



Garden of the Mind

Ten minute secret to eternal success:

Use this analogy to teach the concept of cognitive-behavioral therapy- how to change your feelings and behavior by changing thoughts, battle depression and anxiety, overcome obstacles, and create mental health for yourself.

Have you ever noticed how sometimes a garden has a fence around it? Why does it have a fence? Well, it's there to keep the bad stuff out and the good stuff in, right? This is what fences are for. Fences are boundaries, keeping the good in and the bad out. Boundaries are something you create and maintain for protection. Good boundaries are a little flexible or permeable. Your cell walls are flexible boundaries, they let the good stuff in and keep the toxins out. Your skin is a boundary- they keep you inside; not you outside, they keep infectious bacteria out and let food and air in. Same thing with a fence, it still let's air and water in for the garden to grow, but not deer and rabbits who will damage the garden.

Now, this all makes sense when we talk about a garden. For some reason, human beings tend to get this backwards when it comes to their thoughts. We tend to forget about all the stuff that is good and working right about ourselves and our lives, and focus, repeating over and over, negative thoughts, things we *don't* like, what didn't go well, what might go wrong, thoughts that cause us distress. Who is making those thoughts? Would it be helpful to have a conversation with the maker of our thoughts? Ask them to make thoughts of gratitude, review what feels good to think about, what is right about us, reassurance that we will be okay in the future, let go regrets of the past?

If we are to care for our mind, care for ourselves, like a good gardener would lovingly tend their garden, we would cast out the negative thoughts, the unwanted thoughts, the bugs and parasites, like weeds being thrown outside the fence of a garden.

Continuing to repeat and believe your negative thoughts is like watering the weeds in your garden instead of pulling them out. They grow fast and pretty soon, they crowd out all the good stuff and you will notice how prickly and uncomfortable they are. They will crowd out all the fruits and vegetables you truly desire.

If you like watermelon, and you would like watermelon to grow in your garden so you can enjoy it, what would you need to first do? Plant watermelon seeds, right? Okay, so that's easy in a garden, just stick the seeds in the ground, pay attention to them by watering them and pulling the weeds, and watch what happens. Watermelons appear like magic for you to harvest, and oh, how sweet!

The process of making what you want to be true in your experience of reality is much the same. How do you plant the seeds of what you want to grow in the garden of your mind and your life? You begin by deciding what you want. You get as clear as you can



about what you want, and you create a clear vision of what it looks like, feels like, how will your experience be different when your dreams come true?

I suggest creating a dream book. See the document I created for you called “Dream Book.” Get a nice book, preferably leather bound so it’s durable and can last, and write a dream you have on each page. Not a dream from when you are sleeping, but a dream that is a waking wish you have for yourself and your world. Then get images from magazines, photographs, or google images that best matches how your dream looks to you. Print it and paste it or tape it below the text you wrote about your dream. It’s okay if you pick two or three images. Every night before you go to sleep, and in the morning when you wake up, take a few minutes to look at the images and read through your dreams. Practice feeling how it would feel, as if the dream were already true. Know that these things will happen, that they are already happening. This is how you plant the seeds of what you want to grow in the garden of your mind, and this will help you make your dreams come true. Not sure if you believe me? Try it for two weeks and see what happens. What do you have to lose? Your fears and unwanted thoughts?

I also suggest after a week or two that you go back and rewrite dreams in the present tense. Rather than “I want to feel secure most of the time,” “I am feeling secure most of the time,” instead of “I want to make a million dollars,” “I am making a million dollars.”

Sometimes I ask people if they have heard the phrase “train of thought.” If they are kids they may have seen the movie “Shark Boy and Lava Girl.” which has a train of thought, literally, in it. Once they understand what train of thought means, I ask them where they are on their thought train. Are they in the caboose, just along for the ride, a victim of whatever thought their brain comes up with? Or are they the conductor or engineer, up in the engine of the train, able to slow down, stop, speed up, or change tracks if they don’t like where they are going? Where would they like to be?

When we want abundant produce we prepare the soil, pull the weeds and throw them out, and plant the seeds of the good things we want to see, feel, smell, and taste.

Your mind is like this garden, too. Except sometimes we get confused and keep the good thoughts out and the bad in. Tend the garden of your mind carefully, pull the weeds of negative, fearful, and unhelpful thoughts, and throw them outside the fence. Plant the seeds of your dreams and hopes, thoughts that feel good, by taking a few moments daily to reflect on your dreams and imagine them coming true in as much detail as you can. If a drought comes give them more water. If a freeze comes don’t lie in a bed of weeds and despair, pull out those weeds and plant some new seeds. Keep it up and you can’t help but be successful living in the garden of your dreams.

Have faith the seeds will grow with your care and produce fruit and flowers.

