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# THOUGHTS FROM YOUR THERAPIST

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Ideas | Musings | Resources

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## IDEAS

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Learn something new. YouTube has videos on everything. Experts are offering all sorts of free content and resources on their websites and Instagram accounts.

Challenge yourself to be creative and use odd food from your pantry.

Pull out old games, puzzles, books you haven't touched in ages.

Clean out your junk drawer or sock drawer. Hopefully they are not the same!

Limit social media & news intake; balance with positivity. Venice's canals have dolphins!

Don't overlook the value of deep breathing for anxiety.

Take a daily walk or add a workout routine:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/18/well/move/in-6-minutes-you-can-be-done-with-your-workout.html>

Work on some new habits.

<https://www.nytimes.com/programs/healthy-habits-challenge>

## Stress and Thoughts

Let's work on our stress. Right here. Right now. We are cooped up, anxious, and filled with uncertainty about when this will end and what it will be like when it does. Maybe you are worried about a loved one's health or isolation, your job, your child's education, or your bank account.

The first evening after we were ordered to stay at home, I said to my husband as I climbed into bed, "Well, the chickens and pigs are fed, the cows milked, and the eggs collected. It was a good day." I don't have pigs. Nor do I have chickens, cows, or hens! I have a husband, two dogs, and three adult daughters living in three different states. Apparently my brain needed that random spur-of-the-moment metaphor for my well-being. What was I telling myself? If I do the basic things, the necessary things, the mundane things, I can feel somewhat normal in some very unusual times. Garbage still needs to go out. Dinner still needs to be made. My diabetic dog still needs his insulin twice a day. Some things can't and won't change. If I focus on what I can still do, at the end of the day I can feel some modicum of control and normalcy.



Besides maintaining a routine and practicing self care, how can we reduce our stress? We can change our thinking. Our brains interpret and apply meaning to our experiences

based on our knowledge, experiences, and learned beliefs.

Healthier thinking begins when we look at our self-chatter and separate the facts from the drama.

## RESOURCES

Many individuals and companies are providing FREE resources to keep us all going and strong.

- Headspace
- TenPercentHappier
- CommonSenseMedia has great resources for parents
- Google Doc of resources:

[bit.ly/pashfamresources](https://bit.ly/pashfamresources)

AA and alternative sobriety accounts on instagram are offering online meetings

Yale University's Popular Class called "Psychology and The Good Life" is free on Coursera.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/23/health/yale-happiness-course-wellness/index.html>

## FREE COUNSELING

**In addition to my normal office hours, virtual right now, I am offering former and existing clients who have lost jobs and/or insurance free 30 minute counseling sessions on Wednesdays for the month of April. I am using Doxy.me, a HIPAA compliant video platform. These appointments are available online at my website:**

[greatlakescounselingcenter.com](https://greatlakescounselingcenter.com)

**Please email me if you have questions or just want to let me know how you are doing:**

**diane@**

**greatlakescounselingcenter.com**

When we label something as a problem and wish it were different, we feel stressed. The problem is not causing our stress; it is our thoughts about the problem that are causing the stress, according to Byron Katie, author of *Loving What Is*.

When we realize the problem that seemed like a circumstance problem is actually a thought problem, we begin to feel better and can begin to choose new thoughts.

**Step 1: Become the observer of your thoughts. Notice what you are saying to yourself about a situation or person.**

**Step 2: Challenge your beliefs and thoughts about this situation or person. Is this a circumstance (fact) or a thought? Separate the facts from the "drama." Write a C (for circumstance) next to facts and a T (for thoughts).**

"The grocery store is out of flour." C

Circumstances: actual facts, completely neutral, not open to interpretation, no one would disagree.

"I can't believe I can't buy flour to bake this weekend. It's ridiculous. What else are they going to run out of?" T

Thought: an opinion or belief, in the mind, may or may not be true, not necessarily everyone would agree.

"Ugh! I'm sad I can't bake. I feel nervous." T

Emotions: conscious mental reactions (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body.

"I should be able to buy flour and bake!" T

Beliefs: thought or series of thoughts in the mind which are accepted, considered to be true.

"Stupid coronavirus!" T

Drama: thoughts that arise from emotion or opinion unnecessarily creating conflict around oneself or a situation.

**Step 3: What thoughts aren't serving you and what are they creating in your life?**

"I am disappointed about not being able to bake. Now I don't feel like doing anything."

**Step 4: What would you feel like right now if you couldn't think those thoughts? If I don't dwell on how I *think* it should be, I can see reality without judgement and better perspective.**

"There is no flour. I won't be baking. I will be reading. I will enjoy that."

A friend shared this song this past week. She ain't wrong. I'm jumping on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mKMV0d2cs>

# THOUGHTS are **NOT** FACTS **PRACTICE**

When you put some space between you and your reaction, it changes your relationship to your thoughts—you can watch them come and go instead of treating them as facts.

If you're stuck on a negative thought, ask yourself:

1

## Is it true?

Often the answer is, "Well, yes." This is the brain initially reacting—the autopilot you live with and believe is you.

2

## Is it **absolutely** true?

Is this thought 100% accurate? Can you see the thought in a different way?

3

## How does **this thought** make me feel?

Notice any storylines you're holding onto, and name your feelings: *sad, angry, jealous, hurt*.

4

## What would things be like if **I didn't hold this belief**?

Imagine possible benefits to your relationships, energy levels, and motivation.



## Pandemic

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

—Lynn Ungar