# Master Your Mindset

## and Create a Culture that People Don't Want to Leave

BY JESSICA RECTOR

**You have 60,000 thoughts a day and 80 percent of them are negative.** They come in the form of doubt, worry, and stress, and are linked to poor attitudes, declining engagement, and poor performance.

Most people think they are positive and optimistic, but their negativity shows and they don't recognize it. In fact, 95 percent of your thoughts are repetitive. All the negative thoughts keep getting repeated, affecting how you show up, speak out, lead, and live.

Your thoughts are the fundamental foundation of everything you do and everything you don't do, yet you don't think about them very often. When was the last time you thought about what you thought about?

If you're like most people, you think the same way you've always thought, and that means you're likely stuck in a lot of behaviors, actions, and results. If you want to change relationships, communication, interactions, and your level of confidence, you must first change the way you think. Once you change that, then everything else will change as well.

Following is a five-step process to help you change your thoughts to embrace different actions, behaviors, and results, ultimately leading to a positive work environment.

# 5 STEPS TO TURNING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS INTO POSITIVE ACTIONS

## 1. Identify it.

**Recognize your thoughts.**
Stand up/sit down is an exercise to help you specifically identify your negative thoughts, and it's great to do as a team. Have someone read a set of statements, and for every statement you agree with, you will move your body. Everyone starts in a stand-up position. For example, if the first statement is "you've thought at some point that you're not smart enough," and you agree with that, you'll sit down. If you disagree with the statement, you'll remain as you were. If the next statement is "you've thought you don't have enough time," and you agree, you'll move (either stand up or sit down, depending on what you did for the first statement). This repeats for every statement read (and you should shoot for about 15 statements). You'll see that most of your fellow group members are moving for most of the statements, which helps all of you see some of the negative thinking you weren't even conscious of.

## 2. Write it.

**Once you've identified some of your negative thoughts, write them down.** Something happens in your brain when you write things down; it tends to make your thoughts feel more real, and that helps you remember them better. Writing down your negative thoughts helps you become more mindful about when they arise. Work on these one at a time, and once you've mastered one, work on another. (You don't want to overwhelm yourself or burn yourself out by doing too many at once.)

## 3. Examine your triggers.

**What are your triggers for negative thinking?** Triggers can be places, situations, moods, or experiences. If you've ever had a conversation with someone and walked away saying to yourself, "Why do I even bother?" then you also know a trigger can be a person too. In fact, it is often a person. Write down all the triggers you can think of—you'll find that when you're aware of them, you can better manage them when they come up. And that will help you keep the negative thoughts from following.

## 4. Reframe it.

**Make a list of all the ways you can reframe a negative thought.**
To do that, ask yourself some questions. If your negative thought is "I'm not a good leader," for example, you can ask yourself what you could do to feel better about your abilities. What courses could you take to improve your skill and confidence levels? What leadership book should you read? Who can you ask to mentor you? Your brain is constantly talking to you, and if what it's saying is that you're not a good enough leader, your brain will look for ways to validate that thought.

## 5. Take action.

**Once you have your reframing options, pick one to take action on.** Nothing changes until you act, and even small actions make a difference. If you decide to read a book about leadership, your next thought might be that you don't know which one. But you can solve that dilemma by looking up leadership books on Google, posting on Facebook to ask your friends for their recommendations, or looking up Amazon book reviews. Then decide which action you will take—in this case, choose a book and order it. Most questions can be answered using a similar system, and remind yourself that small, consistent actions are the key to eradicating negative thinking.

The more you work through this process, the more positive thoughts you have. You'll soon learn to recognize negative thoughts in others as well, and you'll be able to help them master their own mindset. And that will help turn your work environment into a better place.

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