

## Voices in Your Head -- Are You Listening?

By Howard Wand

You may have heard the humorous comment: “The voices in my head may not be real, but they have some good ideas!” The voices in your head are very real and often they have great ideas. The important question is: “Are You Listening?”

Voices may not be actual voices that some experience due to mental illness or auditory hallucinations. They can be the soft urging and supportive voices that help guide you every day. Some believe they are comforting and even alerting when any danger is present. We like to think of ourselves as an entity with one body and one mind. While that may be true, the mind is made up of many departments each with its own positive and negative spokesperson. The key is to engage these subtle voices in our minds, and work at preventing the negatives ones becoming stronger than the positive voices. How often have you become aware that you were talking to yourself, sometimes even out loud? These are the voices you deal with every day, reminding you to pick up some groceries, stop at the dry cleaners, looking both ways at a crosswalk, what actions to take at work, or other positive needs you have.

You will criticize yourself for not doing the things you promised because the negative voice and force inside talked you out of it. It is like being in charge of a whole department with different people responsible for important things in your daily life. The voices inside talk to you and if you listen and engage them, you will accomplish more, and live a happier and more fulfilled life. If you ignore them you will proceed along without getting much done, or expanding your mental horizons. When you learn to be comfortable with the voices in your head, you will find less internal struggle, a greater urge to enjoy life while accomplishing so much more. Listening to your soft voices during moments of anxiety helps you to relax and cope with the stressful situation. They also help you make wise decisions instead of the impulsive ones you will make without their guidance. The voices will make you more secure from harm or conduct or actions you will regret.

Psychologists have referred to these voices as “inner speech”, and there has been much written on the subject trying to come to grips with this phenomenon. They realize that it is difficult to study individual inner speech because it is an inherently

private act. It became clear that inner speech is a complex phenomenon. One day we may learn how essential and helpful inner speech is for each of us. We'll leave that to our brilliant scientists.

The key is to look positively at these often complex but helpful soft voices in your head. You must learn to engage them and encourage them to be the most positive influence in your life. They can reverse negativity while maintaining caution, and turn your confusing thoughts into tenacious actions. You keep wondering why you are procrastinating so often instead of moving forward in a positive manner. It is because your positive and negative voices are still arguing or debating the right path. It's like watching our legislators who claim to be working hard, but manage to accomplish nothing. If you encourage your positive force or voice to be more active, you'll note more action and less procrastination. Only by accepting, understanding, and engaging the voices in your head can you direct them into a unified positive force that will do wonders for your life.

Isn't it time you got started?