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ANXIETY HACKS

5 steps to retrain

your mind

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ANXIETY HACKS

I love this quote from Maya Angelou:

If you're always trying to be normal you will never know how AMAZING you can be!

Have you ever asked, what is NORMAL?

My view on this (and I'd love your feedback) is that "*normal*" is what our society around us considers acceptable.

Think about it.

As children we learn directly from the people around us for the first few years - our parents, extended family, siblings etc. That is our "*normal*" in that time.

Then we go to school and have to fit into a new "*normal*" which is the routine of the school, and we have to work out how to adjust in this setting. Possibly (more likely, probably) there are more rules to follow, new tests of compliance. We are compared, evaluated and often found lacking. As social beings we want to *'fit in'* and belong in this environment so we make adjustments to our behaviour, up or down, so that we blend in with the new tribe that we've been placed in.

Yes, there are some who manage to hang onto their integrity and resist this imposed change, and they are handled with discipline. Made wrong. Caused to feel *LESS* than they are.

There's research[1] that shows that 98% of children are highly creative when they enter their schooling program, but by the time they become adult this level of creativity has dwindled to a mere 2%.

So what happens when we emerge into the Adult World? By now we have been trained to '*get it right'*; That anything less than '*perfect*' won't do; That we need to *try harder, work harder, live harder* ... and in the absence of a support network that knows anything different, we turn to distraction to help gloss over our faults - often to addictions with alcohol, drugs, sex, work. These all help us disguise the fact that we feel insufficient to meet the world's demands. No wonder we are anxious.

You see, our brain is hardwired to keep our actions consistent with our identity - our subsconscious belief of who we are.

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[1] In a longitudinal test of creative potential, a NASA study found that of 1,600 4- and 5-year-olds, 98 percent scored at "creative genius" level. Five years later, only 30 percent of the same group of children scored at the same level, and again, five years later, only 12 percent. When the same test was administered to adults, it was found that only two percent scored at this genius level.
https://www.inc.com/rohini-venkatraman/4-ways-to-get-back-creativity-you-had-as-a-kid.html

ANXIETY HACKS

> **Our thoughts are vital. It's because of our thoughts that we**
>
> - **feel what we feel**
>
> - **do what we do**
>
> *And often what we DO is like a reflex, an automatic reaction!*

The human mind is fascinating - during the course of a day we do some things consciously (ie. '*with awareness*' eg. get up, shower, brush teeth etc) and many other things unconsciously (ie. *unthinkingly* eg. place one foot in front of the other to walk, activate the necessary muscle movements to pick up a pencil, blink when necessary and so on) so it appears that there's a fluctuating rhythm of aware and unaware actions taking place throughout our day.

Over recent years many researchers have explored the number of thoughts that an average person experiences every day and that result ranges between 12,000 and 60,000. However one thing that they do seem to agree on is that we tend to have 95% of the same thoughts every day[2].

If that's the case, wouldn't it be great if we could direct them more effectively -

- instead of worrying about something that's not happened yet, take a different action

- instead of constantly nagging and putting ourselves down, take a moment to celebrate what IS going well

- instead of asking "why does this always happen", look for a better question to ask at that moment (and thus find a different answer)

This workbook is designed to show you how to become more aware of your thoughts and direct them consciously. Being aware of your thoughts allows you to question them:

- is this really true?

- what evidence am I basing that on?

- do I have evidence to the contrary?

- who do I know who has overcome this already?

  - what would what would they believe/do here?

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[2] For further reading go here https://neurocritic.blogspot.com/2017/06/what-is-thought.html

ANXIETY HACKS

GATHER YOUR THOUGHTS

> There is nothing good or bad –
>
> only thinking makes it so
>
> HAMLET

If you are new to this, take heart - EVERYONE has messy thoughts! The difference between you and another person is merely **what do you do with them**?

And I hate to be the bearer of bad news - it's 99.99% impossible to have an original thought! We learned to think from our parents, family, school, our extended environment. All the thoughts in our head have come from these other influences, we didn't put them there ourselves.

Here's what I want you to do. Put your 'I'm a scientist' hat on gather some data on your thoughts:

- For the first 24hrs stick with this first activity

- Morning, midday and evening download all the thoughts that are jostling about in your head, no matter how small.

- Make note of every little thing:
  - what's happening
  - what you thought
  - what you felt.

- Pay particular attention to any thoughts about
  - your own abilities
  - your worth, value
  - your appearance.

- Think like a scientist, you are observing not judging. Make it clinical.

For example:

(Morning) - alarm has gone off/I don't want to get up/feeling tired. Email from boss/what now?/ anxious. Opening the post, seeing a bill/OMG, how am I going to pay this/anxious

(Evening) - home from work/can't be bothered to cook/tired. Partner wants to talk about the day/how long is this story going for/frustrated. Kids need help with homework/I don't have time for this/guilty

NB: Examples only, not suggestions!

If you find yourself starting to criticise some of your thoughts this will defeat the purpose of the activity. Stay openminded, and tell yourself something like ... "hmm, that's interesting" and move on.

ANXIETY HACKS

MORNING

SITUATION	THOUGHT	EMOTION

DAY ONE - BRAIN DUMP

ANXIETY HACKS

MIDDAY

SITUATION	THOUGHT	EMOTION

ANXIETY HACKS

EVENING

SITUATION	THOUGHT	EMOTION

DAY ONE - BRAIN DUMP

ANXIETY HACKS

I trust that you have completed your homework and done your Brain Dump. If not, go back right now and do it. **Do not continue until you have your sample of thoughts**!

OK, assuming that you are ready to go .... let's continue.

Perhaps you may have noticed a couple of themes as you wrote? If you haven't, don't worry because this next section will work either way.

But having now done your homework you will have shone a torch on your thoughts, made them more obvious to you - and that is a very good thing.

Because to change something, you need to know it's there.

If you were drawn to this publication Anxiety Hacks, I don't have to be a genius to imagine that one of the feelings you experience quite often is anxiety. You should now be able to recognise which of your thoughts give you that feeling, although other words you may be using are worry, concern, careful, nervous, cautious. All different grades or flavours of the same thing. Fear.

And it's important to know this because it's what we DO with our feelings that matters.

> *Whether you think you can, or think you can't, you're right*
>
> *HENRY FORD*

Tony Robbins teaches that "a decision made from fear is invariably the wrong decision". What this means is that when we act, or react, based on our emotions (how we are feeling) that decision is being made by our subconscious brain. Sure, we rationalise the action with our cognitive brain - but the fact remains that we have acted instinctively.

All humans are wired this way. It takes EFFORT to overcome what comes naturally to us all.

Look at it this way: do you think our military personnel are somehow more brave and courageous than you are? That they are somehow different? NO! They have been trained to behave differently. Hours and weeks and years of training, challenging, drilling over and over again that when X event happens they react in Y manner!

I'm not a neuro-scientist myself, so please accept my simplistic rendering of this:

Consider turning on a light switch - when the switch is flicked/pulled/pushed/whatever, something moves inside the circuits to connect the current and the light comes on. In our brain, millions or trillions of possible connections can be made. When something happens - we see/hear/feel/smell or

ANXIETY HACKS

taste it - a connection is made in our brain and we give that thing a meaning. That triggers a decision (to act or not act) which produces a result.

Has this ever happened to you? Walking past a bakery, you get a waft of fresh bread which instantly triggers a thought of "that smells nice", which then had the effect of you walking in for an "impulse purchase". It certainly has to me!

The more often a particular thought is followed by the same meaning, action and result the more hardwired that process becomes. In other words, the brain sets up a shortcut for the same thing to happen over and over again in an instant. In the field of neuroscience they say *"neurons that fire together wire together"*.

So let's now see what automatic reactions or behaviour you have been creating from the thoughts you've already discovered!

Using one of my examples above:

SITUATION	THOUGHT	EMOTION
alarm has gone off	I don't want to get up	tired

The Action that follows is "I turn the alarm off and sleep in"

The Result is "All day rushing around, feeling like I'm running out of time, not giving work my full attention, feeling frdustrated"

Not very satisfactory, I believe you'll agree.

ANXIETY HACKS

The Result will always prove your Thought true.

Your Result is always what you create.

It's impossible for someone else's thoughts, feelings or actions to appear in YOUR result.

Hmm. What if you don't like your result? What has to change?

Clearly the Action has to change.

And there's a much quoted phrase accredited to Einstein you may have heard: "we can't solve a problem with the thinking that created it".

Hmm. *OK, so the **Thought** has to change*. Here's a hypothetical for you:

	Version 1	**Version 2**
Situation	alarm has gone off	alarm has gone off
Thought	I don't want to get up	I wonder what today will bring?
Emotion	tired	excitement, curiosity
Action	turn alarm off and sleep in	I get up with enthusiasm
Result	All day rushing around, feeling like I'm running out of time, not giving work my full attention, frustration	Creating momentum with my day, start or finish a project, making progress, a sense of achievement

Notice how the Situation hasn't changed at all - merely the thought that followed the alarm - and the biggest change has been in the Result.

This is a fabulous model to use in reverse as well! Is there an area of your life that you'd like to improve? Your health? fitness? relationships? career?

Here's how: Imagine the result you want to create.

- What sort of action would you need to take to get that result?

- What would you need to be feeling to get there?

- What would you need to be thinking/saying to yourself?

- What possible situation could trigger that thought?

ANXIETY HACKS

5 STEPS TO RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN

Using your Brain Dump results above, complete the following tables to help you create a new train of thought and action towards your desired result.

Be creative! Yes, you can. Because it doesn't have to be perfect. This is your work, no-one else's. There's no right or wrong. It just IS.

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

Good work, try another:

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

And another:

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

And keep going:

ANXIETY HACKS

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

ANXIETY HACKS

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

	Version 1	Version 2
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Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

ANXIETY HACKS

	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
Thought		
Emotion		
Action		
Result		

	Version 1	Version 2
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	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
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	Version 1	Version 2
Situation		
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Situation		
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