



How Thoughts Affect Us

by
Peter Field

Perhaps the most basic of all the 'mental laws', and one hopefully drummed into every student of psychotherapy and the mind, is that every thought has a consequence.

Yet so often in our day to day lives we choose to see thoughts as simply abstract things - we think them and then forget about them, as if they had never existed. No harm in this, we reason, it's just a thought. Unfortunately, there are dangers in this way of thinking.

Believing that thoughts themselves have no real and actual affect upon us, we can so very easily allow even the most negative thought to go unchecked and unchallenged. After all, we reason, it's only a thought, it doesn't really matter.

It's as if we believe that thoughts are wispy and insubstantial things, with no real existence, capable of dissipating and disappearing into the ether once we have experienced them. Perhaps it's because our thoughts are such private things that it's easy to imagine them as insubstantial and intangible.

This of course can only happen if we hold the belief that the mind and the body are quite separate, disparate entities, each with its own distinct domain, operating independently of each other.

The truth, of course, is that mind and body are indeed interconnected, with each affecting the other. Each thought we think has its consequence. And those consequences can indeed have a tremendous affect, not only on our mind and our feelings, but also on our body. Negative or positive, thoughts do indeed have a very real affect upon us.

Let me illustrate this with a simple little exercise that nicely demonstrates the tangible effects of thought - and the interconnectedness and inseparability of mind and body. To do this, I am going to ask you to use your imagination.

Imagine yourself walking over to your refrigerator. As you open the door, there's the soft sound of the seal being broken and perhaps the feeling of cold air escaping. Now, imagine that there's a lemon in there and imagine yourself reaching in and taking that lemon out. Perhaps it feels a little cold in your hand, as you bring it over to a board or somewhere you can safely cut it.

Now imagine yourself taking a knife and slicing the lemon in half, lengthways. Maybe you can see the white segment in the middle, and perhaps there are some pips there too, as a little of the juice runs out. Now cut the lemon again, so that you have a quarter, a nice wedge. Lift it up and hold it under your nose. Perhaps you can almost smell the pungent lemon aroma. Now, quickly imagine yourself taking a great big bite into that lemon. Really squeeze it so that the juice spurts into your mouth and onto your tongue, maybe some of the juice even trickles down your lips onto your chin.

Exercise over.

If you really did imagine sinking your teeth into that lemon and squeezing the juice into your mouth then a couple of things will probably have happened: The muscles of your jaw will have automatically tightened as you did so and there will have been an increase of saliva in your mouth.

Now, we know that the flow of saliva is not under the control of the conscious mind; it's controlled by the unconscious mind. It simply cannot be willed.

What's happened, of course, is that the subconscious mind cannot distinguish between real and imaginary. For it, a thought is treated as a reality and an imagined lemon is as real as an actual lemon. The simple act of thinking about sinking your teeth into a lemon is enough to produce the exact same physical affect as if you had really done so.

A thought which existed in the mind has had a tangible effect on the body.

In India, the home of so much philosophy and of astrology, the palpable nature of thought has long been recognised. There, astrologers make horoscopes for the birth of a thought or a question, in order to better understand it. It is a practice that has survived thousands of years. This branch of astrology is called horary astrology. For these astrologers, a thought is something very real and tangible.

The fact is that the thoughts we think affect us on many levels, including the physical. This means that the thoughts we have and the things we tell ourselves, about ourselves, in the privacy of our own mind affect not only how we feel, but what we become. After all, if thoughts have physical consequences, then they can make us ill or well.

When you find yourself thinking negatively, or experiencing a period of difficulty in your approach to the world, when you find yourself thinking thoughts such as: 'I'll probably come down with...'; 'I'll never be able to...'; 'I'll probably only fail...'; 'I don't really deserve...'; immediately replace the negative thought with a positive statement or affirmation. And repeat it at least 10 times. Make a habit of this and you can change your reality.

Here are some examples you can use, and of course you can create your own as you go along. Select one and use it for at least a month.

'I am becoming balanced and whole in body, mind and spirit'

'The past is over now and I am free to move on with my life'

'I am alive, healthy and free'

Be sure to repeat your positive statement 10 times when you awaken in the morning and just before sleeping at night. Use it again whenever you catch yourself thinking a really negative thought. Remember, practice is the key here. Persistence really does pay dividends!

'All that we are is the result of all that we have thought. It is founded on thought. It is made up of our thoughts.'

The Buddha, The Dhammapada

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