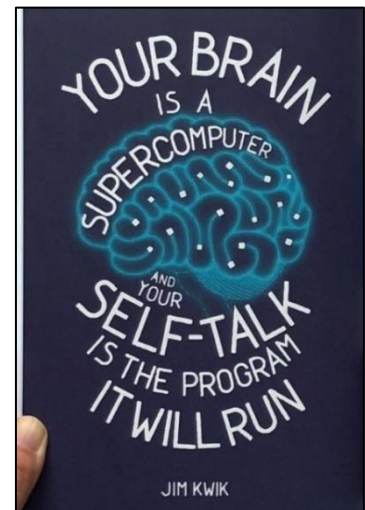
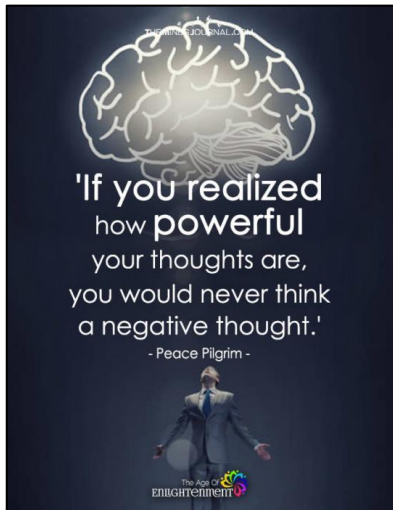


HOW TO CHANGE YOUR THINKING

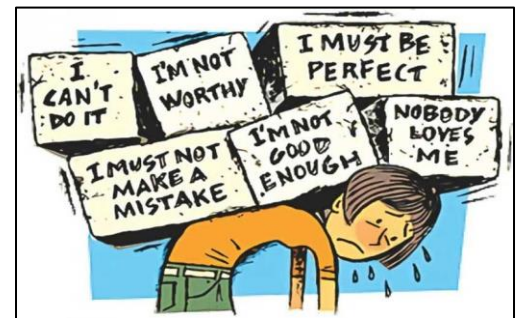
(Compiled by Laura M. Brotherson, LMFT, CST – “The Marital Intimacy Institute” – May 2020)

Many of us struggle to master our thoughts. Our thoughts often have more power over us than we have over them. The following are some tools you can use to master your mind and gain greater power over your thinking. It's a combination of developing greater mental discipline and choosing faith-promoting thoughts over fear-inducing thoughts to own your mental life.



1. **Clean out the Mental Garbage.** Do the “[Clearing Out Your Emotional Closet](#)” exercise to get all the stinkin’ thinkin’ out on paper so you can identify the fears and frustrations and let them begin to dissolve.
2. **Positively Reprogram Your Mind.** Listen to these audio books over and over during your “getting-ready-for-the-day” time, your down time, or your travel time (instead of just listening to music or the radio). This helps to reprogram negative thinking and change your default thinking to be more positive and affirming. Some good books to help with this are:
 - a. [Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life](#) by Byron Katie
 - b. [You Can Heal Your Life](#) by Louise L. Hay
 - c. [Why Some Positive Thinkers Get Powerful Results](#) by Norman Vincent Peale
3. **Learn to Investigate Your Thoughts.** Specifically listen to and learn from the book [Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life](#) by Byron Katie *every day* even if just for a few minutes. This will help you learn to train your brain to check in with yourself to investigate or inquire over the truthfulness of every thought, belief and story you tell yourself—instead of just blindly assuming what you are thinking is true when it often is NOT. Learn to automatically ask yourself these four questions: 1) *Is it true?* 2) *Can I absolutely know that it's true?* 3) *How do I react when I think it's true?* 4) *How would I react if I didn't believe it was true?*

4. **Practice Meditation.** Develop a regular practice of meditation. This helps relax the mind, reduces rumination and overthinking, and helps you develop greater mental discipline and mental self-mastery. Any kind of meditation is like doing “bicep curls” on your brain. The following is just one simple meditation practice you can use to get started or you can check out any of the great apps that help with meditation and mindfulness (e.g. Breethe, Headspace, Calm, etc.)
 - a. [Laura’s 5 Minute Meditation](#) (TEXT)
 - b. [Laura’s 5 Minute Meditation](#) (AUDIO) – download/listen to on your phone.
5. **Practice Mindfulness.** Develop greater mindfulness to gain greater mastery over your mind and your moods. Mindfulness helps you move to a state of neutrality more easily so you can move away from negative judgements about yourself and others. The following are a few helpful resources to get you started:
 - a. [Mindfulness Practice Activities](#)
 - b. [Mindfulness Conversation Guide](#)
 - c. [Mindful Conversation Starters](#)
6. **Use the Emotional Freedom Tapping Technique (EFT).** One of my favorite tools for overcoming deeply embedded negative thoughts and beliefs is the powerful, self-help tool called the “Emotional Freedom Technique” (EFT). It’s an energy therapy tool based on the science similar to acupuncture. Use this [EFT handout](#) or check out videos on EFT ([like this one](#)) to learn and use this tool daily. Tap on any negative thoughts, beliefs, fears, concerns, or struggles you are having.
7. **Practice Self-Compassion.** Self-compassion involves acting toward yourself in the same kind, caring, comforting and non-judgmental ways you would act toward a friend who was having a difficult time. Practice self-compassion by listening to this book over and over to program your brain to think in more self-compassionate ways -- [Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself](#) by Kristin Neff.
8. **Practice Positive Self-Talk.** Cultivate a naturally positive outlook about yourself and life by catching any negative or disparaging thoughts as they come across your mind. Notice the thought then send it away calmly but firmly. (Practicing self-compassion will also help with this.)
9. **Stop the Stinkin’ Thinkin’.** Develop positive mental habits by challenging every negative thought and reframing it to a more positive perspective. You might use [this worksheet](#) to get in the habit of noticing “mental weeds” and “replacing them with “mental flowers.” Or use this [Process Writing Worksheet](#) to process out the negative and learn to move into a state of acceptance of “what is.”



10. **Practice Gratitude.** Keep a gratitude journal on your phone or in a notebook. Write out 5 things you are grateful for every day. The state of gratitude is one of the easiest ways to stay in a positive mental state.
11. **See Your Positives.** Develop a default of seeing your positives by keeping a list on your phone or in a notebook of things you *like, love* or *appreciate* about yourself. This helps with positive self-talk and learning to see the good in yourself instead of the negatives. Take this free [self-assessment](#) by "Positive Psychology" founder Martin Seligman to identify, focus on, and fully embrace your many strengths.
12. **Use Affirmations.** Choose a few personal affirmations for yourself and repeat them over and over in your mind. Some of my favorites are:
- "I'm doing the best I can, and my best is good enough."
 - "I deeply and completely love and accept myself anyway."
 - "I accept what is. It's perfect in God's grand scheme of things."
 - "It's okay to be imperfect."
 - "I'm imperfect and I'm enough." (Brené Brown)
 - "I am enough."
 - "I'm flawed but fabulous!"
13. **Increase Your Coping Skills.** Use these additional stress-relief tools to build better coping skills for greater emotion management and general self-mastery:
- [Stress Relief/Self-Soothing Tools](#)
 - [6 Coping Skills](#)
 - [6 Steps to Mindfully Deal with Difficult Emotions](#)
 - ["The Feeling Wheel"](#)
14. **Watch What You Eat.** You really are what you eat. If you eat crappy foods, you'll have crappy thinking. If you eat healthy foods, you'll have healthy thinking. Try to eat more healthily.
15. **Develop Healthy Habits.** Develop healthy habits in all dimensions of your life -- physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Use this "[Healthy Habits Worksheet](#)" to identify small ways you can improve your overall health. Because mind, body and spirit all work together in holistic, interrelated ways, each of these dimensions contributes to your ability to think in healthier ways.
16. **Get Some Help.** Meet with a counselor (or life coach) that specializes in thoughts and beliefs ([Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#) - CBT) to help you with developing the healthy mental habits mentioned here and/or to better utilize these "changing your thinking" tools. Meeting with a therapist can additionally help if you are dealing with any underlying mental health issues like depression or anxiety. It's pretty difficult to think positive thoughts if your brain is working against you.

Thoughts become
perception, perception
becomes reality. Alter your
thoughts, alter your reality.
William James

You can't be
both awesome
and negative.
Choose one.

Karen Salmansohn



