

# Changing Your Mind!

Can changing your mind, change your perception of the world to enable you to achieve what you want from life? Let's take a look...

**C**hanging your mind is thought of as the female prerogative! After all, if you're anything like me you do it several times a day – quite easily! But have you ever really sat down to think about what it means? Have you thought about how changing your mind could be used in a beneficial way? Why is it so easy to change your mind about some things and almost impossible for others? After all we do it hundreds of times a day without thinking about it!

### The therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) revolves around the close, interrelated link between your thoughts, behaviours and feelings. Feelings such as happiness, sadness, hopelessness or anger are difficult to change, but are formed as a result of your thoughts and behaviour. The latter two are easier to change and this forms the basis of CBT. The therapy aims to help you change

your thoughts or behaviour with the view to changing the way you feel.

This was brought home to me in a deeply profound way when my father died back in February of this year. I remember feeling utterly miserable, very sad and, despite having a wonderful husband and family, a bit lonely. All of a sudden there was a huge gap in my world, which had been previously occupied by his presence. I'm sure those of you who have lost close friends or relatives will recognise this feeling well.

The next morning I was looking out of our bedroom window. The schoolboys were ambling up to the school at the top of the road. They were laughing, messing around as they always do. I was aware that I almost felt angry at them for enjoying the world when mine was so miserable. How could they carry on? Didn't they know that the world was now a different place? It was then I realised that actually the

world hadn't changed one little bit. It was my view of the world which had changed my perception. AND the only person who had the controls to that world was me. I had it in my power to change that view if I so desired.

### It's in your power

I realised I could change the volume up or down, change the contrast or the brightness of my own perception on the world by changing my mind. It was in my control to live a happy, fulfilled life.

It wasn't forcing myself to forget my memories of my father, or the place he has in my heart. It was about putting those memories somewhere where they could be found and retrieved easily, whilst enjoying my life as he would have wanted. It's not about blocking out unpleasant memories, pain or depression either, it's about filing them away to enable your mind to be free from their constraints.

Over the following few days it dawned on me

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that I could do this in every aspect of life. I could make a deliberate decision to change my mind about anything! For example a stranger in the street could be a friend you've never met, a new job can become an exciting challenge to rise to! The list is endless.

### **Overcoming fear**

I've used the technique to great effect when public speaking. Five minutes into the first presentation I gave, I was convinced I was going to have a heart attack! A GP friend tells me I probably had a mild panic attack! I remember looking at ALL those expectant faces staring down at me (we were in an auditorium with tiered seating). The whole setup and air of expectancy seemed to accentuate my feelings of smallness and inability to deliver. I'm sure those of you who give presentations will recognise these feelings! I felt I was going to make mistakes and that everyone in the room would laugh at me!

The reality, though, was that everyone in the room was a friendly, knitting individual and they were all there because they wanted to hear what I had to say. Again my personal perception of a situation was far from the reality. So I've been experimenting with changing my mind before these presentations. I now regard the audience as 'friends' who have made an effort to come

to see me and listen to what I have to say. They're no longer a group of strangers who are there to 'catch me out' with questions I can't answer. Every time those nagging, fearful thoughts barge their way into my mind I nudge them away with positive, calming ones. In the days up to a presentation I deliberately 'look forward' to it, I visualise it being successful, the applause, the eagerness to participate.

Before my first talk I fretted about it for weeks and really reinforced all those negative circuits in my brain. On the day itself I felt as if I was walking into the dragon's den – on the other side of that auditorium door was my idea of hell! Now I visualise a beautiful, peaceful garden behind the door, and do you know? It works!

I can hear you saying 'But changing my mind on issues such as what to have for dinner tonight is quite easy, whereas changing my mind on other issues is impossible!' Begin by looking at those thoughts in a different way. Think of them as ingrained habits which have become so because you've practised hard at thinking them over the years! They are behaviours and thought processes that you've performed so often that they now feel as if they're the only way. You've become stuck in a trench formed by those habits, but that's all they are. You CAN break out of that rigid trench and give it

as many branches and offshoots as you want.

Research has shown that those who suffer from chronic pain and depression become entrenched in their behaviours and thoughts. Lateral or creative thinking becomes difficult, sometimes impossible. When this happens motivation and ability to self-manage life and the illness becomes more and more difficult. This lack of motivation leads to fewer opportunities to improve the situation and thus greater entrenchment. So it all becomes a vicious cycle.

Being aware of this sequence of events can help you change those thought patterns. They're not unbreakable, they're simply thoughts that have been reinforced over and over again, so are more difficult to change. Make a deliberate decision to think differently in every situation. Stop for a while and tell yourself there are alternative ways of looking at every problem. Use your knitting and stitching times to think through other approaches and you'll soon begin to forge your way out of that trench.

### **Explore a way forward**

Just remember no explorer has ever reached his goal by travelling in a straight line! The more you explore the more likely it is you'll find what you're looking for! So exercise that wonderful ability to change your mind!