

The FAST Pathways® Academy - Runaway Thinking



Your thoughts can generate powerful emotions, even when the situation you're thinking about isn't actually happening. But you don't always have to change the content of those thoughts to change their emotional impact.

Which is good news, because trying to ignore something that's worrying you, or over-write it with something else can very quickly get draining; ramping up an inner struggle as the parts of your thinking slog it out for your attention.

Worry's not always a bad thing. It gets you to pay attention to what's not yet as you'd like it, so you'll take action. Worrying about missing an important appointment gets you to set a reminder on your phone. Worrying for finances might stop an expensive impulse purchase. But worrying can get disruptive and uncomfortable when either there's no action you can take, or when you've taken it, but those unhelpful thoughts still keep on anyway.

You've started to explore how to change your mind's eye pictures, to reduce their emotional intensity. This technique is another way to reduce those mind pictures' disruptive effects, without having to change what they're pictures of (what you're thinking about).

It's most useful when you're feeling like everything's been building up: Worrying, re-playing things in your mind (perhaps things which haven't gone the way you wanted), or the same thoughts coming up, over and over. When your mind runs away with you, it can be exhausting; so here are a few ways to do it differently.

Alice was struggling with her GCSE year. As the exams approached, her Mum noticed Alice's stress and anxiety showing in more and more ways. She could hardly remember when they'd talked without it turning into a row. Alice didn't even want anyone to look at her when they were in the same room.

Worst of all, she'd stopped eating almost completely. When her weight plummeted to six and a half stone, the doctor diagnosed anorexia (and having such an unhelpful label made it even worse). Her family were worried sick.

When Alice started FAST Pathways, she'd no idea what to expect. By her second session, she'd started to eat again. She learned a range of skills to clear the anxiety, and started to feel happy again, which she wanted more than anything. As that tension lifted, Alice got back to talking with her family. She became so comfortable around food that she took a part time job in a restaurant, and she got the exam grades that she'd wanted.