

# Effective Rethinking and Paired Relaxation Script



This handout provides a script for effective rethinking, part of the [TIPP](#) distress tolerance skill in Dialectical Behavior Therapy. Click the link or scan the QR code here to access a [video](#) of the same script.



*Intro: I'm Dr. Elizabeth Nick from ChoosingTherapy.com, and I'll be guiding you through an exercise for effective rethinking and paired relaxation.*

This exercise works well when you're feeling bothered by distressing, pessimistic, or worried thoughts. Before we start the exercise, we'll focus briefly on your thinking.

Take a deep breath in and out and tune into your thoughts. What do they sound like? Distressed thinking might sound like, "I'm going to fail," "I can't do this," "They hate me," or, "This is a disaster."

You might notice that thoughts like this are very negative and very certain. This kind of thinking happens a lot when people are distressed. When people are calm, they are able to see things in a more balanced way, and may have thoughts more like, "This will be a challenge, but I'm prepared," or, "That was embarrassing, but it's not the end of the world."

Let's come up with your own "effective rethinking." Effective thinking is realistic and helpful. It acknowledges the challenges you're facing and it reminds you of your strengths. These are thoughts like, "I've done this before and I can do it again," "I'm in control," "I don't like this, but I can stand it," or, "This too shall pass."

Take a deep breath in... and let the breath out. I'll give you a moment to settle on your effective thought.

Before we use your effective thought, we'll get our muscles ready for paired relaxation. Our goal is to tense all the muscles in the body at once while thinking your effective thought. Let's wake up some muscle groups first.

First, make fists with your hands, squeeze your arms into your body, and pull your shoulders up to your ears. Hold for 3, 2, 1... and relax. Breathe out and let go of all the tension in your muscles.

Now scrunch up your forehead, nose, and mouth, and clench your jaw for 3, 2, 1... relax. Breathe out and relax your face.

*\*This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*



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Pull your chin to your chest, breathe deeply to stretch your chest out, and arch your back... Hold that tension and... relax. Breathe out and relax your muscles.

Tense your abs, glutes, legs, and calves for 3, 2, 1... relax. Breathe out and let the tension go.

Now tense your whole body, all your muscles... Hold for 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 - relax. Breathe out and relax your muscles.

Great work. Let's put effective rethinking and paired relaxation together. So when you breathe in, you'll think your effective thought and tense all your muscles. When you breathe out, you'll think "relax" and let all your muscles go. We'll try this a few times. I'll use the effective thought, "I don't like this, but I can stand it," but you can think whatever thought works for you.

Okay. Breathe in, tense all your muscles, and think your effective thought... "I don't like this, but I can stand it" ... hold... and relax. Breathe out and relax all of your muscles. Feel the difference in your body.

Breathe in, tense your muscles, and think your effective thought... "I don't like this, but I can stand it" ... Hold... and relax. Breathe out and relax all your muscles. Feel the tension draining away.

Breathe in, tense your whole body, and think your effective thought again... "I don't like this, but I can stand it" ... Hold... and relax. Breathe out. Release your muscle tension.

Breathe in... tense your muscles... think your effective thought. "I don't like this, but I can stand it." Hold... relax and breathe out. Let all your muscles go.

Last time. Breathe in... tense your muscles... and think your effective thought. "I don't like this, but I can stand it." Hold... and relax and breathe out. Focus on how your muscles feel when they are relaxed.

Great work. The more you practice effective rethinking and paired relaxation, the better it works. It's also important to practice when you are not stressed in the moment. Think of it like practicing a sport or an instrument. The more you practice, the more automatically you can use a skill when it's time for the big game or an important concert. In our case, the "big game" is a distressing situation. With repetition, soon your body will learn how to relax on its own when you breathe in, think your effective thought, breathe out, and think "relax."

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# Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

## You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



**325+**  
Companies Reviewed



**3,625+**  
Hours of Firsthand Experience



**1,545+**  
Data Points Analyzed



### [Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

### [Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



### [Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

### [Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





# Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://choosingtherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

## [Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



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