

The Last Broken home

*Your Mind is Not  
Your Friend*

How to Kill Your Depression and  
Save Your Self

Adam Alvarado

## The Last Broken Home



TLBH is a self-development site for teens and adults, parents and children. It is one man's journey from teen depression to self-esteem, from totally sucking to totally awesome; dedicated to the idea that we all come from broken homes; that life problems begin with childhood problems; that to change your life, you must change your self.

### Adam Alvarado



Adam is the founder of, and principle contributor to, The Last Broken Home. He once sucked a ton and was way lame. He was depressed and not much fun. He was angry. He was an asshole. Now he's better. Now he writes helpful ebooks.

Enjoy. And get well.

[www.thelastbrokenhome.com](http://www.thelastbrokenhome.com)

## **Your Mind is Not Your Friend:** How to Kill Your Depression and Save Your Self

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## Chapter 1: The Murderer and Me

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### Where to Begin?

What began me on this journey? What broke me out of the quiet depression I had held so long and the generally negative view of the world I had clung to all my life?

In some respects...a photo of a man.

Till then, I had lived my life on autopilot; simply rising each day as I had always risen, never conscious of who I was, how I was, or why; never truly understanding the self inside this body, or the body inside this world which had always felt so alien to me. I had accumulated a lifetime of hurt, and seen a lifetime of opportunity pass, and I wasn't enjoying it.

In fact, I was hating it.

My shyness and general dissatisfaction with how I was led me to dislike most everyone, but I was completely unwilling to change a thing about myself or try. Nor was I willing even to admit that perhaps I did *not* know everything; that I in fact knew nothing – of what was wrong, of who I was, or of life in general.

And it hurt. It *always* hurt. Being who I was hurt. It was painful even; always gnawing at me, forever on my mind, incessantly in my thoughts.

"I suck."

"I'm not cool."

"I'm not good enough."

And so I struggled. There were days I'd break down. There were nights I'd cry. There were weeks I'd go without managing a single smile. There were times I was so down, so lost, so unbelievably afraid of everything, that I couldn't even manage to leave the house...to get to class, to go buy groceries, to even hangout with the few friends I did have.

And that's how I lived. That's how I existed everyday for twenty-something years.

In fear.

In anger.

In disappointment.

In that time, I saw periods of happiness – or what I perceived to be happiness – but mostly I was just down; not very excited to be out there doing the things I was “supposed” to be doing at my age, yet secretly, inwardly desperate to be *able* to do them.

In college I found what I had never found before: a few friends who liked my most awkward me, and a girlfriend who “loved” me, for a time.

But things change, and sometimes, as in my case, all at once, and from that change – from what I had known of my friends, my relationship, my family, my life – I found myself broken of heart and mind; completely unable to control my emotions, feelings, and thoughts, as the weight of what had befallen me pulled me towards depths of sadness I had never experienced before.

And all the while this single question haunted me, at my darkest moments, when even I – who had in some respects resigned myself to my depression, to the idea that I would *always* be this way – was generally pissed and fed up with how I felt and how I was:

### **“Why?”**

Why me? Why couldn't I get a hold of myself? Why was I seemingly in control of nothing – not the memories I recalled, nor the thoughts in my mind, nor the feelings in my heart? Why couldn't I stop hurting? Why couldn't I just be as I wanted to be?

I woke up every day just wishing it wouldn't be there; that the memories would be gone and the pain would be replaced, that I could just do a regular thing without feeling as if I could cry, as if nothing felt right. It was a constant ache that's not easily describable, as if I was in danger at all times, as if always standing on the edge of a cliff; forever worried and paranoid, always scared and afraid.

And everything reminded me of it. There was nowhere I was safe from it. It was as if the entire world conspired to remind me that life was hard; that what had happened *did* happen, and that what may come *may* come. Every day. All day.

Despite my best efforts, I couldn't seem to just be calm. I couldn't close my eyes and simply feel fine. I couldn't forget. And I was tired of it. So very fucking tired of it.

Because I *did* try. I tried all the usual stuff we are told. I kept busy. I hung out with others. I found time for hobbies. I talked it over with friends. I sought new friends. I wrote out my feelings.

But it didn't work, and the advice I received was of little help either:

"Just forget it."

"It's okay."

"You'll get over it."

"You just need time."

But nothing worked. Nothing helped. No idea made me any better and no advice seemed to make any sense. Because I *couldn't* just forget it. I couldn't get over it. It wasn't okay. And time wasn't helping at all. Because *every* day I woke up the same. Nothing had changed. I wasn't any different.

And so despite all the crappy advice I found, and all the desperate things I tried, I was never any better than before. I only ever got worse – more sad, more angry, more pathetic. Everything somehow led me back to where I was; to the place inside myself I was so desperate to escape.

The pain. The fear. The depression.

And I just wished it would stop, then and there; that I could just turn it off and feel sane, that I could at last be rid of it forever and finally feel whole and at ease – just feel normal – though I didn't even know what that meant or felt like.

And always I wondered when I lied awake at night, unable to sleep, and dreading the day to come...what could save me?

## I Found My Answer in a Photo

And one day, during my usual browsing of the internet at work, I came upon a news article. Someone had been murdered. A horrific scene had been left. And the eyes of the killer stared me in the face.

It was his mugshot.

He looked so normal, though. So regular. So entirely unlike what I assumed a killer to look like, though I'm sure he was no different than the hundreds of others I had seen already in my life in papers or the news.

But for whatever reason, in that face I found the question which forced me to look within, at my life, at my situation, at my self:

"What separated me from him?"

What difference lies between the killer and the lawful? Where do we cease to be common? Why does he solve his problems one way, and I another?

What I knew of myself was that I was somehow different than those I looked up to and envied. I knew that there existed people who did not view the world as I viewed the world, who did not feel as I felt and hate as I hated. I knew that there existed people who did *not* suffer from depression, though they lived in the same crappy, difficult world as I.

How?

How were they fine while I felt so terrible? And why was I as I was while this murderer was so much worse?

I sat there at work, depressed and worthless, convinced life was never going to get better, that I'd never stop crying, never feel whole again, never feel loved again. He sat with blood on his hands, alone in a rotting, infested cell – far better than he deserved for the crimes he committed and the lives he took.

I thought and thought and thought, as I guess I never had before.

There was a time when this man and I were more same than different; when we would have never guessed we'd find ourselves where we found each other then, at the very lowest point of our lives.

Why then, was I depressed and helpless where others were happy and strong? Why was he a murderer while others can't fathom hurting even a fly without cringing at the very thought?

What separated us? What separated him from me and me from you?

## Chapter 2: The Origin of His (and Our) Actions

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### Life Problems

That certain things happened to me to cause my state, my sadness, could NOT have been what separated us? I wanted it to. Badly. I told myself that it did for so long, as I woke each day convinced I was a victim, as all who are depressed surely do.

"I am this way – sad and helpless – because *this* changed, because *that* never happened, because she left."

But that *couldn't* have been true, no matter how much I wanted it to be, because those things happen to us all, and – in many cases – far worse than ever happened to me. I *knew* it. I knew it had to be true.

I knew there were surely people whose families were murdered, who found more hope in tomorrow than I. There were surely people who had lost everything they had, but felt more rich. There were people who had every reason to hate everyone, yet felt more love.

There existed people who had experienced all I had and far, far worse, yet had reacted so completely differently than me that they seemed to me almost undefeatable, indestructible, superhuman; people who, despite having experienced all manner of misfortune, bad luck, and downright evil, had never lost their positive view of the world, of people, or of themselves.

These were people to look up to; people who, by proof of their example, were far less deserving of what had happened to them than I.

I was willing to admit that. In fact, I HAD to.

That my life had experienced some recent difficulty was not reason enough for the feelings I felt and depression I held. It was not excuse enough when others endure so much more and do remain fine.

Despite my initial reluctance to do so, I *had* to look elsewhere. My problems were not the cause of *my* problem, nor what separated me from him, the murderer, and us, the depressed, from others, the emotionally strong.

So what, then, was the difference? What made this murderer do what he did?

## Genetics

Is it genetic? Was his violence given to him? Is there a gene or protein in his body that made him a murderer? Is he as much to blame for what he is, as I am for being human, and the dog for being a dog?

It's obvious that in many ways we *are* our parents' children; that the talents, skills, and even mental capacities of our mother's and father's are in some sense passed down. We are the unique combination of two genetic pools, and we owe much of ourselves to this combination. From our looks, to our mannerisms, to many aspects of our personalities, our bodies are just the simple result of a complex genetic code; a code inherited in us from a mother, a father, and the randomness of life. We are a plan executed; the end result of an intelligent process put in motion when sperm met egg; a process entirely out of our control and outside our desires.

In this we are bound.

I cannot grow blonde hair no matter how badly I may want it (and I don't), like you cannot be me no matter how badly you may want it (and you should!). Our genes do not allow it. Our genetic plans are different.

Perhaps this man, then, had a certain predisposition towards violence; some unexplainable tendency towards hurting, as others have a natural tendency towards sports or learning. Perhaps his genes made him violent, as his genes made him a certain height, with a certain hair color, and a certain intelligence.

Perhaps.

The study of genetics is complex, and – even at this time – still largely outside the reach of our complete understanding. I could concede that he was potentially innately more

violent than others; that excluding all other factors he would still be more aggressive than most.

But be that as it may, it still didn't explain the action of what he did. It didn't explain the act. Because despite our genetics, no gene in my body has ever *forced* me to do anything. Those people were not killed because suddenly and randomly his genes decided to take control. They are not dead because protein strands designed in the chromosomes of his cells executed some devious plan.

If such were true, I think we'd all fear the unknown ills that may lie within the structure of our DNA. I think we'd all fear that sometime, at any time, our genes would suddenly become the acting agent in us, and perform deeds we would otherwise never perform simply because we were "designed" to.

But I don't believe that to be possible. We are not simply computer programs on "execute." We are not machines at the whim of the programming inside us. We have more than "no choice". We have the ability to do as we please.

His genetics in many ways made him, but it didn't make him do it. I had to look elsewhere.

## **Disease**

To many, the explanation for the murderer's actions is obvious.

The man was depressive. He was ill. He was sick. After all, depression is a disease, is it not; something to be medicated and controlled if a sufferer is to prevent the harming of themselves or others?

I reject this, however.

In fact, I hate it.

When doctors examine a patient and find him or her to be suffering from depression; from fear and negativity and an inability to cope with the pain that is their life, they rightly see that something is *not* right; that despite whatever may happen in their lives, they are not meant to be and live as such. We are not meant to be depressed.

But in diagnosing them with “depression,” as if it were a true disease, I believe they confuse cause and effect. Their conclusion flows from the premise that humans are otherwise perfect, and that any outward problem exhibited must then be the result of some external addition to, or internal subtraction from, the otherwise perfect self. The patient must have too much of *this* or too little of *that*.

They are doctors, after all. Scientists. And when a doctor discovers a problem physically (loss of weight, appetite, hair, abnormal fear and anxiety), it is their inclination to believe there is a source physically. But this ignores the fact that we as humans are entirely capable of ruining what perfection we were given on our own – of ruining our lives – without the aid of some illness or sickness.

Depression is not a disease. It’s a symptom.

It is not the source of a problem, but the result of one.

It’s not the egg. It’s the chicken.

This man was not born with depression, as the handicapped are born with disfigurement. He did not “catch” depression, as the child catches a cold. He could not be vaccinated from it, as the explorer who travels abroad. There was nothing physically wrong with him, nor virally wrong with him.

Doctors rightly observe that those suffering from depression have something of a chemical imbalance compared to those who do not. But this overlooks the reality that the body follows the mind and vice versa; that in our minds we have the ability to actually and physically change the chemical balance of our bodies, and our bodies have the ability to change our thoughts.

This isn’t some holistic argument, however.

Close your eyes and quietly pretend that you are experiencing your greatest fear.

Imagine you are in the hospital awaiting news on a loved one just shot horrifically. Imagine sitting there for what seems an eternity, waiting...waiting...glued to that chair with the horrid thoughts in your mind of what may happen, and the memories of what did happen, and always the annoyingly festive music playing from the waiting room speakers, gnawing slowly at your sanity. Sit and rock in nervousness, as you would if it

were true. Imagine the doctor walks in, with a grim look on his face. Imagine he's looking down, shaking his head as he tries to say that your loved one did not make it. Imagine that feeling, that moment, that instant when all your fears come to life; when your nightmare becomes your reality.

They didn't make it. They didn't survive. You'll never see them again.

Imagine it. See it. Feel it.

Do you feel it? Do you feel your heartbeat change? Do you feel it race, or stop? Do you feel the sweat in your hands, the shake in your legs, the tears welling in your eyes?

If you cannot imagine it, then ask yourself instead what happens to you when you watch a scary movie. What happens to your nerves, and your emotions, and your body, when you watch that film, which you KNOW is nothing more than images on a screen?

Do you see what you've done to your body and what your body has done to you? Do you see how you have used your imagination to change your physiology; how you were able to trick your entire self into believing what is only fiction; how you were able to actually release the chemicals that would be necessary in that very real scenario, as if this scenario were real, simply through the imagination of your mind and the posture and movement of your body?

This is depression in 5 minutes. This is how it affects the physiology of others over time – days, years, a lifetime. This is how the depressed end up with a chemical imbalance, a loss in weight and appetite, a drop in energy and increased sicknesses. This is how it causes some to lose hair, or piss blood; to grey or become paler and appear older; to literally age in front of our eyes.

Not because of a disease. Not because of an illness.

This man's depression could not be medicated, because his depression was not a bacteria in his body or a virus in his blood. He may have improved for awhile. He may have seemed to others to be "better" for a time, but inside he would tell you he was not. The drugs would have, in some ways, muted him, and lessened his more obvious sadness because of that numbness. But they would not have not healed him. They would not have rid him of the incessant feeling of incompleteness, or of the loneliness, and the instability.

That's why so many hate these drugs. That's why all inevitably go off them.

What of their depression then? Are they any more capable of living their lives now, of dealing with the struggles we all deal with and the pain we all encounter after their "treatment"?

Have they learned anything?

No. Because in believing their problem to be a disease, and treating it as if it were a disease, their doctor did nothing to solve the true problem. And the sufferer's done nothing to change what's troubled them all along.

Disease was not the problem.

There *are* those who have true health problems which cause them to lose control, to seem as depressed but because of real and true medical reasons – schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, etc. Those do exist, and this should not be confused.

But this man had no such affliction. And if it wasn't illness – true medical illness – what caused his horrible crimes?

## **Environment**

Was it his upbringing? Was his violence in some way learned?

We are often told (by defense lawyers most frequently) that a murderer's actions are caused by the troubles he or she experienced in their past, by the environment in which they matured. Maybe a father abandoned him, or someone abused him. Maybe he witnessed some hideous act of violence, or grew up in a neighborhood which required it, and from these or similar experiences he learned a violent method of survival he otherwise would not have.

It certainly seems possible, and no one understands this argument better than I. *The Last Broken Home* is based upon it; upon the idea that the circumstances of our youth affect us a lifetime, that we become who we became because of these factors – outside our desire, consciousness, and control; that the events we experience and the people

who influence us are far more powerful in determining who we will and do become than any verbal or anecdotal lesson which would attempt to prevent it.

His playground fights taught him more about violence than any book which claimed it was wrong.

His rough neighborhood taught him more about self-defense than any teacher which said it was a last defense.

His childhood abuse taught him more about faith in a God and the dignity of man and life than any Sunday sermon that preached that he was loved and special.

But as damaging as his past may have been, and as indirectly contributive to his self it surely was, this too cannot explain what had happened.

Those past wounds and experiences surely shaped who he was. They affected him then and affect him still. They created the man. But they didn't create the act. His past explained everything about him until that point, but it did *not* explain the action.

Because regardless of his problems, or his genes, or his past; of what he had seen, done, or had learned, he – like us all – still had the ability and opportunity to choose differently. He had free will. He could have released the gun. He could have walked away. He could have spared those innocent people of the death they did not deserve.

But he didn't.

What, then, made this man pull the trigger? What made him tense his muscle and squeeze his finger? What was the most direct cause of that actual action?

When he encountered the victims, *something* in him – not his genes nor his past, not his family nor his friends – saw the fear in their eyes, heard the screams of their pleas and said "keep going."

And when he gripped the trigger, raised his arm, and the victims cried out "Nooo!" something in him said "Yes," when most others could never, ever, ever do the same.

What was it?

## It Was His Mind

It was his mind, was it not? It was his thoughts.

It was the voice in his head that told him that there was no other way, no other choice, no other solution to his problems or justice to his wrongs. There was no hope for his life, and no need for theirs. It was his mind that told him that *this* was the best course; that things would be better because of it, that he *needed* to squeeze his finger in order to make life make sense again.

His mind killed those people.

His mind took those lives, and ruined his as well.

His mind destroyed him.

To many, that's obvious. "He's deranged. He's insane. He's a psychopath." As if he was possessed by some otherworldly force beyond our understanding or help. As if they too didn't have a voice in their head. As if they had never had the same rage or anger or stupidity; the same secret or momentary desire to do something they would forever regret.

Again, there are certainly people like this. There are people who are legitimately insane; people so detached from reality that they are wholly incapable of functioning in this world or understanding at all the consequences of what they do and have done. They do exist, and the potential of their actions are forever a cause for concern.

But this man – and most killers – aren't like this, I believe. They are, by almost every measure, regular people, healthy people. Just different in a way we can't quite fathom. Just nudged slightly beyond the arm of our understanding. Just pushed over the edge; past the reasons we accept, the excuses with which we empathize, and the actions they would at one time have thought themselves capable.

And when their friends, families, and neighbors hear of what they've done they typically say:

"I'm shocked."

"He seemed so normal."

"I would have never guessed..."

"I don't believe it."

And they'd be right. Because they knew him *before* it came to this. They knew him when, despite his problems or his past, this ending would have been the unimagined ending.

After reading his story, I refused to label this man as crazy, despite what he had done. I refused to write off his actions as the result of his personality or his past, his genetics or some disease; to simply call him a murderer and say: "Murderers do as murderers do." Not as an act of clemency, but as a means to understanding.

I had to imagine that things could have ended differently. I had to imagine that he could have been saved, and, thus, the lives of those he killed.

This man's thoughts had become stronger than his will, and at the moment his life was thrown away and those of his victims were taken, he had lost control.

And if his thoughts had led him there, where had mine led me?

Was anything different in me?

## Chapter 3: “My Mind is My Friend”

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When I was young and shy – almost cripplingly shy – I was unable to meet the people I wanted to meet and make the friends I wanted to make. I just couldn’t bear the fear of trying and the near certainty of rejection, and those friends I did have were never exactly the kind of friends I truly wanted, because as I would realize after my depression, low quality people do not attract high quality friends.

I remember actually telling myself – convincing myself – that my Self was my best friend, that I was my own best friend, that I enjoyed the company of my thoughts more than the real company of any other. Those people didn’t understand me. They didn’t support me. They didn’t like me. Only my mind understood. Only my mind was there for me no matter what.

But what exactly had my mind given me? What had my “friend” done for me?

I was completely alone; too horrified to talk to strangers, too weak to stand up to others; too stubborn to change the things about myself that would make life better and myself happier.

I was depressed; convinced that I was unlovable, undesirable, unchangeable; that life was mean and cruel and others were the same. I thought all the worst things had happened to me and that all the most crippling handicaps had been given to me. I was the unluckiest, the ugliest, the only, and things would never work out for me.

I was the victim. I was the damned.

And all the while, my mind told me it was so; that my problems were not my own, that if I just kept the same – if I kept the bitterness and anger – I would see my happy ending. My justice would be done. They would get theirs, and one day, when all my life’s problems were lifted and solved, I would finally be happy.

Magically.

But I *had* to keep the sadness, it told me. I had to stay depressed. I had to keep re-living what had hurt me and keep hating who had shunned me. I had to keep torturing myself.

I had to stay the same for things to finally change.

And so I kept remembering, and I kept wishing. I kept hating, and I kept crying. And I cycled the memories and fears, the sad songs and the old pictures. And life got worse and worse. My depression grew stronger and stronger. And my time and life wasted.

But for whatever reason, in my contemplation, I saw at last the disgusting routine of my life. I saw why each day felt the same – horrible, painful, and only worse than the one before it. I saw why I could never change, why I couldn't seem to break the sadness I had carried a lifetime and the depression which was quickly consuming me.

Each day I awoke, the first thoughts in my mind were of the troubles that afflicted me and the problems that followed me. Each day I re-lived them. Each day I re-experienced what had hurt me and who had left me. I thought of waking with her, of how long it had been or how long it would be. I thought of the future I'd do anything to affect, and the past I'd do anything to redo; as if preparing for the day I could *actually* change what had happened; waiting for the chance that would never come.

Everything reminded me of my problems, and all plans, hopes, and experiences of my life related to them. I could not go 5 minutes without the thoughts flooding my mind. I could not rest.

I refused to escape them. I refused to stop hurting, because to do so meant to *actually* move on, and I didn't *want* to move on. I didn't *want* to let go. I wanted what I wanted, and all my dysfunctions – the anger and sadness, the memories and hopes – made sense in that context. They were necessary to keep that dream alive – that my happy ending would come to life; that the reality I dreamed of would become the reality I lived in.

And if I dropped them – if I surrendered that anger and sadness, those memories and hopes – I would forfeit forever the idea that that dream was possible; that I could change what had happened, or that I could somehow change myself and be better through no effort of my own or struggle of my own. I'd have to admit that I was wrong

all along; that no one had hurt me, and no one had wronged me. I'd have to admit that I received EXACTLY as I should have, and experienced EXACTLY what I needed.

But it was madness. It was insane. It was fucking stupid.

I was fucking stupid.

To *know* a certain memory or person, a certain photo or song will bring you pain and sadness, yet subject yourself to it anyway is crazy. And that's what I did. All the time. It's what every person suffering from depression does.

They cycle, and cycle, and cycle.

Their memories feed their negativity. Their negativity feeds their sadness. And their sadness recalls their memories.

And when you're in that cycle of depression – that circle of sadness – it indeed seems hopeless. Because within a circle every turn is the same. All things lead to the same end – the end that never comes. And round and round you go; never healing, never changing, always hurting.

But why? Why would we do it? Why would I do it *except* to stay the same, *except* to keep the depression, *except* to keep hurting? What sick pleasure I got from it. What sick pleasure we all get from it; from playing the victim, from cursing our fortune, from hoping beyond desperation that we can and will change the past.

Because in that dream that will never come – that fantasy – our life finally has a meaning and a purpose. Finally we have a story worth telling; where we're the victim, worth everyone's attention and everyone's sympathies. Finally we feel powerful, even if only in our weakness.

And yet, when I looked in those killer's eyes it occurred to me at last that that didn't make sense, that I had all that time been deceived; that what drove that man to do as he did was not some genetic abnormality or clinical disease, but it was the same thing that left me in tears every night.

We were the same.

Nothing separated us.

I was just as tortured in my thoughts. Just as weak in my will. Just as wrong in my choice of "friend." Neither of us could defeat our own minds or silence the voice in our heads, and we had both – everyday – suffered the consequences.

And now I saw it so clear.

It was my mind that prevented the change I wanted, and the person I needed to become. It was my mind that caused my depression. It was my mind that everyday ruined my life.

Your mind does the same.

## Chapter 4: Your Mind as Man

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Your mind is like a person, is it not?

It has opinions. It has a history. It has a memory. It has a plan. It knows everything you know, and thinks it knows everything else. It has a personality. It has dreams. It has beliefs and it has ideals.

Your mind has a story – a narrative – of who it is, who it is not, and from where it has come and where it will go.

But most important of all...your mind has a voice. It speaks and talks, screams and whispers.

And most dangerous of all...it has an audience.

And that audience is you.

I told myself that my mind was my best friend. I believed in it and I trusted in it. I loved it when I thought no one loved me.

In some sense, it makes sense. No one who reads this will converse with anyone today as much as they will with their own mind. It is our constant companion, our eternal partner. It has been with us always and will remain with us always. Every moment – in your sleep and in your wakefulness – for the remainder of your time on this Earth, your mind will be the whispers in your head and the thoughts in your conscience. It is the one voice you can never escape, and it was the one voice I could never ignore.

And why would I have wanted to?

When I went to sleep every night sad and depressed, so completely lonely and afraid, it was there for me. It comforted me. It explained the world to me and my problems to me. It helped me.

Except it didn't.

When I was shy and scared of others, my mind – my "friend" – told me that I was weird and awkward; that those "cooler" kids *were* cooler. They were stronger and funnier.

They were richer. They were better looking, and I wouldn't fit in. They'd see me for me. They'd never waste their time with me.

My mind told me that I'd never be good enough to have the kind of friends I wanted; that the few I had were plenty enough; that the weekends others spent out at parties, or malls, or wherever else were better spent inside my room alone, playing guitar, watching TV, and regretting it all.

When I was lonely and scared of girls, my mind – my "friend" – told me that the cute girl would never like me; that no cute girl could ever like me. I was thin. I was darker. I was Spanish, and I had acne. But she was beautiful. She was desired. She'd never date me, never kiss me, never fuck me. And I'd forever be alone.

My mind told me that girls were mean, they were picky, they were cruel; that they just went for the tallest, or the most chiseled, or the strongest. I had nothing to offer them, no value to give them, and no reason for them to like me. My mind told me I was better off in the corner by myself; that although it may be silent and lonely there, at least there they'd never see me, never talk to me, never reject me. At least there I'd be safe.

When I was at times worried and scared for my family, my mind – my "friend" – told me that our situation was hopeless; that we'd always endure these problems; that we'd never just finally "make it," like the families of so many others I had grown up with. We would always be in fear of money, and jobs, and bills, and our future.

My mind told me that this is who I was; that this was the rung of society I belonged to and the very best I could hope for; that despite all the work, and all the struggle, and all the tears they put into our family that I too could never be better than this; that hard work never yielded more than this, that all that mattered in life was all that we did not have. Effort was useless. Hope was useless. And good things never lasted long.

All this my mind told me.

All this I believed.

And so I thought myself a loser, and I played the part. I sat at home, finishing whatever homework, doing whatever hobbies, and hating that I could do no else.

And I avoided social situations and those I did not know. I refused to go talk to others, or start conversations, or stay in them.

And I worried and feared constantly for my family's well-being; always praying things would get better, that my brothers and sister and I could feel secure in our lives. And I learned to save, and be frugal, and fear.

Because all my life my mind had told me – essentially – that I was not deserving of better. I wasn't as good as others, or as fortunate, or as connected, and the world would never give me what I wanted, because the world only gave to those others I had so grown to hate; those who "deserved" it, those who were seemingly everything that I was not.

And I believed it all.

And I didn't hope. I didn't dream. I didn't try. And I didn't change.

I let my mind win. I let my thoughts control. As the murderer did. As we all do.

Our stories are not unique.

## Chapter 5: We Believe the Lies in Our Heads

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Everyone knows someone who struggles with weight.

We all know the stereotypical “fat girl” in school. The shy one. The insecure one.

When the large girl steps out onto the beach, her mind – her “friend” – tells her that she is fat and unattractive, that she is ugly and disgusting, that everyone is staring and everyone sees. She should be covered up. She should be embarrassed. She’s not as pretty as her thinner friends, and will never be so.

And so she believes it as well. And she doesn’t try. And she doesn’t change.

She lets her thoughts win. She lets her “friend” control her.

Too many do.

But what people fail to understand, when they simply judge the killer as crazy or the depressed as dramatic, is that these acts and states are not produced in a day, as we are not produced in a day.

We are invariably the product of a lifetime of experiences and feelings, of memories and emotions. A lifetime of thoughts. Trillions of them. Each one a small push in a direction, the direction of their design. And the negativity that began in the dysfunction of our youth, the broken home of our childhood, or a single traumatic event in our past, worsens and worsens, as our thoughts grow stronger, as our selves grow weaker, as our minds take control.

Thought after thought, day after day, disappointment after disappointment, the thoughts cycle.

“You are not good enough. You are the outcast. Everyone has wronged you. Everyone is to blame.”

“You’re ugly. You’re fat. You’re a loser.”

“They won’t like you. They won’t accept you. You’re better off on your own.”

And while most people have felt similarly at least once in their life, and others may simply ignore such a thought and move on, some cannot. Because the thought holds weight. Because it makes sense. Because it perfectly describes the struggles we deal with and the problems we endure. We then identify with it. We give it value. And the thought repeats, and it repeats, and it repeats, and our minds recycle it when next we face the same or similar scenario – the cute girl I want to approach, the cute dress the girl on the beach tries to fit into, and on and on.

And soon these negative thoughts – the voice in our heads, the whisper in our ears, the “friend” in our minds – become the basis of our way of thinking, the window from which we view the world, the very foundation of our sense of self.

We become the thought.

It doesn't happen in a day, as our selves are not created in a day. A single thought is somewhat easily dismissed and discarded. It's fleeting. It's random. But imagine the effect if that thought is fed into your consciousness nearly every moment of every day, coloring every experience and shaping every memory, as your mind has all the time and every ability to do.

Imagine your “friend” spends your entire life telling you that you are fat, that you are useless, that no one likes you and no one can love you. Imagine this “friend” never leaves, never rests, never relents, as your mind never does when we accept it as the truest form of ourselves.

Would you simply laugh the thought off as nonsense?

Or would you take it to heart?

Even the strongest are only so strong, and in the impression of our youth, and the stupidity of our immaturity, it's easy to see how such ideas are implanted, and even easier to see how they slowly take hold. Maybe it would seem ridiculous at first – even impossible – but isn't it true that someday, eventually, you'd begin to believe the thought, trust in it, fight for it?

It would become real.

That thought – that belief – would be as real to you as the ground is to me.

And suddenly the depression becomes home, the sadness becomes comforting, the murderer's trigger makes sense. Because your mind tells you so. Because your mind controls you.

## Chapter 6: Your Mind Creates the World It Wants, and the World You Hate

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The greatest challenge in changing our thoughts, in realizing how false they have been and ridiculous they remain, is in the seemingly inarguable validity our minds have given them.

They are as facts to us. As plain to see as the clouds in the sky.

Imagine again the larger girl on the beach.

She was once a normal girl as a young child, with a healthy mind. She may have been slightly, or even significantly larger than others her age. Or she may not have been. She may have been absolutely average, or even less so. It doesn't matter. The world, through the pictures she had seen, the people she had watched, and the relationships she had envied, told her otherwise. She looked around – at her friends, at the popular girls, at advertisements, at celebrities – and determined she was not like them, not good enough, not thin enough.

Society told her that thin was X. Her mind told her that she was Y.

When a cute guy walks by at the beach and makes eye contact, she immediately looks to the ground. Her mind, her "friend," tells her: "Oh my God. You're hideous. You're fat. He saw you. Cover up. No guy could ever like you, him especially. He's too hot. You don't deserve him."

But the boy simply walked by. He didn't smile. Didn't frown. Didn't do or say anything.

But it doesn't matter to your mind.

It feeds you its lies anyway.

Say instead that the boy walks by and does smile at her. Surely this is better, right? Surely now her mind will reward her? Surely now her mind will tell her to bat her eyes and smile back; that *of course* he likes her – she's awesome and deserving of this boy or any other? But no. She again nervously avoids eye contact, looks immediately and

shamefully to the ground, and her mind, her “friend,” now says: “It was probably a pity smile. He couldn’t possibly like you. He couldn’t possibly be interested in someone as fat and nasty as you.”

See how your mind works? See how your “friend” helps you?

The world is irrelevant to your mind. What it sees, hears, and experiences does not matter. It creates the world it wants. It “proves” the beliefs it creates.

All the world – everything that is now, ever was, and ever will be – is made in your mind. Not physically, of course, but intellectually, emotionally, perceptually. All of it is created in your mind, built and maintained through your thoughts, and cemented through your emotions.

Imagine that tomorrow you wake up as you are now, with the life you now have, in the world and place you now exist, having never lived a day before; having no memory of what came before or how you came to be. A matured and able person as you are now, but a blank mind, without the history that led you there, the memories you now remember, the beliefs you now hold, and the lessons you were taught.

As if simply dropped from space.

When you open your eyes, and look at the world around you – at those you once knew, at the problems that now cause you to suffer, and the future that now causes you to fear – NOTHING you see will matter so greatly to you, or be of any great importance to you. Nothing would be anything worth fearing about or worth worrying about. Nothing would have a name or a purpose.

Nothing would be a problem.

There would be no difference between the stranger in the street and the mother who reared you. There would be no expectation that one forever love you, or care for you, or provide for you.

There would be no difference between those who have harmed you and those who have loved you. There would be no vengeance, or need of apology, or grudges or vendettas.

There would be no difference between a tragedy and a miracle. There would be nothing good, nor anything bad.

All would simply be as it is.

Everything and everyone would be worthy of the same consideration, respect, and love. Everyone would have the same value and importance to you. You would not fear any person or be worried about any problem. You would not be nervous. You would not be desperate.

You would look around and see...the world. The REAL world.

That is, the world of all people.

But over top of that world – which is indeed common to us all – we layer our opinions, beliefs, and thoughts. We impose our mind. We impose the reality our mind's create upon a reality which otherwise requires no judgment or feeling; a reality which does not discriminate nor distinguish between cool and uncool, thin and fat, good and bad, happiness and sadness.

Within the reality we impose is every day we have lived, every lesson we have learned, and every thought we have thought. In those memories we refuse to let go, and the beliefs we refuse to change, and the thoughts we say we can't control – all of which is our mind – we differentiate between the stranger in the street and the parents we expect the world of, between all we hope and want in life and the struggles we face instead, between the people we wish we were and the self we feel we had no part in creating.

But in reality, there is no difference between any thing which may happen, or any people we may encounter. There is no difference between the girl on the beach and the boy who passes her; as there was no difference between me and those I thought were cooler, and the murderer and those who had alienated him. There is no difference between what depresses you now, and what you think would make you happy. All things are just things. All people are just people. Not good or bad. Not better or worse.

Yet now, as you are in *your* reality, with the past you have experienced and the thoughts your mind now feeds you, there is a great difference in all those and more. That difference IS your mind. It is your thoughts. It is your opinions on the events of your life you *feel* have made you who you are.

I know that seems difficult to accept, or possibly even understand, when there seems to be such a *great* difference in your eyes. The boy who passes that girl on the beach IS handsome. At least, according to most. And the girl is how she is, however large that indeed may be, however ugly that indeed may be.

But does that make him cooler?

Does it make him more valuable?

Is that reason enough to believe she is not good enough or worthy enough?

THAT's the problem. THAT's the mind.

The mind of a person who believes him or herself to be deficient; who has adopted and trusted in those thoughts, will create the proof of that opinion. It will seek it and will find it, whether it is there or not, whether it is true or not, and it will ignore or reframe any and all experiences or brief thoughts to the contrary.

And when that person looks back upon that aspect of their life that troubles them – my interactions with others, the girl's beach encounter with the boy, the murderer's past struggles and pains – the entirety of their memories and emotional recollections will be of those experiences which best support the beliefs which are strongest in their mind – that certain people don't like them, that they're not competent or capable in particular things, that what has been difficult to them is simply too difficult at all.

Their memory will be both misleading of the truth, and misrepresentative of reality. It will be selective. It will be wrong. It will redefine the circumstances of their past experiences, as well as change – in their mind – the result of their efforts in those experiences, and the effect of their participation in those experiences. It will remember vividly and forever those memories which best cement the arbitrary beliefs they have adopted in their own weakness; recalling when least needed every affront to their pride and exposure of their insecurities.

And of the times people complemented what was – to them – an insecurity or weakness, or otherwise challenged the perception they held of themselves? Their mind will tell them it's irrelevant. A joke. Not true. Not real.

But even more likely...it won't remember it AT ALL. It will erase EVERY reference which contradicts the reality it has created.

It cannot fathom a world outside the one it has designed. It will not accept the information outside its beliefs.

The girl on the beach has felt all her life that she was overweight. Society defined it, and she accepted it. She built her sense of self upon it. Her mind's acceptance of that belief, forced her to believe – to KNOW – that she was somehow less than perfect because of it; that she was not as good as she otherwise would have been; as other, thinner girls are. It forced her to surrender her self-esteem to the fears it had created.

Those beliefs shaped and colored her world. To her mind, every experience became a judgment on her weight. Every experience became a judgment on her self. And her mind reminded her of it. She could not try on a dress without the thought that she was fat. She could not eat a meal without the guilt of what it would do to her waist. She could not look herself in the mirror without the shame at what she had become.

Day after day, year after year, it whispered that the world was how it saw it, and she was as it believed.

When that boy walks by, this poor girl thinks not of how friendly he may be or how well they may get along, but instead of every boy who has already rejected her in her past; of how every time she has shown interest – every time she has put her self on the line and wore her heart on her sleeve – her interest has not been reciprocated, and that *this* boy will be no different.

And what's the boy's actual reason for smiling?

Maybe he caught a sweet wave. Maybe he just remembered some happy thing, and in his positive mood would have smiled at a wall if it had presented itself. Or, maybe he wasn't thinking of ANYTHING. Not her weight. Not her looks. Not her at all. And all her mind's efforts – her reaction to an action so benign – the anxiety, the fear, the tension, and the memories – were entirely unnecessary. They were a useless attempt at knowing what it could not now nor *ever* know...the thoughts and feelings held by another.

And so she scared for nothing. She worried for nothing. She hated herself for nothing.

But that's the insanity of our minds; of its desire to use all things to reinforce itself, whether that helps you or hurts you, whether there's need of its use or not.

Here it took a simple smile – harmless, random, and entirely meaningless – and used it as means to make this girl feel poorly about herself. All because she allowed it. All because she's *always* allowed it.

As things are now – in her mind and in her self – what chance does this boy have of NOT affecting her negatively? Nothing he could do or say positively – smile, wave, say hello – would fit into the vision she has of herself or the reality her mind has created. To her, cute guys have never been nice to her, and will never be so. It is not possible. It is not real.

All that's real are her thoughts.

And her thoughts say she's not good enough, not thin enough.

What she doesn't realize, is that her thoughts are ruining her life. But worse yet, her thoughts are indeed *killing* her.

## Chapter 7: Your Mind Creates You

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Through its thoughts and its beliefs, your mind surely creates the world in which you live. It creates a world where all proof and experience point to the facts it has created and the fears you have accepted.

It creates the world in which you now live – where people don't like you or don't notice you; where your desires come with great difficulty, and your worries come all too easily.

It makes what you fear what you feel, and what you feel what you experience.

But despite whatever effect it may have on your opinion of yourself and your opinion of all other things, what is scariest of all is this, and it's something that you must *forever* be conscious of, and always vigilant against: Your mind does not just find the proof to validate the belief it created, it creates the person upon which it can validate the belief.

It's so important, that I will write it again: *Your mind does not just find the proof to validate the belief it created, it creates the person upon which it can validate the belief.*

Your mind does not simply convince you that everybody is watching, or nobody notices you; that some dislike you or that all know your greatest weakness. It doesn't just tell you that the girl or boy will not like you, or that you will not and can not achieve your dreams. It doesn't just restrict its harm to the invisible realm of thought.

It creates the person on which those fears would be true.

It makes it real in fact, in reality, in your life.

When the cute boy passes the large girl on the beach, her mind tells her that she is fat and that he cannot like her. It takes the simple truth that she is large and ties it to her fear that he will not like her. She need not even be large, as in the case of those with eating disorders. The reality is irrelevant. All that matters is the thought. All that's important is the belief.

When the boy is gone, and she retreats into her mind, her thoughts then tell her that her weight struggle is hopeless. She's tried to lose weight but it never works, never sticks, and never will. It's too hard. It's too much work. She'll always be the way she is.

When she returns home, depressed and beaten by the experience her mind created on its own, from a situation from which she should have had NO opinion or emotion, she will eat to medicate her pain. She'll eat to *maintain* her size – to grow it – to become the person who would truly never get the guy.

Why?

Because she BELIEVES she's that person. And when you BELIEVE you're that person, you ARE that person.

You become it.

And her thoughts win, because now she IS fat. She is *that* much less desirable, and that much more the person she imagines.

Her thoughts have created the reality upon which her fears can be realized – that the boy won't like her, that she is too large for his tastes, that it's too hard to lose the weight and too difficult to keep it off.

Her mind took a single experience, or collective experiences, in her past – a dumb kid who called her chubby, commercials or movies who portrayed the overweight girl as forever the bridesmaid, a mother who told her she'd never marry if she didn't lose the weight, or even her genetics – whatever it may have been – and it created the reality upon which her beliefs would support her fears, her fears would create her experiences, and her experiences would define her actions. All of which were of its own design. All of which resulted in the reality she *did not* and *does not* want.

The murderer in the mugshot experienced much the same. As a result of whatever happened to him in his youth he acquired the belief that people didn't like him; that he was different, that he was the outsider who could never get in. All because a kid picked on him when he was young, or he had a bit too much acne, or a small disfigurement, or poorer clothes. All because he had decided to believe that those things made ANY difference at all in who he was and could become.

But whatever it was – whatever crack in his confidence he had found or others had shown him – his thoughts used as the weakness necessary to destroy the rest, and it fed him the thoughts to reinforce the belief. His thoughts fed him this sorry soup of lies,

and his mind grew stronger as his self grew weaker; starved of the esteem that would heal him and the empowering beliefs that would fix him.

As he withdrew from others – as his mind and thoughts led him to do – his situation worsened. He grew more awkward and more distant; more weird around others and more uncomfortable in himself. People's reactions to him then became more repulsive, and their treatment of him and respect for him disappeared entirely. The name-calling grew worse, and the abuse only became more frequent. And no one else seemed to notice his torment. No one seemed to care. Because no one wants to even associate themselves with that type of depression and dysfunction.

And it became the confirmation of all his fears. It was the reality-come-to-life of what his mind had imagined. He had become the outcast. He had become the unwanted company; the disgusting man no one would talk to or show interest in, the one to be avoided and made fun, without shame or remorse.

His mind saw this and his emotions felt it. And it hurt. It hurt more than any other experience in his life and any experience he could then imagine; enough so and frequently enough that he soon and understandably became angry. Not only at those who had rejected him, but at ALL people. He began to see *every* person as contributive to the same cruel and unjust world, to the torment he had endured and the life he had lived, as he ceased to differentiate between innocent and guilty, between those who were to blame and those who were not. And as people continued to mistreat him, his thoughts told him: "See. There is the proof. No one could like you and no one does love you."

His thoughts created the lie, and his thoughts created the truth. As he was, it *was* true...no one could like him. No one would love him.

And if he had ever previously paid no heed to certain thoughts – those that seemed too ridiculous, too desperate, too violent – he could no longer do so with any semblance of strength. He could no longer ignore the mind that had proven so right. And his mind's solution to the problem – a solution once unimaginable – slowly made more and more sense.

## Chapter 8: A Friend?

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Your mind is not your friend.

As it exists right now, clouded with negativity, filled false ideas and limiting beliefs, it is your greatest enemy.

It is the truest cause of all your suffering. It is all that holds you back and all that prevents you from becoming the person you want and were meant to become. It is the source of all your fears, and the confirmation of all your insecurities. It is the past you cannot let go, the present you cannot act upon, and the future you dread to face.

It is everything you hate about yourself. All your problems – all of life's problems – exist in your mind. They exist in thoughts, and live there, poisoning your sense of self, destroying your very future, preventing you from solving the very real situations your life presents.

It's the mind that causes depression – in the teenager just desperate to be liked and loved, fed up with parents who are unfair or overbearing, or otherwise emotionally distant or actually absent.

It's the mind that causes the emotional abyss of those who have been left by people they loved; convincing them that what they had was irreplaceable and special; that they'll never find again, or are not deserving of it.

It's the mind that causes the soldier's continued nightmares and detachment, and their inability to cope with the violence they have witnessed and the injuries they have suffered.

It's the mind that tells the less affluent that they cannot achieve what they dream or become who they imagine; that that next step in the journey they must take – whatever step – is too hard, too expensive, too risky, too anything.

The mind is the reason the overweight maintain that weight despite however horrible it makes them feel physically or how hurt it makes them feel emotionally.

It's the reason the restaurant patron explodes on the waiter who mistakes their order, believing something so small to be so important.

It's the reason most are so quick to yell and break, and hate and grudge, yet so slow to forgive or forget.

It's the cause of eating disorders and road rage, addictions and phobias, stress and fear, obsessions and denial.

In good and bad, in luck and misfortune your mind is there – outright harming you, or otherwise undermining you.

In the midst of happiness, your mind convinces you that it must and will last forever – as in relationships – raising your hopes that *this* is what you have waited for, that in *this* life is finally perfect; defining your expectations that things will forever remain as they are now, and leaving you devastated when they surely change, as all things surely do.

In the midst of tragedy – as in the death of loved ones – it tells you that the world is cruel, that part of you has died as well; that you'll never heal, and simply can't go on. It convinces you that what has happened is somehow your fault – your doing – and for this you can never forgive yourself, and never truly accept and make peace with the reality that this person is lost forever.

And when you look at yourself, it whispers that you're not good enough, fit enough, deserving enough, and you'll never be so; that others are better – that they'll always be better – and you'll forever be less than those whose lives and accomplishments you'd trade for yours in an instant.

That is your mind. That is the depressive mind. That is the "friend" in the thoughts of so many.

And yet we accept it. We take it to heart. We base our lives upon it. And when life becomes too difficult, and our existence becomes too much to bear, we wonder how and why it came to this, and blame all but ourselves. We search for answers everywhere but in space of our own heads.

How easy, indeed, it is for our minds to convince us of anything at all; that we are the smartest in the world, or the least capable, that we are too thin or a few pounds too heavy; that every happenstance controls our lives, or our destiny is our own creation.

Take the wildest belief one could possibly imagine and you are surely able to find someone who trusts in that exact belief so fully that all other options are as ridiculous to him as "the earth is flat." Think then about the sum of your beliefs, your thoughts, how in a sense they are every bit as ridiculous to him as his are to you; how equally baseless and arbitrary they are in fact. Think of how those beliefs and thoughts have affected your life until now, and how they continue to do so – your sense of self-worth, of ability, of confidence, of open-mindedness, of tolerance, and of your very potential.

How foolish we've been. How poor our choice of "friends."

The mind is the most powerful thing in this world or any other, with both the ability and means to create and destroy, to change your life or ruin it.

But as you are now, your mind is rotten. It is barren. It is destructive.

It is the worst friend you have ever had, and will remain so, until you make it the best friend you can imagine.

## Chapter 9: The Difficulty of Change

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The un-checked mind is dangerous. And when one realizes the damage it has done, and the depression it has caused, they are eager to sever its power over their actions and its influence over their beliefs.

But it's hard.

Because the thoughts they have grown to accept are, in many ways, the thoughts they have grown to love. Within their pain and their hardships – within the negativity and hopelessness their mind has given them – they found comfort; comfort in the idea that others are responsible for their circumstances and others to blame for their problems. They found solace in the notion that the world is cruel and unjust, and relief in the idea that they needn't work as hard, or try as much, because their dreams are not possible for them, because *nothing* is possible for them.

That is their strange contentment internally. But outwardly they remain violent or unpredictable; an emotional wreck, or a social recluse.

Their life is painful, or infuriating, or downright heartbreaking, and their depression is either slowly, or quickly, leading them to a ruin from which they will not return, or the quiet numbness which will become the rest of their lives.

But at least it's familiar. At least it's what they "know."

In some strange way, their depressive life is balanced. It's stable, though they themselves may be anything but. And though that depression may cost them their dreams, their lives, their everything, they would rather see it survive than endure the difficulty of change. Such is the strange equilibrium our minds create, of an existence we hate, balanced by the remedy we fear.

Our lives are like a faulty bridge, long left to the destruction of time to maintain: somehow held in suspension by a patchwork of support – so tenuous and unstable – yet somehow steady. A fragile steadiness. At least today. At least for now...

But without that support – without the thoughts they have become accustomed to and the depressive mind they have become dependent on – their life no longer makes sense. It no longer holds. And the reality of their world collapses.

“What do you mean my thoughts are not true?”

“What do you mean that these other, “cooler” people are no different than me?”

“What do you mean that my problems are *my* responsibility?”

An identity crisis.

What they knew to be true is no longer so. What they knew *at all* is gone. The things on which they thought they were certain – who they are, what they’re capable of, what they want, and what they need – are now a mystery to them, and without the thoughts that built that reality they feel alone and unnerved.

Their darkness may be turned to light, and the burden of their problems lifted, but in their place is a void of certainty with which they are not comfortable. It raises a new kind of fear; one not simply a function of the false thoughts of their mind, but rather of their absence; an absence in comfort and security, of what they knew, and know, and expect.

They at last realize they know nothing.

But in their new knowledge they have hope, and they begin the work of changing their mind and beliefs.

“Today I’ll think better.”

“Today I’ll think positively.”

“Today I’ll trust that I am as good as any other.”

But in their attempts to change their thoughts, they meet resistance. The thoughts return. And when ignored and brushed aside, they return again. And it continues in this fashion, because their minds know no other existence. They know no other way of working.

They are addicted to their negative thoughts. They are a part of them. They are dependent upon them. And as most addictions are fueled by the mind, so is the mind itself an addiction. And though you may know it to be your undoing, you will find that you cannot help but think what you have always thought, and – at your deepest level – believe what you have always believed; regardless of what you may now know about the mind you once trusted so blindly.

Your mind will resist. It will continue to tell you what it has told you. And though you will tell yourself that that is a lie, not to be believed or followed, you will still, at times, do as you have done, even though you *know* you should do otherwise. You'll give into your fears. You'll procrastinate the change you need. You'll disappoint yourself. Like the junkie who finds himself in some filthy restroom, needle in hand, when someone he loves marries or graduates, or struggles in a hospital, or lies in rest at a funeral. Another commitment he'll be too high to attend. Another occasion the demons within him will win, when he knows he's needed elsewhere; when he knows his actions disappoint so many he loves.

So despite what you learn, you will still fail yourself at times. You will still struggle. Because though you may know the thoughts in your head to be lies, you will not know the truth – truly and totally, that *you* create your life, that no one can hurt you except those you let hurt you – until you experience that for yourself; until you've faced your fears and *seen* the old thoughts as lies.

Your mind has gained control over you through a constant flood of negative thoughts and powerless beliefs; through a cycle of pain and loss, and failure and fear it created. And that cycle, though filled with negativity and hurt, has become your comfort. It is all you know, and the only way you know to live, and so many parts of you would rather see that comfort survive, than see you change.

That power is not broken until the cycle is broken. And that's what's most difficult of all.

Because however you are, with whatever emotional and physical strengths and weaknesses you may have, the mind that created that situation – that created you in the absence of your ability to do so for yourself – does not *want* to change. It does not want *you* to change.

It is perhaps the most maddening fact of life that the great many of us are not driven by a desire to improve, but instead resigned to whatever circumstance we now find ourselves in.

Inertia.

However we *are* is how we feel compelled to *remain* – whether good, whether bad, whether happy or depressed.

And that's why you see so many adults, mired in the quiet depression they have accumulated over a lifetime; so very tired of the careers in which they've wasted themselves, and the partners to which they've committed themselves. They know they are unhappy. They may even say so. But when it comes to change – when the choice is put before them to take a different path in life, to put themselves on the road to a more fulfilled and happy life – they do nothing. Because they've invested so much in the life they now live; the one they no longer enjoy, and no longer look forward to.

They may even hate their life. They may hate what they've become. But at least it's familiar. At least it's the depression they know, rather than the change they do not, and the future they cannot predict.

They've spent a lifetime building a sad, sorry life, and they'd hate to throw that away over something as silly as their happiness.

It's fucking stupid. As I was fucking stupid.

The mind is dangerous, but it is a gift. Ask the squirrel on the tree who's better able to contribute to the betterment of the world, and the understanding of the universe – you or himself – and he will not answer. He won't answer, of course, because he *can't* answer. He's a squirrel, and it's silly that you even asked him anything! He has no mind. He can do *nothing* to improve his life, or that of those he cares for.

But one would imagine that a species – once blessed with the gift of mind – would use that mind to improve upon themselves and their situation.

One would imagine that if we gave a pig a mind, he would look around and say: "Wow, I've been crawling in the mud and living in the rain. I think I'll wash up and build a home."

And if we gave a fish a mind he would say: "Ah! No wonder I've lost every fish I know to these nets. We keep swimming around the boats dropping bait. I think I'll swim over here instead."

And if we gave a cow a mind he'd say: "You know what? I don't think a single cow that's stepped into that factory has stepped out. I have a feeling this won't end up too well for me here either. I'd better find a way out."

Yet, when you tell the person complaining of their weight to go to the gym, they say: "It's too far. It's too tiring. It's too much work." And when you tell the person complaining about their love life to go out and socialize, they say: "It's too scary. I'll get rejected. It won't work." And when you tell the kid sulking in his bedroom that his parents may have made mistakes, but it's *his* responsibility to make of himself what he desires, and no others', he says: "But my parents are separated, and they don't understand, and they don't listen."

The reality is that despite the infinite complaints most have about their life – all the problems, and all the fears, all the goals not yet accomplished and all the dreams never realized; everything they would change about themselves if they could wave a wand and have it happen – despite *all* of that...really, they are "fine" where they are.

Or, more accurately, their mind is fine where it is.

It has your power and your trust, and it's not eager to surrender it.

Because to achieve what we want to achieve, and change what we want to change, we must change the thoughts that got us where we are and the mind that "helped" us get there. We must surrender the attachments and beliefs which once defined us and move into the uncertainty we cannot predict.

When the girl from the beach goes home that day, and eats to medicate the emotional pain she experienced earlier, and every day before it, she does so because her mind is actively creating the person she believes herself to be: "the fat girl." When she lifts spoon to mouth she tells herself that her dream of a smaller waist is hopeless anyway; that she's tried it before and it didn't work, because it was too hard, too much work, too painful.

And she's right. Not because it's truly impossible, but because her mind works against her. And when *that's* the case, all things *are* as she imagines them. All things are hard, and too much work, and too painful. All things are that much more impossible. Because instead of putting her faith in her will and ability, she has instead placed it in the mind that has forever hurt her. She's given her worst friend power to determine her life and fate.

And as a result, she won't change. She won't become the person she dreams. She won't ever feel better about her self or her life.

Because her mind is resisting. Her mind is preventing it.

It wants her as it wants her. And if her mind is strong enough to *make* her fat, it's strong enough to *keep* her fat.

Until she becomes stronger than her mind...

## Chapter 10: To Challenge the Mind

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That our minds are dangerous and deceitful, arbitrary and random; that they will eagerly and remorselessly lead our selves and our lives down a path of ruin, is a matter of caution only.

The truth is: one can never entirely and completely remove negativity from their mind. We can never remove all doubt and fear, every self-defeating thought and empowerless belief. All minds stray, and all thoughts ebb. The eternally positive person is as fake and delusional as the eternally negative, and it is not possible, nor desirable, to be a robot of positivity. In fact, it seems almost inhuman.

Bad things happen. It's okay to acknowledge them. It's okay to get pissed off at times, or sad, or even angry. It will happen, I promise you.

But knowledge is power, as they say. And in knowing what your mind has done to you, you have the power and responsibility to see that it never does so again; that it never again pulls you beyond what is the reasonable and understandable reaction, into a depression or fear of its own creation, into the anger and petty disagreements characteristic of so many others. You have the knowledge to discern truth from truth and false from false.

And when next your mind, your "friend," feeds you lies; when next it tells you to quit, or never try, or never hope; when it tells you to scream, and yell, and hate; when it tells you to do exactly as you need to do to remain the broken person that you are, you will see that that thought is not truth, but a thought only.

Not based in fact. Not based in reality. Not worth listening to. Not worth obeying.

And when your mind fills your head with fear – of stepping onto that beach, or talking to that cute girl, or doing whatever scares you personally – you'll no longer cower to the possibility of a reaction you cannot predict, as your thoughts would have you do. You'll instead push forward, past the thought, and into the unknown.

Because screw your mind.

Fuck your fears.

They're irrelevant. They're not real. They're nothing more than the firing of random synapses in your brain; your mind's created reaction to a world it cannot influence and a situation it cannot determine.

You now have the wisdom to know better. You have the wisdom to leave your thoughts as thoughts rather than accept them as who you are. Because you are not your thoughts, but instead the doer behind them. That you can see them, hear them, deny them, shows that you are *not* them. You are something more powerful, more dynamic, more strong.

You are intelligence, not thought. A person, not a mind.

The unknown is where you must make your home if you are to defeat your mind. It is there – the place you have feared going, the place you have avoided, the place your mind has convinced you that you do not belong – where you will learn and grow. It is there you will free yourself of the pain of your past, and become the person you imagine you can be.

It is there you will change.

Because while your mind is truly your greatest threat, it is also your most wonderful asset. When you realize that it need not control you, you open it to the possibility that it will instead improve you; that it will help rather than hinder, create rather than destroy.

And the amazing thing is that it *will* improve you.

Thoughts are indeed addictions. They are repetitive. They are not clever. They're simply the same tired negativity on repeat, like a broken record. And as easy as it was to become addicted to your negative thoughts, so too will your mind gladly become addicted to more beneficial ones, if only you're disciplined in offering them.

And that process is difficult. It is hard.

Your thoughts are much like reflexes: seemingly uncontrollable. When you have lived all your life in the negativity of your mind's thoughts, to simply drop them suddenly – like nothing – simply because you learned that those thoughts were lies, is likely more fantasy than reality.

Because the thoughts are more than just thoughts. They're stronger. They're deeper. They're the strongest of beliefs. And when your mind has met every opportunity with "I can't," or every mirror's reflection with "I'm ugly," or every stranger's eyes with the fear of being seen, that initial gut reaction – those first thoughts through your mind's door – are as instinctual now as the dog's bark. You cannot help them.

If placed on that beach today, that girl – no matter how much of this she has read or how useful she may believe it to be – will likely still think and feel much as she has *always* thought and felt. She too cannot help it. She'll think others are watching. She'll feel ashamed. She'll likely still avert her eyes and condemn herself. She will struggle to impose the reality she *wants* upon the reality she has *accepted*.

There's nothing wrong with this, nor strange about this. It's natural. It's fine.

Considering the life she has led and the time her thoughts have had to take hold, she should expect nothing else. Her negative thoughts are now as much a part of her, to her, as the toes on her feet and the fingers on her hand. She has had every moment of every day to become the person she now is. It will likely take more than this single moment to become the person she truly wants to become.

And so she will struggle. Her journey will be coarse. Her pain will, at times, return.

And though she may not be able to prevent the inevitable relapses of her mind as of yet, neither need she obey them. Despite those relapses; despite the future her mind would see prevented and the change it would see thwarted, she must act the part now.

She **MUST** walk proudly anyway. She **MUST** think she is okay.

And you need to too. You **NEED** to try.

You need to believe now that you are capable and whole; that you can do anything and be anything. You need to see that your negative thoughts brought you here, and only positive thoughts will see you through it. Only in believing you can do something, are you able to it.

You need to think you're the shit. You need to believe that there is no one more deserving or more worthy, no one cooler or stronger, no one on this earth who is more awesome or more desirable.

You need to have faith in your self above all else, and above all others. You need to trust that within your ability is ability enough to do whatever you endeavor, and whatever you can imagine.

Cause why the fuck not?

Why waste one more second of your life thinking you suck? Why let one more person win what, by right, should and must be yours? Why let any crappy thing this world might throw at you defeat you?

Why let your mind defeat you?

You cannot change your self and yet maintain your old, dead thoughts. One must inevitably conquer the other. Your life, and all lives, exist within the struggle between mind and man; between the self we want to be and the mind that would prevent it.

Your mind will resist. Your negative thoughts will persist. But you ignore them. You push beyond them anyway. And as you force yourself to disobey your mind; as you force yourself into your fears, your thoughts *will* change, and your new experiences will reinforce your new beliefs. And over time, where once you believed yourself to suck, or be powerless, or be weak, you will soon believe and trust in the opposite. You'll KNOW you're cool. You'll KNOW you are whole. You'll KNOW that you can *do* anything and *be* anything.

Your beliefs will change. Your mind will become your true friend. And in the thoughts which once tormented you, you will find the seed from which your better life will grow.

## Chapter 11: From Seed to Tree, from Thought to See

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Changing one's thoughts is not *about* positivity.

In and of itself, positivity will not save your life, like negativity will not destroy it. Positivity is not a thing, like thoughts are not things. I do not "enter" positivity. I do not carry a bag of my thoughts.

Thoughts are subtle. They are not seen, nor heard, nor felt. They cannot hurt or harm simply and solely because they exist. They do not attack in the day nor injure in the night. They will not kill you.

Walking through a crowded street, the thoughts of those around us are unknown. They're hidden. The man beside you could be consumed with the rise and fall of the stock market that day. He could be planning some great deed or dreading some grave responsibility. He could be wondering how next he'll pay his bills or feed his family. Or, he may be agonizing over whether to buy the \$1 million home in the Hamptons, or the \$900k home in the mountains.

But then again, it could be none of those. Maybe he's thinking nothing at all.

We just don't know. We *never* know. Because the person thinking positively and the person thinking negatively look and appear no different at any given moment, at any given snapshot in time. There is no outward difference in them through their thought alone. This is because thoughts are imagined. They're intangible. They're nothing. Simply a state of mind; a perceived existence. They are not real.

That is, until you believe in them; until you act upon them.

This is why distrusting the once negative thoughts in your mind and replacing them with more empowering, positive thoughts is not simply about *being* a more positive person, because positivity alone does not matter really and will not change you really. A negative thought here or there does no harm to you or the wider world. It has no effect.

But your actions do.

Where so many go wrong, and cross from the harmless random thoughts that annoy them to the destructive, perpetual thoughts which torment them, is in their acceptance and belief in those thoughts, but more importantly in their actions based upon those beliefs.

Thoughts have no force but the force we give them, and no power but the power we yield them.

A thought is a thought until you act upon it, and only then can it hurt you. Only then is it real.

The man leaning against the wall at a party may glance over at the hot girl amongst her friends and have some doubt. That's fine. It's not so remarkably unusual and not so incredibly harmful. But if he accepts that thought as belief; if he bases his actions upon it and DOESN'T go talk to her – doesn't do as he's meant to do, doesn't do as he *wants* to do – then his thoughts are no longer innocent. They're no longer imaginary, intangible, simply nothing. They are now real. They are now affecting his life negatively and truly.

Only in his belief in his thoughts did his thoughts harm him. Only in his action upon them did they hurt him.

What you think, you create. Inevitably. Through your beliefs. Through your actions.

In accepting his thoughts as beliefs and acting upon them, this man pretended as though his thoughts were relevant, as if they should have ANY influence on what he should and ought to have done; as if being afraid or reluctant or nervous was in ANY way a valid excuse NOT to do what he needed and wanted to do.

Now he is hurting himself. Now he's affecting the world around him – his world. Now his mind is taking from him the adventures, and experiences, and failures even that would change his life; that would improve his self, and make life fun and adventurous, and downright hilarious..

This is why changing one's thoughts is not simply about becoming a more positive person, because positivity alone has never saved a life and will not save yours.

Fuck positivity. This whole journey is more important than that. It's more important than thoughts of sunshine and rainbows, or gloom and doom.

It's about surviving. It's about realizing that life is difficult enough as it is without the added burden of *believing* it to be difficult.

Why think so negatively? Why think the worst? If every misfortune and fear is as the end of the world, then life will never be any easier. It'll never become a joy. It'll never be fun.

It's about confidence.

It's about believing and trusting in the faculties within your self to weather any storm and conquer any challenge. You can overcome this obstacle – this most difficult obstacle – because you are you, and there is no one more suitable or more capable, no one more worthy or more ready. All your life has prepared you for it, and all your experiences have led you to it, and no matter what happens, whether the most glorious success or the most epic failure, you WILL be okay. You will see another day, you will weather this trying storm, and you will count this experience amongst your most positive experiences.

It's about action.

It's about hearing the thoughts in your mind – that you can't do it, that it's too difficult, that you won't succeed – and doing it anyway. Because you know your thoughts are just thoughts, and that *your* reality is the *only* real reality. Because you know that only through action will your problems be solved and your situation improved.

Fuck waiting. Fuck hoping. Fuck not trying.

Only doing. Only in action will you improve your self and improve your life.

We have to think better. We have to believe better. But most important of all, we have to DO better.

In our thoughts are our beliefs. In our beliefs are our actions. And in our actions lie our successes and failures.

Until now, your problem has not been the obstacles in your way or the challenges you face. It hasn't been the people who have hurt you or those who have left you. Nor even has it been the thoughts that afflict you or the negativity that surrounds you. It has been, is now, and will always remain your belief in that negativity, and the actions you take, and behaviors you adopt, based upon those beliefs.

You believed it was impossible so you gave up.

You believed it was hopeless so you didn't try.

You believed you were unworthy, undeserving, incapable so you accepted less than your best.

Therein lies your depression. Therein lies the problems you have faced, the people you have shunned, and the self you could not change.

You didn't *think* you could change. You didn't *believe* you could change.

And so you did nothing. And so you didn't change.

You lacked action. You lacked the faith in yourself to do as you needed to do and believe as you needed to believe to become the person you wanted to become – the person you still NEED to become in order to live the life you WANT to live.

Your thoughts – your mind – are a means to that end. Thinking positively yields a more positive world, but only in acting upon that positivity will that world become real. Only in changing your behaviors will you cement a change in thought. Because thought cannot change thought. They *are* the same and are *of* the same, whether positive or negative. They are just as imaginary, just as arbitrary, just as unreal.

Only experience changes thought. Only experience changes minds.

Only in changing my behaviors, my actions, did I truly change my self. Only then did I think myself more capable, more worthy, more whole. Only then will you do the same.

So you must ask yourself: what is the most direct source of your frustration; what in your life is such a disappointment that it affects you negatively? Why are you lacking confidence? Why are you depressed?

If it's because of the relationships within your family, how can those relationships be made better, without the anger, and fear, and unforgiveness which has so harmed them to date?

What can you DO? What actions can you take?

If it's because of your lack of company, or friends, or romance, how can you improve yourself so as to improve your interactions, without the fear, and nervousness, and desperation which has so hindered them to date?

What can you DO? What actions can you take?

If it's because of your direction in life; because of the work you do, or the people you're with, or the addictions you've accumulated – all of which are no longer fulfilling, or meaningful, or beneficial – how can those situations be changed, or those people be dropped without the fear, and neediness, and addiction which has so tethered them to you to date?

What can you DO? What actions can you take?

Every step towards becoming the person you want to become is a rejection of the person you once were. Every step cements new beliefs, and creates a new reality within your mind.

That is change.

That is how you change your mind, your situation, your life.

## Chapter 12: Conclusion

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Staring at the mugshot of a murderer, I realized at last that my world was a lie, and that all the troubles, and all the problems, and all the people – the entire world I fought against and villains I struggled against – existed in my head alone, in my mind only.

Or, more accurately, my experience of them existed in my mind only.

In my past – in my depression – I thought all the wrong things, yet expected all the right results. And in thinking what I thought and believing what I believed, I acted as if that bullshit were true. I acted as if I were a loser.

But how could I ever believe myself to be a loser, yet expect others to see in me something different? How could I believe life to be difficult, yet expect it to come easy?

I had received what I believed. And what I believed was that I was worth nothing; that no one would like me and no one could love me; that I'd forever and always be alone.

In my head I had created a sad and somber narrative of me as the victim, and everyone and everything else as my enemy – the cooler kids, the smarter kids, my genetics, my looks, her – and the entire time my mind replayed my most painful memories; to remind me, to persuade me, to weaken me.

I thought every person and every thing was against me, when all the while it was me against myself. All along it was my mind. All along and all my life I feared the lion outside of my door; convinced of my weakness by the wolf in my bed.

My mind had betrayed me. My thoughts had deceived me.

When I became conscious of their effect, I at last began to truly solve my problems and change my self.

I finally knew what I needed to do.

Because the truth is...you can't be whole until you *think* you're whole. You can't be happy until you *think* you're happy. You can't change your life until you do it yourself.

Because the thoughts you allow, are the thoughts you take to heart. And the thoughts you take to heart, become the basis of who you are. And who you are determines how you act, how you behave, the values you hold and the actions you take.

In your thoughts lie your reality. In your mind lies your world. In your head exists both the problem and the solution to the great struggle that has been your life.

Use your mind wisely. Use your thoughts positively. Take action, and believe in yourself.

To do any less is to limit the very awesome life you could lead, and the very awesome self you could be.

So remind yourself always of the murderer, or the fat girl, or any of the countless people you see and meet everyday, who let their minds run their lives.

Remind yourself that to DO the same, is to REAP the same. And the negative mind can be a dangerous seed to sow. So think differently. Believe differently. Act differently.

There is no other way to kill your depression.

There is no other way to save your self.

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