

MY THOUGHTS

Self-Coaching Guide

How can I control my thoughts better?

Our minds are constantly busy thinking. This is really useful when we are working on a problem. When our brain is not engaged, however, it is *still* busy thinking. Everyone's mind is constantly producing a multitude of happy, sad, scary and angry thoughts. It's impossible for us to ever stop thinking.

Our mind often pulls us back into the past to *re-live* events, over and over. Or, it pushes us into the future to *pre-live* events, often anxiously. Around 80% of our thoughts are negative and critical. These thoughts are by-products of evolution and in the past they kept us alive. These days such thoughts drain us, causing us to be restless and anxious, giving us a mind full of conflicting thoughts and feelings. Our inner voice – often our worst critic – speaks these negative thoughts. Unfortunately, negative thoughts are quicker, stronger and more likely to be remembered than other thoughts.

The way our mind works profoundly affects the quality of our lives by causing us to:

- **Live mindlessly.** The mixture of thoughts in our head constantly distracts us and we miss out on living in the present moment. **Living mindfully** – becoming wonderfully absorbed in the present moment – our anxious thoughts subside and we relax into the enjoyable experience of living in the here and now.
- **Live reactively.** Our inner critic constantly tells us about our fears and insecurities and we miss out on living intentionally. We often react unconsciously and do things automatically. **Living proactively** – becoming more conscious of our thinking and in our actions – we go beyond these self-imposed limitations and understand who we really are and what we truly want to do with our life.
- **Live pre-judgementally.** Our thoughts and our inner critic, and the feelings they provoke, narrow and prematurely make-up our minds and we miss out on experiencing wonder and curiosity. We narrow the possibilities or potential of our life, pre-judging situations and second-guessing what others think, especially about us. **Living non-judgementally** – suspending judgement, even briefly – we discover new opportunities through asking questions and learning about ourselves and what we can achieve in life.

The above workings of our mind can lead to anxiety, triggering strong feelings and emotions, which in turn reinforce our thoughts and inner voice. And so, this vicious circle compounds itself.

A good way to start bringing your thoughts under control is for you to *accept* regularly:

- 1) Many of your thoughts (particularly the negative ones) are just by-products of evolution
- 2) Everyone on the planet struggles with these types of thoughts
- 3) These types of thoughts are part of who you are and you have to learn how to manage them
- 4) You are *not* your thoughts; you are **much** more than them

Meditation and mindfulness exercises provide ways of bringing your thoughts and inner voice under control. Mindful breathing exercises and focusing on something else can make a significant impact. [See SGC – 'How can I improve my wellbeing?' for more about meditating and mindful exercises.]

"The worst bullies you will ever encounter in your life are your own thoughts." Bryant H. McGill

More Information

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