoken highly of me.

LESSON TWO:

Feelings cause sensations inside us. Feelings also generate different kinds of energy. All this does not remain inside; it causes changes in our exterior. In other words, when you have a feeling, it is not necessarily a private matter, others may also notice changes in you. These changes are called cues ("body language" is a reference to a group of cues).

For example, if someone is experiencing anger, he may throw something, hit something or someone, yell, scream, isolate himself....

Part of becoming more aware of your feelings is that you learn to see the cues you show when you are experiencing a feeling. Seeing your own cues early, can help you realize that you need to take some action to get yourself in check.

Being able to see other people's cues can help you prepare to interact with them. For example, if you know the cues that go with anger, or with dishonesty, then you don't have to rely so much on a person's words. You can listen to their words and read their feeling cues and get a better sense for the goals they have in their interactions with you. That is, if you witness a person slamming things around and yelling at others, then you could get ready to defend yourself; and / or do something to help him settle down. Or if they are unable to make eye contact, it might be that they are up to no good?

LESSON 2 JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT: (use the list of cues in the appendix) and note the cues that you observed when you experienced strong feelings in your interactions with people. Try to get one or two for each area; you may also note some of the other persons cues if you can identify them.

FEELING + CAUSE

BODY CUES:

VERBAL CUES:

FACIAL CUES:

EXAMPLE:

I was HURT and ANGERED when he YELLED AT ME.

BODY CUES (from the list): tense muscles; poised for attack, to defend myself; he was pumped up

VERBAL CUES: I was silent; he was loud, disrespectful, name calling,

FACIAL CUES: my head was cocked to the side, my eyes were squinted, jaw tight; his eyes were wild looking

It takes a lot of practice to observe these things in yourself and others when you're interacting with them. Make note of what you observe and keep trying to see more.

In our next lesson, we will be learning to use the self-exam form. If you need help with any of the questions on that form, then look back at the examples on pages 2-6. We analyzed all the elements of the self-examination form on those pages.

LESSON THREE: Using the self-examination form

Q1. What was the situation?

Q2. What were your automatic thoughts?

Q3. What were your automatic feelings?

Q4. How did you behave? (Compare your behavior with Romans 12 commands, e.g.)

Q5. What were the consequences of my behavior? (Its impact on your relationships with God and with people)

Q6. What are my NEW thoughts about this situation as I re-interpret it?

Q7. What NEW automatic feelings do I have because of my changed thoughts?

Q8. What is my plan of action to keep from sinning like this in the future?

LESSON FOUR: Learning the "I message"

Using an "I statement" when you are trying to resolve a conflict with another person, can help you communicate your concerns to them without blaming them, accusing them, or causing them to get defensive. It is a communication tool.

I Feel (state your feelings)

When you (state the other person's behavior)

Because (state the effect on you)

I need (state what you want to happen)

EXAMPLES:

I feel BETRAYED

When you TELL OTHERS SOMETHING I TOLD YOU IN CONFIDENCE

Because IT MAKES ME THINK I CAN'T TRUST YOU

I need THAT YOU'LL KEEP MY BUSINESS TO YOURSELF WHEN I SHARE IT WITH YOU

I feel PROUD OF YOU

When you DO SUCH A THOROUGH JOB ON YOUR HOMEWORK

Because IT MAKES ME THINK YOU'RE INTERESTED IN LEARNING WHAT I TEACH YOU

I'd like to see you KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK

COMMON ERRORS WHEN ATTEMPTING TO USE THE I MESSAGE:

BLAMING: "You made me angry when...."

SLANDERING / DISRESPECTING: "I think you're a fool when...."

Before you try to use the I message to express yourself to another, practice it much in a journal so that you are sure you can use it without blaming, judging, disrespecting...another.

SUMMARY:

The skills we've covered in this workbook are very difficult to learn for most people. I know them to be difficult and I spent about 14 years teaching them to others. It takes time to develop self-observation skills; to learn the definitions of all the feeling words that you need to know to clearly articulate your situations in your own mind; not to mention, learning to express your innermost thoughts and feelings to another. However, I know that these skills are worth learning, even if you only want greater self-awareness and problem-solving skills, without applying them to your relationship problems.

In closing, I want to share with you the chief reason I used these tools when I was working with juvenile offenders. I was very interested in helping them examine their past abuse, identifying the thoughts they had about themselves because of experiencing it and the related feelings. Enabling them to identify these things reduced some of the worthlessness... they carried around with them and was beneficial to their daily lives. But my main purpose was to help them re-think their old opinions of themselves that caused the painful feelings they carried around with them. These tools can enable one to examine his past pain to ensure he is thinking rightly about it, discarding inaccurate opinions and replacing them with new, more accurate ones. That is a long and painful process that takes courage to confront and to endure; not to mention, help from others who support instead of demeaning one. But I am sharing this to let readers know that these tools have a broader application.

I pray that you are abiding in God's appointed means of grace and that He is upholding you in your pilgrimage.

MAP, JR

APPENDIX: pages 11 and 12

FEELING WORD LIST

HAPPY	ANGRY	FEARFUL	HURT	GUILTY
excited	annoyed	anxious	overlooked	wrong
elated	agitated	defensive	neglected	sorry
satisfied	resentful	intimidated	rejected	remorseful
serene	vengeful	terrified	devastated	unforgivable
DEPRESSED	INADEQUATE	CONFUSED	LONELY	ASHAMED
disappointed	stupid	puzzled	excluded	dirty
sad	unimportant	perplexed	forgotten	used
miserable	helpless	frustrated	alienated	humiliated
hopeless	powerless	trapped	abandoned	degraded
	worthless			disgraced

The list above has 10 types of feeling words, these are in bold print. Under each boldly printed word, there are several other forms of that feeling. For example, look at **DEPRESSED**, under this word there are four kinds of depressed feelings: disappointed (a mild form of depressed feelings) to hopeless (a heavier or stronger kind of depressed feeling). Each column is like this, ranging from mild to strong.

LIST OF FEELING CUES

BODY	VERBAL	FACIAL
<u>POSTURE</u> -Slumping -Erect -Poised for attack -Relaxed -Normal	<u>VOLUME</u> -Whispering -Quiet -Normal -Loud -Yelling -Screaming	<u>HEAD POSITION</u> -Hanging down -Cocked to side -Raised up -Centered
<u>TENSION LEVEL</u> -Tense muscles -Clenched fists -Normal -Relaxed	<u>TYPE OF LANGUAGE</u> -Respectful -Sarcastic -Cussing -Name calling	<u>EYES</u> -Up -Downcast -Rolling -Wide open -Spacey -Glassy -Direct contact -Squinted -Shifting -Wild -Calm
<u>ENERGY LEVEL</u> -Pumped up -Pacing (both explosive) -Energetic -Light -Heavy -Lethargic -Calm	<u>SPEED</u> -Slow -Normal -Fast -Pressured	<u>MOUTH</u> -Clenched teeth -Tight jaw -Pursed lips -Relaxed -Open -Closed
	<u>tone</u> -Whiny -High pitched -Normal -Base	