

Q & A Mindline



Dr Roshan Jain
Senior Consultant Psychiatrist &
De-addiction Specialist
Apollo Hospitals, Bangalore

Q I get very tensed and nervous all the time and find it hard to concentrate. Also, my hands get shaky and I am aware of my heartbeat. My thoughts are always wavering and I find it hard to focus, even when doing things that are interesting (like watching a movie). Often, I don't even know what I am thinking, as I think so many things at the same time. It's tiring. Please help.

This is a common and frequently consulted problem. None of us are immune to stream off seemingly automatic thoughts running through our mind. We are mostly unaware of its content or any situational association/ triggers. Such lack of awareness may be an adaptive subconscious (psychological) defense mechanism, against us getting overwhelmed from external chaos, which we all internalize to make sense of all that is happening. Thus, we endlessly process information, almost in a state of 'mindlessness.'

Unsurprisingly, it affects concentration

and focus and is very tiring as such a state can bring about more exhaustion than physical exertion. Perhaps the shaking you experience and your heartbeat awareness is manifestation of consequential anxiety and stress. Nevertheless, other factors must be considered too. (See below).

In order to work with and make your thoughts more adaptive and realistic - you need to be aware of them. You cannot allow your inner self-talk to run at the backdrop and affect you without being aware about it.

To combat the above state of mind (of course besides cultivating mindfulness via meditation) you can do one useful thing - write it down on a paper. This is the best way to learn about your thoughts processes and it's called journaling or a mood diary wherein, you document the date and time of the prevailing mood/thoughts/worries in any given situation. For example, what was happening, where, with who? What was going through your mind (thoughts, images)? What were you doing just before and/or after you felt this way? Rate that mood on a scale of 0-100.

Such a mood diary helps to educate you about the particular nature of an experience and associated mood changes/triggers and makes you 'mindfully' aware of your inner as well as outer world. A regimented visual (written) feedback about your emotional state can be a start to being in touch with your emotions and feelings. It will also help you review how far you have come from when you started writing. Lao Tzu rightly said, "Know yourself and you will win all battles."

Medically, consider a health check to explore thyroid, cholesterol and lipid status as well as check on your blood pressure and ECG. Also, have your

mood diary reviewed by a specialist who can help with the findings.

Q We have been married for one year now and have been fighting over any and everything ever since. It started with misunderstanding over gifts and has become worse, overtime. Our parents are actively advising us, but in vain. Consequently, our relationship has reached a critical juncture. Please advise.

You both need to take a break and go for a holiday or away from home for a few days to have a one-on-one discrete talk (s) without a third party involvement (in this case your parents), as it can lead to lots of cross communication and loose talk. Ideally, advise your parents to take a back seat until either of you feels that the efforts to reconcile and resolve differences are exhausted.

Reconsider what is important to both of you and try to see the whole problem from the other person's point of view too. Jot down the areas of disagreement separately and match it. Equally, write points in favour of and against your relationship/marriage. Check if both can work on common differences before getting into sensitive areas.

After all, a relationship is all about give and take. The more you give, the more you are likely to get. In the whole process, you have to let go, drop your ego to some extent and see the larger picture. In the end, if the difficulties are too rooted and communication too fractured, then seek professional advice from a marriage counsellor or psychologist or a psychiatrist.