

Thoughts Are Only Thoughts

You do not need to be a prisoner of your thoughts

UNITED STATES, August 19, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Susan, a young twenty something professional came in for therapy because she felt as if her performance at work and in relationships was lacking. She had a type of imposter syndrome and believed her bosses and significant others would discover that she was inadequate. Actually, it is a common feeling that if others really knew you they would think you were "not enough". As a psychotherapist for decades, I have seen the imposter syndrome play out in personal and professional relationships regardless of success levels. It does not matter if you are a CEO, beauty queen or stay at home parent.

In Susan's case she was often criticized by her father when she was growing up and made up stories in her mind that others were judging her. This repetitive mind story caused her to withdraw. Since our brain always means to protect us, the story was serving the purpose of warning her that she needed to withdraw in order to avoid harsh judgment. Her story was based on past experiences. Like debris from the past such stories would wash over her.

MIND TRAPS

During therapy we worked on helping her ask herself these questions about self-judgements:

What is real?

How can I get facts?

If I do not have the facts, how can I remind myself when I am running old programs in my brain?



Dr. Linda Miles

Even if my stories helped me in the past, are they helping me now?

Are my stories holding me back?

Do my stories support my best self?

PRACTICE

Take a moment and imagine allowing a thought to fill a bubble, and then watch the bubble drift away. Continue this practice of filling bubbles with your thoughts for a few moments, consciously constructing thoughts and imagining letting them go...practicing non-attachment to self-defeating stories.

You can also name your thoughts with labels such as judgment, anger, or fear, as you continue to send them away in a bubble. In this way, you are rewriting your experience of the present moment. Rather than focusing on fears that you are creating in your mind based on negative past experiences, you can notice and acknowledge thought patterns, and then begin to send them away.

MINDFUL REWRITE

The young woman chose to rewrite the story about judgement, and her mindful rewrite had a new storyline. She began to ask questions about her performance and reach out to others instead of withdrawing. By venting to some trusted colleagues, she found that it helped to be vulnerable and share her feelings. By stepping back and gaining perspective, she began to change her story and change her brain based on current facts. She learned to replace knee-jerk “not enough” thoughts with curiosity and problem-solving.

You do not need to be a prisoner of your thoughts. Let go of worn-out thinking and replace it with a new storyline based on a practice of kindness toward yourself-and others.

****The case example is not a specific person but a composite of the kinds of issues I have seen as a psychotherapist.**

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