



Intrusive thoughts

They are normal.

Everybody has them.

Can you determine whose voice you are hearing?

Is it one of your own personalities or is it someone else?

Do not try to not hear the voice or to push it away. You cannot not think something.

Acknowledge the thought. Recognise it for what it is – an intrusive, unchosen guest. It's OK. Allow it to be there. It is not harmful if you leave it alone. It will leave by itself when your attention is turned to something else.

If you choose to, you can dispute the thought. Notice why it is not true. Write down examples of when that has not applied to you. When the thought comes, tell yourself that example.

Ask yourself: What would I tell a friend who told me they were having this thought? Be compassionate to yourself. You know these thoughts are unhelpful. It's OK. Anyone who had that experience, grew up in those circumstance, or listened to those people, might have that thought. It's not unusual, and it generally means nothing.

You do not choose your thoughts. You choose your response to them and your behaviour. Even good people have unhelpful thoughts. You can think bad thoughts and do good things.

Some ways to manage intrusive thoughts are:

1. Acknowledge. Intrusive thoughts are OK. They remind us we are human. Everyone has them. They do not necessarily mean anything and they are not an indication of my true character.

2. It's OK. It's an intrusive thought. Do not try to push it away, or not think it. It will disappear when I turn my attention to other things.

Usually steps 1 and 2 are sufficient.

3. If you choose to, challenge and dispute the thought. I know it's not true. I have examples of past behaviour that proves it not to be true.

4. What would you tell a friend who described that thought? Write that down so that you can see it. Share that with someone you trust.

5. Thought substitution. If this is a recurring intrusive thought (e.g., I am an idiot, I can't do anything right; I can't take care of myself; people will laugh at me; I am going to have an accident; I cannot do this task), have a memory of an event that proves this intrusive thought not to be true prepared. Place an anchor.

6. Affirmations of competence and belonging (what would I like to say to my infant self) and anchor.

7. If this intrusive thought is truly complex, then it is helpful to **talk** to someone else (a good friend or therapist) about it to get a better perspective on it. Is this thought trying to tell me something?

8. Keep busy, spend time with others. Minimise the opportunity for mind wandering and self-deprecating thoughts (see what is happening in rehab).

9. Give of yourself to the world. Catch yourself making the difference in the life of another person, however small that may be. Remember that.

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