



Inspirational Emails

Keep a Clear Mind

Fresh Start , Issue 28

"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." (II Timothy 4:5)

As sound advice, ***it seems so obvious.*** After all, who would seek to have a confused mind? Yet Timothy's advice is as profound as it is deceptively simple to follow. In the face of crisis, conflict, rejection, loss, humiliation, disappointment, or serious illness, keeping a clear mind can be quite challenging. Yet it is a challenge that must be met. Without a clear mind to place life's events in a proper perspective, we can lose ourselves in a downward spiral of anger, fear, frustration, anxiety or hopelessness and depression.



To keep a clear mind we must be aware of two enemies of clarity that immediately flood our mind when we are confronted with any situation or even conversation that even hints at threatening our control, security or, heaven forbid, our comfort zone.

The first enemy that muddies our clarity is *uninvited conversations from the past.*

"Voices" in our heads interpret today's events that even vaguely resemble a *past* disappointment, hurt, or mistake as a threat to our very survival. **Our subconscious mind remembers and categorizes every little detail that ever happened to us**, and attempts to match it with current circumstances, dredging up every old fear, judgement, memory and negative self-assessment possible. **For instance**, if you've been humiliated asking someone



for a date, a job, a sale, or even for directions, as soon as you approach someone else ten years later for the same purpose, your inner voice will immediately begin ringing the alarms like crazy, alerting you to a potentially painful ding in your self-esteem armor. This makes you anxious and hesitant about repeating, what "voices" are telling you, is behavior which is going to be painful. In other

words, your mind is similar to a giant computer that non-stop matches up your present circumstance with what it perceives to be a previous similar circumstance. The problem is that your mind, in an effort to preserve the ego, *assumes that the current outcome will be no different* than the past. This is why people are afraid to take risks or try almost anything new. In the past some new things might not have worked out. Translation: "nothing new is going to work out."

Following hard on the heels of your negative thoughts are **the emotions that, through your mind-body connection, flow from negative thinking**. Obviously these are not going to be positive emotions! In fact, they're going to feel a lot like anxiety, shortness of breath, increased heart rate, panic attacks and depression.

So how do you keep a clear mind in the midst of all this mental chaos?

1. ***Realize what's happening.*** Develop an ability to "step back" from your internal dialogue and to understand that they are just old thoughts - "suggested" interpretations from the past that are probably not applicable today. **Do not confuse your inner dialogue based on "old voices " with "the truth."** These voices, based on past events (which may or may not have anything to do with the current situation) are usually not an accurate and certainly not an objective representation of reality. Furthermore, and this is the key, they are not "you." ***Your thoughts are just that - thoughts,*** drifting through your head. They do not represent you unless you choose to identify with them. The trick here is to notice, "Gee, that's an interesting thought. I wonder where that came from?" rather than simply identifying with the thought itself and then letting your emotions begin to run wild.
2. ***Notice*** what emotions your internal voices are causing. Are you beginning to feel anxious, upset, hopeless, confused?
3. ***Clear your mind*** of the negative conversation in your head. **Shut off the voices.** You can do this when you understand these thoughts don't represent reality. They're actually more like a dream floating through your mind. **They only become real when you attach the significance of your agreement to them.**
4. ***Get perspective.*** Stand back from your problems to get a wider perspective. Things are seldom as bad, as clear-cut or urgent as we might first think. Think of other possible explanations or courses of action. Do something that will distract yourself: pray, listen to some music, go for a walk, call a friend, read a book.

The bottom line is, **you can get a fresh start today on the rest of your life by realizing that keeping a clear mind means keeping a peaceful mind** and *not reacting to every negative or anxious thought that floats through your mind.*

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