



## Pay Attention to What You're Thinking About

*by Tom Hopkins*

Rarely do people choose the details of their futures. They choose their daily habits and those daily habits dictate their futures. Re-read those first two sentences several times. Then, think about your daily habits. How are they dictating your life?

Are you often rushing in the morning because you oversleep? Is it a part of your routine to search for your mobile phone or keys every time you leave the house?

- Do you travel through rush hour traffic every day with a sour attitude?
- During time you plan to work, are you daydreaming about what you'd rather be doing?
- Do you grab just anything for lunch?
- Do you catch yourself watching the clock the last 5 to 20 minutes of your work day?
- How do you spend your evenings?
- How well do you sleep?

Those basic aspects are part of everyone's day. It's easy to fall into habits that may not be good for us. Why is that? Because we don't give much conscious thought to them. This is so typical of nearly everyone on the planet. We get up. We follow the same routine for getting out the door in the morning. We drive the same roads to get there. We work. We watch the time. We drive the same roads home in the evening and spend our evenings pretty much the same way.

Think about just one aspect of your typical day that you would change if you could. Would you like a smoother start to your day? Could you have it if you woke up just 10 to 15 minutes earlier? Could something as simple as having a key hook or basket to hold your keys and your phone put an end to a daily search for those items once you developed the habit of using it?

This may sound super-simplified, but the first two sentences of this article are very true. So, if you want your future to be different from the present, don't sweat over large goals and planning—at least not today. Today, pay attention to your habits. Pick one that could be holding you back or slowing down any progress you'd like to make toward improving your life. Determine what you could do differently. Stick with something simple and give it a try for a few days. If it seems to be helping, make a conscious effort for about three weeks to make it a daily habit. Once it's a positive habit, and you're reaping the rewards of a more relaxed start to your day or whatever habit you choose, you can forget about it and move on to something else.

As with much of life and business, it truly is the little things that make the difference. Here are some other ideas to counter the typical daily stressors of adult working life:

If you must travel during rush hour, stop stressing over it. Accept that it will be what it is. Then, find something you can do with your mind during that time. Fellow sales trainer and motivator, Zig Ziglar, suggests you turn your car into a classroom by listening to educational programs while driving. This is an excellent suggestion. You can work on learning a second language that will expand the base of clients you can serve. You can work on your selling skills, weigh other time management ideas, or at the very least, listen to uplifting music or inspirational programs to help keep you on an even emotional keel.

If you catch yourself daydreaming or getting sidetracked surfing the net or scanning magazines while you should be working, stop! The most productive thing you can do during work time is to work. If these other things are of interest to you, jot them down in a small notebook or enter them into your cell phone with an alarm to remind you to look into them later. Chances are some of them won't seem all that important by the time you get around to doing it, but for those that are, you haven't lost the information and you haven't interrupted your train of thought at work.

When it comes to lunch time, the best thing you can do for your body and your mind is to move around and to eat light. This will give you the right kind of energy for a productive afternoon.

Think about giving up your watch for a week. Even if you're still a clock-watcher, you'll have to seek out the clock somewhere besides your wrist. Even a small change like that alters the habits you have embedded in your mind. And changing habits is one of the healthiest ways to stimulate your brain.

Regarding your evenings, do you spend them thinking about or rehashing your workday? Stop! To be truly successful, you need balanced habits. There's a saying, "All work and no play makes Johnny a dull boy." Liven up your life even if it means taking a walk instead of sitting in front of the TV. Go out to a store close by that you don't usually go to and just see what they have. Visit your local bookstore or attend their free functions. You're likely to have a triple win when you change your habits. You'll meet new people. You'll feel better about yourself. And, your future will be brighter.

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