



Tool 18: Act the Opposite Therapist Version

① **Rationale:** This tool teaches a way to decrease your anger using your neurological wiring.

What happens to the following when you get angry:

- Jaw – **clinches**
- Eyes – **squints or widens**
- Lips – **press together**
- Shoulders – **tighten**
- Breathing – **shallow and rapid**
- Other muscles – **tighten**
- Volume of voice – **louder**

Make each of these adjustments right now and pay attention to how they feel. Write any comments you may have.

Process any comments

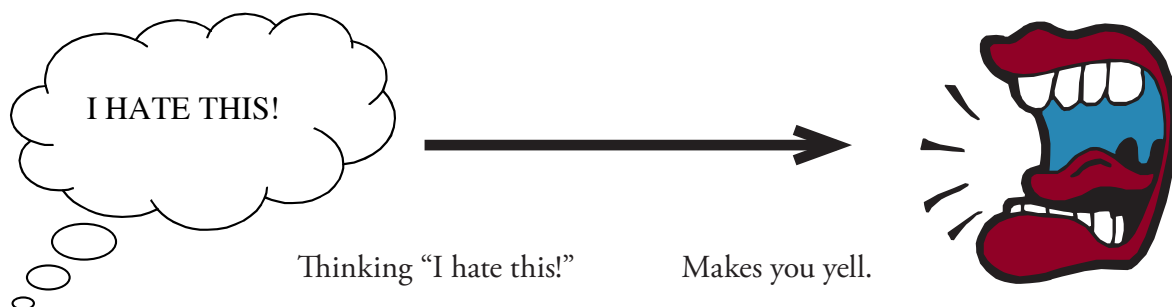
Now do these opposite actions:

- Relax the jaw
- Relax the eye muscles
- Softly smile
- Relax the shoulders
- Take some deep breaths
- Relax everything else
- Speak softly

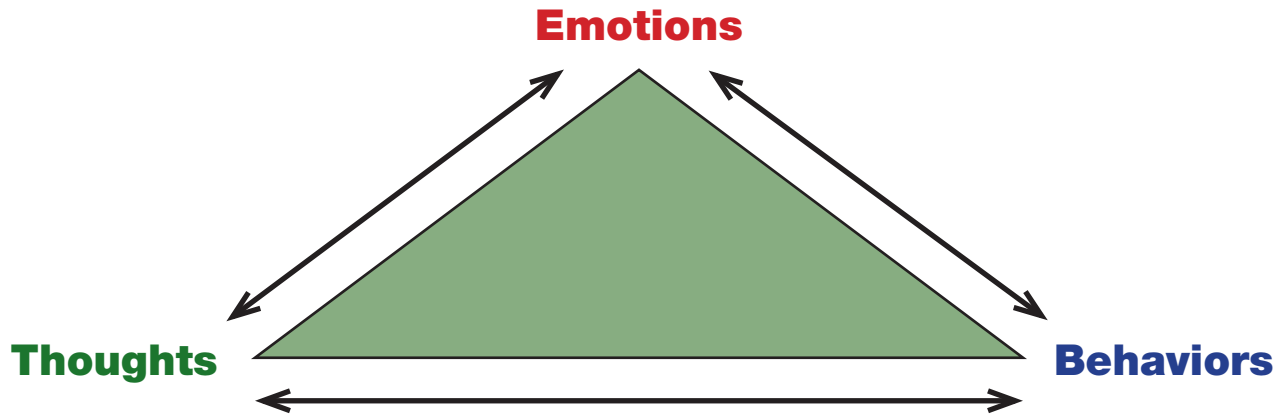
How do you feel compared to when everything was tightened?

More relaxed, more pleasant, etc

People often think that physical sensations and behaviors follow the emotion or thought.



However, as you learned earlier on the worksheet on CBT, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors work in an interactive system where each part influences the other parts.



Similarly, new research suggests that various organs, muscles, or sites in our bodies, wire together into feedback loops where each site involved can influence the entire system. One particular system involves Cranial Nerve VII, the parasympathetic nervous system, and the vagus nerve.

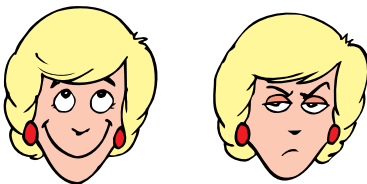
What do you remember about the vagus nerve from the lesson on deep breathing?

Deep breathing in the proper way activates the vagus nerve which can release the bodies' endorphins to help you relax.

Do you remember what the parasympathetic nervous system does?

Slows down the heart rate, calms you down, helps you relax, stimulates digestion, etc.

Any ideas what Cranial Nerve VII does?



Responsible for smiling and frowning

If you are feeling annoyed, how could smiling help you feel better?

The smile (Cranial Nerve VII) is wired into the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system. The smile may help activate this system to make you feel better.

How does ‘acting the opposite’ help you get your point across more effectively with others?

- They can listen better if they’re not being yelled at.
- You relaxing may help them relax

How can you remember to use this when you are getting angry?

Put it on the fridge; make a note card; practice it when not angry

 **Homework:**

Try to look in the mirror when you are frowning or concentrating too hard on something this week. In traffic, in line at the grocery store, or in any unpleasant situation, practice giving a half smile and notice how you feel. If you can, look in the mirror and contrast with the concentrated expression.