



Cleansing Toxic Thoughts

Adapted from
Who Switched off MY Brain
By Dr. Caroline Leaf

Dr. Leaf identifies thought patterns in our lives that need to be cleansed for us to experience wholeness and healthy mindsets. I have prepared this handout for the convenience of my clients; however, I highly recommend purchasing her book for more in-depth understanding.

Before you begin to cleanse your toxic thoughts and memories, Dr. Leaf suggest the following:

1. Be honest with yourself and with God. Remember, God created you and knows all things, you can't surprise him.

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Psalm 51:6 NKJV)

2. Change will happen in your brain as soon as you start the process. Within four days you will feel the effects of changed thinking; within 21 days you will have built a whole new thought pattern, literally, a new circuit in your brain.
3. Though change begins immediately, the entire process takes time and commitment to complete. Because it is a process and you are working on renewing your mind, breaking toxic thinking is taking place.
4. The first four days will be the most difficult. The 5th-21st days will become easier as your progress. By day 21 you will feel a marked change

5. Even though you'll feel a significant change after 21 days, you will need to remain mindful of practicing your new thought pattern. Reputation will help you develop a habit of building new and healthy thoughts and memories.
6. Remember the Apostle Paul advocates leaving the past behind. (Philippians 3:13) You are not chained to your past or even to your present. You can choose to be free from toxic thoughts and memories and step forward into your future.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14 (NKJV)

You can't have a sustainable change of behavior without changing the belief or thoughts that are driving that behavior. Too often we are taught to focus on the behavior that we want to change, which sets us up for failure. Behavior follows our thoughts or beliefs.

Some common symptoms of toxic thinking are, pride, anger, rebellion, self-pity, complaining and ungratefulness. Other symptoms may be expressed in compulsive gambling, criticizing, overeating, excessive drinking, viewing pornography, anxiety, depression, etc.

Taking every thought into captivity:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not ^[a]carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. Corinthians 10:3-6

(Using a note book or journal can be most helpful in this process.)

As you become aware of your thought life start gathering information.

What are your five senses telling you?

Are there any toxic memories or thoughts that cross your mind?

Are gathering a lot of "could-haves, would-haves and if-onlys"?
Should-haves, could-haves and should-haves are toxic thoughts.

Are you gathering memories of conversations that you are repeating in your mind?

Are you gathering thoughts of dishonesty, distorted thinking, and false perceptions?

Are you getting your identity from a problem or sickness?

Are you stock-piling your negative thoughts, one thought on top of the other?
Now take a moment to reflect:

What am I am I thinking about?

Try to focus on each thought. How many complete thoughts are you thinking?

How many half thoughts are running through your mind?

Is there a particular thought that keeps rearing its head?

Next, start prayerfully discussing these thoughts with yourself, use curiosity and compassion rather than shame, judgment or condemnation. For example, what would have happened to cause me to think that way?

Note: Don't judge past behavior and decision on today's knowledge and understanding.

Next: pour out your thoughts on paper, look for patterns such as words or images that repeatedly come to mind.

Now revisit these thoughts and be honest with yourself. Start sorting through your thoughts, adding, changing, evaluating.

Ask yourself, does this line up with scripture?

Do I have any responsibility in this?

Do I need to forgive someone?

Do I need to forgive myself?

The next step is to design your future:

What would my life be like if these thoughts didn't control me?

How would I feel if I turned loose of my negative memories and thoughts?

How would it impact my daily life?

How would it impact my relationship with others?

How would it impact my relationship with myself?

What would keep me from turning loose of my negative, toxic thoughts and behaviors?

What step am I willing to take to turn loose of any negative, toxic thoughts?

Is there anything I need to change in my everyday life to make a powerful transition?

Do I need to reach out to a trustworthy person for help with this?