



familiar. The more nurturing you are towards yourself, the less critical you will be.

Experiment with telling yourself all the good things about you; be supportive and nurturing towards yourself. Decide to have a psychological detox and change those internal messages, the more you do it the easier it will be. Sometimes it is hard to change patterns because of the underlying, often unconscious, psychological reasons for doing them. In these situations it can be good to get help from a counsellor, psychotherapists or someone trained in helping us uncover our unconscious motivations.

It is very important not to discount our psychological health. Our physical and psychological health is inter linked and affect each other. You can release yourself from the self-destructive nature of toxic voices. It will not be easy, but the outcome may be that you will feel better, have more confidence and enjoy higher self-esteem.

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Calming the Mind

A few years ago I was in a small and beautiful town in northern Thailand called Pai, where I attended a ayurvedic Yoga and Vipassana meditation retreat.

Running the retreat was Mr Tiger, a Thai man in traditional thai clothing, a long pony tail and goatee beard (not too unlike a mystic master in a kung fu movie). I learnt a great many things, how to meditate deeply, Traditional thai massage and of course some yoga positions, Mr Tiger was very wise and patient and had a big presence for such a small man.

I 'think' one of the most powerful lessons I learnt was about the 'monkey mind' as Mr. Tiger would describe it. One day while trying to meditate I ask Mr. Tiger "how do I stop thinking and just get on with the mediating" He explained that "the brain thinks. That is it's very nature. Just as the river runs or the sun shines, for the brain not to think is against it's very nature."

He went on to explain that the exercise was not to stop the brain from thinking, but actually expand your awareness and not to get caught up in the games of the mischievous 'monkey mind'. The Monkey loves to play, yet many villagers and tourists are tormented by the monkeys when they steal their clothes or food. The monkeys are simply doing what is in their nature but the people get caught in the antics of the monkey getting angry, frustrated, fed up and defeated.

Similarly when we are caught up in our thoughts we can be open to the effect of inner conflicts. These effect our emotions, state of mind and our bodies. Ultimately these inner conflicts can cause stress, illness and potentially weakening to disease, through dis-ease.

By growing your awareness through meditation, Chi-gung yoga or other practices you create space between your whole consciousness and your thoughts, You can then see thoughts for what they are and they no longer have the same power or effect on you.

If you are experiencing any inner conflicts, unwar-ranted stresses, that are causing you discomfort, try this exercise as a way of creating space between you and your thoughts.

1. When you 'feel' the discomfort from inner conflict move to a different location (room or place) from where you were feeling uncomfortable.
2. Then in a book or journal write down whatever you are thinking at that moment (even if it doesn't make sense) until the feeling has subsided enough and you start feeling more relaxed (do not read or analyse what you have written at this stage).
- 3 Resume what you were doing before and if the feeling comes back repeat step 1 and 2 but writing slowly this time (you can say the words out loud you are writing slowly as you are writing them).
4. Repeat step 1 and 2 as many times as necessary
5. You should have by now put "space" between you and your thoughts (that are on paper) Your thoughts may now seem smaller
6. After a while (a few hours to a few days) has passed go back the book and read what you have written and from this new perspective with distance between you and your thoughts write down any comments or observations about what you had previously written and what you now know and have learned from this new perspective.
7. Again after another period of time go back and read the thoughts and your observations about those original thoughts and notice the difference now. You may even find some new wisdoms from the original thoughts.

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