

# Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Carrie Holland, MD, CPT**

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## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

You are listening to the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast, Episode #4. Today, we're going to uncover the most underrated tool you've already got to change your life. Want to know what it is and how to use it? Let's do it.

Welcome to the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast. If you're balancing career, family, wellness, and some days sanity, you are in the right place. This is where high achieving, busy working moms get the tools they need to eat, move, and think. I'm your host, physician, personal trainer and Certified Life Coach Carrie Holland. Let's do this.

Hey, how are you? What's poppin'? So, that is how my eight-year-old is greeting us nowadays. And prior to that, his greeting was, "Sup girl?" He still most definitely pulls that one out occasionally, but he's moved on to, "What's poppin'?" I have no idea where that came from. But what's crazy is, that he has said it to all of us, enough times, that all four of us are now greeting each other that way.

The other day, when Adam came home from work, he walked in and just asked, "What's poppin'?" And then, when I picked up the kids from camp yesterday, I asked them, "What's poppin'?" I'm even asking my clients, "What's poppin'," too; all thanks to Noah.

He is by far the most extroverted member of our family. He has said, on more than one occasion, that he likes to live his life out loud. And, he does. He most definitely keeps us guessing. And, he definitely has a way of making us laugh when he's not being crazy. Most days, truthfully, he talks to us as if he's a Minion from the movie *Despicable Me*. So, the fact that he's using real words to greet me is actually a big win. This is, this is good stuff.

Alright. So, what's poppin' today is I want to share with you a key concept and tool that you can apply to any problem you're facing. I know that's a big statement, but I believe it. So, I shared a brief snippet of this in the very first episode. But today's the day, we're doing a deep dive here.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

I want you to understand the most powerful tool that you've got for creating change in your life. And, that tool is your mind. Because in order to create any change in your life, you have to manage your mind, first and foremost. The tool that you use to do that is something called the “thought model.” Alright, so let me stop right there. Because I know this is a lot of words, right?

When I first came across this, I thought to myself, “This sounds like a bunch of fluffy stuff,” like buzzwords that don't really mean anything. But let me assure you, I'm not into fluff. I don't do abstract. I like practical. I like simple, and I like step-by-step. So, throwing back to my nerdy love of math here, I really like order of operations. And really, that's what the thought model is.

I'm going to take this a step further and give you an analogy that helped me. So, think of your mind as the tool. The thought model is your operating instructions for the tool. The thought model, that I'm going to share with you, it gives you a framework for understanding how your mind works. And, understanding this is so very fundamental to making any change in your life.

Okay, so let me give you just a little more background, because the thought model is a key tool that I learned and studied when I was a student at The Life Coach School. And the model, as I'm sharing it today, was developed by Brooke Castillo, who is the founder of the Life Coach School.

But let me be clear, the elements of the model aren't new. This is not rocket science; I don't do rocket science. This is based on universally accepted truths. And, you may see similar versions of this elsewhere in psychology and philosophy books. But here it is, I've said it before, I will say it again, I like to keep things really simple.

So, here it is, very simply put. In our lives, there are circumstances. The thoughts we have about those circumstances create our feelings. Which in

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

turn, lead to our actions. Which ultimately produce our results. It's going back to math again, because I can always find a math analogy; the order of operations, circumstances, produce thoughts, which drive feelings, which lead to actions that produce your results. There's the model.

We are going to break this down step-by-step. So, let's start. In our lives, there are circumstances: The temperature is 80 degrees, you have a brother, my dog died, you weigh 200 pounds. Circumstances can also be things that happened to you: my Mom hung up on me, I was in a car accident.

So, circumstances are inarguable facts. They are things that everyone can agree on. There are two key things to know and understand about circumstances. First and foremost, circumstances are things that we cannot control. You can't control the weather. You can't control your past. You most definitely cannot control your kids. This is super important, and I'll explain why in just a few minutes.

The other important thing to know about circumstances is that they're neutral. So, that means they're neither good nor bad; circumstances just are. It's these circumstances that trigger your thoughts. That's the second part of the model.

Here's the connection between your circumstances and your thoughts. So, a circumstance is neither good nor bad until you have a thought about it. Thoughts are how we give meaning to our circumstances. So, really simple: Thoughts are sentences that you say to yourself. They're sentences that have opinions, descriptors, adjectives.

For example: I am so fat. I don't have time for exercise. My kids are so demanding. All of those are thoughts. And thoughts are your own unique interpretation of what you see, and observe, and what happens to you. Okay, so I like visuals. And, I think of thoughts as a social media scroll. There's a scroll in your brain, and on this scroll, there are loads of

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

sentences and paragraphs. And also, just like social media, there are very few circumstances. There are very few true facts to be found on that unique scroll, that you have running in your brain. The majority of your scroll is made up of thoughts, not facts.

But here's where it gets even more interesting. So, the tricky thing about thoughts is that when you say them to yourself, over and over again, over time, those thoughts and those sentences become your beliefs. Those sentences are your truths. And, often we start to think of those as facts. But that's where we run into trouble.

So, let me give you an example, and I use this example all the time. My childhood stunk. That's the thought. But when you repeat that thought over and over again, it becomes your belief, it is your truth. Oftentimes, you confuse that, to think it's a circumstance, that it is hard fact. But that is your interpretation of your childhood, there's a big difference.

You could just as easily choose to think; my childhood prepared me to be the person I am today. Which is a very different thought. So, see this? Same circumstance; your childhood. Two different thoughts.

But this brings me to another thing to know about thoughts: Your circumstances do not dictate what you think, because that is putting power where it most definitely does not belong. You get to choose how you think about your circumstance. And that is cool, because that's where your power lies; you get to choose how you think, always.

It's those thoughts that will create your feelings. That's the next piece of the model. So, feelings or emotions, I'll use them interchangeably, are generally described in one word; excited, anxious, fearful, angry, elated. Feelings start in your brain and travel out to generate a sensation in your body. Like a fluttering in your chest when you get anxious. Or, your face turning red and hot when you get angry. Or, the pit you get in your stomach when you're disappointed.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

Again, we often think that our feelings come from our circumstances. But don't forget your math. And, don't forget the order of operations here. Your feelings are the result of your thoughts, not your circumstances. So, the fact or circumstance for example, that your kid lost his water bottle, is neutral, speaking from experience here.

But it's when you think something like; he always loses his stuff or he's so careless with his belongings, that you feel angry or irritated. It's the thought about your kid losing his water bottle that causes you to feel angry, not the circumstance in and of itself.

Here is another key concept about feelings. No feeling can harm you. I'm going to repeat that, because it is just that important to understand. No feeling can harm you. So, think of the absolute worst feeling you can imagine; rejected, ashamed, humiliated, despair, you choose. Those are probably the worst that I can think of.

What happens to you when you feel those feelings? What is the absolute worst thing that happens when you feel those feelings? Here's a hint; you feel them. You just feel your emotions, that's it. And you feel the feeling for as long as it takes for it to pass, and you keep moving through your day.

But let me be clear, there may be real cases and situations where your feelings are so overwhelming, such as in anxiety or depression, that they get in the way of your daily functioning. They prevent you from completing the everyday tasks that are essential to your living. And I am not talking about that. That is a different scenario entirely. If that is your case, please see your doctor to discuss it further.

For most people, feeling your feelings is essential and it is so often overlooked. In a future episode, we're going to break this down. We are going to talk exactly how to practice feeling, and I know it sounds kind of wonky, it sounds kind of funny. Practice feeling your feelings, like what is that?

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

But so many of us don't know how to do it. I didn't know how to do it. It is such a fundamental piece to living the life that you want. And truthfully, I think it's something that we should learn in school along with world history, but I'm not in charge. Stay tuned for that episode, because learning how to feel your feelings is a skill that will literally change the way you live your life.

So, it's your feelings that drive your actions. And actions come in three varieties; something you do or behavior, something you don't do, because remember, not taking action is also an action, or a reaction. This is fairly straightforward, but I want to make a note here. In general, positive feelings will drive positive action, and negative feelings will drive negative action.

As an example, say you step on the scale, and you see a number you don't like. You get mad as hell and decide to go run on the treadmill for thirty minutes, to punish yourself. You're just so angry that you decide you're going to run every day for thirty minutes. Okay, so first, is that action coming from a place of self-love or self-loathing? Or, somewhere in between? Only you can answer that.

And then second, if it's coming from a place of self-loathing, how long are you going to keep that up? Can you really sustain, what I would consider a positive action, running on the treadmill, from a place of self-hatred? I would argue, no.

I read this in a book called, *Tiny Habits* by BJ Fogg; highly recommend. It was so simple, and so clean, yet it was so profound that I wanted to share it here, because I think it applies. So, he said, "You change best, when you feel good." It's pretty simple, right? You change best when you feel good, that makes sense. But what I think, to take it a step further, let me offer this, you cannot beat yourself up into a better version. It just doesn't work that way.

Because when we're not being real, and true, and authentic with ourselves, your brain knows it and it will call b.s. on you in a heartbeat. So, the actions

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

you take, to make yourself feel better, have to come from kind feelings towards yourself. Not hateful ones, if you want them to last.

Let's talk about results. So, results are the outcome of the actions you take. It is not your circumstances that determine your results. You are responsible for the results you get in your life, because remember, working backwards here: Your results are the product of your actions, which are driven by your feelings, which are produced by your thoughts. And I cannot stress enough how important it is to understand this.

The results that you have in your life are not handed to you by chance. So instead, the results are what you create for yourself, through your actions. And I say this, because so many of you think that changing your weight, or fitting into a certain dress size, or leaving your job will change your results. But that is not it, that is changing your circumstances and that is missing the point.

As an example, you can squeeze into the black dress, you can start a new job with a new boss, but if you bring those same thoughts with you, it's not going to take long before you find yourself feeling as bad as you did, before you fit into the dress or before you started the new job. If you change the circumstance without changing your thoughts and feelings, you've jacked up the order of operations, and you've skipped some math here.

Remember, it's your thoughts that will ultimately guide your results. And truthfully, that's pretty awesome news, because the more you practice this and learn the skill of choosing your thoughts, the more control you have over your results.

What this also means is, that your circumstances do not have to change in order for you to feel better. You don't need to fit into the black dress to feel better. You don't need to find a new job and a new boss in order to feel better. The only thing you need to make you feel better is to choose thoughts that make you feel better. Huge difference.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT



## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

I know that was thick, and I know that this is a lot of stuff. But those are the pieces. That's the model, right there. What I'm going to do now is take an example so that you can see the model in action. I'm going to use the example of meal planning.

And I use this one because if you remember from episode three, one of the key pieces to weight loss is having a plan. I spend a ton of time talking with my clients about how to create a plan for themselves. But admittedly, it is hard and many of my super busy working moms who have crazy schedules, struggle to plan. So, let's talk about it. We'll use the circumstance of planning for meals.

Imagine you say to yourself, "I don't have time to plan meals." Maybe you've said that before. If you've had that thought, "I don't have time to plan for meals," ask yourself this really important question: How does it feel to think that way? How does it feel when you think, "I don't have time to plan for meals?" What is the one-word emotion that you have when you think that?

So, "stuck" is the word that I hear most often. "Powerless" would be a close second, but we're going to run with stuck. When you feel stuck, because you think to yourself, "I don't have time to plan for my meals," what happens? What do you do? What don't you do? How do you react to that?

Most often, you leave meals to chance. You make last minute decisions, often that includes fast food, or takeout, or just eating meals that don't align with your health, or fitness, or weight loss goals; those are your actions. And then, the result of that is no meals are planned. Okay, so what's fascinating here is that the result, no meals are planned, proves your original thought, "I don't have time to plan for meals."

What's cool here, is that this makes perfect sense, because as humans, we like to prove ourselves correct. So, when you think to yourself, "I don't have time to plan meals," and if you've been saying it to yourself over and over

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

again, it becomes your belief, becomes your truth. And then, you go and create evidence to prove to yourself that this is correct. And as a result, you've got no meals planned. Okay, so that's one model.

Alright, now, let's take that same client and come up with a different thought. So, same circumstance, planning for meals. Now, what happens if you choose this thought, "I can set aside time to plan my meals for the week." Simple. How does it feel to think that thought? And most often, I get the answer of "confident." Contrast that to stuck; stuck or confident?

Now, from that feeling of confidence, what actions do you take? Do you sit down with your calendar on Sunday for ten minutes and look at who needs to be where and when? Maybe you decide ahead of time, that Monday is a Crock-Pot™ meal, Tuesday salads, Wednesday's leftovers from the Crock-Pot, etc. Then, you calendar out the meals so you know exactly what needs to be made when. You create a grocery list. You decide, on the calendar, when you're going to chop up the stuff for these meals.

And, what's your result? You've got meals planned for the week. So, here we go again. Once again, your result just proved your thought correct. Awesome. Go back and consider these two thought models again. We started with the same circumstance, planning for meals. Go back to your scroll, if what's playing on your scroll, on repeat, is a thought, "I don't have time to plan for meals," you will get one result; no meals planned.

But on the flip side, if the thought on your scroll is, "I can set aside time to plan my meals for the week," you will get a very different result, in the form of meals planned out for the week and your decision's made. Either way, you've proven yourself correct.

That's the model at work. I hope that going through this example illustrates some really great takeaways here, but I'm going to point some out. Too often, you spend too much time trying to change your circumstances, your parents, your partners, your children, your bosses, your past. And I will

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

argue that, that is wasted energy because you cannot control your circumstances.

You can treat a problem by changing your actions. But unless you address the thoughts and feelings that are driving those actions, that solution is temporary. Remember the order of operations.

The power you have is inside you. It is in your thoughts. And, you always get to choose your thoughts. Remember, 'I have time' versus 'I don't have time,' both of those are thoughts, and they are optional. You create feelings by choosing thoughts that create those feelings; stuck, confident, which do you choose?

This right here, this is the work. This is your operating manual for your brain. This is how your brain works. And when you truly understand this, you will see in real time, for real, your thoughts are the most powerful tool you've got for creating results in your life. Nothing else.

What do you think about this? My hope is that this model gives you a framework, a foundation to start digging into the problems that you've got. If you remember in Episode one, in order to have wellness, there's three things you've got to have; eat, move, and last and most importantly, think.

The thought model is those operating instructions to get you on that path to thinking, so that the eating and the moving are less complicated. But the cool thing is, that this model can be applied anywhere. Coming up in future episodes, we're going to talk a whole lot more about; thinking, and how to choose your thoughts, and how to move from a place of negative thoughts which typically produce negative actions, to more positive thoughts which produce positive actions.

I have specific tools to go along with that, that you can practice. So, you can start thinking in a way that feels better. Come hang out with me next week, and we're going to get into more of this.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #4: The Most Underrated Tool You Already Have to Change Your Life

Thank you so much for being here. Please tell me your thoughts on this. Let me know what you think and what your questions are. And, we'll talk about it more next week. Thanks again, for being here. Bye for now.

To celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away a Wellness Journal to five listeners who follow, rate, and review the show. You do not have to give it five stars, although I certainly hope you love what you've heard so far. But more than anything, please give me your honest opinion and feedback so I can create an awesome show for you.

I would love it if you shared your questions and thoughts, so I can make the show a useful and fun resource for you. Visit [CarrieHollandMD.com/podcastlaunch](http://CarrieHollandMD.com/podcastlaunch) to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing winners on the show in an upcoming episode. See you next week.

Thanks for listening to *Strong as a Working Mom*. If you want more information on how to eat, move, and think so you can live in the body you want with the mind match, visit me at [CarrieHollandMD.com](http://CarrieHollandMD.com).