

106 (C) A controlled life

Here we are going to look at how automatic thoughts can produce a vast array of uncontrolled thoughts & anxiety, or can be fine tuned to bring about controlled thoughts & thinking, void of un-needed, non-helpful, irrational fears, from false origins.

Think about this situation & what your reaction might be. You're driving down the road, on your way to wherever? & a car pulls out of nowhere & cuts you off, causing you to lock up your brakes & nearly going off the road, to avoid missing them? So what is your 1st thought, i.e. your automatic thought? Is it rational? Is it necessarily true? Could it in itself harm you? Could you change it to something more positive? Could you say "so what" & actually turn your thought into a happy positive thought? If you say that you could not change your thoughts, if you wanted to, then there may truly not be much help for you, as much of our lives is lived in our minds, thoughts & feelings & if you cannot gain some form of control over how you choose to think & act, then you have eliminated your chances for true life change.

Now of course the above example seems different than the fear of being forced to walk out your front door & all the fears that plague agoraphobics, but the brain training processes, are the same process, that pertain to changing or gaining control of the thoughts & feelings that imitate the onset of a panic attack.

We will discuss where these auto thoughts truly come from; but for now, what Psychological, emotional & physiological feelings & fears do you think about & feel, in your mind & body, when another intrudes on, or you must leave your comfort zone?

Do you believe that all your thoughts & feelings are based on actual facts? Really think about it, as it is important to understand where thoughts, beliefs, lies & truth intersect, in your thinking processes & to be able to admit that things, may not be quite as factual as your 1st thoughts would have you believe they are, as well as seeing how the perceptions of a situation influences your reactions, or actions. e.g. If you got mad, did you really have to? if you cussed out another, did you truly have to? or was it an uncontrolled reaction? Maybe you felt scared, shaky, sweaty, which is not truly bad, is it?

We need to become more conscious of the connection between our perceptions & our reactions, so as to understand how false perception, can cause negative behaviors & reactions to jump in, where conscious controlled positive thoughts & actions should.

e.g. there was a time when I allowed so much anxiety & anger to affect me when someone cut me off driving, or drove too slow, or too fast, or too close, or turned without a turn signal, sat at green light, or any number of things that we all have done & still sometimes do in error? But it is our road to police right, wrong, but another driver did something I didn't like, so what, pay attention to yourself & allow others the right to make mistakes, pray for them rather than getting upset & this will help with lowering your anxiety on the road by just allowing everyone else, the same rights that you want.

To learn to become more conscious of your thoughts, look around, close your eyes, sit quiet for 2 minutes. Be aware of your thoughts. Write them down.

Now sit quiet 2 more minutes & think back to an upsetting angry moment in your life & write down the thoughts you remember having, or think you would have if it happened today?

Now sit 2 minutes & think on a time where you were very happy & remember these thoughts, to think on & remember them for when you need an attitude adjustment.

Be sure to remember that thoughts are not always true, are not facts, can be subjective & can be biased, by past history, or by what you have heard, read, seen, been taught, or told, which means do not allow feelings, to influence reactions.

We will be showing how making it a habit, to connect automatic thoughts, to actions, rather than reactions, which will cause a very positive change in one's automatic thought processes & behaviors.

Think of a moment where you felt a negative shift in mood & write down what triggered the distress. Be specific on what trigger brought about the automatic thought? Write down the emotion you felt, e.g. anger, fear, anxiety, misunderstood? As well as the physiological response shaky, sweaty, other body sensations & lastly What behavior, or reactions did you display. What did you do,

was it a good action, or bad reaction, as most of us react, before we think about what is truly happening & how much importance should be given to it.

Where does what triggered your reaction, rate on a scale of 1 to 10, of the worst possible things that could've happened to you, with 1 being the least & 10 the worst.

What more realistic & positive thoughts could have you expressed, if you chose to. (but I didn't want to) & that's what will eliminate the chance for change, as you have to want it, but more importantly you have to be willing to do the work, whatever it takes.

Now automatic thoughts are also shaped by underlying core beliefs, which when plagued with self-doubt can cause doubt labels, which we will discuss in upcoming letters.