



Managing Our Monkey Mind

Awareness of Thought -- Week 3

*If your thought is a rose, you are a rose garden;
and if it is a thistle, you are fuel for the fire.*

-Rumi

Exactly. We are what we think. And then we go and do what we think. This is so alarming to me because I know there's a lot that goes on in my mind that I am not fully in the know about.

For example, if I unconsciously think a friend is growing tired of me then I most likely will automatically start pulling back. And now because I've started getting distant and guarded, they might start pulling back, as well. Now we've got a weird cold awkwardness happening between us which moves me to begin unconsciously wondering what I ever saw in this person in the first place. With this distance between us, the texts slow down. As time goes on, we occasionally force ourselves to check in but now it's a job. Steered by our simultaneous unconscious conclusions, our relationship has morphed into something brittle.

However, if I knew I was having the thought that this friend was getting tired of me-and-my-shtick, then I could pick that thought up in my hands like a \$30 hand-thrown pottery mug at a craft fair. Is the glaze beautiful enough? Is the rim too thick? Does it feel good in the hand or does it weigh 10 pounds? In other words, how well does that thought hold up to scrutiny and is it worth plunking down 30 bucks?

When I look, I notice something about my thoughts: I have some typical patterns. For instance, I have a tendency sometimes – only sometimes – to think in very black & white, very absolute terms. If that kind of thinking was a coffee mug, I think it would look like a half-sided cup. It's missing the other side! That cup wouldn't be worth a dime! I hate to say, but another mode of thinking that comes out in me regularly enough to be regrettable is a concerning one – the kind where I impose my plan on someone instead of making room for them to have a different approach. I know, that's bad. As for what that coffee mug would look like...I think it would just be a solid block in the shape of a coffee mug. With no room for coffee, it wouldn't even qualify as a coffee mug at all! No way would I buy that mockery of a mug.

Our relationship with our thoughts

Obviously, we think things. After we get done thinking something, we respond to it in some way – maybe dismissing it or maybe right along with it. This decision point is where it gets interesting. It's kind of strange to think about having a relationship with our thoughts, but we do. This week is about bringing insight and clarity to our thinking process. If we can point our skills of awareness to the thoughts in our head and see them as separate – something we can hold in our hands and examine – we're in a better position to see clearly and act accordingly.

Mind bender

Do we think our thoughts,
or do they think us?

That is, if we aren't the
conscious thinker of a
thought but the thought
gets us to go and behave
according to its bidding,
hasn't that thought, in
essence, thought us up?

Put a different way, when it
comes to thoughts and us,
who owns who?

