

## Ep 3: Think About Your Thinking



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Welcome to The Live Better Podcast where I, Monica Bhardwaj, Certified Life Coach, teach you the life coaching tools you need to think and feel differently so you can navigate life's challenges with more ease, feel good about yourself and show your kids how to do the same.

Hello, welcome to episode three of The Live Better Podcast. This week I'm talking about the importance of managing your mind.

But before we get started, I want to celebrate getting my very first podcast review. It says "Monica offers practical tips we all should have learned as kids. I can't wait to share them with my own kids and students." I love that this listener finds my tips practical because that is my intention: to share tips and strategies that feel doable for you to try and share with your kids and your students if you're a teacher.

If you're enjoying this podcast, I'd love to hear from you too. I'll put a link in the show notes so you can leave a rating and review too. It really helps get the podcast into the ears of more listeners who could use the tools and concepts, so I really appreciate you doing that for me.

Okay, so we've been shut down and doing online school for the last two weeks where I live, and it's been a lot. I had some work and client commitments that I couldn't change, so it's been a lot of working in the evening and weekend to manage. I really miss my routine and having more time to myself.

It's not my ideal for sure, but I'm also enjoying this time too. It takes some effort of managing my mind each and every day to get me to this place, but not as much now that I've been using the coaching tools that I learned and teach over the years.

I know I'm not alone in finding this time challenging. A lot of people are feeling overwhelmed coping with the restrictions, homeschooling, and just feeling Covid-fatigue in general.

And we can see this in the news stories and social media posts documenting the hardships of this time and how much people hate the way things are right now.

Maybe you've noticed that you or others mostly talk about the negative aspects of your life right now.

And most of the time, we don't even realize negative we are. We think we're just stating the facts and everyone else agrees so it's just stating the truth.

But thoughts are not facts, they are thoughts.

Schools being closed is a fact. Children should have a normal school year is a thought. Because there's no definition of what a normal school year looks that everyone would agree on right?

And it's important to know that it's normal to think negative thoughts all the time. If your brain offers you more negative thoughts than positive ones, it's actually doing exactly what it's supposed to do.

Our human brains have been wired to fixate on negative details to stay safe and alive. Because in the primitive days, humans had to assess threats like lions and poisonous berries all day long. There are also parts of our brain that designed to remember all of our pain and suffering and constantly be on the lookout in case they happen again.

This is playing out for people who feel traumatized by the first Covid-related lockdown when the schools were closed for half the year and parents had to isolate from loved ones, worry about getting sick, work at home and homeschool at the same time. So, every wave and shut down in the pandemic will cause you to feel more stress and anxiety if your brain is unconsciously or even consciously thinks it will be the same as the last time.

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We also evolved in tribes and feel connected and safe when everyone thinks the same because if you back then, if you didn't think the same, you would get kicked out of the tribe and be eaten by the lions. So, we commiserate with each other over the things that upset us. It's like a bonding experience.

I experienced this when I worked in accounting firms and other corporate environments. We would feel exhausted from working long hours or there would be a difficult boss or office politics, and everyone would huddle together daily to gossip or complain about it. And it would feel so good that everyone else felt the same way and you weren't alone. What we didn't realize was that it was actually fueling the fire and making the problem feel bigger and worse.

Now, it's not a problem to have negative thoughts or whine and complain. Nor can we stop our brain from doing that because of how it's designed. I'm just suggesting you do it consciously. Acknowledge that you are thinking a lot of negative thoughts or often saying negative things and then notice how it feels in your body when you do. If it feels heavy or draining, maybe it's worth changing your thinking. Because all of your negative thinking is what is causing your emotional suffering on top of what you're already experiencing. When you repeat it over and over, it only feels heavier.

So, if you think the world isn't safe, you will focus on all the tragedies in the world and ignore all the good that is happening and feel even more fearful.

If you think you're incompetent, you will focus on all your mistakes and disregard all of your accomplishments.

If you think your partner isn't helpful enough, you will focus on all the things that they don't do and discount all the ways that they are helpful and feel even more frustrated.

So, thinking negative thoughts about your situation or other people doesn't change them. It only keeps you feeling upset.

But the good news is, all your thoughts are all optional. You can always choose to think the ones that are helpful to you and make you feel good instead.

Now, I'm not saying that you shouldn't feel upset about anything. Feel upset, scream, cry, feel it vibrate through your whole body. But don't indulge in your negative thinking and stay stuck.

Don't let it rob you of your peace.

Because feeling of joy is available to you too and nothing ever has to take away.

So, if you want to balance out the negative, start to pay attention. Take note of what's going well too. The moments that you enjoy, delight you, give you pleasure. The things you're most grateful for.

This is how you liberate your brain from its habitual negative thought patterns. You become aware of your negative thoughts, understand why your brain thinks them and then disrupt them.

Most people try to change the thing that is bothering them to feel better. It's like when you hate your fat body and lose weight but then your brain offers you more critical thoughts about your loose skin or some other area of your body. Or you can't stand your kitchen so you renovate it, but you can't enjoy it because your brain is now fixated on your outdated bathroom.

It has a bias for focusing on the negative. So, there's nothing outside of you that you change to stop your brain from offering you negative thoughts. You have to turn inwards and retrain your brain.

And please don't use it as an opportunity to beat yourself up for being negative. Use it as an opportunity to learn to live more consciously and make space in your mind and body for more positivity.

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And this is for our kids too. Remember they're functioning from their lizard brain because their conscious minds aren't fully developed yet. So, they're hyper focused on the negative as they navigate the world and their sense of self-worth, safety and belonging. God forbid you present a toddler with their dinner on a different colored plate, right? And then there are the older kids who will have a great day at school, ace a test, have a good time with their friends and then only get 5 likes on their Tik Tok post and think their life is ruined forever. This is their primitive brain at work. But we get to lend them our conscious mind.

One way that I teach my little one is to talk about what we liked about our day and what we didn't like to bring awareness to both the positive and negative and let them co-exist.

And it's so worth doing this work to become aware and retrain your brain to also see the positive and produce emotions that feel good in your body.

Because life will always be full of challenges. We get fired, we go through a rough patch with our partners, relationships end, we have difficult phases with our kids, lose loved ones and have health issues.

So, it's so much more helpful to use your precious mental energy to control how you experience the seasons of your life.

When you focus on what's going right, you will start to notice what's going right more often and feel like it's going right more often.

When you stop complaining, you create space in your mind so it can be more efficient, more creative and more present with your life instead of being distracted and hiding from your life.

You feel more empowered to strategize and take thoughtful action to advocate for what you want, weather the storm and emerge from it stronger.

And you don't need a reason to feel good more often than you are. Feeling good is reason enough.

During this phase of the pandemic, I certainly miss spending time with friends and family the way we used to. I'm nervous about getting sick. And I've been enjoying embracing the slower pace of life, being present as much as I can with my son, getting creative with how he learns instead of being on the screen all day. It's been an opportunity for me to evolve by tuning into what he really needs while I challenge and change my conditioned beliefs about what it means to have a good childhood and formal education. I don't project my feelings onto him and assume he's feeling the same way or should be feeling the same way.

Nor do I want him to be. Kids brains are like sponges. They absorb and pick up everything around them. So, if we want to teach them to see both the positive and negative aspects of life, we have to be conscious of what they are absorbing from us, and others and the media.

And changing our habitual thought patterns isn't easy. Taking in all the positive is going to come with uncomfortable feelings because it's not the social norm or what you're used to. It's hard feeling content and at peace when everyone around you is negative and complaining. And fitting in with the tribe feels essential for our survival.

We don't want to appear fake and out of touch with reality. But when you're holding space for both your negative and positive thoughts and choosing not to fuel the negative ones, you are actually much more in touch with reality.

I think there's also a sense of guilt when we thrive. Maybe you've been guilted or shamed by your family or friends as a way to keep you in line with the status quo, which makes it harder to go against the grain.

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Sometimes we even think that our feeling good discounts how others might be feeling. But other people's thoughts are what cause them to feel terrible, not your success. Your ability to thrive regardless of your circumstance creates an example of what's possible for others to see.

And I want to be very clear that I'm not suggesting you think positive to feel better. I'm suggesting that you hold space for both negative and positive thoughts and feelings, because the human experience will bring both.

Consciously change your habitual negative thought patterns to be able to experience the positive ones too.

Because feeling the full range of emotions is what makes us feel alive and live more fully.

So, this week, pay attention to your thinking. How often do you have negative thoughts and conversations about your life, yourself, other people or your even your surroundings? How much are you posting on social media, or consuming negative media or absorbing from conversations with others? How does that leave you feeling? If it feels heavy and exhausting, acknowledge how you're feeling and invite some positivity in.

This will be super helpful as we send our kids back to school amidst this wave of the pandemic. I'll be thinking that it won't be long before they are back isolating at home for every runny nose or cough and hoping that we all don't get too sick. And I'll also think that any amount of time they spend with their teachers and friends at school will be amazing for them and that this wave will end, just like the others.

If you engage in conversations with other parents or teacher, honor the negative thoughts and feelings that you and others are having and add some helpful thoughts to the mix.

And if you get kicked out of your tribe, come join mine. Follow me on Facebook and Instagram. I'll put a link in the show notes for you.

Alright, that's all for now. I'll see you next week.