Thought Patrol

The stories we tell ourselves create the quality of our lives

Welcome to the final lesson in this anxiety section.

I am going to teach you how to control what shows up on your computer screen. A bit like installing new anti-viral software, and with this you are going to constantly scan your computer for the bugs/viruses.

So what do I mean? Let's remember the analogy of you as a computer, and the keyboard gives the instruction which determines what shows up on the computer screen. The keyboard types the thoughts which result in how you feel.

Let me explain;

When you wake up each day there is a moment when you feel good, everything is well, and this may last a second, half a minute, half an hour, ok? Yes?

Then what happens?

Suddenly you don't feel so good...right?

Then you perhaps go into the bathroom, look in the mirror and you still don't notice how you are feeling, but perhaps when you get to the kitchen you somehow realise that today isn't a good day for you, but you don't pay any more attention to it.

Then you get into your car, and on your way to work, a car cuts across you at the roundabout, suddenly you are in the midst of road-rage, you feel like you could kill the other driver

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What happened?

How did you get from waking up and everything being good to this rage?

Let me help.

It was the story you told yourself. For example, you wake up and everything is perfect, then the voice in your head kicks in... "oh no I shouldn't

have eaten that chocolate cake before I went to bed", "and oh God, I knew I should have finished that report for my boss before I left the office yesterday, work is going to be so hard today" etc.

Then you get into the bathroom and another barrage starts, "look at the state of my hair" "there's another frown line" and on and on, and by the time you get to the kitchen you realise on some level that today isn't a good day, but you don't have time to think about this.

Then as this tirade continues in your head, you still haven't consciously noticed how you are feeling as a result of these stories, so you get to that roundabout, the driver cuts across you and now maybe you can understand why you are exploding at the driver.

You see our behaviour is absolutely determined by how you feel on the inside, and guess what how you feel on the inside just doesn't happen to you- it is ABSOLUTELY determined by the thoughts you have i.e. the story you tell yourself.

So let's take an example of the opposite scenario.

This morning you wake up as usual, everything is well in your world, then the voice kicks in - "you shouldn't have eaten that chocolate cake before you went to bed"-but then you remember that after work today you are going on that wonderful vacation that you have waited so long for.

So your next thought is "I don't care about that because I'm off on holidays", then you think "yippee", suddenly you are telling yourself a happy story, you get to the bathroom and you look in the mirror and this time when you see yourself, you say "I'll look great next week on vacation when I get to rest and the sun has shone on me"

You get to the kitchen this day and you notice that today is a good day! When you get to the roundabout on your way to work, and the same driver cuts across you what is your reaction?

Correct!

You don't care, you may even smile. What was the defining difference on both occasions?

How you felt on the inside pre-determined your behaviour, and guess what? How you felt on the inside was determined by ???? You got it- your thoughts, or -the story you told yourself. Now there's good news and bad news;

The good news is you now know, so you can take control and begin to choose how you feel,

The bad news, apparently, and I have no idea how they could have measured this, but apparently you have 70,000 thoughts a day!!! So watching each thought I'm sure is impossible, So enter the new anti-viral software that is going to flash up to you each time it senses negative "self-talk".

Close your eyes now and think of something negative that you said to yourself today.

We all have our favourite repeat ones! Now, notice when you repeat this to yourself… what is the feeling you get? In my clinical experience, I have found that it is most often described as that "sinking feeling in the stomach".

Same for you?

Now, ask yourself this question, "would I say that same negative criticism to someone I loved?" let me guess-no you wouldn't! Now ask yourself "would I say that to my worst enemy?" Again usually clients will also say no-how about you?

So here's the revelation-if you wouldn't say that nasty comment to someone you didn't like-what on earth are you doing saying it you yourself?

Now that we have established where the problem is, it is time to install new software to change this. Remember I said earlier that we have approximately 70,000 thoughts a day, so how will this new software work

Initially you will have to consciously choose to run this software. Imagine you have to press a particular key on your keyboard to activate this program. A bit like how you have to individually mark a viral email as spam.

So how will you know when to press the key?

By your feelings-yes- as soon as you notice that you are beginning to feel bad, you will stop the talk in your head, rewind a little and ask "what was the story I was just telling myself?" Then as you hear the negative thoughts replayed, ask yourself "would I say this to my best friend?"

No... of course not.

So you now press the delete button on your keyboard and get rid of that negative statement.

Now you feel much better...right?

So-this new software is going to train you to become your own best friend.

Because you have been downloaded with so many negative suggestions over the years this new software will have to be consciously run on a daily basis, until it becomes your new subconscious program to treat yourself as your own best friend naturally.

This is truly a path to personal freedom but like anything that you wish to become expert at it takes-practice, practice, and more practice, until it becomes your second nature.

It may help you to remember that you are the only person in your life that is guaranteed to always be there for you! So it makes total sense to become your own best friend.

So now you have many new programs and your computer is cleaner and more efficient than it ever has been, however as we use our computer daily, we sometimes pick up viruses with our mail, so this next technique is to help with those "surprise" attacks.