

## Introspection

“**Introspection** is the examination of one's own **conscious thoughts** and **feelings**.”

“Introspection can determine any number of mental states including: sensory, bodily, cognitive, emotional and so forth”

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introspection>

### Introspection

- Examination, observation, record taking, learning our thoughts/choices and how they affect us.

Chain reaction: One day I was driving home and everything was great. Somehow I began thinking about baseball. I played baseball as a kid for nine years. I thought about my performance and how I kept getting better. Then I thought about how I stopped playing. I thought about my bad choices during that time of my life that led up to me not playing baseball anymore. Then I wondered how things might have been different if... Next thing I know I'm upset.

Introspection is increasing our awareness of what thoughts are going on behind the scenes. When we can identify the chain reactions of our thoughts and how they affect our choices we can become empowered to make better decisions. Continued learning about Godly solutions, how to align ourselves more with God, is like owning new tools that can help us improve life.

As we learn our thought messages, patterns, triggers, and their affects we can choose to replace them and change the reaction. The more attentive we are the earlier we can identify the reaction and make adjustments.

Taking responsibility to direct our thought life means we will be proactive in our thought choices knowing that such responsibility can improve our lives. Many people become accustomed to “who they are” that they dismiss their ability to be different, change, and improve. Fixed mindsets use thoughts like “I can't” or “we've tried and it didn't work” which results in giving up and

resisting possible solutions. Let's own these thoughts and be willing to replace them with new ones like, "maybe I can" and "let's try another way."

There are deep rooted and engrained thought patterns that are not easily redirected or turned off. Yet with persistence, self-discipline, endurance, and training we can improve our ability to focus our thoughts toward God and away from evil.

Quitting smoking is not easy. I tried for a few years with repeated failures before I finally was able to stop. I noticed a thought come to me, "I need a cigarette." This was my beginning to see how such thoughts guided me into action. I realized this motivating thought was something I would think to myself daily and that it was a lie. I held that thought in my head as if it was a criminal ready to hurt me. I made a decision to pay closer attention to such thoughts because they would sabotage my success in quitting smoking.

New convincing messages toward the solution

I began to practice telling myself that I did not need to smoke and slowly developed new thoughts to support my abstinence. "My lungs will be better" and "I will have more energy." "I can save more money." "My teeth and fingers won't turn yellow." "I'll have more time to do other things."

Belief is a requirement for this to work. If there are disbelieving thoughts about this method, perhaps more evidence from other's personal stories and experiences may help with our disbelief. We must be willing to see how it can work. In recovery circles this is referred to as open mindedness.

We identify thoughts that sabotage us, "this will never work," and then develop a solution focused thought that we believe is true, "maybe this can work," and continue learning more about the solution to help us understand how it might work.

Daily prompts, restarts, & plans

Daily prompts

We can choose how to begin our day with what messages we will display in our minds. We will need messages ready to read, hear, and reflect upon. We can write down messages, create signs, and/or use notes. We can place them by a mirror or in our vehicle. When we see the message we can read it slowly and keep it within our minds to see the good in it. Such practices can slowly build powerful thought messages that can gradually reshape the way we think, our mental attitude.

Once we develop a regular daily pattern of focused meditation upon God's good character traits we improve our likelihood of experiencing them. Getting started at the beginning of our day with a solution focused attitude places us in a much better position to take action toward solutions.

Perhaps we wake up with a bad attitude already sabotaging our day. We may be in such poor shape we find ourselves stuck and completely resistant to do good. "God help me" can sometimes be a powerful prayer that lowers our resistance enough to begrudgingly see God's goodness.

## Restarts

Many of us multitask and get busy in our day with various distractions. Keeping our practice with introspection can empower us to see when we get off balance, become angry, fearful, anxious, hurried, worrisome, pessimistic, or just empty and dull. When we notice this position we can again reflect upon Godly messages, grace, and beauty. This can help empower us to regain a solution focused direction and attitude.

## Plans

Remember the saying, "those who fail to plan, plan to fail." If we do not have a plan to grow in Godly character then we probably won't. Everyday we ought to set our minds toward our plan which we develop that has clear obtainable objectives. As we pursue our plan we may encounter fears, resistance, frustrations, or doubt. Such temporary hurdles are part of the journey for us to find solutions and gain skills to overcome. If our hurdle is fear, then prompting ourselves with faith focused prayers and thoughts can help us. If our hurdle is resentment, then praying for forgiveness and mercy

can help us. We have many hurdles tripping us up as we get going. Let's just take it one hurdle at a time, hence the saying, "one day at a time."

### Journey not a destination

This is not a class we take for a year and then we are done. This is a learning process to put into practice for life. After a while though what seems like work will become more automatic just as sabotaging thoughts has become automatic. Thoughts practiced, believed, and used regularly over time often become part of who we are until we decide to change them again. That said, we will need to apply self examination to ensure we do not wander away by distractions and other priorities. Such wandering can begin with positive goals and end with a lost spiritual connection. God will need to be a first priority and we will need others to help us. The practice of mentoring others freely to improve our spiritual awareness and experiences ought to become part of our daily lives. The regular application of God's love, truth, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, justice, patience, peace, and generosity is a powerful, amazing, and grace filled way of life. Each day it is up to us to choose it.