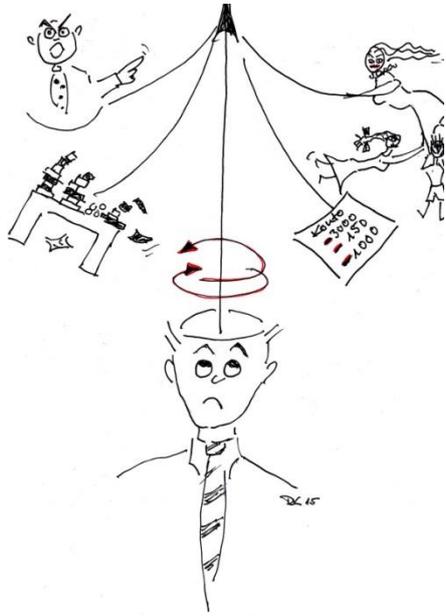


STOP Your Thoughts Going Round in Circles

Do you know the situation when a matter or a problem keeps bothering you to such an extent that your thoughts keep going round in circles? Often strong emotions and self-doubts come along and in extreme cases you wake up during the night and cannot get back to sleep as your thoughts keep going round in circles again.



Such a situation has various negative impacts:

- It takes a lot of energy that is missing when you need it for your daily tasks.
- If your thoughts continue going round in circles while you perform your tasks, you are distracted and cannot work at the standard you usually work.
- If you are short of sleep, you have even less energy and your performance will further decrease.
- However, in my opinion, the worst impact is that we tend to imagine negative scenarios and even exactly the situation we are afraid of when our thoughts keep going round in circles.

Why does this last item have such a negative impact? As proven by scientific tests, our brain cannot differentiate between reality and imagination. Hence, pilots and astronauts are being trained on the basis of visualisations enabling them to automatize important sequences of actions in the case of an emergency.

You might have already heard of sportsmen or -women who have repeatedly visualised the situation of their competition to detail at home “on the sofa” as to realise optimal motion sequences during the event itself. At the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics, the 18-year-old American ski athlete Mikaela Shiffrin became the youngest winner in the history of the slalom at the Olympic Winter Games finishing more than half of a second faster than the silver medallist. “For other persons this seems to be my first Olympics. For me it is my thousandth Olympics!” she said in an interview after her success. She had visualised many times all situations she might be faced with at the Olympics.

Perhaps you have already seen the American professional golfer Tiger Woods, who is among the most successful golfers of all time, visualising many minutes the optimal course of the ball before finally putting it?! By this he increases his chances to succeed considerably as the respective nerve tracts in the brain have already been ‘preheated’.

These visualisations of desired results work best when you use the five senses. Apart from the optimal motion sequences, Mikaela Shiffrin, might have imagined e.g. the snow blowing into her face feeling cold, the cheering of the audience at the course, the skis scratching on the ice, the images after the finish or the sound of the national anthem at the medal ceremony. If the visualisation is really vivid, it can be deeply memorised in our subconscious which is known to be leading by far the most of our daily actions.

The following exercise can help you in a situation when you do not make any progress in your considerations of a problem or lose energy by worrying. By this you may add some positive thoughts to the whole scenario. Often totally new solutions or strategies come to our mind when we manage to “let go”. By the way, Albert Einstein went to sleep when he was not able to make any progress with a complicated equation – he knew that the solution would leap into his mind on the next morning.



TIP

Strategy how to act when the thoughts go round in circles:

- As soon as you notice that your thoughts go round in circles again, say mentally “stop” to yourself and imagine a red STOP sign!
- Deliberately decide for the situation you wish for!
- Visualise this situation and allow for as many emotions as possible.
- Scan all five senses: Perhaps you can hear supportive sounds, feel temperatures or your favoured situation has a specific taste or smell. There might also be a movement you connect with it.
- If you constantly repeat this technique, there is a high chance that your visualised success is memorised in your subconscious and your chance to reach your aim is much higher as in a situation where your thoughts keep going round in circles.

Good luck with the exercise!

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