

The FLIP IT! Process ©

'Flipping' can be likened to the Aikido term known as *tankan*, where a person turns her body 180 degrees to blend with an opposing force. This means not just turning your body but completely reversing your energy field. Using your thoughts to transmute your feelings about a situation is as powerful as a martial art!

A complete reversal of energy is the goal.... but a little step each time, slowly and surely, is a simple path to a complete 'FLIP.' With practice, you'll find that situations which look like they're going to be negative can be resolved in a positive manner. Or if they don't change, then you'll find that *you* have. Either way, the problem ceases to be a problem and instead, becomes a vehicle for increased awareness, learning and creativity.

There are four easy steps to the **FLIP IT!** process. Let me share them with you so you can begin to transform your life.

FLIP stands for:

- ❖ **FEEL**
- ❖ **LISTEN**
- ❖ **INTERVENE**
- ❖ **PROMOTE THE POSITIVE**



BEGIN by identifying an event, relationship or perspective that you want to **FLIP**. Basically, we want to **FLIP** any negative, bad-feeling thoughts and savor the positive, good-feeling thoughts.

Step 1: FEEL

The first step is to recognize that you are having a negative thought or are in what might be perceived as a negative situation. Once you 'catch yourself,' you can begin the flipping process.

Our feelings are the 'trigger' for letting us know whether we are headed down a negative spiral or up a positive one. Our feelings are our early warning system. What are you creating right now? Is it a 'yum' or a 'yuck'? Are you creating more happiness or less? The feelings we want to change are always some form of fear and show up as anger, worry, frustration, lack, sadness, judgment, self-criticism or doubt. Pay attention to how you feel.

We live in a culture that is rich with negativity. We have come to believe that being pessimistic or cynical is normal. These feelings can be very subtle. You may need to dig deep within yourself to identify the negative emotions you are experiencing. If something 'just doesn't feel right'...you're on the right track.

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Take a minute to be quiet and really analyze the situation, relationship or perspective. You'll find there may be some faint 'not so good' feelings. We often gloss right over them when someone crosses a boundary with us or makes a comment that doesn't feel good. I was taught to never hurt anyone else's feelings without regard to my own feelings. I've come to call this *toxic niceness* because it is toxic to me when I do it.

STEP 2: LISTEN

Listen to your self-talk. What is the dialogue that is going on in your head? Often times the negative self-criticism, judgment and doubt has become so much a part of our daily lives that we don't even notice it. Begin to notice. Pay attention to the dishonoring beliefs about yourself. Would you be this critical of your own child or someone you loved? I discovered that I was much harder on myself than I ever would be with my child. Extend the same compassion and love to yourself as you do to others.

Some common thinking pitfalls to watch out for are:

- ❖ *Awfulizing* = exaggerate how negative an event or person is. Example: "He is totally inconsiderate because he rarely does the dishes."
- ❖ *Distress intolerance* = underestimate ability to recover from a painful event. Example: "Won't be able to live through a divorce."
- ❖ *Learned helplessness* = simply give up because feel have no power to change negative circumstances. Example: "Why bother?"
- ❖ *Perfectionism* = strive to be faultless rather than just successful. Example: Pay more attention to small details that went wrong rather than big picture of everything that went right.
- ❖ *Negative self-fulfilling expectations* = draw negative responses from others by communicating that one expects a negative reaction. Example: "You probably don't want to go with me anyway."
- ❖ *Rejection goggles* = see rejections everywhere even in normal circumstances. Even the most minor rejection can be seen as a major slight.

Another easy way to recognize negative thinking patterns is to ask yourself, "Is this thought coming from a place of love or a place of fear?" If it is some form of fear, you want to **FLIP IT!**

STEP 3: INTERVENE

Now, step back from the situation if possible, become the observer of your own life remove the emotional attachment and begin to dispute the negative thinking. Examine the 'facts' of the situation like a good lawyer. A friend of mine calls this, viewing your life from the balcony. Ask yourself questions like these:

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- ❖ *What set it off?*
- ❖ *What negative thoughts and beliefs got triggered?*
- ❖ *How do those thoughts and beliefs compare to reality?*
- ❖ *What can I control?*
- ❖ *What is my priority?*

Now ask yourself some more positive questions. What can you find that is ‘good’ about the situation...even if you know you may not ‘feel’ the good until later.

- ❖ *What’s right about my current circumstances?*
- ❖ *What makes me lucky to be here?*
- ❖ *What aspect of my current circumstance might I view as a gift to be treasured?*
- ❖ *Where is the opportunity?*
- ❖ *How does it benefit me or others?*
- ❖ *Is there a lesson here?*
- ❖ *What can I learn about myself from the situation?*

Barbara Fredrickson, a professor of Psychology at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has been studying positive emotions for over two decades now. In her recent book, “*Positivity*” she says:

“We have the power to turn positivity on and off for ourselves.”

She suggests we can turn our thoughts toward the positive by asking ourselves questions like the ones shown above.

STEP 4: PROMOTE THE POSITIVE

Usually, when I am able to successfully **FLIP** something, I feel an immediate sense of relief. Savor that sense of relief and see if you can find things for which to be grateful. Start off with being grateful for your ability to shift your perspective.

Often I find humor in the fact that I was taking myself so seriously in the first place. Feel free to laugh *with* yourself.

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"Humor can alter any situation and help us cope at the very instant we are laughing."

- Allen Klein

Once you feel that sense of relief, really power up the positive. Find things to be grateful for. **Gratitude is the number one happiness strategy.** Other opportunities for powering up the positive are:



Cultivating optimism. Optimism is expecting a desirable future, that good things will be abundant and bad things scarce. One great technique is to write a Best Possible Selves Diary. Sit in a quiet place and take twenty to thirty minutes to think about where you expect your life to be one, five or ten years from now. Visualize a future for yourself in which everything has turned out the way you've wanted. You have tried your best, worked hard, and achieved your goals. Now write down what you imagine. Think of this as the realization of your life dreams, and of your own best potentials.



Practicing kindness. Doing a kindness often relieves guilt, distress, or discomfort over other's difficulties and suffering and encourages a sense of awareness and appreciation for your good fortune. Another benefit of practicing kindness is its impact on your self-perception. When you commit an act of kindness, you may begin to view yourself as an altruistic and compassionate person. This new identity can promote a sense of confidence, optimism and usefulness and jump-start a cascade of positive social consequences. Is there a kindness you can extend to someone involved in the situation? Allow your intuition to guide you to committing a random act of kindness such as paying for someone's parking space, lending a hand to a neighbor, or simply holding the door for someone.



Nurturing relationships. The value of supportive family and friends is consistent in all the happiness research I've done. Fredrickson says, "The tie between flourishing and enjoying good social relations is so strong and reliable that scientists have called it a necessary condition for flourishing." Is there a relationship with your current circumstance that needs a little TLC? If so, here are some suggestions. First make time for the person, second express sincere appreciation, admiration or affection and thirdly, manage any conflict in a non-conflictive manner.

Mining the Gold

The **FLIP IT!** process can also provide an opportunity for deeper psychological work. Truly, it can be seen as a chance to clear old beliefs or change a habit in your life that will help you feel better in the long run. Consider:

- ❖ *Learning how to forgive*
- ❖ *Reviewing and re-committing to your goals*

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- ❖ *Re-newing or beginning a religious or spiritual practice*
- ❖ *Taking care of your body with regular physical activity or a meditation practice*

All of these undertakings have been shown to increase our overall sense of well-being. It is up to you to determine which the right strategy is for you and how you commence with it.

Vital Keys to Your Success

As with any goal, you must put dedicated effort and commitment into achieving greater happiness.

1. **Resolve** to undertake a program to become happier
2. **Learn** what you need to do
3. Put weekly or even daily **effort** into it
4. **Commit** to the goal for a long period of time, possibly the rest of your

You've already prioritized your own happiness by choosing to read this article and by the time you are done with it you will have completed the second step shown above, learning what you need to do.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, a professor of Psychology at the University of California, states in her book, *"The How of Happiness"* that the secret ingredient to your success is motivation. Her research shows that those study participants who found happiness enhancing activities motivating and rewarding were most likely to practice it and therefore benefit from it long-term. She says:

"The more motivated you are to do something, the more likely you'll invest effort in it!"

It is up to you whether you choose to continue. Steps three and four are UP TO YOU. Are you willing to put weekly or daily effort into decreasing your negativity and increasing your positivity? Are you willing to commit to it for the rest of your life?

How serious are you about your happiness?

Barbara Fredrickson reports that a ratio of three positive thoughts to one negative thought is the tipping point to move your life from languishing to flourishing. She describes 'flourishing' as going beyond happiness, or satisfaction with life.

"People who flourish are highly engaged with their families, work and communities. They're driven by a sense of purpose: they know why they get up in the morning. Striving to flourish, then, is a noble goal. It's not just about making yourself happy. It's about doing something valuable with your day and your life."

There are two ways to change your happiness ratio. One is to decrease negativity, as with the [FLIP IT!](#) process and the second is to increase positivity, as with the strategies outlined under Promote the

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Positive (the “P” in the [FLIP IT!](#) process). Working both simultaneously seems the surest way to a joyful life. As with any goal, you must put dedicated effort and commitment into achieving greater happiness.

Flipping has led me on a path to a flourishing life...it just gets better and better. Imagine a world full of people who were driven by a sense of purpose, were highly engaged and happy. Flipping is a simple technique that can move us steadily and surely towards that tipping point.

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