

Awareness of self-talk

VOICES IN OUR HEADS

When we 'hear' ourselves think, plan or create, or anything really, it is like having a bunch of people constantly with us talking to us, with us and giving their view of the world as each 'voice/person' sees it. Each voice or person has its own role to play in the creation or storage of knowledge; memories and our overall interpretation of the world we live in. Each voice seems to have the capacity to think, integrate new information with previous experiences an image or dream.

Most people are aware of their voices as they are just there, and we don't seem to be able to get away from the noise they make. Information in the conscious mind goes on like a chattering commentary of how things are according to how each 'voice' sees it and so, it is possible to have any number of voices giving their opinion about a single event. Very often these voices take on a position or view based on the dominant character we inherited or were exposed to such as the critic, the analyst, the thinker, or the child.

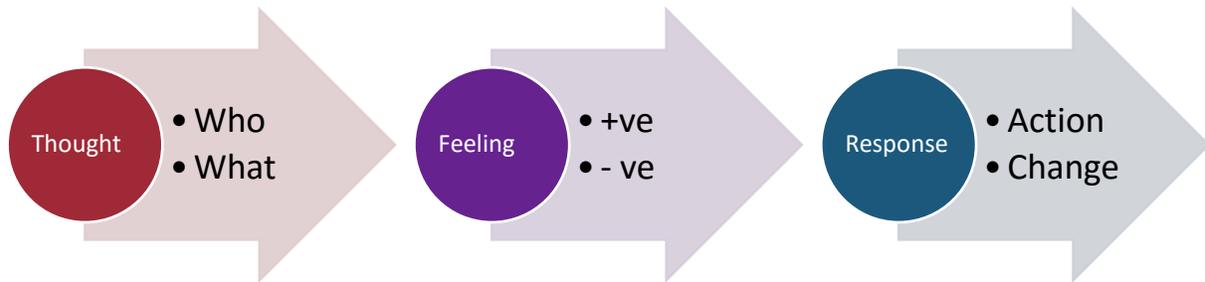
The layering effect of recurring evidence (repeated scenarios of a similar theme) adds weight to the core perceptions we develop and concretised the beliefs we have about ourselves. To help clarify this, think back to a scenario of things falling into place – you applied for a job and you were successful. The voices that come to mind could be celebratory from your parents or friends; a significant other who always told you "You could do anything you set your mind to!" These voices confirm and re-inforce the belief you can achieve and receive.

If on the other hand you had experiences of being unsupported, or self-doubt, the voice that comes up could be one questioning "How did it happen that you got the job?" or "How long you are going to keep it?" The voices are merely a reflection of our self-perception and self-belief and with this knowledge we can gain insight into how we view ourselves and what we project to the world.

By becoming aware of during the above scenario you can see how what and how you think influences your feelings. Positive thoughts make you feel happy and energise you, while negative thoughts make you feel sad and *drain your energy*. Often thoughts seem to just drift and pop into your mind, uninvited and out of your control. Yes they do, however, when we become aware of them, and take notice we become in control and we then get to choose which stay and help, or which go and are not invited back in. Yes, it can be done.

Ditch The Weight & Gain Your Life

As explained by van Loon & Kralik (2005), we all have thoughts, feelings and attitudes about our current experiences. These thoughts and feelings give rise to emotions such as love, fear, anger, hatred, sadness, sorrow and so on, which need to be recognized and acknowledged. The more we ignore our emotions, the louder they become. Body aches and pains for example can arise when we ignore the



subtle messages of the subconscious. Emotions trigger our behaviours and responses and at times these can be self-rejecting reactive responses, arising from the experiences of past trauma, life experiences good and not so good. Every response, whether we've thought it through or not, has a consequence, and these consequences impact other people and situations, or ourselves. Some consequences can be anticipated while others are unanticipated and unintentional. This process pervades everything we do every day. Our behaviours and reactions to these effects make us modify our behaviours.

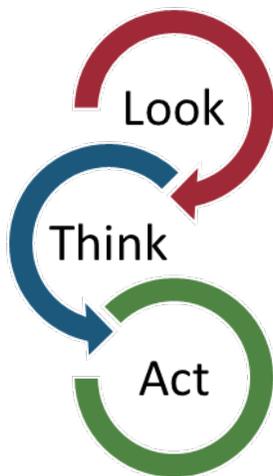
The *'Look, Think, Act'* process helps us to work out what's going on inside our mind, and our body by focusing on our thoughts, feelings and actions. By becoming aware of what and why the thoughts and associated emotions are there, you can choose the most appropriate behaviours and responses to create our preferred outcomes (van Loon & Kralik, 2005).

Another way of viewing the *'Look, Think, Act'* process is it informs our choices and helps us work out what we want to modify in our thoughts, feelings, attitudes or behaviours and choose responses more thoughtfully. It empowers us to be more in control, to make informed choice that support us, and makes us stronger and self-trusting. Remember, even no action or ignoring a situation is a choice, with its own consequences. It takes time to develop the process to a regular life feature, and like all things worthwhile having, it takes practice, trust and endurance, but the outcome is worth it.

You may notice that as you become aware of your own responses and reactions, and the responses of those around you, the more you use the *'look, think, act'* process, the better you become at controlling your reactions to another person's response. You stop taking everything so personally and your capacity to tolerate people's behaviour increases.

Ditch The Weight & Gain Your Life

At first, it is useful to go through this exercise in the moment, within reason, to help you practice. You might do it after a phone call or meeting with someone that triggers a response you would like to address. It could be while you are considering what to eat, shopping for food or any situation where there seems to be a voice sitting on your shoulder. Take time to write down your responses to the questions and sit with them. You may take a day or so to work through or recall really important information to help you fill in the blanks of what and why. This is ok. The longer you have lived with these reactions, or the more painful they were when they were created they are less likely want to be heard again or revisited. If you feel the reason or the response is too big for you to deal with by yourself, then seek help. It is a sign of self-care and courage to ask for help to change. You are not a failure, but a winner to do so.



<input type="text"/>	What is going on/happening? <ul style="list-style-type: none">•What is your thought/response?•Who's voice are you hearing?•What are they saying
<input type="text"/>	How do you feel about this? <ul style="list-style-type: none">•What emotion/s are trigger in you?•When have you felt this way before, & before that?
<input type="text"/>	What is your ideal action in this situation <ul style="list-style-type: none">•What would you need to think and do to follow through•What resources or people can help you?

1. **Look:** What's going on?
 - a. What's happening?
 - b. What's happening inside you?
 - c. What are your responses?
 - d. What are the circumstances?
 - e. Describe the context: What are your thoughts?
 - f. How long did you mull over the event afterwards?
 - g. When were the other times you thought these things?
 - h. What is the common thread between the incidents?
 - i. Who were you with?
 - j. Who's voice are you hearing now?

2. **Think:**
 - a. How do I feel about that?
 - b. What's the main problem?
 - c. Why is this happening?
 - d. What was the trigger or cause (e.g. attitudes, beliefs, past experiences)?
 - e. What are the consequences?
 - f. How am I behaving (e.g. are my responses defensive, grounded in my past)?
 - g. Which area/s can I move forward with?
 - h. How might my moving forward look?
 - i. When should I begin – what order...?
 - j. How should I do it?
 - k. What resources or skills do I need to make these changes to move forward?

3. **Act:** By 'Act' we mean to take action, or do something. A good place to start is to think about what could/should be done differently to get the desired outcome. Then begin to action the smallest and most easily managed act that would have the most benefit. Baby of baby steps are still moving forward. When I was going the darkest of moments, getting out of bed was a big deal, speaking with a counsellor to understand myself and to do the above felt like 'work'

If you have come this far, don't underestimate your achievement. Celebrate even the smallest of wins. Write them in a journal or better still, put them on post it notes and put them on the mirror, in the car, in your reminder pop up in your phone. You are special, important and needed in the world, even if you haven't yet worked out what and why!

Parts adapted from: <http://www.blueknot.org.au/WHAT-WE-DO/For-Survivors/Resources-for-Survivors/Coping-Strategies/The-Look-Think-Act-process>