

The Marathon Mind Psychologist

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EPISODE SIX – PSYCHOLOGY SESSION PLAN



Dear Marathon Mind Listener,

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

Hello Runners

By the time you read this, you will already be aware that you are half way through this programme. HUGE GIGANTIC WELL DONE!

POWER & PERMISSION

HALF WAY. Think back to when you first heard about Marathon Mind and it piqued your interest. Each of you will have had a completely different journey up until this point. Some of you will be hitting targets as planned, some of you will have encountered injury and are feeling daunted at the prospect of catching up with newly healed limbs, some of you will have had some life set backs, whilst others will perhaps be toying with whether or not to continue on this path. All of this is ok. For those who are considering dropping of, what did you learn about yourself in the process? Because the answer to that question is the essence of the programme's purpose.

Perhaps you learned that actually this wasn't a goal for you at all, and you were doing it perhaps to be loved more, liked more, to be more attractive, or to gain the admiration or approval of a loved one or someone you would like to have the love of. Perhaps you care less about having to prove yourself now and if so, I commend you.

I hope that also by now, most of you have begun to move closer to the idea that it is your own mind that has the power to either keep you in prison or

to set you free. In 98% (maybe more) of cases, the prison door is usually ajar. This doesn't mean that you couldn't point at all the ways in which you FEEL trapped, or stuck inside a situation. All these things you point at certainly make it more difficult to bring about change or to do something different. That doesn't mean you shouldn't do it. And equally - it doesn't mean that you are in prison. It means you are choosing one situation, perhaps the personal frustrating pain of the status quo, over the more wide-reaching pain of the implications or consequences of choosing another direction. That is very different to being trapped and believing yourself to be powerless.

We have choices. This doesn't mean it isn't painfully difficult to leave or to change or to begin again, be that in your career, relationship or in any other capacity - it 100% is incredibly difficult. But, in this life, you always have a choice, and I say this to bring you into the concept of your own power.

We do not talk about this enough.

You have the power to change - without anyone's permission, except your own. Even if it amounts to baby steps. You have the power to change, if that feels right for you. And if you have to seek permission as an adult (work annual leave requests aside!), I would encourage you to question why.

We are sometimes led to believe that to live, to thrive, to transcend barriers, to try something wildly new and creative, to rise above and challenge expectations and to thwart either external or self-imposed limits, that we need permission. PERMISSION FROM WHOM?

You wonderful powerful humans, I've got news for you, it's you. It's been you all along.

You can give yourself permission and you can give yourself approval. This doesn't mean that you don't afford your loved ones empathic and compassionate conversation, quite the opposite. But it means you deliberately put yourself into the driver's seat of your own life. No-one has the right to take that away from you, and check in with yourself to see if you have freely given it away, over time. It happens.

DAMN THOUGHTS AND SHORT CIRCUIT STRATEGIES

Last month I spoke to you about thoughts and this month I want to follow it up with concrete strategies for how to defuse or how to “unhook” from difficult thoughts.

Here is the scene.

We have a half marathon coming up. You look online and you see a bunch of commenters on the @marathonmind page talking excitedly about their progress and about this next landmark challenge. The minor twinge in your calf that you noticed lastnight begins to throb. You notice a stab of anxiety in your gut, which then transmutes and travels up to your mind. Your mind interprets your freshly activated nervous system as panic and doubt about your ability to partake in this half marathon. This keeps your nervous system on high alert and ensures that your mind keeps churning out interpretations. And remember, we are primed to seek out threat. So there you are. Sitting in a pool of your mind's own personal threat responses and finding it hard to catch your breath. How can you short-circuit this?

The following are a bunch of strategies to short-circuit your spiraling thoughts:

- 1. SAY THEM OUT LOUD IN A STUPID VOICE**

When you notice your mind churning out a repetitive thought, whether that is self-doubt, “I barely managed to get through 21km, how in hell am I going to manage 42.3? This is not possible, it already nearly killed me”

Now, choose your favourite, funniest, weirdest, silliest voice, whether it’s the voice of either Bert & Ernie, a hills LA accent or a Trump voice – and say this thought out loud. And say it again. And again. In your chosen silly voice. After you’ve done that a few times. Notice how you feel.

2. NOTICE WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE BULLIED BY A THOUGHT

Start to picture that thought as a little bully on the school yard.

It comes up to you. You notice it’s shorter than you, much shorter. As it comes closer to you, and into the light, you also notice that it’s got puny little arms and legs. It’s shouting up at you but now that you listen properly, you realise it sounds like a 6 year old.

Would you accept this level of abuse from another person who came up to you shouting “you’re no good, you’ll never be able to do this”?

And when you notice just how small and powerless this little puny thought is in bully form – what impact does it have on how you feel about yourself now?

3. BUZZKILL BROADCAST

Just like there is often a relentless amount of waffling on radio, our mind can often house an incessant amount of chatter about all of the things that could go wrong on a day to day basis. I like to call this, the buzzkill broadcast.

Notice how often the buzzkill broadcast shows up. And when it does, see if you can begin to let it waffle on without fusing to, or hooking with anything it’s saying. Just let it waffle on as though it’s your harmless local broadcaster. Start to notice what happens when you treat the buzzkill broadcast as lightly as this.

4. THE BESTSELLER

When difficult thoughts show up for you, what quality do they have? Is there a repeated story in there? Do they tend to have the same impact on you time and time again? Do your stories about yourself and who you are make you feel stronger or make you feel less powerful? How does this then impact your behaviour?

The next time a familiar story or sequence of thoughts show up for you, I want you to title it.

What is the name of this 'most downloaded' bestseller?? Give it a name! And then every time that story shows up and you begin noticing it, start saying aloud "ah, there is the XYZ story", "ok, I see you, Netflix has thrown up the 'most played' selection again and that story is the top feature!"

Call your mind out on it's own patterns!

PERSPECTIVE SHIFT - THE TWO PARTS OF YOU

Early on in the Marathon Mind programme I spoke on Instagram about the two parts of us. There's the part of you that does the thinking "I am sad", "I am happy" and there's the part of you that notices that you are sad or happy. This can be a tough concept to get initially.

So there's you, the part of you that feels deeply, gets caught up in thoughts and feels devastated with pain and feels elated with joy. There there's the part of you that watches these things unfold. The part that knows. A calm knowing. The part that remains untouched and unruffled despite what's going on - the part that observes quietly.

Some people call it the gut instinct. John O'Donohue used to call it:

The place within us that has never been wounded.

This is the place that can pull us out of the darkness, but it is also the place that knows that it's in this darkness that we grow the most, that the core parts of ourselves become more rooted. We just have to hold the nerve to trust the process.

GOOD LUCK, UNTIL NEXT TIME.

Louize