Imagine you’re lost in a big city. Would you wander down a dark alley as you try to find your way? Or would you look for a brightly-lit main street? Just as you choose your route in a city, you can decide where to let your thoughts travel. When you’re worried or disappointed, it’s easy for your mind to head down negative roads that make you feel sad. But you can direct your thoughts along positive paths. Thinking positively takes a little practice. First, catch the gloomy thoughts. “I can’t,” “I hate,” or “I’ll never” are clues to negative thinking. When you notice them, focus on something optimistic instead. The thought, “I’ll never win that competition. I should quit,” can become, “I’m the best I’ve ever been.” If you’re having trouble switching to positive thoughts, talk to a parent or friend.

The path of life can be challenging. But when you steer your thinking in positive directions, you can build confidence and hope. And that helps make any journey happier.

### Choosing Positive Paths

Practice making positive choices by matching the negative thought to the positive thought that could replace it.

1. I’ll probably **fail** the math quiz.
   - I think I’ll **save up my allowance to buy a cell phone.**
2. I wish I had a cell phone. My parents **never** buy me what I want.
   - Maybe I’ll **make a new friend on the field trip.**
3. I’m sick of the **awful** players on my soccer team.
   - I wish I had a better part. I’ll **work for a bigger role next year.**
4. All this **trash** on the ground is so gross. Why doesn’t someone clean it?
   - I’ve studied hard, and I’ll **just do my best on the quiz.**
5. I don’t want to go on the **field trip**—those kids are all **geeks.**
   - I’ll invite my teammates over to **practice before the big game.**
6. It’s no fair that I didn’t get a lead role in the musical. The director must **hate** me.
   - I need to tell Gina how I feel. I hope she understands and won’t do it again.
7. I can’t stand taking the bus. Waiting is so **boring.**
   - I’m going to e-mail the city about getting a garbage bin here.
8. Gina started a **nasty rumor** about me. I have to **get back at her.**
   - I love having time to read on the bus.