

# Thinking Differently: Jess's Story

Hi! I'm Jess.

About a year ago, at breakfast, I was feeling good. But then my son asked if I remembered that he had a basketball game that day.

Well, of course, I didn't. And when I looked at my calendar, I saw that I had a work thing that was too late to cancel. Suddenly, all my thoughts switched to lousy "bad mom" thoughts.

For the rest of the day, I let those thoughts change my feelings about myself. No matter what I was doing, I'd think all these terrible things.

I'd get cranky with my coworkers. I wasn't doing my best work. These thoughts and feelings turned a small mistake into a bad day.

By the time I got home, I was a mess. And my son? He was fine. He was happily celebrating the winning game with his friends.

But then I made things awkward when I yelled at him about spilled potato chips or something. I can't remember anymore. I just know it was one of those days.

At some point, I realized I was having more bad days than good. And that my feelings were affecting how I acted with other people.

I found a counselor. She taught me that I could learn to reframe my thoughts.

Now, you don't have to talk to a counselor about this. It helps, but it's something you can try right now.

Here's what I mean. We all have these automatic thoughts all day long. Thousands, in fact.

Positive thoughts. Negative thoughts. Truths. Unrealistic ideas.

But our thoughts can sometimes hurt how we feel about ourselves, others, and our life.

The one thing that I've learned from reading and therapy is that I can control what happens after thoughts or feelings come up. I can decide whether a thought is helpful to my well-being.

How? I can question whether the thought is true for me. And I can find a thought that's more helpful.

Let's take a look at an example. With the "I'm a bad mom" thought, I felt it deeply.

But then I asked myself, "Is that really true?" I realized that even if I can't make it to all of Chris's games, I go to as many as I can.

And whether I go to the game or not, we have fun and laugh together at dinner talking about the game. I think good moms do that.

Now when thoughts come up that aren't helpful, I take the time to slow down. And I explore whether my thoughts are realistic and helpful—or not.

Of course, I can't do this with every thought. But I am becoming more aware of the ways I sometimes view myself and my life.

This "slowing down" and becoming aware of how we think is a skill.

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It's a skill I've learned to help me reframe my thinking. I also found it helpful to work with a counselor.

If that's something you might be interested in, talk to your doctor. Like anything new, it takes some practice to learn how to question and exchange unhelpful thoughts for more helpful ones.

Keep with it. It can lead to feeling better about yourself, others and how you see the world.