

Title: Mental Hygiene: A Starter PSA

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Body:

Hello, Ratios! I'm guest-hosting for a double-feature of Mental Health Monday this week! Thank you to u/RatioAtLeverage for the warm welcome.

After over a year of seeing PSAs for physical hygiene *everywhere* to reduce the risk of spreading/contracting SARS CoV-2, it recently struck me that there's no strong equivalent campaign in Mental Hygiene. Never heard the term before? Here's how

[Dictionary.com](<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/mental-hygiene>) describes it:

>**Mental hygiene** is the practice of trying to maintain mental health through proactive behavior and treatment.

>**Mental health** is "one's overall psychological well-being." Hygiene refers to methods for preserving health. (In the popular sense, it refers to things like brushing your teeth and washing your hands.) In this way, mental hygiene is what you do to keep your mind healthy.

>Practicing mental hygiene is an ongoing process. Understanding what it is and how to practice it can help improve your quality of life.

Let's get started. This topic can go very, very deep, so I'll just be scratching the surface on three main points:

1. Evaluating currently-held ideas
2. Replacing and rejecting unwanted ideas
3. Vetting what ideas you take in going forward.

###A Warmup

A resource I've found myself revisiting from time to time is **Find Your F\$ck Yeah** by Alexis Rockley. Here's one of my highlighted sections from the book:

>Let's say you fall down an HGTV rabbit hole and decide to build your own house, from scratch. (Impressive.) Once the home is finished, you move in. You'd say then that you live in this house, right? Right.

>Would you also say that this house happened to you? Nope. You live in this house, but it didn't "happen" to you. In fact, you built it. Your life experience is real, but it isn't "happening" to you. You're not **observing** a pre-existing reality; you are **building** it. And the framework of this reality house? Your beliefs.

>In fact, your beliefs determine your actions, whether you are aware of them or not. If I believe that earning money is an uphill battle, then **I will make earning money an uphill battle**. If you believe your life is exhausting, then you will **make** your life exhausting. If I believe I have an audience, then **I will make my life a performance**. If you believe you are your job, then you will **make your life an endless pursuit** of the "dream job." We don't realize we're constructing these realities—but (mental) Autopilot is busy hammering away, just out of sight, in our subconscious minds. Beliefs determine everything we do (or don't do), because they're tied to something far more powerful than just sensory data: our emotions.

>"Beliefs" are a set of instructions for your brain and body to follow, based on a set of emotionally color-coded memories. Let's say you touch a hot stove and experience searing pain. Youch. Thanks to the sensory data you picked up (touch: ***hot!***) and your emotions color coding the memory (***pain! fear! danger! RED FLAG!***), you now believe touching a hot stove should be avoided. (Good call.) Since you don't need to be thinking about hot stoves all the time, your brain files this away in your subconscious; the

next time you see a hot stove, you're looking at it through this filter of belief.

###So why this topic?

Many of us weren't all that deep into the inner workings of the market before the end of January. GME and its linked short tickers changed that. Along the way, we also discovered ■■■. Whether it was via DD in the many subs that sprung up/strengthened in the wake of January, a pursuit of ■,■,■,■, or■ from u/RatioAtBlessons, (I know, I know. I'm not typing this on iOS, so I don't have the needle emoji.), or some other source entirely, at some point, you probably fell deep into one ■■■ or another. Some contained delicious, valuable, secret treasure. Some went nowhere and wasted days of your life. And some only held pain and distress. This post is about all of them.

###Part 1: Examination - Tracing the origin of an idea.

There's been a lot of info mainlined straight to our brains in the last few months. DD. Hype. Rabbit holes. Tinfoil theories. FUD. Fluff. Everything in between.

All of it leaves a lasting impression in your mind, one way or another, and you may find yourself believing some very different things than you did a few weeks ago. When you find yourself saying, "Man, if you had told me a month ago that _____ would _____" that's a sign that you've acquired a new idea/belief, and it might be a good time to double-check why you believe it.

A quick 5-step process of ideological "contact tracing":

1. Where did I first see or hear this?

- Identify and consider the source

2. What prompted me to adopt this idea?

- Do you know the source, and do you trust the info/source? Why do you trust it or suspect it?

3. Has anything happened contrary to this belief?

- If yes, time to strip it down and figure out what needs to go. Blind confirmation bias and willing cognitive dissonance open a backdoor into your mind which allows any number of toxic ideas to accumulate unchecked. Move on to 4.

- If no, move on to 4 anyways..

4. How does this idea benefit me?

- Ask yourself: Am I legitimately holding onto this idea just for my sake, or for someone else's sake? This can take the form of trying to be superior to that person, needing to fit in with a group, or holding onto a version of reality that no longer exists for the sake of maintaining the status quo. It might feel justified at the time, but I can open one up to a slippery slope to mental subjugation, because if you're holding ideas for someone else's sake, you've now established an ideological authority in your mind higher than yourself. I get more into this in the next section

Major point: *Never let anyone dictate to you what to think. Your thoughts are your own.*

Walking through this process of introspection can be tough. I know it was for me, at least at first. It's not a skill readily taught, and given the swarm of messages that bombard us from many sources, all constantly competing for our acceptance, it's more important than ever to recognize when you've been

sold on something you never intended to acquire. You may find that some ideas come from an obvious place, like that DD you just read. Others may be harder to trace. They might come from a consistent negative association from earlier in your life. They might come from a religious source. They might come from a conversation you had at work. They might come from an ad. They might come from a FUD campaign.

Whatever the source, it's important to identify the source of new, unrecognized ideas, and evaluate them, which brings me to the final question:

5. Who benefits from me holding this belief or idea?
- The answer will inform what you do next.

###Part 2: Sanitize - Keep only what you want

There are countless ways ideological benefit can be measured, many of them through a lens of "worldview" systems that incorporate anywhere from 7 to 24 dimensions of belief analysis. For sake of time and simplicity, I'll keep to these 5 for today:

- Financial gain/bodily survival
- Emotional validation
- Social prestige
- Control
- Self-actualization

In each case, consider the benefits to both parties. How do *you* benefit, and how do *they* benefit? Not all benefiting counterparties are necessarily bad actors, as ideological benefits can go to both those seeking to exploit you and those seeking to encourage you. Recognizing what benefit is being tendered in each interaction is the first step in deciding whether to keep a beneficial idea or to remove unwelcome ones.

Each one of you has deeply held priorities on each of these 5 areas, whether you're aware of it or not. Identify your priorities within those 5, and let's get to work:

1. Financial/survival - This is the most common tender, used by everyone. The end result is always that someone is trying to pitch you something, from con artists trying to scam you, to trusted people trying to genuinely better your life. In all cases, ask yourself - Do I need this to get by? Your answer will define what you need to do next with your money/time/etc.

2. Psychological/Emotional Validation - Does this person need me to agree with them in order to be happy? Do they need me to disagree with them for some odd reason?

\- Takeaway - Again, you can think whatever you want. In some cases, you may need to smile, nod, and go back to what you were doing.

3. Social Prestige - Does this person need to be "better" than me based on what they believe? Do I need to be "better" than them? Does it matter?

\- When it comes to what you think, ideas are their own thing, What you think shouldn't have anything to do with whether you're better or worse than anyone else. It's what you do with it that matters. Placing stock in the "superiority" of an idea and insisting others follow it can be a dangerous step into narcissism.

4) Control - This is closely related to number 3 above. Does holding this idea or belief give someone power over me?

\- Your mind is your own. Be careful who you give keys to. "Change the locks" if you have to.

5) Self-Actualization - This one is a rare one, but I've seen it happen. Does me believing this idea fulfill

someone else's "mission in life, whatever form that may take? (This can be a religious calling, a mission to "spread the truth," patriotic zeal, etc.)

\- If making you believe something about yourself "completes" another person's reason for existing, that's a clear sign that you've encountered an idea that needs to be looked at closer. Anything that changes the "core" of who you are should especially be questioned. Does it change you for the better and make you stronger and more independent? Or does it beat you down and put you in an easily dismissed box? ■

Once you've figured out what the net "trade" is, it's time to decide whether to sanitize. If the idea benefits you, or the net tradeoff is overall acceptable to you, keep the idea. Build on it, even. Understand it, and own it. You might be able to help someone else with it down the line.

If it doesn't benefit you, or actively hurts you, it's time to get rid of it. You can't just dump a belief and leave a hole in your mind, though. The mind doesn't work that way. You're going to have to actively seek out a new belief to replace it. You can read about it, you could pick it up in popular media, or talk with trusted friends. Heck, you could even just *make up* a placeholder belief to replace it if you're high in self-confidence, at least until you find a quality source to take its place long-term.

That takes us to my last topic:

###Part 3: Vetting - Actively defending your mind's borders.

I'm going to keep this last bit short(ish).

Looking at the progress of the poll that closed last night, the sub membership is choosing to continue with the current mix of financial education, uplifting content, and the more... *exotic* content. As RAB and RAL mentioned at multiple points over the brief history of this sub, everyone is free to speak as they please, as long as they abide by the rules of the sub. **However,** no one is obligated to read every post and comment. You, and you alone have control over what you choose to put into your mind and what to follow. If you find that certain content is distressing and/or deeply disturbing to you, and you keep reading or watching, it's like that classic joke:

>"Doc, it hurts when I..."

Well, stop. If you know it hurts you, don't do it, don't look at it, don't talk about it, don't think about it (as best you can). Standing up for yourself *to* yourself is a huge win, and I applaud you for it. ■■■■

As I commented in the last MHM post, you control what you read. No one is forcing you. If you find info useful, go ahead. read it. If the hairs on the back of your neck go up though, listen to your body, and proceed with caution. If it's hurting you, just stop reading. Mental scars aren't worth whatever fleeting benefit you might possibly get from the undertaking, and you *never* have to be anyone's "reading hero."

If, in the process of reading this, you're finding that sacrificing your mental health for the sake of internet credibility is something that you believe is worthwhile, maybe stop here, go back to Part 1, and work through that idea. If you end up back here still holding that belief, more power to you. ■■ Just be careful, and make sure you're practicing good self-care so you don't burn out. Remember what happened when Icarus flew too close to the ■■.

As I mentioned at the start of the post, some of the rabbit holes we've found lead only to pain and despair that few can actually do anything about. Centuries of human greed have left a long legacy of secret sins, some of them more egregious than others. If you dig deep enough, the unfortunate truth is that eventually you'll find corruption and shame in every sector of society, no matter how respectable they are

in popular perception. Not everyone has the mental grounding to hear/read/know the world is burning and be okay with it, though. Many of you reading this have the stomach for the deep Mines of Corruption, but not everyone.

Some people simply need to ignore the sewer and focus on the sunlight, and that's absolutely okay. If you're one of these people, and you're finding that consistently seeing certain exotic topics of focus from another user(s) drives you away from a place you otherwise enjoy, the beauty of Reddit is it allows you to filter users by using the [Block function](<https://learn.g2.com/how-to-block-someone-on-reddit>). Their posts disappear from the feed, you get a break, and they're none the wiser. If later, you decide you want to take a peek again, you [can unblock them here](<https://www.reddit.com/prefs/blocked/>).

If you're a hardcore stannovore and immune to FUD, good on you. ■ Go get them. Find those rotten secrets. Just remember to come up for air from time to time. When you come back with that rotten, dirty secret, be aware that digging into rabbit holes is a voluntary activity, and exposure to corruption is a *matter of consent*. Everyone has their limits to how much corruption they can be exposed to without snapping, so you may find that some on the sub won't participate in certain topics. Don't badger them. Some want to move on from digging up the sins of the past and simply invest in a brighter future. **That's their right.**

Conversely, if you're not a fan, don't badger the Corruption Miners either. (I've been guilty of this. That stops today. Go get 'em, RatiosAtExposure ■■■)

There's 525,600 minutes in a year, and everyone has the right to choose how to spend every last one of them. Spend them wisely.

There's a lot to learn out there as the Big Picture unfolds, and I look forward to learning along with you. As this group continues to move forward and grow together, let's all remember to RatioAtSelfCare this week and all weeks to come.

Drop me a line anytime.

✍ * -Immune to FUD*

(Edits to fix Reddit's format syntax)