



Thinking about Thinking

Why do we do what we do? The overall answer to that broad question is probably a lot more complex than what is being brought out here. Nevertheless, consider one important aspect of being human that can be found at the root source of many behaviors.

As humans...

We think – The human brain can be like a television with 10 billion channels being surfed with a nuclear powered remote control. Zillions of thoughts can go through our minds with such great variation throughout the day ranging from good to bad to ugly. Some thoughts seem to be direct and purposeful and others random and strange. Often it is our thoughts that trigger our feelings. A thought such as “What am I going to do with the rest of my life” or a thought like “How am I going to get myself out of this hole that I dug myself into” can be the catalyst behind feelings of fear of the future, debilitating anxiety or overwhelming stress, which then may lead to the plan to “just get high one more time, then I’ll quit tomorrow” that can perpetuate an addiction.



We feel – There is such a wide array of potential feelings that come up for each one of us in our human experience. When feelings feel good they can feel so very, very good. Feeling happy, proud, satisfied, hopeful, joyous, excited and enthusiastic can be a high unto itself even when those positive feelings come about naturally. Chasing after a good feeling that brings with it the euphoria of endorphins and dopamine rushing through our brain cells is often why people get high, especially in the beginning of the process. Other times, getting high can become more about escaping uncomfortable feelings such as stress, fear, pain, shame, worry, insecurity, boredom or discomfort. Feelings, both positive and negative, are often the fuel that feeds our behavior



We behave – During our waking life we make many choices throughout the day about our behavior. What we do with our time and resources as well as which desires we satisfy and which desires we repress all eventually come out in our behavior. On a daily basis some behaviors may seem automatic, some are impulsive and some are carefully planned. Some behaviors we may feel good about, and others we may later regret. When addiction and coexisting mental health issues are not properly cared for and get out of control, the long term outcome is often negative especially when consequences follow our choices of behaviors

What does this all mean? – Considering all that we have just reviewed about thinking, feeling and behavior, it makes the most sense to start with thinking when it comes to making positive changes in our lives. We identified thinking as the place where everything usually starts so therefore it makes sense to conclude that ***when we change the way we think, we can change the way we feel and behave***

Thinking about Thinking: One thing that separates humans from other life on this planet is that not only can we think, but we can think about our thinking. Each one of us has the power and ability to change what we think about and even to change *how* we think, which can be very powerful when it comes to positive lifestyle change. This is very relevant when it comes to overcoming the challenges involved with substance use issues and mental health challenges.

To get started, complete the simple drawing exercise on the next page and then share and discuss your results

Afterward, a good activity to follow this is the [Thinking Styles Quiz](#)



Opening Thoughts: What's On Your Mind These Days? – *Write/Draw and discuss when complete:*

