

## Stress Management: Transform your Thought Attacks

One of the key criteria of stress management is managing Thought Attacks. A Thought Attack is what happens when your mind turns on itself and attacks any possibility of a positive outlook. It does this by focusing your thoughts on the negative and threatening aspects of a situation.

Once a Thought Attack enters your mind it starts to attract similar thoughts and begins to snowball. It gains further momentum until feelings of stress, anxiety and panic set in.

When you experience Thought Attacks you have given permission for negative thoughts to have free reign in your mind and consequently allowed feelings of stress to enter your body and our stress management ability declines.

Thought Attacks are the biggest disease known to mankind. They infect us all many times a day and affect us in ways we don't even realise causing illness, poor health, low self-esteem and unhappiness. On a larger scale, they can result in intolerance, hatred and conflict.

So what happens when we experience a Thought Attack?

This example will help explain how Thought Attacks sabotage stress management:

You decide to enter a 100km cycling race. You have completed a few of these races before but you've never reached your goal of finishing the race in under 4 hours. Everyday for months you wake up early to train. You're committed and disciplined. You even lose a few kilograms and go to bed early so that you'll be fresh for each morning's training session.

The day finally arrives. The gun goes off and away you go. You're feeling strong and positive. The race is going well until you suddenly hit a pot-hole and fall off your bicycle onto the road. Your skin is scraped and bruised but you can still continue the race. You check the damage to your bicycle and discover a tyre puncture. By the time you've cleaned up and repaired the tyre, 20 minutes have gone by and you realise that you'll never finish the race within your goal time.

I'm sure you'll agree this event has the potential to cause a little stress and derail the stress management process!

So how can you respond?

Response 1: Thought Attack; Response (usual default thinking) While you're busy repairing your tyre thoughts start to churn inside your head. You think to yourself: I can't believe this has happened! I'm such an idiot I should have seen the pot-hole. What a waste of all that training! Why don't tyre companies make decent tyres that don't puncture so easily? Why is life so unfair? Why did this happen to me?

When you choose responses like this you're experiencing a Thought Attack! So what can you do to

overcome it and what's the antidote that would make you feel more positive and become better at stress management.

Let's look at what another response to this situation could look like.

Response 2: The Wise Owl Response (suggested stress management technique)

While you're repairing your tyre you think: Thankfully I'm only slightly injured. I hit the pot-hole at 30km an hour and I could have been badly hurt. I can still finish the race but that's not much of a challenge for me. What other goal can I set so that I can feel that I've achieved something?

You decide to reset a new time and challenge yourself to ride at an even faster pace. With this thought in mind you regain your feeling of excitement about the race and don't allow the situation to sabotage your positive state of mind.

The Wise Owl Response is valuable in stress management because it helps you view life's challenging situations in a way that benefits you rather than allowing them to create feelings of stress.