

The Thought Diet Sheet

Usually we spend our time thinking the same thoughts over and over again; perhaps about money, food, relationships, or worries about the future or maybe regrets about the past... This simple yet powerful exercise reveals where we are directing much of our thinking, and then gives us an opportunity to consciously try to change this if needed.

To do the exercise, print out this sheet, get a pen and set aside about 15 minutes where you won't be disturbed.

Step 1: Using the chart below, and being very honest, write down in the column on the left what you would consider to be the ten most frequent thoughts that cross your mind throughout your day. It is usually best to go with your first reactions to questions like this, as these answers tend to be closer to the 'truth' than when your conscious mind has had the chance to start being analytical.

Step 2: When you've got your 'top ten' thoughts, use the 'score' column to give each thought a score from zero to ten, with zero being a highly negative or unproductive thought and ten for an extremely positive and useful thought. When you add up all your scores you will have a figure which is out of a possible total of 100. If your score is under 50, you are likely to be spending much of your time entertaining energy draining thoughts. Over 50, you are spending time in a more positive frame of mind, but there may still be some thoughts that are less helpful than others.

Step 3: Take a moment to review your list and notice where you spend your mental energy. Then, ponder on how you can focus on a more positive train of thought and, if appropriate, use your mental energy to focus on a positive solution rather than on the problem. When I first did this process, I was surprised to discover how much time and mental energy (on and off all day) I spent thinking about what evening meal to cook for the family. The solution was to draw up a weekly menu. I was equally surprised how much energy this freed up to think about more exciting and productive things. Sometimes this exercise reveals to people how they spend a large amount of their time and energy contemplating one particular aspect of their life that is not going well, but that they give very little focus to actually doing anything about it!

Step 4: Use the third column to write down how you can turn any of the less productive thoughts around, either by thinking a more positive or constructive thought about the issue, or by taking some sort of action that will mean you have to spend less time thinking about something than you did previously.

And finally, keep this chart handy and periodically look back at it to see how your thoughts are changing!

'Whether you think you can or think you can't, either way you are right'
Henry Ford

Top ten most frequent thoughts...	Score (from 0 - 10)	Alternative thought to replace any negative/ energy draining/ non-productive thought listed on the left...
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
TOTAL SCORE (out of 100)		