Mind Traps

Why You Are Married To A Monkey And How To Get A Divorce

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Sponsored by:

Facilitated by:
Howard Burchfield III
RADIX
Overview

The Monkey
Mind and Brain
Traps: What They Are and How They Work
Techniques with Exercises
  • RAIN
  • CBT
  • Breathing and Guided Meditation
  • Mindfulness

Review and Additional Resources
Who is the monkey?

Who is the monkey?

• 心猿 – Restless or wandering mind/heart
• You and everyone you know
Mind and Brain

We will use “brain” to describe your physical brain, and “mind” to describe your conscious experience – thoughts, images, feelings.
Basic Brain Structures

**Prefrontal cortex** (前額皮質)
- Higher thinking/planning/executive functions, unique to humans
- Logical reasoning; feeds into limbic system and HPA axis

**Limbic system** (大腦邊緣系統)
- Processes emotion and motivation
- Interlinks with HPA axis through the hypothalamus ("H" in “HPA”)

**HPA axis**
(下丘腦 - 垂體 - 腎上腺軸)
- Processes reactions to stress
- Translates emotions to body
- Produces fight-or-flight response via adrenaline/cortisol

**Cingulate gyrus and caudate nucleus**
(尾狀核及扣帶迴)
- CG receives input from prefrontal cortex and limbic system; it is the ‘oh s***’ button of dread
- CN pushes “reset button” to release anxiety, but can become stuck
Basic Brain Structures

Prefrontal cortex (PFC): thinking, analysing
The ‘president’ of the brain; the thinking brain

Limbic system with cingulate gyrus (emotional processing)
The feeling brain, or the zoo. We have similar nerve structures in our heart and stomach.
Basic Brain Structures

Hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis (physical/body reactions)

The ‘fight or flight’ system
Basic Brain Structures

Caudate nucleus; the reset button (or “Thank God it’s over!”)
Example of interaction

What do you see? (PFC)

What emotions do you feel? (LS)
Traps
Group exercise

Identify as many types of bait as you can in each of these 4 areas. Remember to include both desire-based and fear-based BAITS.

What forms of bait can trap you?
1. In your school work?
2. In your job or prospective career?
3. In an interview?
4. In your social life, including dating?
Techniques for recognising and escaping traps

RAIN

CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)

Breathing Exercises/Guided Meditation

Mindfulness
The “RAIN” components can be mapped both to specific brain pathways and to specific areas of our mind. We will look at both.
Cognitive Behavioral Techniques

A technique used to identify faulty patterns of thinking and to correct them. This technique is effective primarily in the prefrontal cortex area of the brain, and in the “R” (recognition) and “I” (investigation) parts of the mind.

CBT experts differ in the number of faulty patterns they use, so that some may work with 9 patterns or less and others with 25 or more. We will use a simplified version and look at only 5.
Five Cognitive Behavioral Faulty Thought Patterns

- **Filtering:** focusing only on the bad
- **Black-or-white:** seeing things as all good or all bad
- **Mind-reading:** thinking you know what other people are thinking about you
- **Catastrophising:** turning a minor setback into the worst possible thing that could ever happen
- **Emotionalising:** believing that because you feel something, it must be true.
Breathing/Guided Meditation Techniques

• better expressed as ‘breathe and keep calm’

• empirically proven to have strong effects in regulating troublesome emotions

• effective primarily in the limbic system (emotional) and HPA axis (physical response system) of the brain, and the “A” (acceptance) and “N” (non-identification) parts of the mind

• may have some effect on the “reset” mechanism of the caudate nucleus
Three Basic Calming Techniques:

1. Simple in-out counting
   • 2/3, 4/7, 7/11: exhale count > inhale

2. In-hold-out counting
   • Most popular 4/7/8: here we may exhale through the mouth

3. Imagination + breathing, with or without counting
   • When breathing in, we imagine that the air is filled with some quality we want to increase, such as peace, joy, love, calmness. When breathing out, we imagine that we are breathing out worry, anxiety, negative emotions, etc.
   • We can also give these qualities colors, so that we imagine we are breathing in a colour we like, and breathing out a colour we dislike (often black or grey).
Loving-kindness Meditation

- A more advanced technique: loving-kindness meditation. This technique has been demonstrated in studies to dramatically change brain-wave patterns and where oxygen is used in different areas of the brain.

- Good technique for working with particular persons in our lives. We replace negative patterns of thinking with positive patterns.
Mindfulness

“Wisdom knows what feelings are present without being lost in them.”

Jack Kornfield

正念 静觀
Mindfulness

Consciousness

Thoughts
Emotions
Physical sensations
Resources for Further Study

• Sharon Begley, “Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain”
• David D. Burns, M.D., “Feeling Good” and “The Feeling Good Handbook”
• Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Flow”
• Norman Doidge, M.D., “The Brain That Changes Itself”
• Mark Epstein, “Thoughts Without a Thinker”
• Jon Kabat-Zinn, “Full Catastrophe Living”
• Jack Kornfield, “The Wise Heart”
• Jeffrey M. Schwartz (and Sharon Begley), “The Mind and the Brain”
• Ken Wilber et al., “Transformations of Consciousness”