

The Marathon Mind Psychologist

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EPISODE FIVE – PSYCHOLOGY SESSION PLAN



Dear Marathon Mind Listener,

Welcome back to the 'Mind' section of Marathon Mind!

PINBALLS, ALANIS MORRISSETTE AND SOCKS

Hello Runners

This month, I want to talk to you about the phenomenon of THOUGHTS.

On average, each of us has in the range of 50 to 70 thousand thoughts per day.

If you're concerned or fixated on something in particular, a few thousand of



those thoughts could be related to the same topic.

But what even are thoughts? How do they form?

Electrochemical Reactions

Thoughts are electrochemical reactions. They can be fleeting or they can form long term memories and they are the result of 100 billion neurons in the brain exchanging up to 1000 electrical signals with each other every second.

The types of thoughts we have are influenced by our memories and by our environments. They are influenced by what we learned as a child and by how far we've come in being able to challenge what we learned if that particular lesson doesn't serve us in our adult relationships.

Feelings coursing through our bodies also impact the quality of the thoughts we have and so too does the amount of fuel in our tanks - 100 billion neurons and our tantrum-like behaviour could literally be down to needing a huge glass of water, a hug from our loved one, or a better night's sleep.

PINBALLS

Difficult, challenging or uncomfortable thoughts can appear at random on occasion as though borne out of the sky, unpredictably raining down upon your serenity parade. They can present as erratically as a pinball, resounding off the walls of your internal world and causing a chaotic hustle in an attempt to catch, control or contain them.

If we really get sucked into a belief that we can fight with, battle and struggle 'successfully' in order to gain control over our thoughts (pinballs), then all of our attention gets fixated on watching that thought (pinballs), and being overly concerned with what we do or don't do next (gripping the levers or pinball flippers).



This might seem reasonable. Surely if I have a difficult or challenging thought, I should put all my effort into proving myself wrong and manifesting some kind of positive thought to beat the head off the negative one?

And so we grip, and we battle, and we hold on even more tightly. We allow ourselves to become so immersed in the struggle with the difficult thought by either pushing it away and avoiding it, or by gripping it close to us with all of our might, believing that this is how we remain prepared, and fearing that if we take our eye off the ball for one measly second that it will slip past our awareness and cause complete destruction. We remain beady eyed for the threatened and feared negative consequence to hijack us. We swim around in its foreboding nature, e.g. “you’re never going to be able for this”; “you’re nowhere near as good as the others”; “you’re going to show yourself up”; or “you’re lazy and useless” because we feel that ignoring it leaves us wide open to some great disaster. In reality, that disaster could simply be embarrassment or shame. So we remain avoidant of the thoughts

(which actually takes just as much effort), or we remain hyper-vigilant and hyper-focused on the battle with the negative thoughts.

ISN'T IT IRONIC?

But here's the irony. If we are avoiding or if we are fighting - the battle has already been lost. We have already been hijacked by the negative thought itself.

Not to overstate the matter, but in our attempt to control our thoughts and struggle with the discomfort of them (including avoidance), we are trying to prevent the anxiety that is associated with them from ruining our lives, our relationships, and our careers. The thing is, in the process of exerting all of this control over our thoughts (whether that is to fixate or to avoid), we leave very little energy for the things that matter, i.e. those things we were trying to protect in the first place.

Alanis Morissette is wondering if you see the irony yet?



Exerting a huge portion of effort towards trying to control our inner thoughts, means that we likely inadvertently direct attention away from our meaningful relationships and from valuable intimacy with the people we love.

When we get hijacked by thoughts, despite wanting a rich social world, we might be too consumed with how we appear to others that we turn down social invitations. Despite wanting the children to flourish in their creativity, we might silence them as their noise distracts us from the seeming pertinence of paying attention to our negative thinking patterns. Despite wanting a better career, we don't accept the invitation to compete

for a promotion at work because our thoughts tell us we might fail. And despite wanting a life full of adventure, we listen to thoughts that tell us 'who are we to want such lofty things', and that we don't deserve to curate a wild and wonderful life for ourselves.

LET GO OF THE LEVERS

And now back to the pinball. The pinball machine is the thought generator. But we don't have to keep our hands on the levers. We don't have to keep gripping. We don't have to keep pushing and fixating. We don't have to keep balancing the ball. We have a choice to step away from the machine and not engage in the game. We have a choice to let go. Whether the pinball stays up or the pinball falls, it makes no odds on what you choose to do next. And so, if the thought is released from your grip to exist and mosey along as it pleases, it frees up your attention to focus on what matters to you in your life.

THOUGHTS CANNOT TOUCH YOU

The reason I break thoughts down like this for you this month, is because I want you to start understanding that every thought we have is made of the same stuff, whether that thought is related to a past unpleasant experience or whether it is a thought that consists of 'I must pick my sock up off the floor'. This is not to reduce the severity of past experiences nor the impact they may have had on you, it is to get you to notice how a serious thought and an innocent thought about socks, come and go in the same way. One just bears more emotional impact than the other. But just as you're able to let the sock thought go without consequence, so too is it possible to let the other negative thoughts float and go by too, without having it control your life.

AND NOW FOR YOUR PRACTICE

This month, at the end of each day, I want you to pay attention to:

- The types of thoughts you experienced that day
- How frequently you had them

- **What kind of impact they are having on your life.**

To prepare, have a think about the following and jot down some notes:

- 1. What difficult thought do you sometimes struggle with?**
- 2. In what situations do you tend to have this thought?**
- 3. What impact does it have on you?**
- 4. How does it influence your behaviour?**
- 5. How does it impact your relationships?**
- 6. What would you like to do differently?**

Now you will be more primed to notice your patterns. And we all have patterns, it is part of the human condition. There are some schools of thought that talk about changing your thought patterns. However, I'm not a massive prescriber to that. My body always felt like I was trying to get one over on it, "pull the other one, I can feel what it is you really think Louize". So that never worked for me. What did work, was changing my relationships with my thoughts.

STEP ONE - SLACK CUTTING

The first step is acknowledging that first of all, I am an adult human and I am going to have around 60,000 thoughts today. Some of them will be a bit shit. My mind is trying to look out for me, so it thinks that jumping forward to worst case scenario is going to keep me safe. It's the same for you, so cut yourself some slack.

STEP TWO - WORKABILITY

This is about shifting your perspective on thoughts and checking out how functional they are in your life - or not.

I want you to begin asking yourself the following questions whenever you have a difficult/negative/challenging thought:

A. WHETHER THIS THOUGHT IS TRUE OR NOT - IS IT HELPING ME BE THE KIND OF PERSON I WANT TO BE?

B. WHETHER THIS THOUGHT IS TRUE OR NOT - IS IT HELPING ME TO DO THE THINGS THAT MATTER TO ME IN MY LIFE?

You see we can cling to the idea that, well I might be a bad person? I might be less talented than the next person? I might not be as smart/funny/fast/attractive/ambitious/career-driven as the next person... and maybe it's true?

I want you to start shouting WHO CARES???

The thing that actually matters is:

IS THAT THOUGHT HELPING ME GET TO WHERE I WANT TO GO?

I might not have what it takes to make it to the finish line - WHO CARES LADS! Is that thought helping you get to the finish line??? (Provided you have not got any serious health concerns and related thoughts that you DO need to pay attention to, use your noggin where applicable of course).

Your thoughts are the result of a lifetime of experiences and associations, memories, joys and fears. But they are not solid and they cannot touch you. They are images and sounds in the mind. You get to choose whether you let those thoughts dictate what you do next or whether you watch them float by as innocuously as the one about the old sock on the floor.



GOOD LUCK, UNTIL NEXT TIME.

Louize

WHAT MATTERS TO ME IS:

AWAY FROM Your Values

TOWARDS Your Values

**BAD
WOLF**

*good
wolf*

HOOKED

HOW I CHOOSE TO BEHAVE

UNHOOK



SITUATION/ INCIDENT:

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS: