

THE MIND

*Watch your thoughts, for they become your words,
Watch your words, for they become your actions,
Watch your actions, for they become your habits,
Watch you habits, for they become your character,
Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.*

Undoubtedly, the greatest influence on our lives is going to be the positivity of our own attitudes.

Ability is not a fixed property, beliefs about your abilities have a profound effect on your ability at any given time, therefore your ability will vary depending on your state of mind.

A positive outlook leads to positive self believe which is a tremendously important concept to grasp. If you think you can, you can, and, the opposite is also true.

What is the mind? Observe your next couple of thoughts, that thinker in your mind. Our mind can be our most valuable tool if we choose to use it wisely, it can be destructive if we don't. This section is about how to better optimise the value of your mind. A good tool to assist this is mindfulness. The upside of mindfulness can be life changing. Unfortunately, the downside for the lack of mindfulness can also be life changing. Asylums and jails are full of people who may not have been able to harness their minds as optimally as they possibly could have. There is an element of luck to life but those with a higher mental resilience tend to have developed mental strategies for coping with life's set backs.

Our minds are constantly chatting away to us in the background, either replaying the past or anticipating the future, over and over. High achievers have often mastered the ability to be aware of their longer-term goals whilst at the same time give their full attention to the task they are doing now in a state of mindfulness. For most people, the opposite is true, the tool has taken over the user, that is the mind has taken over.

Mindfulness or inner peace is when you stop the stream of thoughts in your mind and just be. It is a state of no mind. This state of no-mind is where creativity comes from, the big ideas that can move the needle. For most of us, it is painful to stop and just be, so we distract ourselves by doing things

The secret to being mindful is to focus attention in the "now" (the moment you are in, not thinking about what's happened in the past or what might happen in the future). Harvest or muster the paddock you are in rather than worry about the next one.

You can always handle the now but problems arise when you get swept up in the past or the future, the what if's, could have's and should have's for prolonged periods of time.

It all starts with awareness, being aware of your thinking. Instead of being consumed by your thoughts, take a step back and see if you can observe them. The aim is to try to get a gap in your thoughts, "no-mind".

Thinking

- 90% of most people's thinking is not only repetitive and useless but because of its often negative nature much of it can be harmful.
- We mistakenly believe that we think things over to solve a problem. The irony is that the solution will come when you are not thinking.
- Not being able to stop thinking is a dreadful condition but we don't realise because almost everybody is suffering from it.

- Mental noise prevents you from finding inner peace and enjoying the now (this moment right now).
- Compulsive thinking is an addiction. You can identify it with a feeling of uneasiness or restlessness. It gives us a false sense of pleasure that usually turns into pain. People derive their sense of self from the content and activity of their mind.
- The mind is a superb instrument used correctly, however used wrongly it becomes very destructive.
- As we grow up, we form a mental image of who you are (usually different to how our friends and family see us). We call this the “ego”
- Ego is a false self-created unconscious identification of the mind. To the ego the present moment does not exist; only the past and the future are considered important.
- The mind is a survival machine, attacking and defending, gathering, storing and analysing information.
- You need to find the “off” button to stop yourself over thinking
- The delusion is that you believe that you are your mind (you’re thinking about yourself and who you are, which is often a very different version than what others think)
- Our internal dialogue is most often not relevant to what is going on at the time. It is usually reliving the recent or distant past or rehearsing or imagining future situations. The state of your imagining things going wrong or negative outcomes is called worry. Even if the internal voice is relevant to the situation at hand it will often interpret it in terms of the past.
- Many people live with a tormentor in their head who continually attacks and punishes them and drains them of vital energy.

How to stop thinking

The single most important step in the process of mindfulness is to learn to dis-identify with your mind (stop the thinking noise)

Exercises

There are lots of mindfulness techniques. It is important to find one that resonates with you. Here are a couple to try.

1. Refocusing your attention – Try this exercise
 - Direct the focus of your attention into the now. Just become intensely conscious of the present moment
 - Concentrate and observe your breathing and become present but don’t try to control your breathing
 - Scan your body for physical feelings such as tightness around the neck and shoulders, don’t judge them, just observe them. You may find that by observing them the tightness eases. This is your body relaxing as your mind relaxes
 - You can use this method to take a routine task that you would do every day and give it your full attention
2. Watching the thinker
 - Learn to observe the voice in your head; witness its presence
 - Don’t judge or condemn what you hear, doing so will mean that the same voice has come in again
 - Soon you will realise “there is the voice and here I am listening to it”. This “I am” realisation, the sense of your own presence, is not a thought: it arises beyond the mind. You have distanced yourself from the thinker and are dis-attaching yourself from it
 - This will bring about a new dimension of consciousness, when you listen to a thought and are aware not only of the thought but also yourself as the witness of the thought

- The thought then loses its power over you. This is the beginning of the end of involuntary and compulsive thinking. A small gap of “no mind” is established. You are experiencing “the present”. You will be more alert, awake and at peace with yourself and others around you
3. An interesting experiment is to observe your thinking and do up a score of the positive thoughts vs the negative thoughts. This balance can have a remarkable effect on your outlook at any given time.

Summary

- If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place.
- You are not your thoughts
- Become an observer of your thoughts
- The present moment is all we have so practice and learn to be more grounded in it
- Surrender to the Now and accept what is
- When you catch yourself judging, criticizing, rejecting, labelling, feeling sorry for yourself or trying to change people or situations, you know you are not accepting what is.

References

This section has utilised the wisdom and insights of Eckardt Tolle’s writings in The Power of Now. We highly recommend you read this book.

Sometimes the chains that prevent us from being free are more mental than physical

