

Stopping Mind Chatter – Three Exercises

In my work as a medical intuitive, I encounter a large number of people who suffer horribly from anxiety. The never ending chatter in their minds keeps them awake when they'd rather sleep, makes them worry about matters that, objectively, don't warrant so much worry, and can really make their life miserable.

What causes this chatter? Do we need it? Who is doing the chatter? How can you stop the chatter? What happens when we stop the chatter?

The first thing to consider is to understand what part of us is chattering. Is our mind, our chattering mind, our true self? The need for chatter comes from our subconscious and is perceived by our conscious mind. The cause is fear. Chatter offers up endless possibilities and "what if" scenarios with the idea that if we consider all options we will be safer, we will avoid pain. Chatter attempts to create order from the chaos.

It's important to remember that we are much more than our conscious mind. We can exist without our conscious mind being active. When we sleep, our conscious mind plays no part in who we are. In many ways sleep is like the death of our conscious self. Hence it is clear that we are much more than just our conscious mind.

One of the worst things about chatter is that while it is going on, we are missing out on the Life all around us. We're thinking about the future and missing out on the "Here and Now". My experience is that when I finally managed to stop my own chatter and started focusing on the here and now, I discovered that the world I lived in was full of unexpected gifts that warmed my heart and filled my life with joy. They had always been there, but I was too busy worrying about the future or the past to see them. In a sense I went from a living hell to a living paradise just by changing myself and my chattering mind. The world didn't change, I did. You can too.

Here are three exercises that helped me stop my chatter. I did them in this order.

1) The Blackboard and the Sponge exercise

I learned this in the early 70's from a wonderful book called *The Master Game* by Edward De Ropp.

Basically, while sitting in a comfortable chair, close your eyes and imagine that you have a blackboard on the inside of your forehead. Also imagine that you have an eraser in your hand. Once you have visualized this, your job is to look at the blackboard, and keep it black. When a picture or thought appears on the blackboard, move your imaginary hand and wipe it clean. I did this exercise for maybe 5 minutes every day before I went to bed. At first my hand with the eraser was moving so fast it looked more like a windshield wiper, but, over time, I learned to keep the blackboard clean.

I've recommended this exercise to many of my clients over the years and many of them have modified the exercise to suit themselves. Some visualize a drive-in movie screen, others used black spray paint etc. It really doesn't matter, they all work. The key is to keep our foreheads free of images and thoughts. This is a gentle exercise. Doing it for only a few minutes every day is a gentle way of letting our conscious mind understand that it is not in full charge of our lives, sort of like accustoming a wild horse to the feel of a bit.

2) Feeling your body, sending your mind into your body

I learned this exercise from Dr. Frank Hladky, one of the finest bioenergetic therapists alive today. The exercise consists in telling our mind to observe the physical perceptions in our body, noticing any differences between one side of our body and the other side, such as how our left hand might feel differently than our right hand, how the right side of our neck may be more tense than the left side, how one part of our body may be warmer, more numb, less tingly, harder to feel etc.

The exercise, especially the first few times, should be done systematically, starting from the soles of the feet, then moving to the structure of the feet themselves, then the ankles, the lower legs, the knee joint, the thighs, the hip joint, the pelvic floor, then our palms, the structure of our entire hands, our wrists, lower arms, elbow joints, upper arms, the arm to shoulder joint, then down to the intestines, the diaphragm, liver, lungs, heart, our spinal column, neck, jaw, eyes and face. The key is to observe without judgement. If some parts are hard to feel, spend more time trying to feel them.

In many ways this exercise is similar to the previous one. We give a task to our restless mind and essentially exercise some control over what it does, gently teaching it to trust our conscious selves. However, this exercise also offers a much more bountiful reward. In addition to teaching us to control our minds, it also heightens our awareness of our bodies. There are many reasons why this is of immense importance and I will discuss this in later articles, but, for the purpose of this discussion, the great benefit of heightened body awareness is that once we have progressed on the first exercise, sending our minds into our bodies is a very rapid way to still a wandering mind. When we have mastered both the first and second exercise, a chattering mind can be stilled in a matter of seconds just by focusing on bodily sensations.

3) Stopping Time

This is the most powerful exercise of all, and one I discovered on my own, but the name is borrowed from J. Krishnamurthi whom I discovered many years after trying this exercise and whom I consider to be the last century's greatest teacher about the structure of logic, thought and about what is in our heads. To do it properly, I had to first largely master the first and second exercises.

I was at a park and saw a young child focusing on some ants. I noticed how absorbed he was. It awoke an old memory of how I too used to watch ants that same way when I was very young, and I decided to try and emulate his behavior. I happened to see a dragonfly and just focused on it, forcing myself to observe just the dragonfly, ignoring all other thoughts, judgements, categorizations or stimuli.

That's it, that's the whole exercise, observe without thoughts, listen without planning ahead, feel without judging, live in the here and now. It can't be done if we analyze, plan, categorize or judge. I found the exercise very difficult at first. I wanted to compare the iridescent colors of the dragonfly to that of other dragonflies I had seen, I heard myself naming the colors I saw, counting its wings, I found myself wondering if it would soon fly away, I got distracted by other insects.

Eventually I learned to just observe. The dragonfly or bird or ant I watched was no less beautiful because I had failed to analyze it or memorize its shape. When I finally learned to master this exercise I found great inner peace and joy, a new found sense of connectedness with my own body, but also with perhaps my soul. It was as if some long closed valves had been opened and , energy flowed through me, filling me with joy. This is the reward of stilling our minds while still feeling our bodies, this is our birthright, and it's available to all who master these three exercises.

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