



Feeling Good

Growing wellness through
transforming your thoughts,
words and actions



This booklet is about how to help yourself feel better. When I worked in general practice, I noticed most people with low mood came to see me not because of mental problems but because they lacked what they needed to feel good—and it's hard to feel good if you don't have what you need to feel good. Often their basic needs, such as sleep, diet, exercise, social contact, recreation and meaningful activity, were not being met, and when these needs were met, they had a better foundation on which to feel good.

You live with yourself 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You are always with you—every morning, it's your face you will see in the mirror. Whether at work, home or on holiday, you will always be in the company of you, so it's important to like the one you're with and feel good about yourself. When you do, it's likely to improve your feelings and quality of life.

In this booklet, we discuss how your thoughts, words and actions can help you feel good.

There are many things you have no control over; however, you do have control over your thoughts, words and actions. While negative thoughts may float into your mind, once you are aware of them, you can replace them with positive thoughts, thus asserting control over your thinking.

If you think bad things, say bad things and do bad things, you are more likely to feel bad. If you think good things, say good things and do good things, you are more likely to feel good.

Have you ever found yourself having a pity party, as we all do from time to time, ruminating about how bad your life is and how bad you or other people are? During those times, do you feel good or bad? Likewise, when you find yourself judging and criticising yourself and others, and treating yourself or others badly, do you feel good or bad? Most people feel bad in these situations. Also consider when you see a person being mean or hurtful to others with their words and actions, do they look happy and peaceful or more agitated and upset?

When you orientate yourself negatively towards yourself, others and life, it's bad in three ways—it's bad for others, bad for your relationships and bad for yourself—and it generally makes you feel bad. It's a 3-way loss.

However, you can choose to think, speak and act towards yourself, others and life in ways that make you feel good and proud of yourself.

Consider people who are saying positive and encouraging things about and towards others. How do they look? Don't they generally

look happy, content and confident? Or how about people who are helping others and providing practical support to people. How do they look? Don't they generally look happy, motivated and energised by helping others?

When you orientate yourself positively towards yourself, others and life, it's generally good in three ways—it's good for others, good for your relationships and good for yourself—and it generally makes you feel good. It's a 3-way win.

What you feed grows and gets bigger and stronger. What you starve gets smaller and weaker. If you feed yourself positive thoughts, words and actions, your good feelings will grow bigger. If you starve yourself of negative thoughts, words and actions, your bad feelings will get smaller and weaker.

Right now, if you create, choose and practise good thoughts, words and actions towards yourself, others and life, ones that make you feel good and proud of yourself, you can start improving how you feel. To feel less bad, you need to do less negative thinking, speaking and acting and more positive thinking, speaking and acting. You need to deal with both the good and the bad in your life, feeding yourself the good and starving yourself of



the bad. In life, you will experience tension between the positive and the negative coming from both within and outside of yourself, and it's necessary to learn how to manage both in order to feel good.

In every healthy home, the shopping is brought in and the rubbish is taken out. Similarly, your body needs to take in good food and get rid of waste to be healthy and function well. A nice garden needs both weeding and watering. If you want to improve how you feel and the quality of your life, you need to do both the weeding and watering of your life.

It is helpful to consider the things affecting your feelings and quality of life, which come from both inside and outside of you.

Dealing with things outside your control

There are many things that can affect your life that you have no control over—war, natural disasters, serious health conditions and other people's bad treatment of you and others. It is natural to respond to trauma and tragedy, feeling hurt, angry, low or a range of other feelings when bad things happen, and it is reasonable and responsible to process your feelings and heal in a safe and healthy way, learning and gaining wisdom from those events to inform a better present and future.

You can navigate trauma and tragedy by choosing to respond to painful events in ways that not only make you feel better but also help you feel strong and proud of yourself. This helps prevent you from getting stuck living in resentful thoughts and feelings of past events. Remember, what you feed grows and gets bigger

and stronger. If you are stuck in a cycle of thinking, speaking and acting in negative ways about past trauma, it's worth considering whether you may inevitably be feeding it, making it bigger and stronger. Choosing thoughts, words and actions that make you feel good and proud of yourself regarding past trauma will help you to move forward.

Painful past events can't be changed, however your responses can. For example, you could choose to respond to a past event where a person treated you badly by acknowledging the strength and courage it took for you to cope with and survive the incident. This is something to feel good about. Even though bad things have and will happen to you, you can learn from them and grow in strength. Every time you remember a past traumatic event or experience trauma symptoms, they can be productively used as reminders of lessons learned and the strength it took to get through the trauma, thus helping you feel good and proud of yourself. In this way, what happened to you does not control your present or your future, rather your attitude about what happened determines your feelings now and in the future. It enables you to shift from feeling out of control to being in control.



You can turn a negative experience into a positive outcome and transform yourself from feeling victimised to feeling a sense of mastery.

Dealing with things in your control

Just like things outside of your control can affect how you feel, things inside you can also affect your feelings and quality of life. These include the thoughts you choose to think, the words you choose to speak and the actions you choose to practise towards yourself, others and life. Remember: If you think bad things, say bad things and do bad things, you are more likely to feel bad. If you think good things, say good things and do good things, you are more likely to feel good. You are most likely to feel good when you consistently notice, resist and replace negative thoughts, words and actions towards yourself, others and life and create, choose and practise good thoughts, words and actions towards yourself, others and life.

For example, when you consistently feed yourself on anxious, depressing thoughts, words and actions, you are likely to feed anxiety and depression. Regularly choosing positive thoughts, words and actions about yourself, others and your life circumstances is likely to help you feel less anxious and depressed. This is not positive thinking or trying to manifest your reality, it's making changes through taking charge of your mental state by consistent choice, discipline and effort over time. It's unhelpful to solely focus on positive things and ignore everything negative. The negative within and outside yourself is a reality. Real progress is realised when you acknowledge and take responsibility for the negative and deal with it.

What you feed grows and gets bigger and stronger, and what you starve diminishes and gets smaller and weaker.

Creating a plan to feed feeling better, starve feeling bad and grow a good quality life

The following questions will help you visualise and build more of the life you want:

- What type of thoughts, words and actions have you used and/or are using towards yourself, others and life that make you feel bad?
- How would you treat yourself and others in your best life?
- What kind of thoughts, words and actions could you create, choose and practise towards yourself, others and life that would make you feel good and proud of yourself?

Your thoughts, words and actions are the food that you are choosing to feed yourself. If the food is unhealthy and negative, you will grow in that direction. If the food is healthy and good, you will grow in that direction. In this way, the saying "you are what you eat" is true. If you don't like the life you are living, you can change the food you are feeding yourself and grow a new kind of life that you can feel good about and enjoy living.



So, how do you recognise
the right and wrong foods
to feed yourself?

Identifying the wrong food—thoughts, words and actions

The wrong food is thoughts, words and actions that are negative towards yourself, others and your life circumstances. It may help you develop awareness to consider the type of thoughts, words and actions you are using towards yourself, others and your life when you are feeling negative feelings. Keeping a notebook, audio file or document on your phone or computer to record the thoughts, words and actions that affect your feelings can be helpful. This exercise can assist you to identify blind spots and what you are doing to make yourself feel bad. It also increases your awareness and sensitivity to these negative processes, enabling you to better notice and replace them and make changes.

Identifying the right food—thoughts, words and actions

The right food is thoughts, words and actions that are positive towards yourself, others and life. It may help you develop awareness to consider the type of thoughts, words and actions you are using when you are feeling good, happy, confident and proud of yourself. Keeping a notebook, audio file or document on your phone or computer to record your thoughts, words and actions can be helpful. This exercise can assist you to identify what you are

doing that makes you feel good and proud of yourself. It increases your awareness and sensitivity to these positive processes and provides alternatives to negative thoughts, words and actions.

Identifying what you will try to do less of (negative thoughts, words and actions) and what you will try to do more of (positive thoughts, words and actions) will help you develop awareness and sensitivity to what is both bad and good for you. In our *Feeling Good* programmes and workshops, we offer tools and resources to help.

For now, you can focus on and apply the following intention and commitment:

I will notice, resist and replace negative thoughts,
words and actions towards myself, others and life, and
I will create, choose and practise good thoughts, words
and actions towards myself, others and life.



This may sound clear and straightforward, however in real life, it is very challenging and takes time, effort and practice. Expect to experience failure on the path to progress. It's a bit like when you first go to the gym. It's hard, and you don't see results on your first day. But if you are consistent and regularly exercise, in time, you will see change and results. It's the same with growing a life in which you feel good and proud of yourself. You will need to practise consistently and regularly, doing the work of saying no and noticing, resisting and replacing negative thoughts, words and actions towards yourself, others and life and saying yes to creating, choosing and practising good thoughts, words and actions towards yourself, others and life. Always focus on your progress, not perfection.

It's like golf. You will never play a perfect round of golf, but you can improve and make progress. You can improve your skill and handicap. However, improvement and progress don't just happen. They require you to notice, resist and replace doing things that are bad for your golf and create, choose and practise those things that are good for your golf.

Similarly, it's like tennis. You will never play a perfect match of tennis with no mistakes, but you can improve and make progress. However, it won't happen through positive thinking. You will make progress when you notice, resist and replace doing things that you know are bad for your game and create, choose and practise those things you know are good for your game.

This is similar for your mental health and feeling good. You will never have perfect mental health or feel good all the time; however,

when you notice, resist and replace thoughts, words and actions about yourself, others and life that are bad for your mood and create, choose and practise thoughts, words and actions about yourself, others and life that are good for your mood, you are likely to make progress in feeling good.

As expressed previously, if you think good things, say good things and do good things, you are more likely to feel good.

The word 'likely' is important because feelings aren't linear or directly governed by the laws of cause and effect. They are in a constant state of flux, influenced by the three significant dimensions of your life—your past, present and future. Even if you choose to practise good thoughts, words and actions towards yourself, others and life, you may still experience times of low mood and anxiety; however, you can feel good about your efforts, and the recipients of these will feel the good effects on their lives.

You will never eliminate the negative completely from your life, but you can be less negative towards yourself, others and life and more positive towards yourself, others and life, which means less negative and more positive feelings and improved quality of life. It is possible to live a life you can enjoy and



feel proud of. Ultimately, what you put into your life is what you will get out of it.

This booklet has been a brief introduction to the principles and practices of *Feeling Good*. If what you have read resonates with you and you would like to learn more, consider attending a *Feeling Good* individual programme or group workshop. In addition to what you have read in this booklet, you will receive helpful tools and resources and learn more about things that are needed to help you feel good and some strategies to manage worry and anxiety.

Right now, you can start to improve how you are feeling by making this intention and commitment to yourself and others:

I will notice, resist and replace negative thoughts,
words and actions towards myself, others and life, and
I will create, choose and practise good thoughts, words
and actions towards myself, others and life.

This is a great practice model for living better and feeling good.

For further information about the *Feeling Good* programmes and resources, please contact:

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