

Look for light in the darkness

Most people are faced with stressful, challenging and painful events in their lives, which create negative emotions. Although no one goes through life without experiencing negative emotions, struggling or trying to control them tends to create more suffering. Changing the way we relate to our feelings, opening, making room for them and allowing them to be as they are may not stop the suffering but does not make it worse. This way of relating to our experiences also allows us to be better able to notice the positive things that also fill our lives.

In this activity, you will practice using your thoughts to regulate the negative emotions you experience due to your unmet desire for children. All situations involve some positive and some negative aspects and the aspects we pay attention to often determine the way we feel. In general, we have a tendency to focus on the negative aspects of our life. When there is danger this is a good thing to do, but it can also prevent us from noticing there are also good things happening.

For example, imagine you find a friend you hadn't seen for a few months and she is pregnant. This may trigger painful thoughts and feelings and that's OK, but it also gives you the opportunity to feel happiness for your friend, catch up with her, etc. Painful thoughts and feelings are natural parts of life. When we truly accept them for what they are (thoughts and feelings), even though they are uncomfortable and unpleasant, we do not get so distressed by them.

Negative events can have different positive repercussions. They may allow you to

- Grow as person
- Learn something new
- Experience something good

We invite you to apply this reappraisal technique when you experience negative emotions that result from your unmet desire for children. For instance, while many people find fertility treatment challenging, they often think that it strengthens their partnership. With time, those who end treatment without children come to appreciate having a strong and caring partnership.

Let's practice

It is because of your unmet desire for (more) children that you are reading these materials. They may trigger many negative emotions related to this aspect of your life.

Have you experienced or learned something positive?

How does thinking about it make you feel?

To do at home

- Cultivate an attitude of openness and awareness of the positive things that show up in your life. Be curious about your life!
- Try to use this technique when you face situations that trigger negative emotions related with your unmet child desire or any other areas of your life.