

# The Human Mind

## The Discipline of Renewing It Daily

### Session 3

#### Question:

Let's say you have stored a lot of filth in your mind and then one day you decide to clean up your mind. The battle gets worse the moment you make that decision. The battle isn't very intense as long as you are just giving in to tempting thoughts. The battle begins the moment you decide to resist tempting thoughts. So how do you win the battle for your mind?

- Neil Anderson

#### 1. The Battle of the Mind (Psalm 119:1-16; Colossians 3:15-17)

How can a person stay on the path of purity?

How do we let the peace of Christ occur in our hearts?

How can we begin to rid our minds of filth since there is no "delete" button?

#### 2. Illustration

How Does this Illustration Relate to Our Life?

You have a pot filled with coffee. Because you chose to mix coffee grounds with the water, the liquid is dark, dirty, and opaque. How do you weaken the coffee?



There is no way you can filter out the coffee from the water. Now suppose there is a bowl of crystal-clear ice next to the pot. Each day, you take one ice cube and put it in the pot. At first you do not notice any difference, but as you add one cube per day, the liquid in the pot begins to clear up. If you keep adding ice day after day, there will come a time when you won't be able to taste, smell, or see the coffee in the pot. Although the coffee is still there, the ice has diluted it. This method will only work if you don't also keep adding a scoop of coffee every day.

If we wish to rid our minds of filth, we must read and study the Word of God each day. Our minds are like computers—if we put garbage in, we will get garbage out. The process of renewing our mind often begins with one step forward and one step backward. We spend time in God’s Word during our devotions, but then go back into the world for work and leisure, where we are mentally assaulted again. Learning to take every thought captive in obedience to Christ takes time and commitment, but it can be done. The next day we take two steps forward and one back, then three steps forward and one back. If we stay committed to the process, it will soon become 20, 30, and 40 steps forward and one back.

The Spirit of God will lead us into all truth if we choose that path, and He will convict us if we choose the wrong path.

Neil Anderson

Questions:

Why is it important not to get discouraged as we begin the process of renewing our minds?

What practical steps can you take so that the peace of Christ can rule in your heart?

## Are You Letting Your Self-Talk Defeat You?

One major roadblock to change is the self-talk we choose to use: the messages we habitually or unconsciously tell ourselves about who we are and how life works. Below are eight common self-talk messages. Maybe one is stymieing you!

### 1. Believe in Your Limitations

Nothing protects you from disappointment more than your belief in your limitations. Why expend all that effort exercising self-control or building a new habit when you know you’ll fail in the end anyway? Just let yourself go: you’ve been living with the consequences already, so why not just let it slide for another year? Don’t expect so much of yourself, and you won’t feel so bad when you don’t get it.

### 2. Keep Being Driven

You’ve accomplished a lot. But in your darker moments, it still feels empty. You find yourself striving for more, even though what you have attained hasn’t turned out as satisfying as you thought it would be. Don’t stop pushing! The things that seem just out of reach — your father’s approval, business success, recognition, the sense of pleasing God — they’re just around the corner! Being driven has gotten you this far, so now is not the time to change. You just need to try a little bit harder. If anyone can make this work, you can. And when you do, it will prove to the whole world how worthwhile you are.

### 3. Waste Your Life

Life is tough. In fact, it is so tough that just thinking about it is a downer sometimes. Making friends or getting involved in church might add some spice to life, but relating to people is so much...*work*. So keep distracting yourself! TV is a reliable way to get some instant enjoyment without having to invest energy in people. Or stay up late playing computer games — it always feels good to beat the computer. Or get lost on the internet! Jumping from one link to another can let you avoid an odious task for hours.

### 4. It's Not Your Fault

Maybe this is the year the people around you will finally change. I know, I know, conflict is always a two way street. But your side is a bike path and their side is like rush hour on the 401. I mean, the things you have to put up with! It's amazing you are as gracious as you are. So stick to your guns: after all, you're in the right. If they apologize first, you'll make the same gesture. And if not, keep letting them know they have a problem. It may be that the shaming, the sulking, the anger, or the passive-aggressive behavior they deserve (and are getting) from you is the thing that will finally lead them to repentance.

### 5. You Don't Need Help

All your life you've lived by the law of self-sufficiency: "I can do it, and I don't need help." You're the prototypical Canadian, the rugged individualist, the can-do it all by myself. Asking for help is for sissies. Just because your marriage is lifeless, the kids are drifting away or the debt is mounting doesn't mean you should go running to your WEE group for help. This kind of stuff can happen to anybody- just tough it out and things will eventually turn around. You aren't any worse than anyone else. As long as you can hold things together on the outside, there's no need to admit your how weak you feel sometimes.

### 6. Nobody Understands You

If people really knew your heart, they'd get off your back. People somehow develop these overblown expectations of you, when all you are doing is trying to help. And then when they get disappointed, for some reason it's all *your* fault! I mean, you did as well as anyone could given the circumstances. Things changed, and there was really no reasonable way to give them exactly what you promised. How about a little flexibility?!? Clearly they don't understand you or the demands on your life. It's best to just ignore that kind of off-base criticism and move on. They just don't understand your heart.

### 7. Put Up or Shut Up

You are facing some tough issues in life: problems at home, conflicts in the workplace, and more. But you're a survivor. Probably God is just using this to teach you patience. So just put your head down and keep on going. Don't think too much about what your situation means, or how to change it: that's a distraction you can't afford. And that nagging sense that maybe its your problem? If you start paying attention to self doubts, they just drag you down. This isn't a learning experience, no matter what anyone else says: it's about survival. If you just keep on slogging ahead, you can put up with almost anything.

### 8. Do It Right!

There's a right way and a wrong way to do everything, and you are committed to excellence; to doing it *right*! Why do people have such a hard time with this simple concept? For instance, every problem has a best solution. Every decision takes you down a right or a wrong path. If you make the right choice, God will bless you. If you choose wrong...well, you'll just get to eat the fruit of that poor decision. The consequences of doing it wrong are so high, it is no wonder you feel fearful and get all tied up in knots whenever you face a major decision. You'd look like a big, fat failure if you did something wrong — at least to yourself. The safest course of action is to analyze everything exhasutively before you do anything, minimize risk, and above all, make certain you do it right.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deployment based on "**How to Ruin Your Life, by Tony Stoltzfus**

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**Personal Reflection:**

1) Does one of these paragraphs sound like the self talk that sometimes goes on in your own head? If so, here's a question to ask yourself:

What if, instead of continuing to cope with this thinking pattern, I could eradicate it? What if in 90 days it was gone entirely from my life? Take a few moments and envision what life would be like if you were no longer fearful, or no longer were driven, or you let go of having to look like you have it all together. What would that be like?

**Group Discussion:**

2) What do you think we can do to help someone whose self talk is stopping them from becoming the person God created them to be?

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3) Not all self-talk is created equal. Some of it is downright destructive. When self-talk is negative, it becomes a weapon of self-destruction. Self-talk derived from positive scriptures is just the opposite. It not only points you in the right direction. It also gives you the power to make the trip.

Pick two scriptures that would help someone over power a particular self talk

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## Thought Journaling

<sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24

Our thoughts impact our feelings, behavior, our choices, and health. Indeed, the situations we face can be difficult, but our thoughts we dwell on will impact how we interpret each situation and how to respond to it. A lot of time, we need to find a way to capture the thoughts we dwell on in order to better understand why we are experiencing certain feelings and outcomes.

The thought diary helps by providing a way to capture our thinking patterns (individual and collections of thoughts over time) and the opportunity to revisit, attempt to change our thinking and look to God's word in regards to what thought is a lie and what thought is a truth.

As we record our thoughts, we need to be aware of the following thoughts that will affect us negatively and are not from God.

### **Overgeneralizing**

Applying the outcome of one specific event to many others in your life.

### **Minimizing and maximizing**

Thinking things are worse than they are, often accompanied by underplaying strengths while focusing on weaknesses.

### **Emotional reasoning**

We often judge situations according to our feelings.

### **Selective abstraction**

Overly focusing on one aspect that may have gone wrong while ignoring all that has gone well.

\* If we identify when they happen and change how we think, we can reduce heightened emotion.

### **Reflection Question:**

Think back over the last week. What events have triggered your anger, stress, and anxiety?

What negative thoughts have you been dwelling on lately? What truths from God's word should you be writing about?