

How to reign in unhealthy thoughts and take charge of our minds

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October 23, 2020



I have come to the realization that through my habitual worrying and jumping to conclusions, I frequently made up stories that had nothing to do with reality. This would inevitably create problems for me and others.

How can we eliminate this pesky habit? First, we need to become aware of our thoughts. Then examine them - what and why we are thinking a certain way. Where do these thoughts come from? In my case, many times my thoughts have nothing to do with reality. They just pop into my head, seemingly related to something I heard, or thought I heard, and immediately my mind attaches meaning to these thoughts as to why, who, where and when something happened.

It is good when we take the time to examine our thoughts and reign them in. This is how we can avoid many misunderstandings.

It is even more critical now during this pandemic to get serious with taking control of our thoughts. FEAR can get the better of us easily. We hear or read something in the news - how do we process this information properly? How can we maintain a healthy balance between taking all necessary precautions and still live our lives?

Some years ago, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, which has a survival rate of 90%, according to statistics. I did my own research to confirm what doctors were telling me. Still, the word "cancer" caused my mind to go on a wild ride of fear - my world became dark. I did not know what to do about it. It was like this dark shadow engulfed me! I could not talk to anyone - nobody would understand.

It was then that I learned to reign in my thoughts and sort through them and finally get a grip. The illness itself was a minor problem. The hospital stay was only three days! But my mental health problem lasted weeks.

As soon as word got out about my illness, well-meaning people would call me and tell me all kinds of stories, and every time I would go through this barrage of terrifying thoughts. I compare them with wild horses - that's how difficult it was to tame them! It did not seem to matter that I had evidence that my life was in no danger.

Unfounded jealousies are rooted in this unhealthy habit of runaway thoughts and emotions. Just think how much of our misery would be eliminated if we would change this one habit. If we can control our

thoughts, most everything else will be corrected. For example, why do so many of us eat the wrong foods or abuse alcohol and drugs? It stems from our inner chaos.

Let's do this exercise for a few moments:

We hear a lot about the benefit of meditation. Let's take this a step further. Let's observe our thoughts next time we encounter such a situation. Let's examine them and see what the evidence is. How much of what we are thinking is correct? Then let go of any such thoughts, on purpose.

At one point, I created mental baskets and labeled them, using terms such as: 'useless', 'discard', 'issues that have to get resolved' and 'things that worry me but I have no control over.' I would designate a specific time for them, too. It worked well. This method freed up my mind, and I could be at ease for the rest of the time.

Then we need to train ourselves to control our own thoughts, be present in our immediate environment and ask ourselves, "How can we be of service, such as expressing gratitude, whether verbally or merely in thought, and truly pay attention to people around us?" The point here is to avoid having a passive mind which will act like a sponge and soak up a lot of negativity. If, instead, we occupy our mind with intentional good thoughts, it will make it easy to take charge of our lives and be happy.

Now is the time to take charge of our minds! A clear mind will provide the resources we need not only to survive but to excel in our endeavors. It will provide the courage we need and promote positive, creative energy that will allow us to discover new opportunities. Eventually, we won't have the time or space to worry. Just imagine for a moment how that would feel - we would experience inner freedom, energy and enthusiasm for life AND its challenges. I remember these days in my youth - the sense of excitement I felt whenever I faced a new challenge. But as the years went on, for whatever reason, I lost that ability. Fortunately, by using the techniques mentioned above, I have been able to recover. What a great gift that is.

As a society worldwide, we face enormous challenges, and it is easy to become anxious, overwhelmed and confused. I admit it is hard to trust anyone these days, including the media, politicians, business leaders, educators and so forth. Therefore it is vital that we can trust ourselves and our ability to discern.

Once someone told me to trust God's help and guidance, and my response was: "Trusting God is not a problem, but can I trust myself?" Will I be able to sense God's guidance and willingness to follow or will I allow fear or arrogance to cloud my mind?

If we get into the habit of studying God's Word daily with utmost sincerity, I can promise that we will be able to sense God's presence in the form of peace, clarity of purpose, love for ourselves and others. We will have a sense that we can deal with anything that comes along.

Editor's Note:

This guest article was submitted by Maria De La Rosa, a new contributor to the WFWP USA newsletter. As a [blog](#) writer and mother of four, she is particularly interested in topics related to spirituality and family life.