THE PAUSE

A newsletter about looking and feeling great with age.

WEIGH LESS · AGE LESS | SESSION THREE

Thought Release

Just because a thought enters your mind doesn't mean you have to entertain it.

“Doc, How Do I Turn Off My Brain?”

Susan was ready for our third coaching session.

“Doc, I'm enjoying your morning mindfulness exercises, but I have a problem.”

“What's that?”

“I can't stop thinking.”

“That's good news, Susan.”

“How is that good news?”

“At our age, I'd be more concerned if you couldn't think.”

She laughed.

“I'm serious, Doc. I'll be doing my Three-Six Breathing or the Five Sense Awareness exercise, and suddenly, I'm thinking about something I need to do, something somebody said to me, or something I'm worried might happen.”

“Perfect. You're ready for the third thing I do every morning before my feet hit the floor.”

“And what do you call this one?”

“Thought Release.”

A Morning on Monterey Bay

“Susan, have you ever been to Lover's Point in Pacific Grove?”

“Yes. It's beautiful there.”

“It's one of my favorite places in the world. Imagine sitting on a bench overlooking Monterey Bay. The sun is beginning to rise, a gentle breeze blows, and you can hear the waves breaking against the rocks. (By the way, it is the one place I have found where I can watch the sun rise over the Pacific Ocean on the West Coast. Monterey Bay is cocked in a way that you are actually looking east.)

“There's nowhere you need to be and nothing you need to do. You're simply enjoying being there.

“Now imagine a small bubble floating across the water. Inside that bubble is a thought.”

“What kind of thought?”

“Any thought. Perhaps it's about something that happened yesterday or something you're concerned might happen tomorrow.

“As the bubble floats in front of you, imagine reaching out with your index finger and gently touching it.”

“POP!” I said.

“Here comes another thought.”

“POP!”

“And another.”

“POP!”

Susan laughed.

“Is that really what you do every morning?”

“Yes. I spend part of every morning sitting on an imaginary bench overlooking Monterey Bay, popping bubbles.”

“Vicky knows you do this?”

“Who do you think sits next to me on the real bench?”

You Are Not Your Thoughts

“Susan, have you ever stepped on your bathroom scale and thought, 'I'll never lose this weight'?”

“More times than I can count.”

“Did thinking it make it true?”

“No, I guess not. Especially now that I'm losing weight.”

“Exactly. Yet how many years did you allow that thought to influence what you did?”

Susan went quiet.

I explained to her that we often give our thoughts far more authority than they deserve. A thought enters our mind, and instead of simply recognizing it as a thought, we entertain it, give it credibility, and sometimes allow it to determine what we do next.

Think about how many times you've told yourself you're too old to do something, that you'll never lose the weight, or that you'll never feel as good as you once did.

When repeated often enough, those thoughts can become beliefs. And those beliefs can influence how you live your life.

You don't have to believe everything you think.

One of the greatest lessons I've learned about discipline is that it begins long before we take action. It begins with deciding which thoughts deserve our attention.

What Does Thought Release Have to Do With Your Hormones?

“Okay, Doc. I know what's coming. You're going to tell me that popping imaginary bubbles has something to do with my hormones.”

“You're getting pretty good at this, Susan.

"Have you ever become angry just thinking about something someone said to you several days ago? Or felt anxious about a conversation you haven't even had?

"Nothing is happening to you at that moment, yet your heart may begin beating faster, your shoulders tighten, and you become uncomfortable.

"Your thoughts can activate your body's stress response, which involves hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline.

"Those hormones are wonderful when we need to escape danger. But how often do we find ourselves responding to an event that has already happened or one that hasn't happened at all?

"During and after menopause, many women also experience changes in sleep, mood, and how they respond to everyday stress. These changes can make managing their health and weight feel even more challenging.

"Thought Release isn't a treatment for hormonal imbalance. It's one of the tools I use to manage my response to life's daily challenges.

"I can't always control what happens to me, but I can practice controlling how much of my attention I give it.

The Third Thing I Do Every Morning

“Susan, let me teach you how I do it.”

"Step One: Return to Your Breathing

"After completing my Three-Six Breathing and Five-Sense Awareness exercises, I close my eyes and concentrate on the air moving in and out of my nostrils.

"I don't try to change my breathing. I pay attention to it.

"Step Two: Go Somewhere Beautiful

"I imagine myself sitting on my bench at Lover's Point, overlooking Monterey Bay.

"You don't have to go to Monterey Bay. Perhaps your favorite place is beside a mountain stream, on a beach in Hawaii, or sitting on your grandmother's front porch.

"Choose somewhere that makes you feel peaceful.

"Step Three: Watch Your Thoughts Float By

"Sooner or later, a thought will enter your mind.

"Imagine that thought floating in front of you inside a small bubble. Reach out with your imaginary finger, touch the bubble, and let it disappear.

"POP!

"Then return your attention to your breathing.

"Another thought will arrive. Do the same thing.

"Don't argue with your thoughts, judge them, or try to figure out why you're having them. Practice releasing them."

"Doc, what if I suddenly remember something important that I forgot to do?”

"Step Four: Don't pop that one, Susan. Just let it float away.”

“But what if I forget it again?”

“If it's something you genuinely need to remember, write it down when you finish the exercise. You don't need to spend the next ten minutes thinking about it.

"The purpose of Thought Release isn't to forget your responsibilities. It's to practice deciding when to give them your attention.

"I spend up to ten minutes releasing thoughts every morning.

"Some mornings, there are very few bubbles.

"Other mornings, Monterey Bay looks like somebody poured a bottle of dishwashing detergent into it.

"That's okay. I keep popping."

"Do I have to pop bubbles?"

"No, I teach that method to my beginners. That visualization gives them something that keeps their attention."

“Doc, Do You Ever Run Out of Thoughts?”

“Rarely, Susan.”

“Then how do you know you're getting better at it?”

“Because I'm getting better at letting them go.

"At 70, I have accumulated seven decades of memories. Some are wonderful, and some are painful. I also have dreams I'm still pursuing and concerns about the people I love.

"But I don't want to spend the years I have remaining reliving the painful moments of my past or worrying about what might happen in my future.

"Vicky and I still have so much of the world to see. We have eight grandchildren whose lives we want to be part of, and you already know what I intend to do at each of their weddings.

"Dance."

"Yup, I want to be there physically, mentally, and emotionally. And I want to be present enough to enjoy every minute.

"That's one reason I still practice Thought Release every morning.

Your Seven-Day Challenge

"For the next seven mornings, before your feet hit the floor, practice the three mindfulness tools I've taught you.

- **Three-Six Breathing:** Calm your body.
- **Five-Sense Awareness:** Bring yourself into the present.
- **Thought Release:** Practice letting go of as many thoughts as possible.

"Begin with just a few minutes of Thought Release and gradually work your way toward ten minutes.

"Remember, your goal isn't to stop thinking. Your goal is to learn that you don't have to follow every thought that enters your mind.

"At the end of seven days, ask yourself whether you're becoming better at letting things go.

Two Readers. One Free Week Each.

After retiring from our medical practices, Vicky and I decided to accept new coaching clients exclusively through personal referrals.

However, each week, **I reserve two openings for readers of THE PAUSE** who would like to experience what it's like to be personally coached by me.

Perhaps you're struggling with your weight, sleeping poorly, concerned about your hormones, or simply wondering why you don't feel like yourself anymore.

I'd love to help you.

Here's what I'll do for each of those two readers, at absolutely no cost:

- Spend as much time as it takes on the phone learning about you and what you'd like to accomplish.
- Develop a customized lifestyle protocol for your individual situation.
- Make sure you understand how to follow it.
- Personally coach you through it daily during your first week.

You'll be working directly with me, just as Susan does.

There's no charge and no obligation to continue after your complimentary week.

RESERVE ONE OF MY TWO COMPLIMENTARY COACHING OPENINGS

Perhaps it's time to stop wondering what you could be doing differently and spend a week finding out.

One Small Favor Before You Go

Do you know someone who spends too much time regretting her past or fearing her future?

Perhaps she's a sister, a daughter, or a dear friend who is struggling with some of the changes that come with age.

Would you forward this week's edition of THE PAUSE to her?

And if someone were kind enough to forward this newsletter to you, I'd love to have you join us.

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“One Last Question, Doc.”

“What's that, Susan?”

“If I'm sitting on that imaginary bench tomorrow morning and a thought about eating a doughnut floats by, what should I do?”

“POP IT!”

I heard her laughing as we ended our coaching call.

Tomorrow morning, before my feet hit the floor, I'll breathe, experience my five senses, and visit my favorite little corner of Monterey Bay.

I hope you'll find somewhere equally beautiful to begin your day.

Because the more time we spend regretting yesterday and fearing tomorrow, the less time we have to enjoy today.

And today is the only day we get to live.

Until next week,

Doc Mac

Weigh Less · Age Less

Live Younger, Longer.

P.S. Next week, I'm going to teach Susan something that changed the direction of my life many years ago. Most people think they need to DO something to HAVE something before they can BE someone. I'm going to teach her why I approach it differently.

Medical Disclaimer: This newsletter provides general wellness education and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Mindfulness exercises are not established treatments for hormonal imbalance, menopause, or weight loss. Consult your healthcare practitioner regarding persistent symptoms or medical concerns. Never start taking any supplement without first consulting your healthcare practitioner.