



## Change the Channel: The TV Mind Analogy

One of the primary aspects of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) involves enhancing the ability to effectively manage our thinking. One basic way to do this is to recognize negative thinking patterns and then try to shift our thinking in a more reasonable and positive direction. This can be challenging, and it takes patience and practice, but with time, when we are able to change our thinking, we will likely feel better and also make better decisions (with improved behaviors).

For this exercise, one way to view our thinking is to imagine our mind like a television with many channels. Some “channels” of thought are much better for us than others. Although the process of managing our thinking can be a lot more complex than described here, it can still be helpful to consider the idea of “**changing the channel**” as a way to shift away from negative patterns of thinking toward a more positive focus.

So, for the purpose of this exercise, look at your mind like a TV. The with your “remote” in hand, consider and discuss some of these common “channels” of thinking. Some channels tend to be unhealthy while others are more “in the middle” or neutral and other channels are actually much more positive and beneficial.

**DIRECTIONS** – For this list of fictional mental “TV Channels” below, discuss the following points:

1. If you can identify with this channel, what specifically comes to mind for you personally when you are mentally focused on this channel?
2. For the negative and neutral channels: What positive thoughts and coping strategies can help you change the channel to something more positive? - For the positive channels at the end: Discuss how you can try to increase your focus on these positive things more in life

### **“Negative” Channels** –

**Focusing on these channels of thought can lead toward negative feelings, bad moods, and if you are not careful: harmful behaviors.**

**The Obsession Channel** – This channel is very repetitive. When you turn on the obsession channel you may find yourself going over the same ground over and over. There can be many subjects on the obsession channel but whatever the topic is, it goes round and round in a circle rarely if ever going anywhere productive.

**The Self Doubt Channel** – This channel features programs that review all of your perceived flaws and mistakes. This channel can also feature your insecurities and areas where you lack confidence. If you spend too much time on the self doubt channel and allow yourself to dwell on this channel’s programming too deeply the self doubt channel can become the “Low Self Esteem” channel or even worse the “Self-Hate” channel

**The Self-Pity Network** – Some of the popular “shows” on this channel are: “Why I have it so tough” and “All the ways I am the victim” This channel is always all about being absorbed in your own troubles and you won’t find many solutions on this network.



**The Anger Channel** – This channel plays some shows about things that are annoying in the morning and as the day goes on it can be all about things that make you mad and irritable each day. There is also an “oldies” network on the anger channel called the “Resentment Rewind” that plays reruns where you watch things from the past over and over that upset you, just so you can relive them in your mind and hold onto resentments.

**The Classic Regrets Network** – This channel goes over life’s regrets and one of the most popular shows on this channel is “Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda...But Didn’t” as well as the show “My Worst Mistakes Rewind.” and the popular show “If Only.....”

**The Jealousy Broadcast** – This channel is just what it sounds like – “I Wish I Had What You Had” is the most common show on this channel and another show is “Compare and Complain.”

**The Stress and Worry Racing Thought TV Marathon** – This channel is similar to the obsession channel, but it is specifically focused on all the things in life (some real and some imagined) that may stress you out or cause anxiety. Anxieties, worries, fears, speculation, paranoia, stressors, overthinking, perfectionism and other uncomfortable thoughts can be played repeatedly and even nonstop on this channel. Reruns of negative events are also commonly viewed on this channel.

**Some other “Shows” you can binge-watch on some of these networks – Discuss:**

**The Days of Disappointment**

**“Its Just Not Fair!”**

**Everybody Hates Me**

**The Drama and Gossip Review**

**Why? Why? Why?!!!!**

**What if \_\_\_\_ Happens!**

**“Middle” Channels – These can be good, bad, or neutral depending upon the topic.**

**The Financial Channel** - Sometimes thinking about goals and budgeting can be positive when done at the right time. But worrying unnecessarily about debts and financial regrets can be a waste of time and so can thinking about finances in the middle of the night when you are trying to sleep.

**The Relationship Channel** – The outcome involved with this channel depends upon who you love and the types of relationships you are in. Supportive and mutually loving relationships can be positive to think about, but abusive relationships and other negative associates can be harmful to focus on and cause lots of stress.

**The Fantasy Channel** – Some healthy fantasies can be relaxing but fantasizing about things we know we aren’t good for us (like criminal ventures, self harm, getting high, vengeance, hate or violence) can be damaging and lead to negative behaviors.



**Positive Channels** – These channels are good for you and can build you up and even make you stronger. Spending time focused on these channels can even add to your happiness.

**The Gratitude Channel** – This is focused on all the good things in life you are fortunate to have- All that you appreciate and feel grateful for are the topics when this channel is “on”

**The Goal Channel** – This forward-looking channel is focused on the good things you plan on achieving both in the short term and the long term that make you a better person with a better life.

**The Hope and Inspiration Channel** – This extremely positive channel elicits upbuilding and motivational thoughts that drive you to want to make progress and energize you to keep going forward.

**The Spirituality and Self-Help Channel** – This channel is deep, and it involves both looking inside yourself to think about how you can strive to be a better you while also looking outside yourself to search for your bigger purpose in life and how you can make the lives of others better too

**The Creativity Network** – This highly imaginative channel is focused on how you can think outside the box and explore new interests, hobbies, ideas, and perspectives. Designing, making, building, decorating and creating are huge parts of this network.

**The Love, Goodness and Kindness Channel** – This channel is focused on what is good in life and on the positive quality of love, not in the romantic or sexual sense but in the sense of connection, commitment, affection, intimacy and closeness. Thinking about others in a positive light is highlighted on this channel as well as thoughts about ways to show others that we love them with our words and actions.

**Close out discussion: Plan to focus on the positive and “*Change the Channel*” with the negative**

- **Which channels stood out to you the most that you need to avoid personally?**
- **How can you increase your ability to change the channel when negative thinking takes over, and instead effectively cope?**
- **What positive things are you going to try to increase your focus on mentally, going forward after this group today?**