

Mindful Monday, June 8, 2020

Your Brain Believes What It Hears: What Are You Telling It?

If anyone asked you if you talked to yourself, you would likely say “no”. And you may even judge them for asking. But the reality is, we are talking to ourselves all the time. Constantly. In fact, that is what our brain is built to do. We are often not aware of what is happening in our head, and yet it can sometimes negatively impact our mood, our job and the way we interact with others.

In earlier weeks, we have learned to slow down with [SEAS](#) breathing, we have learned about our [ABCs](#), and we have mastered the [superpower of mindfulness](#). We are ready to start to pay a bit more attention to the thoughts that are running through our head.

Your brain believes what you tell it. Reflect on that for a moment. **Your brain believes what you tell it.**

Did you know that thinking unhelpful things does not need to have a negative impact? If we are aware of what we are telling ourselves, we can learn to shift the message in our heads when our thoughts are not helpful. With practice, we can learn to shift our focus and get our heads back on track. Today we present two ways to do this.

Take a Break: Engage with Your Mind

At some point in the day, maybe it is when you are working or maybe it is when you are home or running errands, set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes. After you set the timer, shift your focus inwards, and take note of what is going on in your head. When you become aware that your mind is off-track or your thoughts are not helpful, take a deep [SEAS](#) breath and gently bring your focus back. Allow the unhelpful thoughts to simply pass by and/or adjust your thoughts so they are helpful. Make no judgement. Simply notice, gently bring your focus back and reframe your thoughts to support what you are doing. If you have time afterwards, grab a piece of paper or use a notes app on your device and write down what you noticed about your thinking. Then reflect on which thoughts are helpful or task relevant, and which ones are simply random thoughts, or maybe even negative and unhelpful. Do this a few times each day. You will start to become more aware of what is running through your head and begin to learn the habit of letting the unhelpful thoughts pass by like bad weather.

Another Way to Frame This: The Stormy First Draft (SFD)

The SFD is the concept developed by Brené Brown to explain the stories we tell ourselves and the impact they have on our ability to thrive. *“When something happens that triggers strong emotions, we often immediately create a story to make sense of what happened. These stories are often one-sided worst-case scenarios, and they seldom contain the full truth. We call this story the Stormy First Draft (SFD).”* We can halt and begin revising our SFD by doing our own reality check using the phrase, “The story I’m making up is.” Doing this enables us to pause and reflect as well as check in on the assumptions we are making. For additional information on SFD’s and how to navigate and revise them, check out this [PDF](#) from Brené Brown’s Dare To Lead Program and the Dare to Lead hub [here](#).