

HOW TO DEAL WITH NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

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Defining Negative Thoughts

All thoughts are negative, but some are more negative than others. What makes any thought negative is that it obscures reality and carries disturbing emotions.

All thoughts obscure reality to some extent just because any thought uses up some conscious energy to form the thought—and this used up conscious energy is no longer available for *direct* conscious contact with reality—including, especially, the inner reality of deep consciousness itself. For full clarity and full contact with inner or outer reality, all thoughts should be absent.

The most negative thoughts are those that are compulsive and obsessive.

Some thoughts are more negative than others. The more negative thoughts are those carrying (1) desire, (2) aversion, and (3) delusion. Desire is most negative in the form of greed and attachment. Aversion takes the form of anger, hatred, or fear.

There are also 1001 other negative thoughts, but all these can be broken down into combinations of desire, aversion, and delusion. Envy is a composite of desire for an object we don't have, plus resentment or anger toward somebody else who does have it, plus despair that we ourselves don't have the ability the other person has to acquire that object. Despair (and depression) itself is a form of aversion to our present condition, combined with the delusive belief in our "self" as a permanent structure lacking in enough power to ever escape from this condition.

Delusion is literally a *decrease of the light* of consciousness or knowingness. Consciousness or knowingness is a still, focused awareness or seeing of the situation, person, or moment. Even if there is no object to see, there can be pure seeing.

In psychology, delusion is a false belief that is maintained even despite repeated experience of reality that disproves it. This happens when we cannot let go of our thought, because we are not conscious enough of the thought itself, as an object which comes and goes. Instead, we are subconsciously identified with the thought. So we don't have enough free consciousness left over to recognize that reality is different from what we think it is.

Let us look briefly at positive thoughts, and then consider antidotes and exercises to negative thoughts.

Positive Thoughts

Positive thoughts are the opposite of negative thoughts: (1) instead of attachment, there is detachment—letting go of objects. This letting go leads to generosity with objects, time, and energy—giving them to others. Giving is an

expression of love.

(2) Instead of aversion—anger, hatred, fear—positive thoughts mean acceptance of the present situation, person, and moment, whatever they are, even unpleasant. This acceptance is also an expression of love—and leads to love.

(3) Instead of delusion there is unmoving, focused knowing. Non-delusion lasts at least some respectable interval of time, without being disturbed by any thought, desire, or aversion.

Whereas negative thoughts lead to compulsive thinking, desiring, and aversion, positive thoughts lead to peace, openness, and connected to others.

The most positive thoughts are thoughts of God, of God's Divine qualities, of God as being in others; thoughts of others—especially unpleasant people and situations—as containing a teaching from God; and thoughts of oneself as containing embryonic qualities and blessings of God.

Exercises Liberating Us from Negative Thoughts

Exercises enabling liberation from negative thoughts can be organized into three classes:

- (1) the radical exercise of meditation—sitting (or acting) with no thoughts whatever;
- (2) practicing positive thoughts as dhikr, or mantra, perhaps using a mala of beads; and
- (3) dealing directly with negative thoughts as they arise—letting them go, or substituting opposite, positive thoughts.

This third class of exercise further branches into different responses to the three different strengths of negative thoughts—weak, strong, and medium. Watchfulness or seeing must operate with all three of these strengths of negative thought, because if we don't see a thought we can't apply any antidote whatsoever.

Weak negative thoughts. Simply seeing them is usually enough to dissolve them, because seeing a thought as an object breaks the feedline of subconscious energy that gives the weak thought what modest power it has to continue.

A negative thought is fed with energy only so long as we are not fully conscious of it. Then our subconsciousness is merged with it, feeding it—and we actually subconsciously feel identified with it.

When we become clearly conscious of the thought, we see it as an object, separate from our seeing—and the feedline of subconscious energy is broken simply

by our becoming awake and conscious of the thought.

Also, once we see the thought clearly, we can intentionally let it go. We simply bring our attention back to whatever we were doing before the negative thought arose. And if we weren't doing anything in particular, we bring our attention to our dhikr or our breathing.

Medium strength negative thoughts. Either follow and act out the thought consciously, instead of subconsciously, or deny the thought consciously.

Let us look at each of these two approaches separately, because the second approach breaks down into two sub-approaches—one of total nonaction or denial of the negative thought impulse, and the other of acting contrary to the negative thought impulse, doing the opposite.

1. Acting out the negative thought. First, suppose we choose to follow the negative thought and act it out; for example, we listen to other people when we know we don't have time to do that. Then at least be aware we are doing that, and be aware of the unpleasantness of doing that. Be aware of the positive element here—giving our time and attention to the other person. But be aware also of the commitments we have to third parties and to ourselves; be aware of our limitations of time. And be aware of the unpleasantness—the aversion, in fact—the feeling of opposition and loss—that we undergo as we sacrifice our other legitimate desires, giving them up for the sake of the present demanding person or situation.

2. Not acting out the negative thought. Second, suppose we choose to not act out the present negative thought; say, the thought of complying with a demanding person or situation when we cannot really afford to do so.

Not acting the thought out can be done by (1) simply doing nothing, or (2) acting contrary to the negative thought:

2.1. Sitting with the negative thought. If we have the opportunity, simply sit with the negative thought or feeling, and observe and be aware of its unpleasant nature, for as long as it lasts. Greed, desire, and aversion all have an unpleasant feeling quality. They also all have a particular content. See these things. While sitting with the negative thought, without acting on it, we give it full attention during this time, closing our eyes, and simply observing it. We don't indulge it or let it spin us into related thoughts. We watch it like an object, as long as it lasts.

If we like, after we've identified the negative thought, we can meditate with determination on our dhikr. Sacred thoughts of the Divine are good antidotes to all negative thoughts.

2.2 Acting contrary to the negative thought. If we do not have the opportunity to sit with the negative thought, we can act contrary to it. For example, we can tell the other person that we have to end the session with them because we have some

specific other prior commitment which we have to do. Observe all our feelings and thoughts as we do this. In particular, observe and witness the disapproval which we may expect them to express toward us—and observe the feeling we have of being hurt, rejected, and destroyed by their disapproval. This is a mere thought form: We will in fact not be destroyed even if they do disapprove of our statement ending this session with them. If we can see this fearful thought form of ours clearly, then we can remain friendly throughout our statement that we have to go now. We can express friendly willingness to see them again at some future date—either specific or non-specified. And we can watch our formerly subconscious fear, aversion, and unpleasantness dissipate under our conscious observation. And we can see our own ability and power to act differently from our previous pattern of automatic compliance.

3. Powerful negative thoughts. Let us discuss them personally.

Summary

The one-word key is “consciousness.” Giving our consciousness is the same as love. We give our consciousness to our own negative thoughts—and they gradually or quickly go away under observation. We give our consciousness to the other person—whether spending time with them or saying goodbye and separating from them. And we give our consciousness to words of the Divine—which contain a particle of the Divine and draw us into deeper connection to the transcendent Reality.