How to Manage Those Nagging Unproductive Thoughts

1. Identify your automatic thoughts. In addition to recording your situational negative thoughts, you should also keep a record of your automatic thoughts. Keep a notebook at hand to jot them down. These are the thoughts that pop into your head all of the time. They may seem to occur without warning or reason.

For example, your automatic thoughts might be something like, "I am useless," "I am a disappointment," or "I will never reach my goals."

2. Identify your underlying concerns. In order to deal with negative thoughts, you will need to become more aware of those thoughts and what assumptions and beliefs are associated with them. Choose a negative thought and think about the concerns that might be driving that thought. This process may make you feel uncomfortable, but it is important to understand the motivation for your negative thoughts. Try to do this with a grounding activity (i.e. breathwork, tapping)

For example, a negative thought might be something like, "I never do things right." The motivation for this thought might be related to concerns about your type of intelligence and your specific natural abilities, as we all have them.

3. Examine the root cause of your negative thoughts. Remember that your negative thoughts are NOT facts. They are related to a belief or assumption

that you hold. It is important to try to find the root of that belief or assumption and begin to break it down.

For example, if you often have thoughts about not performing your best at work, consider the role of people in your life who may have contributed to the development of that belief in you. This does not mean blame them, but it does mean validate the reason it may have occurred. The power of validation is highly underestimated.

4. Mindfully challenge your thoughts. You can also better understand your thoughts by challenging them by investigating them. This technique can be used when you are aware and able to recognize your negative thoughts.

    Consider asking yourself the following questions:

a. How much do I believe this thought to be true? Rate it 1 to 10
b. If you think the thought is true (i.e. 8 out of 10), how do you know it is true? What are the facts which support this to be true?
c. How would not having these thoughts change you actions or behaviors?
d. What are some facts which demonstrate that this thought is not true...

5. Get curious about the benefits of addressing your thoughts out loud. In addition to writing and thinking about your negative thoughts, addressing your thoughts out loud can also help you to deal with your negative thoughts. Using positive self-talk to address negative thoughts can help to change your perspective and help you to become less critical of yourself over time. You can try this even if you have doubt about the positive thought, however, consider tapping while doing this as it may create better outcomes.

Remember starting is usually the difficult part, go slow, but do start. Your Time Is N.O.W.