

HHM - 18 How to Recognize and Correct Unhealthy Thinking Patterns Part 1



David Sandstrom 0:05

Welcome to the holistic health matters podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential in body, mind and spirit, so that you can pursue the abundant life more effectively. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, Naturopathic Doctor and Biblical Health Coach. And this is episode number 18. This episode is part one of a two part series on recognizing and correcting unhealthy thinking patterns. Before we get started, I have some news. I now have a YouTube channel. If you're more of a visual learner, you may want to check

that out. It's not a live recording. But I've got a video there with the double HM artwork, and there's a live sound waveform that gives your eyes something to focus on while you're listening. So if you're more of a visual learner, that might be something you'll enjoy. Another reason to listen on YouTube, an added benefit is that there are timestamps in the description under the video, and you can click on a timestamp and move directly to that portion of the talk. That's pretty cool. If you enjoy the YouTube channel, please click on subscribe, it's free. And you'll have quick access to the homepage. And on the homepage, there's the videos are organized by categories in playlists, which makes it easier to find an episode based on a particular topic. Right now, it's kind of hard to search on YouTube and find the channel there's not a lot of visibility just yet. So the best way to get there is to go to my website, davidsandstrom.com forward slash podcast and scroll down to see the social media links. And there you'll find the YouTube channel link.

David Sandstrom 1:51

I'm looking forward to this episode because it has massive implications for all of us for our everyday lives. You might be saying, why is this such a big deal, Dave? What difference does it make? I want to improve my physical health. I'm not listening here to improve my thought life or my mental emotional condition. Why are we talking about thinking patterns?

Well, this show is called Holistic Health Matters. And to approach health in a holistic fashion means that we acknowledge that we are spirit, we have a mind and we live in a body. We maximize our health potential. by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. Each part of the human condition is interconnected and interdependent in nature. What interdependent means is that what affects one part will by necessity, alter the others, for good or bad. I have an MBA. And when you're in business school, they train you to become a business leader and business leaders use formulas mathematical formulas to make predictions about their industry. So that will help them in their decision making process. Well, here's the problem. If the data you use to plug into those formulas is flawed, then the predictions they make will be inaccurate. And it'll lead to poor decision making. The term is called GIGO or garbage in garbage out. The same thing is true with our three- part nature. Our spirit is designed to be submitted to God, and therefore animate our minds in healthy ways. When our minds are submitted to our spirit. They animate our brains in healthy ways, and our brains run our bodies. If the data that our brains receive from our minds is flawed, and if it's not based in truth, our brains will receive faulty instructions and therefore send those faulty instructions to our bodies. Garbage in, garbage out. What we want to do is turn that around we want to turn garbage in, garbage out into good in, in good out. Because the beliefs we hold the thought patterns we embrace, have consequences for our physical well being. That's referred to as the mind body connection and truthful thoughts. Thoughts based in reality are far more likely to produce positive health outcomes. The problem is, we may be rehearsing unhealthy thinking patterns, and not even be aware of it.

David Sandstrom 4:24

In 1990, there was a Northwest Airlines crew on a layover in Fargo, North Dakota. They were drinking at a bar with a local lumberjack. And they told this guy that they were pilots and they were flying in the morning. And this guy noticed that they were drinking pretty heavily. So he called the FAA that morning. And an FAA inspector met the crew at the gate. And he said to the crew, Oh, we got a report that you guys were at a bar drinking last night very late. And they say well, yeah, we were there. And then the FAA left the cockpit and they discussed it between them. And they all agreed that if they admitted to their drinking, and they didn't fly the airplane this morning that morning, they thought that they would be fired. So they push back from the gate and they flew from Fargo, North Dakota to Minneapolis, St. Paul. Well, the FAA inspector called the local FBI office in

Minneapolis and told them when that airplane arrives at the gate, have those pilots arrested. And they were now the flight was uneventful. But the captain went to trial and he was convicted of flying an airplane while intoxicated, and he spent a year and a half in jail. Now here's the interesting part. In the trial, it came out that the captain had 17 rum and cokes that night. And then he flew the airplane. A few hours later, the prosecuting attorney asked this pilot 17 rum and cokes. How did you feel in the morning? In the captain replied, I felt normal. I drink that much every night. This guy had a major drinking problem. But to him it felt normal. The point is this. Just like that captain, we could have a problem without thinking patterns. And it may feel normal, because it's been going on for years. It feels normal to us. But it could be causing us harm anyway. It could present a danger to us. So we do well to recognize our toxic thoughts and thinking patterns. And once we do, we stand a chance of correcting them, if we don't recognize them, and how we're going to correct them.

David Sandstrom 6:33

The Bible says we should take every thought captive and be transformed by the renewing of our minds. In this week's episode, I want to teach you to recognize these unhealthy thinking patterns. And next week, we're going to be talking about how to change those thinking patterns into more healthy ones. Dr. David Burns, an adjunct Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at Stanford University School of Medicine wrote a book called feeling good, the new mood therapy. A lot of people have been helped by this book, it's sold over 4 million copies. That's a lot of books. And that's a lot of people. It's a pretty thick book, and it's a heavy read. But I want to share just a few highlights with you. In the book, Dr. Burns identifies 10 unhealthy thinking patterns. There's more than that. But these are the ones that most often cause people trouble. These are the ones people find themselves in the counselor's office, or struggling with their relationship with their spouse over. Now, we all engage in every one of these from time to time. But as we go through them, I want you to look for patterns, and see if something emerges as something that you maybe practice on a regular basis because we all have.

David Sandstrom 7:46

The first one is an all or nothing thinking. In all or nothing thinking where polarized, we see things as all or nothing black or white. And if a situation falls short of perfect, we see it as a total failure. A few things in life fit so

neatly into such a polarized model like that. Most things have varying shades of grey. For example, let's say we lost 10 pounds on a new eating plan. And we have a chocolate chip cookie at a New Year's Eve party. And we say to ourselves, I've completely blown it. We ditch the diet and go on a week long eating binge. That's all or nothing thinking and it's not at all healthy.

David Sandstrom 8:27

The next unhealthy thinking pattern is an overgeneralization. Here we see a single adverse event as a never ending pattern of defeat. If we use the words never, or always, we're probably over generalizing. Here's an example. Let's say you're used to paying your credit card balance off every month. And then you have an unexpected car repair. And we say something like this. These financial setbacks are always happening to me, I'll never get control of my finances. Those words always and never. That's overgeneralizing.

David Sandstrom 9:06

The next one is using a mental filter. A mental filter is locking onto a single negative comment or event and dwelling on it to the point that it distorts reality. Let's say you gave a presentation at work. And the feedback from your boss and from your colleagues was mostly positive. But one person had something critical to say. Now, we can't get that comment out of our mind. And we incorrectly conclude that our presentation was a joke. And we stink at communication skills. That's using a mental filter.

David Sandstrom 9:42

The next one is discounting the positive. When we discount the positive, we won't accept praise or positive feedback. Because we think our performance didn't count or anyone could have done just as good. We hold ourselves to an impossible standard of what we do is never good enough and discounting the positive robs us of our joy, and makes us feel inadequate and unrewarded.

David Sandstrom 10:12

So you've decided to make some improvements to your health and well being, you're listening to shows like this where you can get information that can help take your health to the next level. The trouble is getting educated and implementing effective strategies is time consuming, and can often be expensive, not to mention overwhelming. That's why I wrote

my book *The Christians Guide to Holistic Health*. I've taken 20 years of research and experience as a natural and holistic health coach and distilled it down to what you need to know, to maximize your health potential in body, mind and spirit. It's my contention that we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. In my book, *The Christians Guide to Holistic Health* will put you on the fast track to the vibrant health and vitality you've been looking for. By the way, many of my recommendations won't cost you a nickel. They're free, because a lot of my message is simply aligning our lives more fully with the Word of God. That doesn't cost you a thing. So if you'd like to avoid, overwhelm, and get some biblically based holistic health information you can implement right away, go to my website, davidsandstrom.com forward slash book, and you can learn more and pick up a copy today. If that doesn't work, you can go directly to Amazon. It's available there in paperback, Kindle, and audible. Let's get back to the show.

David Sandstrom 11:37

Another unhealthy thinking pattern is jumping to conclusions. As the name implies, we make predictions that are not based in reality. jumping to conclusions takes on two forms. The first is mind reading. And with mind reading, we think we know what others are thinking. And we believe people are thinking negatively about us when there are really no facts to support our conclusions. For example, let's say you see some friends from across the room and they're talking quietly with one another. And you assume that they're saying something negative about you. That's mind reading. The next one, it's kind of related but a little different. It's called fortune telling. With fortune telling, we predict that things will turn out badly in the future. For example, were understandably apprehensive about a final exam and we say to ourselves, I'm going to blow it tomorrow on this test. Or how about this one. We have a heated argument with our spouse and we say to ourselves, things are always going to be this way things will never change. Well, we don't know the future. And no one can predict the future but God, some of us need to stop playing God.

David Sandstrom 12:51

Another unhealthy thinking pattern is magnification. When we magnify, we blow things out of proportion. we magnify our shortcomings, and we minimize our accomplishments. Another name for magnification is called the binocular trick. If we look through a pair of binoculars the right way,

things appear bigger. If we look through the wrong way, if we flip the binoculars around and look through them backwards, things get smaller. So it would look something like this. Let's say we notice a single gray hair in the mirror in the morning. And then all day long. We think everyone we meet is staring at that single lock of hair. And we conclude that we're unattractive. That's magnification.

David Sandstrom 13:37

Now, here's a big one. This I know we all do this from time to time, I know I do this, and I've seen this in a lot of my friends and family. Emotional reasoning. This is a big one. Emotional reasoning is when we feel something and conclude that it must be reality. We may be angry over what someone said. But that doesn't prove we were mistreated. We may feel hopeless. That doesn't mean things are impossible. Feelings are there to alert us as to what's going on in our hearts. They should be serving us and they're not good measures of objective reality. That's emotional reasoning. That's a big one.

David Sandstrom 14:18

Another unhealthy thinking pattern is should statements. we tell ourselves that our expected outcome should have come to pass or that something must happen. Should haves or must statements tend to lead us into frustration. When they're directed at ourselves, they lead to guilt. For instance, do we say to ourselves, I should have done better with that conversation I had with my teenage daughter last night. Now that's okay if it leads to a productive response like giving her more of our undivided attention next time we talk. It's not okay if it causes us to linger and guilty feelings when should or statements are directed at others or the world in general, they lead to anger. We could say to ourselves, people should be better at driving, or they have to be better at driving. And that type of thinking leads to anger and hostility.

David Sandstrom 15:16

Another unhealthy thinking pattern is labeling. And labeling is an extreme form of all or nothing thinking. And labeling is bad enough when it's directed at others. It's especially unhealthy and toxic when it's directed at ourselves. Let's say we make a mistake, and we say to ourselves, I'm a loser, or I'm stupid, or I'm an idiot. Or it could look like this. Someone may say or do something we don't approve, and we say he's a jerk, or she's a manipulator. We all engage in jerky behavior from time to time, but that

doesn't make us all together corrupt. These labels are useless abstractions that lead to guilt, anger, anxiety and frustration, or it could also lead to low self esteem. And they almost always lead to relational disconnect.

David Sandstrom 16:10

Personalization and blame. Personal personalisation is internalizing all responsibility for an outcome that's not entirely within our control. For example, our child fails a class at school and we say to ourselves, I'm a failure as a parent. It's similar to labeling, but with a little bit more of a toxic twist to it. For instance, if a woman is physically abused by her husband, she may say to herself, he'll stop when I become more patient or understanding with him. That's personalization. And it's not at all healthy. The last unhealthy thinking pattern is blame. It's the opposite of personalization. It's assigning responsibility to others, and ignoring our role in the matter. For example, marital issues are almost always a two way street. And rarely, if ever, are the issues between couples solely one person's responsibility. We tend to think that all our relational disconnect is 100%. The other person's fault. That's blame.

David Sandstrom 17:18

Now that was a mouthful. So let's summarize. Because of the mind body connection, the beliefs we hold the thought patterns we embrace produced consequences for our physical well being. truthful thoughts, thoughts based in reality are far more likely to produce positive health outcomes. The problem is because these patterns are often in place for years or even decades in some cases, we may be rehearsing unhealthy thinking patterns and not even be aware of it. So the 10 unhealthy thinking patterns identified by Dr. David Burns are this one, all or nothing thinking. Two overgeneralization three, mental filter, four discounting the positive, five, jumping to conclusions, and jumping to conclusions takes on two forms, mind reading or fortune telling, six, magnification, seven, emotional reasoning, eight should statements, nine, labeling, and 10, personalization and blame. We would all be well served by spending some time analyzing these patterns and seeing if we can relate to any of them. Because the beliefs we hold and the thoughts we choose to ruminate on will impact our mental, emotional, and our physical well being. Next week, we're going to go over how we can change our thinking and how to start embracing more healthy thinking patterns. The Bible says we need to take every thought captive. And it says we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

That's what we're going to talk about next week. Don't forget to check out the show notes on my website at davidsandstrom.com, I put links to the resources we talked about in each episode. And I always post a complete transcript of the episode there where you can read it online or you can download it to your device and take it with you and read it later. I also put timestamps in the show notes so you can quickly scroll to the section you're interested in in the transcript. Once again, thanks for listening. I appreciate you. I enjoyed serving you. I'm looking forward to next week's episode where we'll dive into how we can correct unhealthy thinking patterns and replace them with more healthy ones. Have a great week, and I'll talk with you then. Be blessed.