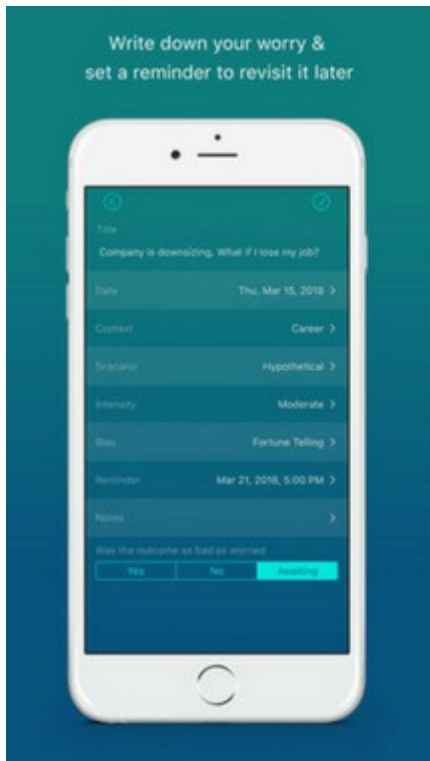


# DOUBT – PRESSURE – STRESS – CONTROL

Obsessive negative thinking can become a bully, sabotaging our ability to focus on solutions, this kind of negative thinking is called rumination. It all-stars when our minds wonder towards the negative events in the past or the possibility of negative events in the future. However, rumination should not be confused with healthy reflection, during which we analyze some specific elements of our problems in order to better understand them.



When we ruminate, we're not focusing on any solutions, instead we are fixating on the problems, or potential problems themselves. Harvard psychologists Daniel Gilbert and Matthew Killingsworth estimates that we spend only about half of our time actually focusing on the present. You may ask why does that matter? We're happiest when we are living in the moment, no matter what it is that we are working on.



In a study of 2,250 people, (by the way, it is still ongoing through the Track Your Happiness app), Gilbert and Killingsworth found that a wandering mind is more than likely an unhappy mind. The good news is that we can learn to bring our minds back to the present and stop ruminating. The first step to feeling better is to notice your cognitive distortion, the little dirty tricks your brain plays on you. Psychologist Martin Seligman identified the three P's" that we tend to focus on after negative event.

1. Personalized: (thinking that the event is all your fault). Personalized: Instead of immediately thinking, I'm the reason. We may have lost the client, try to look at what happened more objectively. On any project issue, that will come up that are beyond your control. Always own up to your mistakes, however, don't necessarily blame everything on yourself.
2. Pervasiveness: (thinking that the event is actually going to ruin every aspect of your life). Pervasiveness: If you realize after a important meeting that you accidentally called a colleague, by the wrong name, try not to let yourself become consumed by anxiety. A tiny

mistake is very unlikely to start a chain reaction that ends in a complete disaster.

3. Permanence: (thinking that you are really going to feel like this (e.g., bad) forever). Permanence: The words always, and never, are usually indications that your self-reflection has turned into self-destructive. Let us say that your boss is not happy with a one-page that you created. Instead of thinking that I will never become a good designer, focus on the single event and your ability to do much better the next time: This was not my best work, I can learn more skills and improve.



Stressors fall into two categories: those that you can do something about (the Withins) and those that are outside of your control (the big Beyonds). If you are anxious because of Withins-unanswered emails or an impending deadline-the easiest way to feel better is to complete the very thing that is stressing you out.

As the great American painter and writer Walter Anderson

noted, nothing diminished anxiety faster than action. How do you stop stressing about the things that you can not control? First, you have to be diligent about recognizing what you really can't control.



If you feel somewhat responsible for the big Beyond, you'll never be able to confidently say you've done enough and relax. Always remember that your thoughts are simply your thoughts. Acknowledge that, however, recognize that they are not inevitable truths (even if they feel true). We all have many voices in our heads, but we also get to decide which ones we listen to and how we want to respond. With practice, we all can start to develop a mental immunity to stress by saying in the present and taking care of all the things within our control.



Psychologists have found that the most important factors in determining our response to pressure is how we think about our ability to handle it. When you are faced with any stressful situation, you begin evaluate both the situation and your resources. How hard is this going to be? Do I have the skills, the courage and the strength? Is there anyone who could really help me? This evaluation of demands and resources may not be conscious, however, it's happening under the surface. As you weigh the demands of the situation against the resources you bring to it, you make a rapid assessment of your true ability to cope.





This evaluation is the true key to determining your stress response. If you believe that the demands of the situation exceed your resources, you will have a threat response. But if you believe you have the resources to succeed, you will have a challenging response. There are many studies that show people are more likely to have a challenge response if they stay focused on their resources.

Some of the most effective strategies for this are acknowledging your personal strengths; thinking about how you have prepared for a particular challenge; remembering the times in the past when you did overcome similar challenges; imagining the wonderful support of your friends and family; and praying, or knowing that others are praying for you. There are all quick mindset shifts that you can use to turn a threat into a challenge, which makes them some good things to try the next time you want to perform well under any pressure.



Viewing the stress response as a resource can transform the physiology of the fear into the biology of courage. It can turn a threat into a challenge and can help you do your very best under pressure. Even when the stress doesn't really feel helpful, as in the case of anxiety-welcoming it can actually transform it into something that is helpful: more confidence, more energy, and a greater willingness to take action.





You can use this strategy in your own life anytime that you notice signs of stress. When you feel your heart pounding or breath quickening, realize that it is your body's way of trying to give you more energy. If you notice some tension in your body, remind yourself that the stress response gives you access to your strength. Sweaty palms? Remember what it felt like to go on that first date-palms sweat when you're close to something you want.



If you have some butterflies in your stomach, know that they are a sign of meaning. Your digestive tract is lined with millions of nerve cells that always respond to your emotions, and your thoughts. The butterfly are your guts way of saying, this really matters. Let yourself remember why this particular movement matters to you.





Whatever the situations of stress may be, worry less about trying to make them go away, and always focus more on what you are going to do with the energy, strength and drive that stress gives you. Your body is providing you with some access to all of your resources to help you rise to the occasion. Instead of taking a deep breath to calm yourself down, take a deep breath to sense the energy that is available to you. Then put the energy to use, and ask yourself, what action can I take, or what choice can I make, that is consistent with what my goal is, in this moment.

My friends, you now have some strong tool that with practice, you will be able to call on them when needed. You will be able to be in control of that stress, when and if it flares up in your life. Just, please remember, this is your body, your emotion, and you can be in control.

May good health and prosperity be always with you.

Humbly yours,

Paul Earl.

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