

Manage the Story in Your Mind

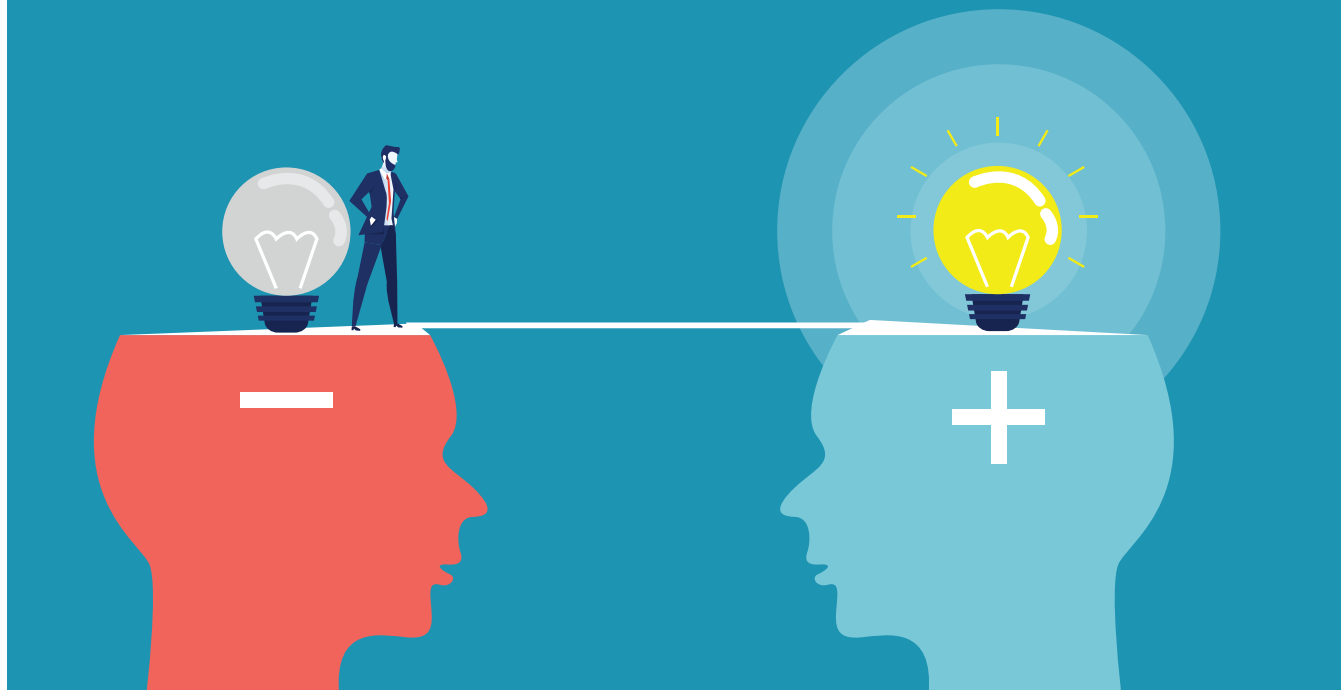
Five Ways to Double-Check Thoughts or Feelings Before Jumping to Conclusions

“They’re only coming over because they feel like they have to. They don’t really want to be my friend.”

“She doesn’t really care about what I’m saying. She’s just being nice.”

“I know they’re talking about me. I can’t trust them.”

“He didn’t take my call. I know he just sent me to voicemail. Why is he ignoring me?”



AS A SENSITIVE PERSON, it’s easy at times for your mind to get the best of you. You can easily fall into the trap of worrying that someone is rejecting you, avoiding you, or something worse if you have a history of social and relationship challenges.

You may also tend to make assumptions about other people based on the stories living in your head. Unfortunately, when the stories you tell yourself are half-truths or conjectures, they can negatively influence how you interact with people, making it even harder to feel confident in your relationships.

The good news is that you can learn to have the ability to manage the messages in your mind. The even better news is that you can do this without anyone else knowing about it.

How will this ability benefit you? You'll feel more confident in social interactions, including making new friends, connecting at a deeper level, and avoiding the excessive worry that happens when you are concerned that someone misread, ignored, or misunderstood you or your intent.

Silencing your tough inner critic is a very important part of being emotionally healthy and a skill that you're never too old to practice and eventually master.

Here are five ways to double-check the story in your head before you decide it's the gospel truth.

1. Examine the story.

As the negative story starts to build in your mind, resist reacting to it without first examining where your reaction is coming from. What are the facts you really do know versus any assumptions you're making? Ask yourself what else could be going on.

Use your knowledge about the person (or people) you're interacting with to dig more deeply into what you see on the surface. Could the person be stressed, distracted, or influenced in some way that's causing the reaction you experienced?

What else do you know that could have an impact on the behavior you witnessed? What's your history with this person? How well do you know them and is that enough to trust your instincts?

2. Use social spy to check yourself.

If you're unsure about the story you're telling yourself, use social spy to examine more closely what's going on. Social spy is a technique designed to help you silently and stealthily examine the facts. When you practice this over time it will help you confirm your intuition, understand

the people around you better, and build greater knowledge about the people in your life.

To be a social spy, practice watching or observing the people around you. What does their body language say? What do their words say, exactly? How much of their behavior is really directed at you—or is their behavior a part of their general personality? For example, does this person answer *anyone's* texts right away? Social spying is observing without sharing, a fun way to gain evidence about the world around you. Then, with your observations you can more accurately interpret exactly what's going on so you're more likely to be correct.

3. Ask yourself how this story in your mind is influencing you.

We're all vulnerable to making mistaken assumptions about others and then taking those assumptions to be "truths." Here you want to ask yourself how you're letting these assumptions affect what you believe to be true about yourself.

How are your assumptions coloring your self-esteem and beliefs? For example, if you assume that someone didn't take your call because you were not worthy, what did you then build that belief into? A bigger belief that no one wants to be your friend? What else have you inflated as a "truth" that really wasn't a fact to begin with?

4. Identify the positive story.

Often, when someone has a history of social challenges, social slights, or a feeling of being regularly criticized by others, it's easy for them to jump to the conclusion that somehow they are to blame when something negative happens. Instead of doing this as an automatic reaction, try to find the positive in the story about yourself instead.

What good qualities do you bring? What makes you a great friend? Try to identify positive qualities such as being

trustworthy, loyal, creative, funny, zesty, and creative. Instead of focusing on that negative narrative, consider what positive thoughts could replace that story.

5. Remember that feelings are not facts.

When you're flooded with emotions, it's easy to mistakenly believe that feelings are facts. For instance, you might feel that someone did not like your comment, but what evidence is there proving that?

When you're confronted with emotions, ask yourself if the feeling you're experiencing comes from something factual that happened. Or is it an emotion inside of you? By determining what part is story and what part is fact, you can separate the heaviness of a "factual event" from feelings, giving you time to sort through the real details with greater truth.

THE REALITY IS THAT we're *all* vulnerable to the stories that play out in our minds. You can change how you interpret what happens to you on a daily basis using these five strategies so you grow in your confidence and trust in yourself.

And when all else fails, take a breath and let the stressful moment pass. If you can pause before reacting, you give your brain and your heart a chance to catch up. And then you can work on letting go of the assumptions in favor of a more honest relationship with the world around you. 🗣️



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