

How to Deal with Invasive Thoughts

By MICHAEL HEDRICK



I'm no stranger to nasty thoughts. I recognize when they're present so innately that it's safe to say it almost hurts. In my almost nine years of living with schizophrenia I've had to battle my fair share of these thoughts and I've gotten so good at it that I can almost see them coming from a mile away.

If it wasn't the notion that people were making fun of me it was the idea that I'm more important than anyone else, i.e. grandiosity.

I've been subject to many nights where I just stared at the ceiling in the dark letting these little monsters run and play their tricks through all corners of my mind.

There are some that are one-off and then there are the ones that keep coming back no matter what you do. I've seen and been subject to all kinds. Some are intensely strange and some are more run-of-the-mill but persistent as all hell.

It's my intention with this article to show you how to dissipate invasive thoughts and put them at rest for at least the time being. If there's one truth about life though, it's that invasive thoughts will inevitably pop back up. Hopefully with what I've said here, you'll be a little better prepared for when it happens again.

The first thing you can do for yourself when you're caught up on an idea, whether it's strange or whether it's persistent is to take a deep breath and dismiss it. The breath alone will help to center you and calm you to a point of realizing that whatever is happening in your head is temporary.

I think it was Buddha who said to let the thoughts pass like clouds and there's a lot of truth to it. It's probably the most apt description I've heard and it's important to realize that, just like time, thoughts will pass in and out of your head. It's good to take a step back from

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being entrenched in a thought cloud and to see it objectively. Eventually your mind will pick up something else entirely, something that isn't so disturbing.

Another good thing to do when you're hung up on a thought is to talk it out with somebody, maybe a friend or a member of your family. Letting the thought out for some air and letting it run around the yard of conversation will be just the thing it needs to put it bed for a while. Conversation also helps with gaining valuable context into what makes the thought and why it's so nasty. Who knows what another person's perspective into what you're thinking can provide. It may be just the thing to give you a better point of view.

Another method of dealing with invasive thoughts is to distract yourself, go for a walk, go out to dinner, watch a movie, focusing on something else for the time being can provide a healthy escape and may even make the notion disappear entirely. Distracting yourself seems like a copout but it may be what you need to focus your energies elsewhere.

The last and most powerful method I saved for the last because it's what will work in a desperate situation. This is for when the thought is so persistent that no matter what you do, it won't go away. Simply say "I accept this." And then move into actually accepting the notion for what it is. You don't have to fight it if you're ok and comfortable with it.

Being comfortable with invasive thoughts is incredibly easy and incredibly effective. If you can sit with a thought and not let it bother you, before you know it you'll be on to something else. Accepting an invasive thought takes its invasive power away. After that, it's just a simple stupid thought. Not something that hurts.

These are the tricks I've learned and they've seen a good deal of practice. Maybe they can help you.