

TRANSCRIPT

Inner Peace University - Lesson 2-4

[00:00:00] Now, before we get into the actual brain training process, we need to cover one more very important thing about the mind. So let's get to it. For our purposes, we'll be looking at two distinct aspects of the mind- thoughts and attention. So first we'll take thoughts. That is those ideas, images, narratives, and beliefs that appear in our minds. To put it another way thoughts are those things that make up the parade of ever-changing mental chatter that we all know too well. Now attention on the other hand is that part of us that is aware. Aware of those thoughts, as well as the other things that we experience in our lives, you can put your attention on a thought, or [00:01:00] you can put your attention on the side of a house. You could put your attention on the sound of music, no pun intended, or you can put your attention on the smell of a cup of coffee, for example. So again, thoughts are the ideas, images, and beliefs that appear in our minds and attention is that part of us that is aware of those thoughts and every other thing in our lives. With that said, there's something super important that we need to know about thoughts, particularly when we're interested in shifting from a negative to a more positive focus.

And here it is, thoughts are largely out of your control. Not so good news or at least it seems, but that's the fact. And it's because that the brain is an associative mechanism. [00:02:00] That is what it perceives, it strongly influences what it thinks. And we talked about this when we were talking about the cycle of becoming all along through the first module.

So if someone happens to see a piggy bank, for example, there's a much stronger chance that the mind generate a thought of money than if it saw, for instance, a birthday cake where it would create a thought of perhaps a party. Now, because of this, the truth is that other people have more power over what thoughts are happening to you than you do. If someone tells you about their skiing trip, you're going to probably get a thought of skiing. And if I tell you about a purple squirrel, riding a unicycle with a top hat smoking a cigar, well, there you go. And you're welcome. But in any event, you get the [00:03:00] idea. Now, if you don't believe that you have little control or that any of us have little control of our thoughts, just think about one of those nights when you're trying to get to sleep, but worries about money or the chores around the house or a medical problem just won't leave you alone. And in those moments you have to ask yourself, why is it that you just can't shut them off or choose for more pleasant or soothing thoughts? And again, it's back to because we don't have very much control over our thoughts, at least directly.

Which brings us to the elephant in the room. How do we manage our thoughts then? And the fact is that we really don't. We manage our attention. That is the thing that is aware. We manage where we place our attention. And again, referencing back to the cycle of becoming, we talked about that as [00:04:00] really the first point of leverage that we have in changing that cycle of becoming from a negative cycle to a positive cycle.

So in any given moment, our experience contains all sorts of things. Some of those things could lift us up and make us feel joyful and others could pull us down and make us feel sad. And most importantly, in every one of those moments, we have a choice as to where we shine our attention.

We can focus on our difficulties or we can focus on our blessings and this is really critical to get, because the fact is that how you use your attention actually creates your experience. I mean, think of your day as a road trip. Down the left hand side of the road are so many blessings and down the right side of the road are difficulties and disappointments and challenges.

[00:05:00] And now think of your attention like a camera. And as you move through your day, you can choose to aim your camera of attention at the blessings at the left side of the car, or you can choose to aim it to the right side of the car at the difficulties. Moment to moment. It's up to you what kind of photo album you're creating by snapping photograph after photograph after photograph.

And of course at the end of the day, you would end up with a photo album. And depending upon where you pointed the camera of your attention, you would end up with two very different types of photo albums. Photo album number one could be filled with happy snapshots and photo album number two was filled with anything but miserable and depressing snapshots. But it does also get even worse because it's not just about these individual moments, whether they're so-called positive or negative.

We [00:06:00] need to remember that the mind is an associative mechanism, the brain, and therefore it's strongly influenced by that photo album. And when it perceives a photo album of negativity, you're going to get a whole series of additional thoughts. On the other hand, if it perceives a photo album of uplifting and positive thoughts, you're going to get a completely different kind of thought patterns that emanate from that.

And this is why it's absolutely critical for us to take control of our attention. Or maybe said more concretely to train the brain patterns that control our attention so that it serves us. It all comes down to what kind of experience do you want to create and creating our experience in a way that serves us is going to be exactly what we're up to in this module and future modules with our [00:07:00] brain training exercises.

Key takeaways here:

First, that attention is distinct different from thoughts. Again, thoughts are things that attention can be aware of. And attention is the thing that is doing the looking and attention can be aware of thoughts, but it can also be wary of other things like the sound of my voice right now, or the sensation in your right leg.

Second, attention can be directed independent of thoughts and experience. Just because a negative thought is happening in the mind, it doesn't mean that you can't pay attention to something else.

And lastly, attention creates our experience, including our thoughts and emotions, because it's where we place our attention that starts the cycle of becoming, creating an either a virtuous cycle of positive and uplifting thoughts and emotions or negative or vicious cycle of negative thoughts and [00:08:00] emotions.