

THINKING BETTER (or I really have to learn to think better)

For me, cartoons sometimes convey wisdom long after the next page is flicked over. They invite us to think again, before the moment of insight is lost. Beyond their momentary humour, cartoons usually contain deeper psychological meaning, illustrating the human dilemmas we face and become caught up in...



Getting a grip on your thoughts

Often people say that they need to control their thoughts or get a grip on their thinking, "I need to think more positively" or "I have such a poor attitude towards him. I need to change it if I want a better relationship." Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (a widely accepted evidence-based psychotherapy for many disorders) encourages this change our thinking but for PiB, wanting to change is the only first step, indicating that the thinker has begun to recognise the influence of his or her thinking. Once we see the connection between our thinking, feeling and behaviour, we tend to want to change our thinking, our life-long conditioned habits of judging, criticising and analysing, placing expectations on ourselves or others (and the many other habits we innocently build over a lifetime). The results often resemble the inner battle our man in the cartoon is experiencing. Every human being has a capacity to create thoughts, attitudes, views on how life is etc. - and this capacity can serve us to live happy and healthy lives. PiB calls this capacity the PRINCIPLE OF THOUGHT.

This same capacity can create a mental nightmare of self-condemnation (or condemnation of others), hopelessness, helplessness and anger. "She doesn't like me!" "I wish I wasn't so fat." "You've stuffed up again" "You'll always be a loser!" ...on and on. When we become angry, frustrated, stressed and overwhelmed by circumstances we sometimes feel our heads will explode, and in many ways they do.

In desperate moments our mind (and our thinking in particular) has a life of its own. Yet, what are we to do? Knowing that it is our thinking does not help. In fact, it makes it worse. All our efforts to change our thinking are yet another burden for our frazzled minds.

PiB asserts that every human being has a natural innate mental health. That is not to say that we are never going to have a bad hair day! What we say is that psychological health is built into our being. When the distress is over we return to calmness - we are at ease with *what is* at that moment, and this ability to regain our equilibrium is our innate psychological health. What grounds do we have to make such an assertion? Well, put simply, Nature (the cosmos) has an energy that is expansive, generative, abundant, self-creating and evolutionary. Human beings are part of this powerful energy as LIFE UNFOLDING.

So we assume (yes, just another thought or belief) that human beings are part of life unfolding, and our experience of that is determined by a psychological function called THOUGHT. We are not just thinking our unfolding life, we are experiencing it. This capacity to experience is call CONSCIOUSNESS - the mysterious capacity to know that we live... and experience it in this very moment. Moreover, to varying degrees we are able to understand that it is our thinking that brings forth our uniquely personal experience of life. Consciousness is about our understanding THAT WE THINK.

But back to the guy at the bus stop...

We all know moments like this - when we want desperately to change our thinking - knowing that our attitudes, beliefs, views, etc. are not serving us well. We want to be more open-minded, less judgmental, more ready to look positively on situations. But no matter how firm our resolve, our habits seem so strong, so entrenched, and so unmoveable.

So let me ask you this...

When you are at the bus stop, or talking to your children, partner or boss (whatever it is); are you present, or preoccupied with a thousand habitual thoughts? You see, when we are present, rather

than in the heat of battle as it were, that 'presence' sets the stage for us to acknowledge and set aside our insatiable drive 'to think'. Or to put it another way, to the degree we are present, we experience life first-hand.

"To the degree we are present, we experience life first-hand..."

Next time you are at the bus stop, see, smell, hear and feel life unfolding in the here and now...

Until we see that we think and become more conscious of SEEING our own wandering and absorbed thinking, we will always struggle to find a more open and willing mind in times of stress.

The NOW is an uncluttered mind, a focused mind, a mind free of fixation on what we are thinking - open to the generative power of just BEING. As we grow in experiencing each moment more of the time, the self-imposed battles and frustrations of our thinking diminish, because our ordinary moments will be in the NOW - not in the life of preoccupation. ■ ■

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