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### Coach's Corner: Reframe Your Thinking

By Sharon Pahlka

Published: Tuesday, April 7, 2009 9:40 AM PDT

First knee replacement surgery; now, rotator cuff surgery two months later. "Yikes!" commented one of my friends. "Yikes" was a good word for what I was feeling: fear about my upcoming second surgery. Not long after this, a close friend called. I proceeded to list my fears and negative thinking, basically saying, "This is too hard for me."

She is a natural strategist and started telling me about benefits of reframing my thinking. This made me smile because this is a coaching tool I use with clients, and my buddy was coaching me, so I listened.

Use reframing when you see yourself getting stuck in a negative perspective. When you reframe, it not only gets you unstuck, it opens new possibilities. To reframe, look for positives first. Next, expand your thinking to get some perspective. And, finally, look at your problem or feeling from several points of view.

Here's what I did:

- (A positive) With my down time, I can get some of those little projects out of the way.
- (A positive) I will be asking more people to help me again, which will bring me closer to the friends I love.
- (Expand) This second surgery needs to be done at some point anyway. Doing it now means that I will be ready for a great summer of outdoor activities with a new knee and arm. One way to expand your thinking is to remind yourself of the ultimate — in this case to be active again.
- (Several viewpoints) Questions I could ask to look at it in several ways.

1. What more is there in this situation?
2. What is the learning in this?
3. What might I do differently next time?
4. What is the gift for me?
5. What is the thing I will take away from this?
6. What do I want to leave behind?
7. What might I do differently next time?

Reframing interprets the experience in a way that includes more of the person's life and bigger picture. It helps us respond to situations rather than just reacting. Shifting the perspective can also create new opportunities and directions. If nothing else, changed thinking helps us see that we do have some control of our lives.

After my chat with my friend, I will admit that I am still afraid, but I also feel empowered by my reframe. Try it.

**Coaching Question:** Is there a situation which you are negatively interpreting? Is it bogging you down?

**Coaching Tip:** Take some action to look at a hard situation with a new perspective. Force yourself to come up with three to five different ways to see the problem.

**Quotes:**

*"Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is."*

– *German proverb*

*"He who fears something gives it power over him."*

– *Moorish proverb*

*"When thinking won't cure fear, action will."*

– *W. Clement Stone*

*Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon's column, Coach's Corner, offers helpful tips from her work.*

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