

What did you just say to yourself? Within that daily in-brain monologue of thoughts that reminds you to pick up washing powder and book a dentist appointment, are often cutting comments that you would never dream of saying to a friend. So why do you deserve them? Answer: you don't. And keeping a rein on your negativity can quite literally change your life.

Toxic thoughts include the most common female complaints of feeling we are far too overweight, unattractive or unsuccessful to be truly happy, but they also include less obvious, but just as poisonous, outlooks on life. "Thinking you can change other people is toxic. You can't, and if you don't like them 'as is', don't be around them," says US-based motivational speaker, professor and radio host, Dr Carol Morgan. "Thinking that you are a victim is also extremely toxic, and actually the obstacle to your success. If you don't like where you are now, you need to take personal responsibility to change that for the better."

ARE YOU A VICTIM?

It's unlikely that any outwardly-confident woman will put her hand up to being a 'victim', but this doesn't equate to covering in bed afraid of what's outside your front door. The 'woe is me' trait can be hidden within your day-to-day routine, and you're so used to talking yourself in or out of things that you don't even know quite how downbeat you are.

For example, you may plan to go to the gym after work, but come 3pm the sofa is calling and you decide against the workout. A positive thinker will chalk this up to a long day at the office and know tomorrow is another day, while a 'victim' will start to spiral into thoughts like: "I'm so overworked that it's ruining my life. I really don't have time to exercise because I am so run off my feet here, and that is why I have no hope of losing weight, getting fit and meeting the man of my dreams." Sound familiar...?

GREAT ON PAPER

But isn't a toxic thinker just another term for, well, spoilt? If someone has a great life on paper, why can't they very well be happy with their lot? "Toxic

thoughts have nothing to do with being spoilt," says International Coach Federation-accredited Dubai life coach, Rawan Albina. "A common thought process I find in clients is that things must be done perfectly, or there is no point in bothering. Someone who isn't ever happy with what they have, will constantly compare themselves to others, because they don't know what drives them and what they themselves are passionate about."

Toxic thinking is also something we, destructively, keep inside our own minds, while those we'd consider spoilt or ungrateful are likely to thrive on an audience to air their situations.

DON'T SWEAT IT

Toxic thinking should not be confused with depression. Depression is an overwhelming mental state, while it is very common for unnecessary negativity to creep into the average adult mind several times a day. And, guess what? The summer heat doesn't help! "People very often experience difficulties while being in non-

resourceful states for too long, such as exhaustion, lack of sleep, hunger, thirst, heavy work load and mental or physical stress," says Angela. "And here in the UAE, the soaring summer temperatures and humidity affect people's thinking and behaviour a lot. The lack of vitamin D that comes from staying indoors definitely doesn't help."

So how do we change our brain? Can we really wake up one day and decide to be content? "No, we don't suddenly become more content. We have to work on it and change our self-limiting beliefs," says Rawan.

THE SOUL DIET

As the first step towards positive thinking for life: go cold turkey. Angela advises her clients to embark on a 'soul diet' for a minimum of 30 days, which means no verbal complaining whatsoever...

She explains: "Every time you want to complain or express how unhappy you are with something, stop and replace it with the opposite. If you find it difficult to openly express happy and positive thoughts, at least try and not blurt the toxic ones out, and just stay silent about them."

More tricks to find your 'happy place' include writing down and repeating to yourself key mantras or positive quotes that uplift you. These can be taken from your favourite authors or religious leaders, or be simple lines like: 'I deserve to be happy' (you do!).

It is also important to know your triggers. If a certain person, location or even time of day always makes you feel low or irritated, then prepare yourself, and arm yourself with positive thoughts that will override some, if not all, of the toxic ones.

Rawan also reminds us that 'up and down' times are a part of life, and accepting this will also help lessen the pressure you place on yourself to feel happy. "The right balance is to enjoy the good times and know that the bad times are just a phase," she says. "We can learn from our toxic thoughts, we need them to grow and, most importantly, to help us really 'ride the waves' of life." **VI**

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TOP FIVE TIPS TO DETOX YOUR THOUGHTS

Leap Life Coach Rawan Albina lists her top tips to free your mind

1. Become aware of your toxic thoughts and what triggers them
2. Write down the thoughts as they come to your mind
3. Now write down the exact opposite of these thoughts in a positive tone. For example: 'I am fat' should be replaced with 'I am beautiful at any weight'
4. Stand in front of the mirror and say the positive thoughts to yourself out loud
5. Promise yourself that you will catch your negative thoughts every time and stop the toxic cycle before it starts