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Thought Model

Emotions drive so much of what we do when it comes to eating. We eat when we are happy, sad, bored, tired or stressed. We do this to buffer our emotions because feelings can be uncomfortable. WE learned as children that eating makes us feel better. Why? Food results in dopamine release in our brain which is a chemical that triggers a feeling of pleasure. Now we can't stop our brains from releasing dopamine but we can change our thoughts that trigger our emotions. The first step is to become aware of our emotions. Give yourself a few minutes each day to write out what it is in your brain. Don't edit and don't correct. Write out what you are thinking. This allows us to identify a thought process that is not serving us on our way to weight loss. The model that I use is one based on the teachings of Brooke Castillo*, a well-known life coach.

Circumstance: **A neutral fact**

Which triggers our

Thoughts: **what we believe about the circumstance**

Which result in our feelings

Feeling: **emotion provoked by our thoughts**

Which lead us to our action

Action: **what we do or don't do in response to our feelings**

Which always leads us to the results we encounter

Result: **the consequence of our actions or inactions**

Which always proves our thought

Things to know about the model:

1. The circumstance is always a neutral fact
2. Our result is always evidence of our thinking
3. Our feelings are always generated by our thoughts and not by the circumstance

Example: The scale. The following is a conversation I might have in my head about weighing on my scale.

"I weighed myself today and I am so overweight. I weigh ten pounds more than what I did when I brought my son home from the hospital. I can't find a diet that works for me. If I do start a diet I don't have the willpower to stick with it and I end of gaining more weight than I lose. Diets just don't work and I am too tired to exercise. I guess it doesn't matter what I do so I might as well continue to eat the way I have been."



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Old Thought Model:

- C:* I am overweight
- T:* Diets don't work and I don't have willpower
- E:* Despair
- A:* Eat a treat to make myself feel better
- R:* Gain weight

See how the result proves the thought? I gain weight which "proves" to me that diets don't work. Also see how the circumstance is not really a neutral fact? I might be overweight but 100% of people won't agree with me.

New Thought Model:

- C:* I weigh X number of pounds
- T:* This number is just a measure of the gravitational pull of earth on me
- E:* Curious, can I change this?
- A:* Eliminate sugar and flour from my nutrition plan
- R:* Weight Loss

The thought for the new model is neutral which does not trigger a negative emotion driving me to seek out food to buffer my feelings. The goal here is to turn our negative emotions into positive ones by changing our perception or thoughts about our life circumstances. In order to do this we must be open to feeling uncomfortable emotions and to approach our thoughts with curiosity. It takes practice to develop this as a useful tool but it can be life changing when you get the hang of it. Always approach yourself with compassion and love and I can give you some help if you get stuck. You might find that it is easier to work from the result you want backwards. Also sometimes we can't just go from one thought like "I hate my job" to "I love my job" with a single model. Sometimes we have to bridge the gap by using intermediary models. We call this minding the gap. We can work on this along the way. Remember, practice makes perfect!

*Brooke Castillo has a great podcast, The Life Coach School Podcast. If you listen to episode #26 she will explain the model in great detail. I recommend that you check it out