

Put Your Mind In Charge of Your Brain

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To begin, let try a little experiment. Please put your hands on your Brain. Go ahead; see how close you can come...now move your hands and put them as close as you can on your Mind.

The Brain is real – it's flesh and blood – it's comprised of 10 billion nerve cells and over 50 billion other cells...yet it weighs only 3 pounds. But the Mind is a whole different deal. As you know the Mind is real but it doesn't exist in the flesh and blood as does the Brain. The Mind is what happens when the Brain is active (which by the way, is nearly all the time).

For the next few minutes I want to speak to your Mind...to the unique, special...absolutely one-of-a-kind essence of who you are. While I'm talking you may find that your Brain will activate thoughts that will distract your Mind from being fully present with me. You know, thoughts like; *"I forgot to take out the trash" ...or..."I wonder what I will fix for dinner tonight"*. If that happens, here's what I invite you say to your Brain;

Brain, thanks for sharing...but not now.

It's critical to remember that the very essence of you...your Mind is in charge...not your Brain. You get to decide how the Brain will function... you decide what thoughts are worthy of your attention and what actions are worthy of your effort.

The BRAIN

For the next couple of minutes I want to talk to your Mind about your Brain. The Brain is a huge and complex organization...not unlike a large corporation. There are hundreds of departments in your brain for nearly everything. Let's start with the Department of Hunger – this workgroup was one of the earliest departments created in your brain. Within the first 24 hours after you were born as you lay there in the crib your body began sending messages to your Brain indicating that something was wrong...you had a need. Later you would come to name this need "hunger"...but way back then, all you did was cry. Once you began crying something truly amazing happened... something was placed in your mouth – you grabbed on and began sucking. Nourishment flowed and the bad feeling went away. After that happened several times...the **Department of Hunger** was organized.

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So that begs the question, how does the Brain create a department? Let me explain. Departments in your Brain are clusters of cells (like corporate work cubes) that are linked together by chemical/electrical pathways. When one cell or one cluster within a Department is stimulated, immediately the other cell clusters within that Department are aroused. Let me give you a real life example. You are busy working...in your cube or in your area...when your keen sense of smell picks up the unmistakable scent of popcorn. Now depending on the clusters that you have developed regarding popcorn there will be an immediate explosion of activity along the pre-established pathways. Your Brain activity might go something like this...

"Popcorn! – Oh wow! – I love popcorn – I need to get some – where is that coming from?" With that...you smile a wide smile and in an instant are up moving in the direction of the smell or the known location of the microwave.

On the other hand, your Brain activity might be very different; it might go something like this...

"Popcorn! – Oh yuck! – Everyday that disgusting smell invades and assaults us – why does he need to do this everyday?" With that...your face scrunches up – your lip curls and

you begin thinking about what kind of errand you can legitimately run that will take you out of the area.

In either case...all of this occurs in your Brain in a nano-second. Messages speed up and down the pathways between and among the clusters of your Brain. The result has almost nothing to do with your conscious Mind...it's all the work of the Brain. The Brain has created a habitual response to the smell of popcorn...and at the first stimulation, you moved through the predictable stages of your established Brain-based HABIT.

You are a very complex person...so, I guess by now you've figured out that your Brain has been very busy creating all kinds of Departments. Actually, your Brain has hundreds of Departments and workgroups that allow you to function in the world. And, like our popcorn example, most of the activity within these Departments is based on HABIT. Over time you have LEARNED... which means there are well developed...well worn pathways that link together clusters and clusters of clusters in your Brain such that when you open the door of your car to drive to work you don't need to sit there for a half hour and study a driving manual – you know how to drive – it's a well established and yet very complicated pattern of Brain activity that goes on without much conscious attention from you. Your Brain has netted together a large and complex series of activities into what has become a "second nature" activity. Driving is now a HABIT...so much so that you can drive from point A to point B and have little or no conscious recollection of what happened during the drive. We have all experienced that...you pull into a parking lot or your driveway and suddenly realized...*I don't remember driving*. You get out of your car...check it over...there are no dents...no evidence of an accident. Still you wonder...how could I have driven ten miles and have no memory...who was driving? The answer of course is that HABIT was driving...and your Mind was somewhere else.

The MIND

We have now arrived at the somewhere else...it's time to talk about your MIND.

Before I begin I want to check with you...with your Mind...are you still with me? This is going to be the good part – so no drifting away...stay with me now.

There is this thing called the Mind and there are things we are encouraged to do with our minds, things like...

Mind your manners...

Mind your children...(or pets)

Mind your own business...

So what are these expressions asking us to do? Simply stated we are being asked to "pay close attention to" or "intentionally be aware of"...our manners, our children or of what should or shouldn't concern us. However, and here's the catch, to do this...**to be MINDFUL...we must be present...in the moment...able to observe, reflect, direct our thinking, and make conscious and intentional choices.**

**We need to give our
Mind executive control
over our Brain.**

Let me say that again; to be MINDFUL...we must be present...in the moment...able to observe, reflect, direct our thinking, and make conscious and intentional choices.

This means **we must give our Mind executive control over our Brain**. There are many things we can delegate to the Brain – things that can be safely entrusted to HABIT. That is precisely why we have developed all the Departments in our Brains because we don't want to spend every waking moment being mindful about routine activities. But most of us carry it too

far – we trust the Brain and HABIT with activities and decisions that need a Mindful Executive in charge.

We can get in trouble when...the Brain gives us habitual information about complex issues. In such cases we should ignore the Brain. Failure to ignore the unmindful Brain can result in acting in a manner that does not serve us and/or it may even do harm. If the Mindful Executive is not in charge we act on the faulty Brain data and then wonder why things don't turn out better.

We can get in trouble when...our Mindful Executive is busy elsewhere and leaves our body in the care of our habitual based Brains. We talked earlier about driving and how sometimes our Minds are not with us as we move from place to place. We all have examples where we ran the red light, or missed the stop sign, or didn't see the child in the street because our Mindful Executive was not present as we were driving.

The Mind is what makes us uniquely human – it frees us from instinct and habit. It allows us to learn, grow and change...to break old habits to meet new situations and to invent new strategies to accomplishment desired goals.

How to Put Your Mind In Charge of Your Success

We now have come to the heart of the matter. You have made a commitment to change – to break old negative habits and to establish new ways of being that you have consciously decided are in your best interest. Mindfulness can greatly assist you. Let me give you two strategies for putting your mind in charge of your success. However, before I offer these ideas, I want to be sure I am speaking with your Mind – because your Brain just won't do on this one.

Still with me...

1) Update Your Department of Success

One of the many departments in your Brain is the **Department of Success**. This Brain workgroup has a long history. Stored in the archives of this department are the records of all your efforts as well as all the feedback you have received toward the accomplishment of goals and achievements. Obviously, for all of us there are examples of success, examples of failure, and examples where it was hard to determine what happened or how to evaluate the outcome. But I suspect, your Brain has prepared a Summary Opinion about your capacity for the successful accomplishment of goals. This summary includes the likelihood of your following through with your commitments as well as your competence to meet the challenges associated with goal accomplishment. The Summary Opinion is so well developed that as soon as the Brain receives the incoming message that you have decided to commit to the accomplishment of a goal...immediately the summary opinion is issued...most times without even really evaluating the substance of the current goal.

Here's the deal...in preparation for setting sail on this self improvement challenge that you have committed to...I encourage you to update your Department of Success. This is what I have in mind. Get a copy of the summary opinion on your success potential. Determine,

Is it current?

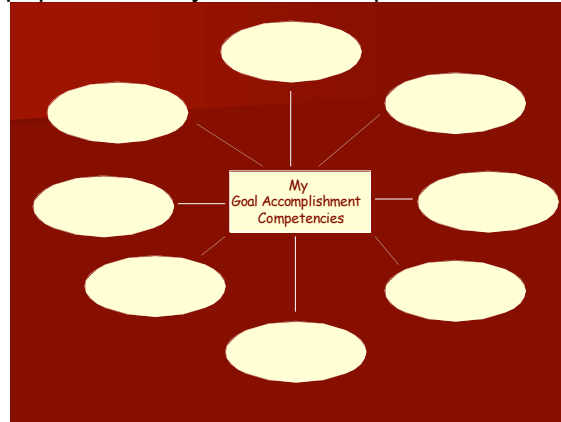
Is it balanced?

Is it helpful?

Too often when I speak with my clients I find their Success Department has based the Summary Opinion on very old data. And what's worse, the department has selectively ignored more current and/or more positive data. The truth is, sometimes the staffers in the departments get lazy and don't keep their Summary Opinion current. They rely on a version of your capacity for success that is sorely out-of-date.

Let's make sure it's current, balanced, and helpful.

To get a copy of the summary opinion I suggest you mine your brain for the information. In the center of a clean sheet of paper write: My Goal Accomplishment Competence



Then like spokes on a wheel write the words, phrases, and images that come to mind...don't edit or delete the information your Brain is supplying. At this point we just want to capture your raw thoughts. Once you have "mined" your Brain for all the impressions – it is time for your Mind to take an objective and mindful look.

As a part of that assessment, answer the following questions.

Is it current?

Is it balanced?

Is it helpful?

What's missing?

What's distorted?

What can be done to make it stronger (more honest and realistic)?

When you have honestly completed your assessment you are then ready to update the Summary Opinion. The end result of this update should be that your goal accomplishment capacity will be enhanced and empowered. This will then be the new message your Brain will habitually provide. If you are searching for a new message you might want to try an old Japanese proverb which says; *"Fall seven times – stand up eight."*

Now I realize that it will take the folks in the Department of Success some time to let go of the old message and fully and automatically embrace the new message. In the meantime, it will be necessary to utilize the second strategy.

2) Give Your Mind a Stronger Voice Than Your Brain

Your Brain regularly offers information – most times it is helpful and necessary. Occasionally the information provided by the Brain is intrusive, distracting...even self-defeating. On such occasions it's necessary for your Mind to have a stronger voice than your Brain. Of course your Mind can't have a stronger voice than your Brain if your Mind is not present...so being Mindful is essential. The technique is quite simple, when your Brain offers unhelpful, distracting or self-defeating information...think to yourself;

Brain, thanks for sharing...but not now.

Let's say that together...

Brain, thanks for sharing...but not now.

Brain, thanks for sharing...but not now.

"Put Your Mind in Charge"

Dr. Burt Bertram

It's so important to remember, the thought your Brain is offering is just a thought – it isn't The Truth. Not only is it just a thought it is a habitual thought and likely is coming from a place that needs updating. Don't let the Brain's automatic message derail or discourage you. As I said before, you get to decide how the Brain will function... you decide what thoughts are worthy of your attention and what actions are worthy of your effort.

Don't let the Brain's automatic habitual message derail or discourage you

Let's put this in the context of your self improvement goals.

Suppose you have made a commitment to lose weight – we all know there are real challenges with meeting this goal. In order to meet this goal you will need all the help you can get from yourself and as few derailing or discouraging messages as possible.

So when the Department of Hunger begins shouting Pizza – Donuts – Chocolate – Chips

If you are Mindful you will be able to first determine

- Am I really hungry?
Or did the guys in the Department of Hunger get all stirred up by a picture of a donut on the side of a bus? Or perhaps...you had a salad for lunch, but now it's 1:45 and you are "dying" for some chocolate?

Then you will be able to say to the folks in the Department of Hunger

- **Brain, thanks for sharing...but now is not the time for chocolate!**

Finally, since you will know whether you are really hungry you can then take Mindful action to meet the need in a way that is consistent with your goal to lose weight.

I want to close by wishing you every success as you mindfully meet your challenge. I hope you will find a way to **firmly put your mind in charge of your efforts**. I leave you with the words of a visionary entrepreneur, Nolan Bushnell, the man who is widely credited as the father of video games...he said it about as simple and straight forward as it can be said; his words;

*The critical ingredient is getting off your butt and doing something.
It's as simple as that. Not tomorrow. Not next week. Today.*