**Day 37**

**Title: Mind Your Thoughts**

If you’re like most people, you’ve worked to change something about your behavior many times. No matter how simple or how complex your behavior change goal is, there will come a day when you’ll inevitably slip up. So how do you react? Do you acknowledge the less than perfect action and move on? Or do you let loose your internal meanie and go over every mistake you’ve ever made in your entire life? How can you overcome this negative thinking that can make you miserable and possibly sabotage your healthy eating goal?

**Talking to yourself**

Say you went over your calorie goal for today. What did you tell yourself? Did your thoughts sound like this? *“You’re never going to lose weight. You can’t even stick to the calorie goal. What makes you think you’re going to succeed? You should just give up.”*  When you start talking to yourself this way, interrupt this train of thinking. You can even hold up your hand and say “STOP” out loud. (This will really get your attention.) Then take a minute to dissect what you’ve said. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are these thoughts correct? Do they represent the whole truth?Did you go over your calories today because you went out for dinner with friends and didn’t plan ahead? If so, acknowledge that for most of the day you were making progress toward achieving your goal. One over indulgent dinner will not prevent you from succeeding at weight loss or healthy eating.
2. Are they proportional to the situation?Maybe you didn’t meet your calorie goal today. Maybe you went WAY over it. But that’s just today. Telling yourself that you’re never going to succeed because of one bad day over-exaggerates the situation. Behavior change takes time. Acknowledge that you ate more than you should today, and recognize that tomorrow is a new day.
3. How can I learn from this?Let’s say you worked late and got home to an empty fridge. So you ordered pizza, which sent you over your calorie goal for the day. Instead of beating yourself up, what can you do to achieve a different result in the future? How about on nights you work late, you stop by the grocery and get a rotisserie chicken and bagged salad? Don’t give up on yourself. Instead, create a plan to overcome obstacles like a late night at the office.

**Change how you talk to yourself**

Here are some other ways to make your thoughts more positive and helpful:

1. If someone you cared about came to you with the same situation, how would you talk to them? Would you emphasize how badly they messed up or would you encourage them to keep trying? If you would respond with compassion and understanding to someone you cared about, why should you respond with anger and judgement to yourself? If practicing self-compassion is difficult for you, try writing down what you would say to a friend and then read it back to yourself.
2. Don’t expect perfection from yourself. Even with simple goals there will be times you’ll forget or mess up. If you can’t expect perfection with a simple goal, don’t expect perfection with a more complex goal, like eating a healthy diet or losing weight.
3. Have a “go-to” thought to replace the negative ones. After you tell that negative train of thought “STOP,” you need to replace the thought. Otherwise, that negative train might start rolling again. What is something positive you can tell yourself? Try something like *“I have already made positive changes. I will succeed.”*  Or maybe *“I am making progress toward creating a healthier life. I’ve got this.”* Whatever you choose, have it ready to go when the negative thoughts try to tear you down.
4. Acknowledge your attempts. Small successes build up to larger ones. So when you eat a healthy breakfast, don’t forget to tell yourself “Good job!” Seriously. It helps.
5. Believe in yourself.You’ve already shown you want to make a change, and that you’re willing to put in the effort to do it. It may seem like a long road from where you started to where you want to be, but you’ve already made progress. Don’t give up!