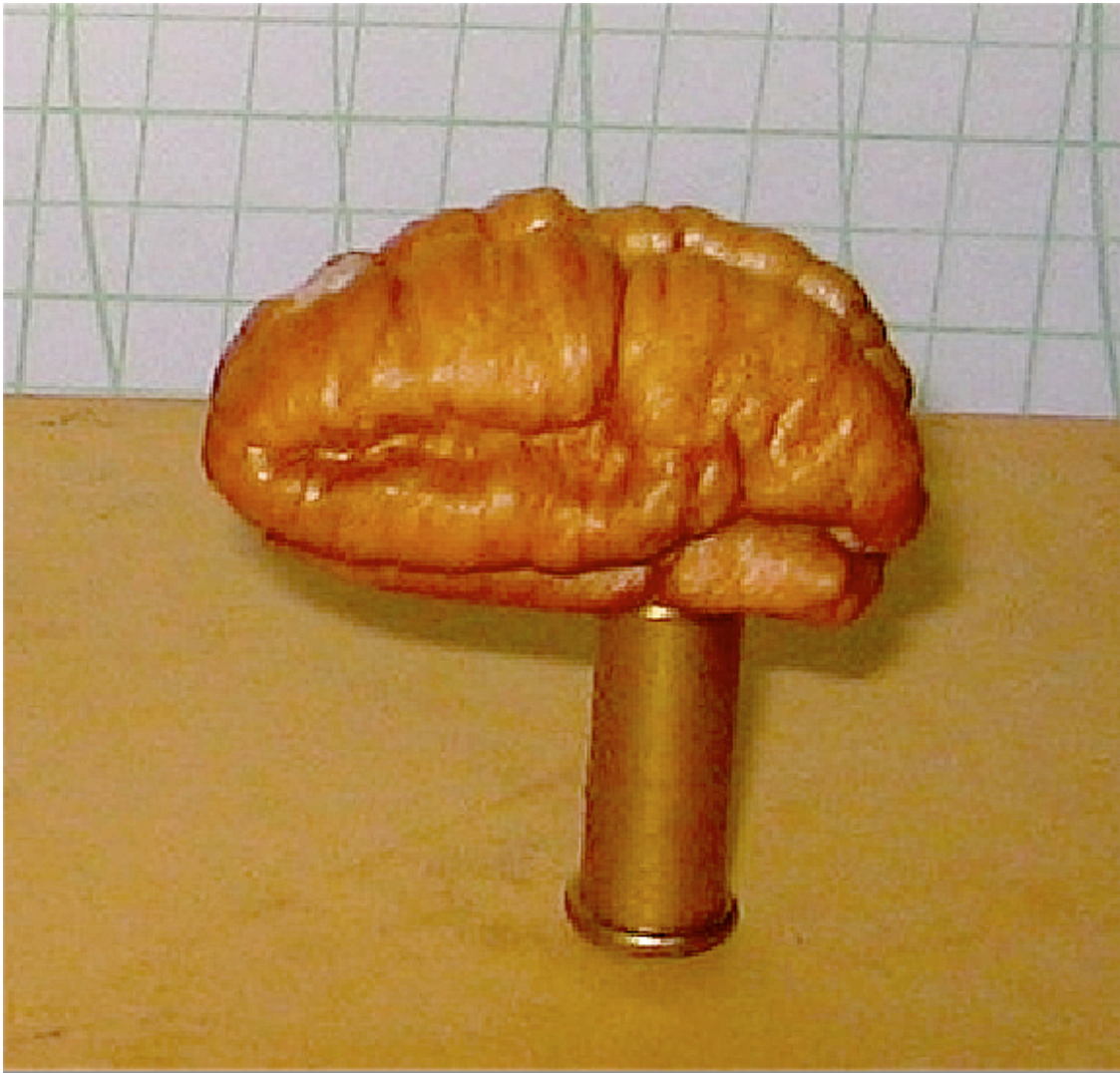


## Talking the Talk helps with Walking the Walk

Humans have a capacity for self-led mental adaptation and alteration--that is, you can reprogram your brain. Here's an example: suppose you are forced to endure a small amount of pain. If you make yourself smile during the experience, you will find that the experience is more tolerable (within limits). This is due to 'classic' conditioning, like Pavlov's dogs. When you smile, it is because good things are happening, and eventually, good feelings can be evoked just by smiling. (BTW, if you try this when you are getting your teeth cleaned, it might be a good idea to tell the dental tech first.)

There are other ways to do this. One way is to put your thoughts on a metaphorical leash. It is easy to think about something at will, and you can stop thinking certain thoughts if you catch yourself thinking them. This is easier said than done... but everything starts with thoughts. Your thoughts become your actions, and your actions become not-thought-about habits. Your actions also have repercussions on your thoughts, not usually as obvious as the forced smiling example. If you were to allow yourself to start thinking about how good a beer or three would taste, you run a risk of thinking rather blurry thoughts in the future.

If a person loves wealth overmuch, then spending or sharing this wealth will be associated with bad emotional feelings. Having these feelings is optional. Suppose this person could 'reprogram' themselves to like spending and sharing--then such occasions could be joyful. This 'reprogramming' is humanly possible. You are what you think, and you can think what you want (at least sometimes). Perhaps many criminals are created when a human 'allows' oneself to fantasize about something/someone to excess, or always attempting to gain currency at every opportunity. Perhaps it is better to not think of these things at all. You decide--and nobody can change your mind.



"'Tis nothing good or bad / But thinking makes it so." Shakespeare

So, how can you improve the probability that you will think 'good' thoughts? What are good thoughts, anyway?

Read this free PDF book available here: [http://awareness.tk/?page\\_id=273](http://awareness.tk/?page_id=273) Mr. Demello's Awareness is very good. There's a bunch of audio files too, but I've only listened to one of them.

My suggestions:

Live simply. "Eat your food to satisfy your hunger, and drink to satisfy your thirst. Satisfy the necessities of life like the butterfly that sips from the flower, without destroying its fragrance or its texture."--Buddha "It is hard to fight with one's heart's desire. Whatever it wishes to get, it purchases at the cost of soul."--Heracleitus "He has the most who is most content with the least."--Diogenes "I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is over self."--Aristotle

Minimize distractions, seek quiet places "I lived in solitude in the country and noticed how the monotony of a quiet life stimulates the creative mind." Albert Einstein

Increase the quality and quantity of what you know--keep reading! Check what you think you know, for the propaganda is everywhere these days. "Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities."--Voltaire "Get the facts, or the facts will get you. And when you get them, get them right, or they will get you wrong."--Thomas Fuller "Employ your time in improving yourself by other men's writings, so that you shall gain easily what others have labored hard for."--Socrates "Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it."--Albert Einstein "The ignorant know not the depth of their ignorance, but the learned know the shallowness of their learning."--Ambrose Pierce

Avoid brain damage. Drugs, including 'legal' ones like pills, alcohol, and the plug-in drug, can damage a very complicated and fragile human brain.

Put yourself in other people's shoes. Attempt to predict how a given person will react to a new situation, and see if you were correct.

Stay away from stupid situations that might encourage you to do stupid things.

Don't wander around in some sort of daydream daze. Not only should you pay attention to what you are doing and what is going on around you, you should pay attention to what you are thinking and adjust as needed. You are more easily manipulated by adverts and propaganda when you are not paying attention. "An intellectual is someone whose mind watches itself." Albert Camus

Don't reward yourself for 'progress,' whatever that means to you. If your 'progress' is not its own reward, you're doing it wrong.

Be who you want to be. "You cannot have a proud and chivalrous spirit if your conduct is mean and paltry; for whatever a man's actions are, such must be his spirit."--Demosthenes "Men acquire a particular quality by constantly acting a particular way... you become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave actions."--Aristotle "Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you."--Thomas Jefferson

Persevere! "Much good work is lost for the lack of a little more."--Edward Harriman "Permanence, perseverance and persistence in spite of all obstacles, discouragements, and impossibilities: it is this, that in all things distinguishes the strong soul from the weak."--Thomas Carlyle

Don't let other people tell you how to act, how to feel, or who your enemies are--even if this is done by accident. A grouchy person can inspire bad feelings, and if you think much about an experience with such a person, you will be changed. Avoid people who 'harsh your buzz' especially if those people are EmpryreMedia addicts--they have an infinite source of psychobabble to draw from. Any good you might do for these people will likely be erased after a few dozen more 7V 'programs.'

It is likely that you live in an insane culture, bizarrely 'colored' by corp\$€culture and the quest for paper rectangles. "Who are they by whom you wish to be admired? Are they not those of whom you used to say that they are mad? Well, then, do you wish to be admired by madmen?"--Epictetus "The object of life is not to be on the side of the majority, but to escape finding oneself in the ranks of the insane."--Marcus Aurelius

"If a traveller does not meet with one who is his better, or his equal, let him firmly keep to his solitary journey; there is no companionship with a fool."--The Dhammapada "Hell is other people."--John Paul Sartre

"I most seriously believe that one does people the best service by giving them some elevating work to do and thus indirectly elevating them." Albert Einstein Gandhi often said that his 'constructive programme' was more important than anything else he was doing.

What you physically do is all we mere mortals ever see, so expect to be judged solely by what you've done and said.

Your thoughts alter your world. If all you seek is sex, how are you going to view other people? Suppose your fondest wish is to obtain more currency in any way possible--will you be a good friend? "The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes." William James

You can use your anger as a gauge for blindspots in your perspective: if you are a rabid politics-junky, you will likely get angry when told of any imperfections in the Can't-debate of your choice. The initial anger is cognitive dissonance. 'Insight' is the self-knowledge of recognizing when this happens. Should a simple statement arouse anger? Should a few words be enough to alter your feelings? "The opinions that are held with passion are always those for which no good ground exists; indeed the passion is the measure of the holders lack of rational conviction. Opinions in politics and religion are almost always held passionately." Bertrand Russell

"They cannot take away our self-respect if we do not give it to them."--Gandhi "Don't compromise yourself; you're all you've got."--Janis Joplin

If you are dependent upon anyone else (for money, sex, praise, grades, etc.), then you will feel happy or sad depending upon the whims of another person. "(...) this power of desiring and disliking, and pursuing, avoiding, and rejecting, and, in brief, the use of appearances. Have a care, then, of this, hold this only for thine own, and thou shalt never be hindered or hampered, thou shalt not lament, thou shalt not blame, thou shalt never flatter any man." Epictetus 'Right views' is the first of the Noble Eightfold paths. (Right views; right aspirations; right speech; right behavior; right livelihood; right effort; right thoughts; and right contemplation.)

Humans rarely see anything as it is--the perceptions are 'colored' by experiences and desires. Even thoughts are so 'colored' ... If a person convinces themselves that everything will be wonderful if only so-and-so were gone forever... and allows the thoughts to linger, running this way and that, suffusing other thoughts with potential murder... "What we ought not to do, we should not even think of doing." Epictetus

More Epictetus quotes:

The only thing that you can control, and you must therefore control, is the imagery in your own mind.

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Men are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of them.

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Of things that exist, some are in our own power, some are not in our own power. Of things that are in our own power are our opinions, impulses, pursuits, avoidances, and, in brief, all that is of our own doing. Of things that are not in our own power are the body, possessions, reputation, authority, and, in brief, all that is not of our own doing.

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Thus is freedom acquired. For this reason he [Diogenes] used to say, Ever since Antisthenes made me free, I have not been a slave. How did Antisthenes make him free ? Hear what he says : Antisthenes taught me what is my own, and what is not my own; possessions are not my own, nor kinsmen, domestics, friends, nor reputation, nor places familiar, nor mode of life; all these belong to others. What then is your own? The use of appearances. This he showed to me, that I possess it free from hindrance, and from compulsion, no person can put an obstacle in my way, no person can force me to use appearances otherwise than I wish.

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I cannot escape death—shall I not then escape the fear of death? shall I die lamenting and trembling? In this is the source of suffering, to wish for something, and that it should not come to pass...

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But what saith Zeus? "Epictetus, if it were possible, I would have made both this thy little body and thy little property free and unhampered. But forget not now that this is but finely tempered clay, and nothing of thine own. And since I could not do this, I have given thee a part of ourselves, this power of desiring and disliking, and pursuing, avoiding, and rejecting, and, in brief, the use of appearances. Have a care, then, of this, hold this only for thine own, and thou shalt never be hindered or hampered, thou shalt not lament, thou shalt not blame, thou shalt never flatter any man."

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What then do you wish to be doing when you are found by death? I for my part would wish to be found doing something which belongs to a man, beneficent, suitable to the general interest, noble. But if I cannot be found doing

things so great, I would be found doing at least that which I cannot be hindered from doing, that which is permitted me to do, correcting myself, cultivating the faculty which makes use of appearances, laboring at freedom from the affects (laboring at tranquillity of mind), rendering to the relations of life their due (...)

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(...) at a proper time you will descend into the arena to know if appearances overpower you as they did formerly. But at first fly far from that which is stronger than yourself: the contest is unequal between a charming young girl and a beginner in philosophy. The earthen pitcher, as the saying is, and the rock do not agree.

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(...) a man may say to me, if I attend to such matters (as you do), I shall have no land, as you have none ; I shall have no silver cups as you have none, nor fine beasts as you have none. In answer to this it is perhaps sufficient to say I have no need of such things, but if you possess many things, you have need of others whether you choose or not, you are poorer than I am. What then have I need of? Of that which you have not : of firmness, of a mind which is conformable to nature, of being free from perturbation. Whether I have a patron or not, what is that to me? But it is something to you. I am richer than you - I am not anxious what Caesar will think of me, for this reason, I flatter no man. This is what I possess instead of vessels of silver and gold. (...) for I have leisure: my mind is not distracted. (...) To you, every thing appears small that you possess : to me, all that I have appears great. Your desire is insatiable; mine is satisfied. (...) do not desire many things and you will have what you want.

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(...) do not choose to desire that which you will fail to obtain, nor to attempt to avoid that into which you will fall, desire nothing which belongs to (which is in the power of) others, nor try to avoid any of the things which are not in your power. If you do not observe this rule, you must of necessity fail in your desires and fall into that which you would avoid.

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Is it possible to be free from faults? It is not possible; but this is possible, to direct your efforts incessantly to being faultless. For we must be content if by never remitting this attention we shall escape at least a few errors.

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For first, and what causes most trouble, a habit of not attending is formed in you; then a habit of deferring your attention. And continually from time to time you drive away by deferring it the happiness of life, proper behavior, the being and living conformably to nature. If then the procrastination of attention is profitable, the complete omission of attention is more profitable; but if it is not profitable, why do you not maintain your attention constant?

Today I choose to play.

Well then, ought you not to play with attention?

I choose to sing.

What then hinders you from doing so with attention? Is there any part of life excepted, to which attention does not extend? For will you do it (anything in life) worse by using attention, and better by not attending at all? And what else of the things in life is done better by those who do not use attention? Does he who works in wood work better by not attending to it? Does the captain of a ship manage it better by not attending? and are any of the smaller acts done better by inattention? Do you not see that when you have let your mind loose, it is no longer in your power to recall it, either to propriety, or to modesty, or to moderation; but you do everything that comes into your mind in obedience to your inclinations.

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Each man is improved and preserved by corresponding acts, the carpenter by acts of carpentry, the grammarian by acts of grammar. But if a man accustoms himself to write ungrammatically, of necessity his art will be corrupted and destroyed. Thus modest actions preserve the modest man, and immodest actions destroy him; and actions of fidelity preserve the faithful man, and the contrary actions destroy him. And on the other hand contrary actions strengthen contrary characters : shamelessness strengthens the shameless man, faithlessness the faithless man, abusive words the abusive man, anger the man of an angry temper, and unequal receiving and giving make the avaricious man more avaricious.

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(...) whatever means are applied to the body by those who exercise it, if they tend in any way towards desire and aversion, they also may be fit means of exercise ; but if they are for display, they are the indications of one who has turned himself towards something external and who is hunting for something else and who looks for spectators who will say, 'Oh the great man.' For this reason Apollonius said well: When you intend to exercise yourself for your own advantage, and you are thirsty from heat, take in a mouthful of cold water, and spit it out and tell nobody.

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Every habit and faculty is maintained and increased by the corresponding actions : the habit of walking by walking, the habit of running by running. If you would be a good reader, read ; if a writer, write. But when you shall not have read for thirty days in succession, but have done something else, you will know the consequence. In the same way, if you shall have lain down ten days, get up and attempt to make a long walk, and you will see how your legs are weakened.

Generally, then, if you would make any thing a habit, do it; if you would not make it a habit, do not do it, but accustom yourself to do something else in place of it. So it is with respect to the affections of the soul : when you have been angry, you must know that not only has this evil befallen you, but that you have also increased the habit,

and in a manner thrown fuel upon fire. In this manner certainly, as philosophers say, also diseases of the mind grow up.

For when you have once desired money, if reason be applied to lead to a perception of the evil, the desire is stopped, and the ruling faculty of our mind is restored to the original authority. But if you apply no means of cure, it no longer returns to the same state, but being again excited by the corresponding appearance, it is inflamed to desire quicker than before : and when this takes place continually, it is henceforth hardened (made callous), and the disease of the mind confirms the love of money. For he who has had a fever, and has been relieved from it, is not in the same state that he was before, unless he has been completely cured. Something of the kind happens also in diseases of the soul. Certain traces and blisters are left in it, and unless a man shall completely efface them, when he is again lashed on the same places, the lash will produce not blisters (weals) but sores. If then you wish not to be of an angry temper, do not feed the habit : throw nothing on it which will increase it : at first keep quiet, and count the days on which you have not been angry.

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(...) see what the trainers of boys do. Has the boy fallen? Rise, they say, wrestle again till you are made strong. Do you also do something of the same kind; for be well assured that nothing is more tractable than the human soul. You must exercise the Will, and the thing is done, it is set right : as on the other hand, only fall a nodding (be careless), and the thing is lost : for from within comes ruin and from within comes help. Then (you say) what good do I gain ? And what greater good do you seek than this ? From a shameless man you will become a modest man, from a disorderly man you will become an orderly man, from a faithless you will become a faithful man, from a man of unbridled habits a sober man. If you seek any thing more than this, go on doing what you are doing; not even a god can now help you.

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THEY who have taken up bare (philosophical) theorems immediately wish to vomit them forth, as persons whose stomach is diseased do with food. First digest the thing, then do not vomit it up thus : if you do not digest it, the thing becomes truly an emetic, a crude food and unfit to eat. But after digestion show us some change in your ruling faculty, as athletes show in their shoulders by what they have been exercised and what they have eaten ; as those who have taken up certain arts show by what they have learned. The carpenter does not come and say, Hear me talk about the carpenter's art; but having undertaken to build a house, he makes it, and proves that he knows the art. You also ought to do something of the kind; eat like a man, drink like a man, dress, marry, beget children, do the office of a citizen, endure abuse, bear with an unreasonable brother, bear with your father, bear with your son, neighbor, companion.

Show us these things that we may see that you have in truth learned something from the philosophers. They say, No ; but come and hear me read (philosophical) commentaries. Go away, and seek somebody to vomit them on.

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You will do the greatest services to the state, if you shall raise not the roofs of the houses [enlarging them], but the souls of the citizens: for it is better that great souls should dwell in small houses than for mean slaves to lurk in great houses.

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It is the part of a wise man to resist pleasures, but of a foolish man to be a slave to them.

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No man is free who is not master of himself.

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Epictetus, Born a Greek slave in the Roman Empire. he was educated on a whim by his master. (During Nero's reign, owning educated slaves may have been a fad) In later life, Epictetus taught philosophy, but wrote no surviving books. His knowledge was preserved by his student, Flavius Arrianus, who published his notes he took during discussions with Epictetus, but only after he found that inferior copies of his notes were for sale. Even so, much of what Arrianus published has been lost through the ages, for entropy always wins. It is a thin thread that connects a portion of Epictetus's wisdom with today's brains.

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"You've got the same body, with the same organs and energies, that Cro-Magnon man had thirty thousand years ago. Living a human life in New York City or living a human life in the caves, you go through the same stages of childhood, coming to sexual maturity, transformation of the dependency of childhood into the responsibility of manhood or womanhood, marriage, then failure of the body, gradual loss of its powers, and death. You have the same body, the same bodily experiences, and so you respond to the same images. For example, a constant image is that of the conflict of the eagle and the serpent. The serpent bound to the earth, the eagle in spiritual flight -- isn't that conflict something we all experience? And then, when the two amalgamate, we get a wonderful dragon, a serpent with wings. All over the earth people recognize these images. Whether I'm reading Polynesian or Iroquois or Egyptian myths, the images are the same, and they are talking about the same problems." Joseph Campbell

**psychological signposts in the mental wilderness**

No matter what culture you are from, humans are born with the same physical and mental equipment. If a person should explore their inner mental wilderness, they would find many common mental tendencies and attributes. I've started collecting ideas of what might be in all human brains (with much help found in the writings of various mental-wilderness explorers).

everyone has an internal narrator--like when humans talk to themselves. This narrator is not limited to words to communicate, but seems to prefer it (at least, to nobody) perhaps because nonverbal thoughts are hard to talk about, and often hard to remember.

ignorance is the root of all evil--"forgive them, they know not what they do." Buddha said it too.

denial is an easy-to-use but powerful mental clog.

words have limitations and so limit the mind that uses them, and words are huge mental shortcuts that usually work.

habit of not attending/not paying attention is easily formed in the mind.

paying attention seems to cost mental energy, but practicing this makes paying attention easier. I suspect the non-verbal lizard brain subsystem always pays attention, but it has limits (WANT THAT. DOMINATE. SEEK SEX, EAT. FIGHT. DEFEND TERRITORY.) Lizard-brain probably supplies a drive to survive and is the source of desires/mental direction that can lead to extreme character virtues and/or vices when other brain subsystems 'get into the act.' If the spotlight of The Will is focused fully upon the tasks chosen, the mental spotlight becomes focused and steady (to 'put your mind to').

opinions are causes of individual actions--people do what seems like the right thing to do at the time  
ego/arrogance/self-conceit interfere with learning (seeing/being/paying attention)

Stories are important. Humans seek to be like heroes, and alter themselves to fit the heroes they know of. Humans learn lessons that cannot be expressed more directly in human language from stories, myths, fables, parables, all of which supply human-sized examples of truth, justice, wisdom, etc; and define what is worthy, heroic, admirable.)

seeking pleasure/entertainment makes a person better at such seeking, and since such success is rewarding, seeking pleasure can easily be a 'vicious circle.' Since human minds are infinite fonts of desires, hedonism can be a metaphoric rodent wheel or treadmill. Desires are quickly followed by other desires. Any caveman who was too easily satisfied risked 'losing' to those greedier.

thinking hard about one thing is difficult to do for very long, for minds can be distractible, forgetful, lazy, with malleable memories. This skill can be learned.

thoughts can be directed/sieved by a human, self-guided mental programming can be done. Mental 'growth' is possible.

thoughts lead to actions which lead to habits; habits are hard to break

inherent physical laziness--a human is a big animal, and shouldn't waste energy. There is likely a mental equivalent.

There are at least a hundred cognitive biases (not reproduced here).

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The only thing you truly own is what goes on inside your head. Everything else can be taken away from you, but your thoughts are your own for as long as you live. Are they your thoughts... or is it better to ask if your thoughts are you? LOL catch 22.

Create yourself, like the god/goddess that you are! What kind of thoughts does a being made-of-stardust think? You decide. What kind of thoughts are worthy to think? You pick the mental leashes you choose to use. Mental leashes, mindfulness teaches.

Yet, brains have a mind of their own, and you will think of things you don't want think. You decide if those thoughts are you, rather than be what a random thought makes you. You choose--and you will make mistakes. You decide if you've learned your lesson(s) and can move on.

There will be mental loads that you drop, mental burdens that cannot be borne; but mental wounds can heal. There is no dishonor in failing, but there is no excuse to be found there either. Wiser, but sadder, always the next task is to choose your thoughts, and so it goes, for you, for ever.

That autopilot that guides you during the 'boring' bits of life--what is it? You, of course. Don't bash the autopilot--it never helps. Mental lashes, mindfulness trashes.

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"It is only a few rare and exceptional men who have that kind of love toward mankind at large that makes them unable to endure patiently the general mass of evil and suffering (...) These few, driven by sympathetic pain, will seek (...) for some way of escape, some new system of society by which life may become richer, more full of joy and less full of preventable evils than it is at present." Bertrand Russell

For such 'crimes' like chasing the moneychangers out of a temple, Jesus had enemies that made sure he died. Mohammed was forced to leave a city and had to shelter in a cave. Socrates was put to death on false charges. It may seem like humanity hates people who can love... but this may be an illusion (Buddha is an excellent exception).