

THOUGHTS



Do your thoughts control you or do you control your thoughts? Vicki Jayne Yates puts you back in charge

Having strategies to control thoughts enables us to live our dreams, frees us from limitations, releases our abilities and unlocks potential.

Thoughts come and go. Most start in the subconscious, so many of us are not aware of our thoughts. Thoughts directly shape our feelings, so we can be aware of the impact our thoughts have. Some thoughts limit us in a negative way, making us feel bad, sad, fearful, anxious or tense. Some make you smile, feel good, cause you to feel happy, confident or relaxed.

HOW TO CONTROL YOUR THOUGHTS

1. Stop!

This is not easy as usually we are wrapped up in feeling a certain way, positively or negatively. The human condition is to press on, rush along while getting frustrated and annoyed, rather than

Happiness doesn't depend upon who you are or what you have; it depends solely upon what you think

Dale Carnegie

examining the thoughts behind the feelings, or even recognising that our thoughts created how we feel. So next time a feeling is spoiling your equine dream, instead of pressing on, stop and examine your thoughts.

2. Identify thoughts

The better you get at stopping your thoughts the better you will get at identifying the root problem. As thoughts shape feelings, start by examining how you feel and work backwards. Negative thoughts create unpleasant, negative feelings. Most people do not want to face something that feels bad. The human condition means they would rather dismiss it, ignore it or suppress it and hope it goes away. Face it, examine it and give it no place to hide so you can take control. Are you having judgmental thoughts or finding fault with yourself? Are you experiencing distorted and intrusive negative thoughts? Self-defeating statements and negative thoughts erode confidence, create limitations and frighten you. In extremis, negative thoughts can keep you awake at night, cause stress, fear and depression.

3. Get it out

Once you have identified your negative thought, get it outside your head. Say it, acknowledge it and, if it helps, write it down. It takes the heat off and calms things down. Acknowledgement is the first vital step in any process of change.

4. Action

Challenge your thoughts. Look for and recognise the truth. What evidence do you have to support your thinking? Be objective and stand outside the situation. What alternative views are there? Are you overlooking solutions to the problem, assuming they will not work? Consider what is the worst that can happen? Then be prepared to accept it. Are there errors in your thinking? Are you catastrophising or overestimating the chances for a negative outcome? Are you jumping to conclusions? Are you seeing the world in terms of fixed or inflexible rules? Are you worried about how things should be? Do you find yourself using words like should, must and can't? Are you thinking in black and white or all or nothing terms? Have you ignored the middle ground? Are you personalising? Challenge your negative thoughts. Don't just accept them.

5. Quieten your mind

When you have acknowledged and challenged your negative thoughts, you need to learn to quieten your mind. Dampen the negative thoughts so the positive thoughts can be heard. It is useful to actively practice relaxation or meditation, to free your mind.



6. Grow positive thoughts

Now that your mind is not using precious time listening to the negative thoughts, it's time to get some positive thoughts coming your way. For example, when you hear yourself say that you can't do something, replace it with the fact that you can. Whatever your negative inner voice says to you, just replace it with the exact opposite wording.

7. Believe

Chances are you've been having negative thoughts for some time. So, changing the way you think is one thing, believing it is something completely different. To help yourself with this particular step remind yourself of your strengths. List all your and your horse's positive qualities. Remind yourself of all the things you like doing and things that others have complimented you on. When you have lived with

negative thoughts you may have missed compliments people have given you. Ask friends and loved ones to help you list your positive qualities. When a negative thought visits you can use this resource to prove it wrong and silence it.

8. Work in progress

Be the best person you can be at this moment in time. So, when a thought wants to point out something you did wrong or something that you are not yet exceptional in, you can quiet it by the fact that you are work in progress. Actively focus on coaching yourself to think supportive and encouraging thoughts in regard to your work in progress.

A final thought to ponder: Change the way you think about things and the things you look at change.

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There are two ways to control your thoughts:
You can interrupt and replace them or
you can eliminate them altogether.
This second option is what is known as peace of mind!