

Telegraph Columnist

The only moment that matters

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The definition of 'overthinking' is the art of creating problems that weren't even there.

You've had a busy day and are just about to drift off to sleep when up pops the overthinking mind.

"Did I lock the back door? I wonder what my boss thinks of the idea I submitted? Why hasn't Anna replied to my text? I wonder what that pain in my side is?"

Three hours of obsessing, googling and checking your phone, you are still wide awake, your mind is racing and you then start to worry about how many hours you have until you have to get up and how exhausted you will be. Sound familiar?

Our mind is a very powerful thing and it is so easy to get swept away by the stories of it. We have all been there, we worry about a recent mistake and find it hard to let go, going over and over it in our mind worrying about how others see us, thinking we look foolish and no one will like us. We have an important meeting and we start to project scenarios about how the conversation will go, we play it out in our minds and become totally engrossed by it all that it begins to feel real.

And we've all encountered times in life when someone says or does something that offends us. And no matter how hard we try to let go of feelings of hurt or resentment, we find it hard to let go and move on these overwhelming thoughts consume us and take on a hurricane effect and before we know it we are playing a disaster movie in our minds that hasn't happened and isn't real.

We worry about things in the past that we cannot change and catastrophise things that haven't even happened. We are living anywhere but the present moment, the only moment that truly matters.

When we hold on to this way of thinking we begin to feel overwhelmed, anxious and stressed. These thoughts



Jo Gawthorpe taken by Mike Pearce.



A racing mind can keep you awake



You can't change what happens, but you can change how it affects you

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We can't change the past, and we cannot truly control the future.

create the feelings that not only lead to a downward spiral or negative thinking but also can affect health and well-being.

It is important to learn not to take everything personally and not take offence. Remember everyone has and will always have a right to their opinion and the reality is that it may not be the same as yours. So next time someone voices a conflicting opinion take a few deep breaths, listen with interest, with

patience without interruption, without reaction and try to be non-judgemental. By listening, by making eye contact and calming yourself down with your breath it gives you time to formulate your response in a calm and non-reactive manner and is less likely to lead to an argument where nothing gets resolved. All of my clients tell me that this is a game changer and has helped to resolve conflict at work and at home. At the end of the day

all any of us want is to be seen and heard.

We choose how things affect us. We can't always control outer circumstances but we can choose how we respond and deal with our thoughts and life's challenges.

We can choose to see thoughts as nothing more than knee-jerk reactions to a perceived offense, and not reflections of reality or ideas that we need to let influence our state of mind.

Observing our thoughts and accepting a situation will enable us to make peace with what has happened and get on with living our lives.

The lesson here is that worrying about what others think doesn't change anything, and that life is unpredictable and out of our control. With practise we can learn to forgive, to accept situations for what they are and to let go and be kind to ourselves and to the people around us. Tomorrow is not a given for any of us, we can't change the past and we cannot truly control the future, all we have is the here and now this very moment, this very breath, so live in the present moment and next time you find yourself dwelling on something you cannot change remember this phrase: "You can't start the next chapter of your life, if you keep re-reading the last one"

For a free meditation on The Overthinking Mind and a free 30 minute, no obligation, session visit <https://www.calmrme.com/free-session-%26-meditation-or-contact-Jo@calmrme.com>.