

## The Positive Reframe: Mental Resilience in Archery (and Life!)

When we coach ourselves, it's easy to focus on our shortcomings instead of what we've done well. Yes, it's important to identify and understand what we've done poorly so that we can correct it. But it's even more important to view "mistakes" as opportunities to learn and get even better.

Reframing negative thoughts into positive affirmations helps us continuously improve and build mental resilience when things aren't going our way.

**Mental resilience** is the ability to cope with disappointment or frustration and continue on the path to achieving a goal. Resilience allows us to acknowledge negative outcomes without internalizing that outcome as something "wrong," "bad," or "hopeless" about ourselves.

To develop mental resilience, we can ask ourselves three big questions about our thinking.

### Is it true?

Black-and-white or absolute statements, like "I'm the **worst** archer ever" or "I'm **never** going to get this right" are very powerful, but they just aren't true.

When you encounter exaggerated or absolute words like "never," "always," "worst," "hopeless," "disaster," try to challenge the truth of these statements and think more objectively about what just happened. You will quickly discover that you're probably not being fair to yourself. Then you can move on to the next question.

### Is it helpful?

Bad shots happen! Sometimes, a negative statement like "I messed up that release" or "I didn't have my grip in the right place" will be objectively true. But is it helpful to beat yourself up for something that's in the past? No!

That's why we talk about the **positive reframe**. A positive reframe is when you turn a negative reprimand into a helpful suggestion.

When you transform your thoughts from a criticism into an encouragement, you create a chance to refocus and improve. Instead of saying, "I messed up my release," try saying, "Next time, I will make sure I release cleanly." Instead of, "I didn't have my grip right," let's focus on, "I will remember to keep my grip hand in the right position next time." Positive reframes will make sure that your thoughts are always moving you toward your ultimate goal: becoming the best archer you can be.

## Is it kind?

Changing our thoughts is hard. You might struggle to see when your thoughts are untrue or unhelpful, because your brain is really used to thinking in a certain way. It takes time and effort to retrain our brains, so we need to be kind and patient with ourselves during that process.

When your arrow doesn't go where you want it to, it's okay to give yourself a moment to feel upset or frustrated. Those feelings are valid, and everyone feels them (even the best archers in the world). **Mental resilience is about what you do next.**

Take a moment to be kind to yourself. Forgive yourself for not being perfect all the time (no one is!) and give yourself credit for what you did well. Then take a deep breath and think about what you can do even better on your next shot. Make sure you put a positive spin on that instruction to yourself.

Remember: **if you wouldn't say it out loud to another person, don't say it to yourself!** You deserve kindness from everyone, including (and especially) yourself.

Keeping these three questions in mind when self-coaching will help you identify negative thoughts, turn them into positive actions, and enjoy being an archer. Your coaches and instructors can help you figure out specific ways to develop helpful, kind, and truthful thought patterns so you can have more fun on the range.