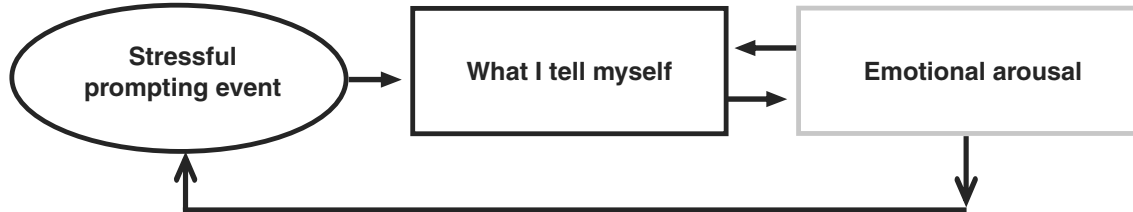


## Effective Rethinking and Paired Relaxation, Step by Step



**Step 1.** Write down the **prompting event** that is often related to distressing emotions and that you want to work on reducing your emotional reactions to.

**Step 2. Ask:** “What must I be telling myself (that is, what are my **interpretations and thoughts**) about the event that causes such distress and arousal?” Write these down. Examples:

*“He hates me,” “I can’t stand this!” “I can’t do this,” “I’ll never make it,” “I’m out of control!”*

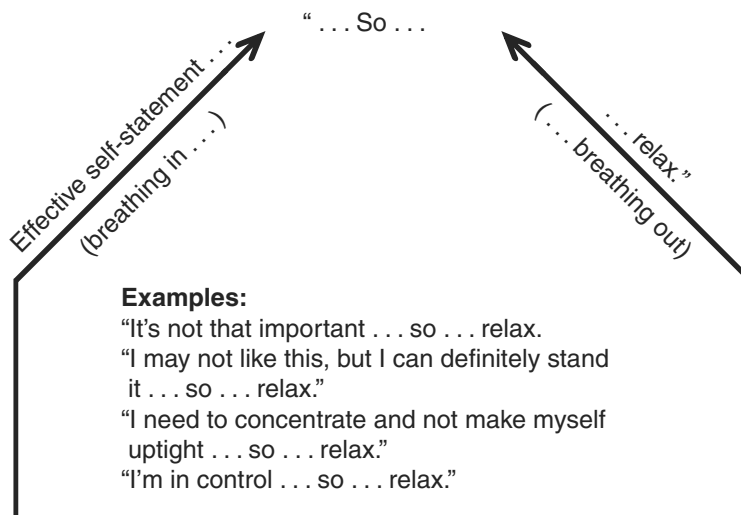
**Step 3. Rethink** the situation and its meaning in a way that counteracts the thoughts and interpretations producing stress and distressing emotions. As you rethink the situation, write down as many **effective thoughts** as you can to replace the stressful thoughts.

**Step 4.** When you are *not* in the stressful prompting event, **practice imagining** the stressful event:

- a. At the same time, while **breathing in**, say to yourself an effective self-statement.
- b. When **breathing out**, say “Relax” while intentionally relaxing all your muscles.

**Step 5. Keep practicing** every chance you get until you have mastered the strategy.

**Step 6.** When a stressful situation occurs, practice effective rethinking and paired relaxation.



Note. Adapted from Smith, R. E. (1980). Development of an integrated coping response through cognitive–affective stress management training. In I. G. Sarason & C. D. Spielberger (Eds.), *Stress and anxiety* (Vol. 7, pp. 265–280). Washington, DC: Hemisphere. Copyright 1980 by Hemisphere Publishing Corporation. Adapted by permission.

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