



Thinking about Your Thinking... Applying the Power of Thought

We've heard it before...the most important tool for success is a powerful mental focus. At first glance, it makes sense and sounds simple. In reality, it can be difficult to achieve between interruptions, crises and co-workers. Our best intentions to make the most of the day are often felled by the second cup of coffee.

Okay, you'd like to sharpen your focus but you don't have time to read another book or attend another workshop. Relax, the answer is easier than you think.

The first step is to understand how our minds work. Our brains have two parts, the conscious, rational section and the more emotional subconscious. Most people believe they operate out of the conscious brain – the part that makes our decisions and choices. Actually, the subconscious is usually in true control because it's the part feeding all the data to our rational brains in order to make those decisions. It's a lot like an iceberg – what you see sticking out of the water is the tip, or conscious part of the brain. Underneath the water is the huge mass of ice, or subconscious, allowing the iceberg to float. What's interesting is that the subconscious "thinks" in pictures and visual symbols. The more pictures you give your brain, the faster the information is processed.

Why is that important to you? The two brains actually take a few seconds to coordinate their data. In his book, Change Your Brain, Change Your Life, Dr. Daniel Amen details the thought process as follows:

1. Your mind creates a mental picture (thought)
2. Your brain releases chemicals
3. An electrical transmission goes across your brain
4. You become aware of what you're thinking

Step one takes place in your subconscious mind while step four is your rational, conscious mind becoming aware of the thought.

What is so significant about Dr. Amen's study is the release of chemicals that cause the two minds to connect. By learning how to create our own mental pictures and then release those chemicals, we can actually help our minds focus on our goals and achieve them much faster.

Here's the catch...you have to help your body. The good news is that this procedure takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere, public or private. You can also use this technique to reduce your stress level throughout the day.

Begin by creating a picture of what you want to happen in your mind's eye. Make it as real as possible by adding sounds, colors, people, etc. Notice how you feel as you see yourself successful in this picture. Hold that thought!

Now, find the slight lump on your breastplate that's about two inches below the hollow of your neck. Tap your chest lightly on this area 8-10 times while you take deep breaths. Visualize your success picture, continuing to tap and breath for another minute. When you feel relaxed, stop.

Why tap your breast bone? Behind that bone is a tiny gland called the thymus. It releases endorphins, also called the "feel good" hormones. They're the same hormones you feel in a runner's high, when you're happy, or for me, eating chocolate. Gently tapping your chest releases these endorphins to create a sense of well-being and calm.

This is a terrific exercise to do in the morning before you start your day, or the night before when you plan your day. If you feel a stress attack coming on, you can tap lightly and breathe to calm your nerves.

By helping your mind create these pictures, you are "programming" your subconscious to work toward that picture. Once you develop a daily habit of strengthening your mind, you'll be amazed at the results. Put the power of thinking to work for you!

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