

Break Free of Anxiety and Obsessive Thoughts

Have you ever felt like your mind was spinning on a hamster wheel? You know; you get caught in an endless loop, running over the same old fears again and again, feeling unable to just stop the ride and get off?

I think we have all felt this way at one time or another, and if you have a history of anxiety or panic issues, you have surely done a few laps on the old hamster wheel. I know I have!

This obsessive re-examining of a fearful or worrying situation is what I call a "cognitive loop." It is uncomfortable at best, and at its worse, can have a negative affect on every area of your life, including your actual physical health.

That's right. Research shows that over time, mental distress of this type can actually cause physical distress, quickening the pulse rate, raising blood pressure, and even weakening the immune system. All the more reason to learn how to "jump off the hamster wheel." So let's define what this "loop" actually is, and how you can put an end to this vicious cycle.

I think of a cognitive loop like a computer "hang up." Remember the last time your computer froze on you? It became unresponsive and all forward progress came to a screeching halt, right? Probably your only alternative was to "reboot" and start over, because as everyone knows, once that endless loop starts running, you're not going to get anything done until you do!

And that is exactly how you handle a loop in your thinking!

Once the loop of fear or worry begins, all progress stops. Your mind has basically "hung up," and you're not getting anything productive done until you call a time out and "re-boot" your system. And just how do you re-boot your mind?

Physical Change = Emotional Change

Our physical state and our mental state are very closely linked. For example, I notice that I always feel calm and centered when I exercise regularly and drink plenty of water. So to change a faulty (but temporary) mental state, like the cognitive loop, I recommend immediately changing your physical state.

The easiest way to do this is to just notice what you are doing with your body, and then do the opposite of that. If you're sitting-stand up, or even go for a short walk. If you're slouching, straighten your posture-chin up, chest out, back straight.

Notice your breathing. Are you taking short, shallow breaths? Take a few slow, deep breaths, breathing out slightly longer than you breath in. Do a few slow and deliberate stretches with your arms and legs to increase circulation.

Anything you can do to change your physical state will immediately begin to affect your mental state. And the more extreme the change in your physical state, the more extreme the change in your mental state will be. That's one reason that exercise is so good for your mental health-especially as a preventive measure.

Walking or bike-riding are both good for the nerves, but any physical movement that changes your physical state will have a positive effect. One easy way to remember this:

"When you change what your body is doing, you change what your mind is doing."

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About the Author

Jon Mercer recovered from a 20 year struggle with Anxiety to become a successful personal development coach and author. Today he helps others eliminate anxiety problems, through private consultation, seminars and video coaching programs. For more information visit <http://www.easycalm.com/>