

Trashing Negative Thoughts

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Explain to the group that often we approach new information or ideas with some resistance. Talk about how important it is to have an open mind for new ideas and to recognize negative thoughts that they may have in regard to the topics being addressed in the class. For example, some people may believe that a common communication technique taught in a couple's class will never work for them and seems silly.
2. For each topic that is introduced through the day or the ongoing sessions such as communication skills, priorities, and rebuilding fun and friendship, ask the participants to be aware of any resistance or negative responses they may have to that particular subject. For example, when introducing fun and friendship, a spouse may think "My wife is never any fun anymore" or "My husband will never try anything new."
3. Explain that these negative thoughts may interfere with the participants' ability to be open to new ideas and new ways to approach something. When introducing a new topic, give participants two minutes to write any negative thoughts or bad experiences related to the topic on the scrap paper. After writing it, instruct them to wad up the paper and to throw it into basket on the table. Have each group member keep track of how many negative thoughts they threw away.
4. During break or when class ends, instruct participants that for each thought they threw away they can reward themselves with a corresponding number of pieces of candy.

Group Size: 26 to 50

Time Needed: 11 to 20 minutes

Goal: To help participants clear their minds of negative thoughts for the workshop they are attending and to make room for learning new concepts

Audience: Couples, Parents, Singles

Special Considerations: None

Resources Needed:

- ✓ One basket per table, scrap paper for table, pens/pencils for number of participants in group, bags of candy or small candy bars

Tips for Discussion and Processing

Discuss how many of us hold on to old ways of doing things even though they may not work very well. Talk about the idea that change is difficult and we often have to make room for change in our lives, that is, we have to "throw" something away to make room for something new. Explain that when we make room for something new, it's easier to be open. Discuss how negative thoughts and feelings can cloud the way we perceive new things.