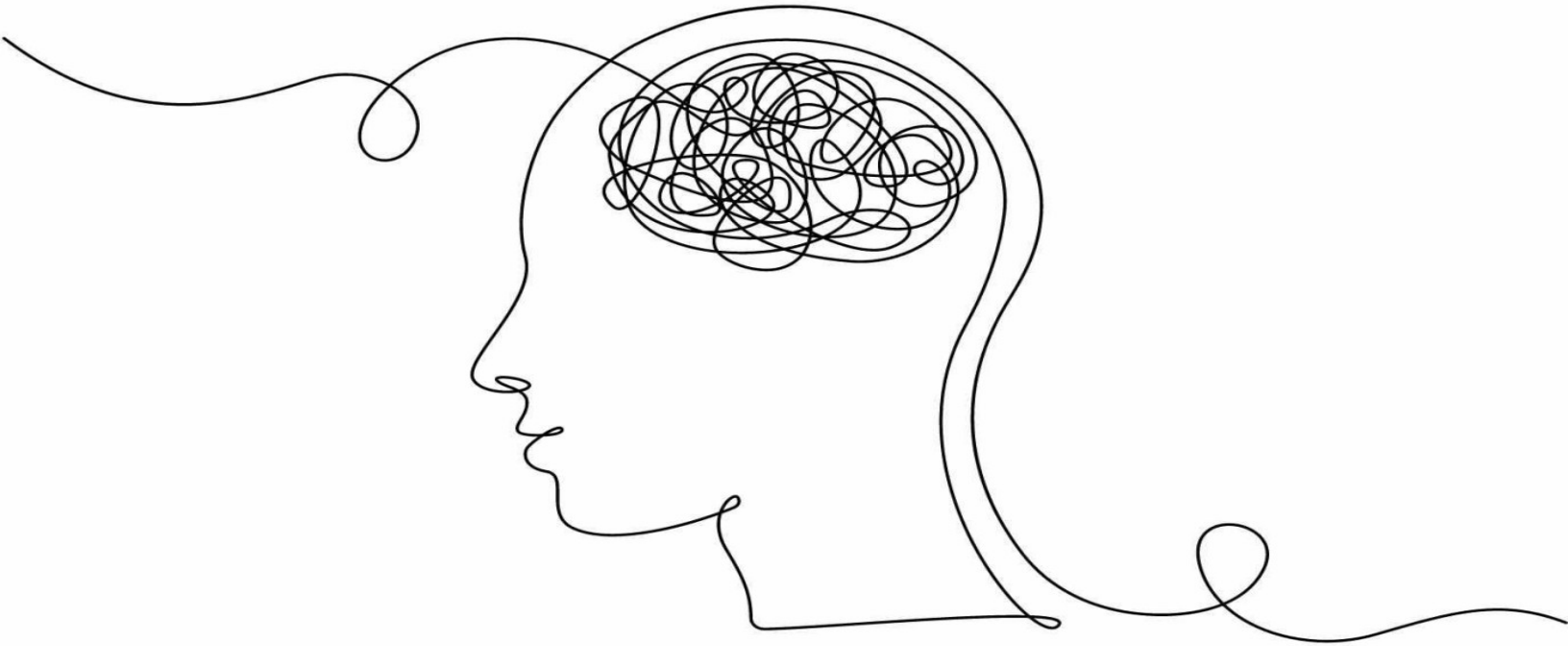


DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK



WHY YOUR THINKING IS THE
BEGINNING & END OF SUFFERING

JOSEPH NGUYEN

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK

*Why Your Thinking Is the
Beginning & End of Suffering*

JOSEPH NGUYEN

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For Kenna,
an angel on earth who taught me what unconditional love truly is and
how it can change the world

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT YOU WILL DISCOVER IN THIS BOOK & HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF READING IT

This book was written to help you find everything you've been searching for and the answers to all the questions you've had your entire life. I understand this is a very bold statement, but you will shortly see why I have complete confidence in saying this.

What I know to be the truth from the depths of my soul is that you will not be the same person as you were after you read this book. The only constant is change. Growth is an inevitable process of life, and it will be impossible for you not to change after reading this book.

“We cannot change what we are not aware of, and once we are aware, we cannot help but change.” - Sheryl Sanberg

No matter who you are, where you're from, what your background is, what you've done and haven't done, what status or wealth you do or don't have, Martian or not, you can find total peace, unconditional love, complete fulfillment, and an abundance of joy in your life. I promise that you are not the exception, even though it may seem like it. Love knows no boundaries. An open mind and a willing heart are all you need to receive every answer you've been looking for.

And yes, there are extremely practical implications and byproducts of understanding what is inside of this book, which many of my coaching clients have experienced, such as: a 2-5x increase in income, exponential growth in their businesses, deeper and more harmonious relationships, overcoming lifelong addictions, the spontaneous disappearance of destructive habits, an increase in health, vitality, and overall energy. Miracles like these occur every day for many who understand the principles within this book. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. If I were to just list some of the improvements and results people have gotten from this understanding, more than half of this book would just be stories of such miracles that happen daily.

I am reluctant to mention any of these "external" results because it is not the point of this book. These physical manifestations are the byproduct of this inside-out understanding of how our experiences of life work. In actuality, we only want these external results like money and significance because we want to experience certain feelings inside such as love, joy, peace, and fulfillment. The feeling is really what we want in our lives, not the physical things, but the trap is that we believe the physical things will give us those feelings. The secret lies within the feeling.

This book will help guide you to understand how to uncover the truth you already know inside and discover these feelings you've been looking for your entire life.

Now let's get into the guide of how to go through this book.

Don't read this book for information, read it for insight. Insight (or wisdom) can only be found within. That is why it is called insight (inside). To find everything you're looking for in life, you must look inside yourself and discover the wisdom that already exists within you. All the answers lie deep within your soul. This book is merely a guide to help you look in the right place. I truly admire anyone who still has the hope that what they're looking for is still out there. This means you have hope. Without hope, we have nothing, so the fact that you're here, reading this now, is a testament to your faith, courage, and strength. I know with one hundred percent certainty that you will find what you're looking for if you continue down the path you're on with the hope you have in your heart.

I want to make it clear that this book is not the only book that contains truth. The truth lies within everyone and in everything. You must look beyond the form (the physical) to see and experience the truth (the spiritual). The words in this book are not truth. They point TO the truth. Look beyond words to see the truth for yourself. Truth cannot be intellectualized; it can only be experienced. The truth lies within a feeling, which is why it cannot be formulated into a word.

If you want to find truth, look beyond the words, and **look for a feeling**.

Many who discover the truth will describe the feeling as one of complete peace, unconditional love, and an overwhelming amount of joy. People also describe it as the most familiar unfamiliar feeling. It feels like you're finally home. Look for that feeling, and everything will be revealed to you. In this book, I will not say anything that you don't already know deep inside your soul. This is why it will be a familiar unfamiliar feeling when you experience the truth.

Don't try to use your intellect to figure it out — you won't. As soon as you intellectualize it, you've missed it. The truth does not come from memorizing a sentence or two. A child can do that, but they will not understand the truth. The truth comes in the form of a feeling. From that feeling will come the wisdom and truth you're looking for, which will set you free. That's what we're all ultimately seeking, isn't it?

What I will unveil to you in this book will seem simple. It will seem almost too simple, and your brain (ego) will try to fight it or attempt to make it more complex. It will think that it can't be this simple. When that time comes, I want you to remember that the truth is always simple. What is complex can always be broken down into its smaller counterparts. The truth cannot be broken down into smaller constituents, which is what makes it truth. This is why truth is always simple. **If you want to find the truth, look for simplicity.**

Approach this book with an open mind and a heart of pure intention to know the truth and you'll receive everything you've been searching for.

Before we move on, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for you being here and sharing your time and attention with me. Those are some of the most valuable life forces you could give to another, so thank you for that gift to me, which you are also giving to yourself. Never forget your own divinity because it is only through our divinity that we have our humanity.

With Love & Light,
Joseph

CHAPTER 1

THE JOURNEY TO FINDING THE ROOT CAUSE OF SUFFERING

"People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar." — Thich Nhat Hanh

There is an important distinction to make when speaking about suffering. When I mention suffering in this book, I'm referring to psychological and emotional suffering. There is a way in which, no matter what happens in your life, you do not have to suffer emotionally and psychologically.

I am not saying that what we go through is all in our heads or made up. Terrible and unfortunate events happen to people every single day. What I'm saying is that although we experience a lot of pain in our lives, suffering is optional. In other words, pain is unavoidable, but how we react to the events and circumstances that happen in our lives is up to us, and that will dictate whether we suffer or not.

Buddhists say that anytime we experience a negative event in our lives, two arrows fly our way. Being physically struck by an arrow is painful. Being struck by a second emotional arrow is even more painful (suffering).

The Buddha explained, "In life, we can't always control the first arrow. However, the second arrow is our reaction to the first. The second arrow is optional."

When I first heard of this quote from Buddha a few years back, I was confounded because although I understood what he meant, I didn't know how I could apply this in my own life. If anyone were given the clear choice of suffering and not suffering, I don't think anyone in their right mind would choose to suffer.

How can I just choose not to suffer? If it were as easy as that I don't think anyone would be suffering anymore. It wasn't until years

later that I came across a new understanding of where suffering comes from that I was able to stop it at its source.

As I began my journey of self-improvement, I came across a myriad of different teachings, studies, and methods to help people overcome their problems. I read dozens, if not hundreds of books, studied psychology, went to therapists, listened to many different thought leaders, tried changing my habits, waking up at 4am, changing my diet, becoming more structured and disciplined, shadow work, studying personality types, meditating daily, going on spiritual retreats, following spiritual masters, and researching different ancient religions.

If you name it, I've probably tried it. I was desperate to find an answer because I wanted to know how to stop suffering in my own life as well as help others do the same. Although some of these things did help me improve incrementally, it didn't stop my suffering. I still always felt extremely anxious, fearful, unfulfilled, irritated, angry, frustrated, and heavy every day. Even after doing all of that, I still didn't discover the answer and, if I'm being honest, I was even more lost than before I started on this quest.

I felt purposeless, hopeless, and directionless. I didn't know what to do anymore, where to look, or who to talk to. It wasn't until I was in my darkest hour that a glimmer of hope began to lead me to the light.

All of the sudden, after years and years of searching, I stumbled upon one of my first mentors that taught me how to become a coach and he revealed to me the answer of how I can alleviate my own suffering.

The answer I discovered was in the understanding of how our minds work and how the human experience is created.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROOT CAUSE OF ALL SUFFERING

“One who looks around him is intelligent, one who looks within him is wise.” — Matshona Dhliwayo

We live in a world of thought, not reality. Sydney Banks once said, “Thought is not reality; yet it is through thought that our realities are created.” Each of us lives through our own perceptions of the world, which are vastly different from the person right next to us. An example of this is that you could be sitting in a coffee shop having a quarter-life existential crisis, completely stressed out of your mind about how you have no idea what you’re doing with your life when it seems like everyone else has theirs together, while the person next to you is happily enjoying their freshly brewed drink while peacefully people watching. You both are in the same exact coffee shop, smelling the same aroma, surrounded by the same strangers, but how the world looks to both of you couldn't be more different. Many of us go through the exact same events or are in the same location at the same time yet are having completely different experiences of the world.

Here's another example of how we live in a world of thought and not reality. If you walk up to 100 different people and ask each of them what money means to them, how many different answers do you think you'll get? Close to 100 different answers!

Money is technically the same thing, but it means something different to each person. Money could mean time, freedom, opportunity, security, peace of mind, or it could mean evil, greed, and the reason why people commit crimes. For now, I'm not going to get into which one is right or wrong (hint: there is no right or wrong answer, but that's for a different chapter).

Another illustration of this concept is as follows: If you survey 100 different people and ask each of them what they think of our current president, how many different answers do you think you'll get?

Even though it is the same exact person we're talking about, we will get 100 different answers because most people live in their own thoughts and perceptions of the world. The meaning (or thinking) we give an event is what determines how we ultimately feel about it. That meaning or thinking is the filter through which we see life from then on — because of this, we live through a perception of reality, not in reality itself. **Reality is that the event happened, with no meaning, thinking, or interpretation of it.**

Any meaning or thinking we give the event is on us and that is how our perception of reality is created. This is how our experience of life is created from the inside out.

It's not about the events that happen in our lives, but our interpretation of them, which causes us to feel good or bad about something. This is how people in third world countries can be happier than people in first world countries and people in first world countries can be more miserable than people in third world countries.

Our feelings do not come from external events, but from our own thinking about the events. Therefore, we can only ever feel what we are thinking.

Let's hypothetically say that you really hate your job, and it causes you an enormous amount of stress, anxiety, and frustration. It pains you to even set foot in the building where you work and just thinking about your job makes you furious. When you're thinking about your job, you're just sitting there on a sofa with your family watching a TV show together, but you are fuming at the thought of your job. Everyone else is having a good time, except you.

In this moment, everyone else in your family is having a different experience of life than you, even though the same event is happening. Just the thought of work created a whole different perception of reality, even though you're not physically at work.

If it were true that external events cause us to feel the way we feel inside, then you should be a happy camper in your living room, watching a funny TV show with your family every single time you do this activity — but that's not the case.

Now, you may be saying that you're only feeling this way because an external event, your job, is causing you to feel stressed and anxious. To that I'll ask the question, is it absolutely true that every single person feels the exact same way about the job they're working in?

Two different people can be doing the exact same job but will have completely different experiences of that job. It can be the most amazing experience and a dream job for one person but be another person's worst nightmare and living hell. The only difference between one person and the other is how they think about their job, which determines how they ultimately feel about it.

Now let's go back to the original scenario of you hypothetically hating your job. Remember how much stress, anxiety, and frustration it causes you when you think about it?

Let's do a quick thought experiment about that by answering the question below:

Who would you be without that thought that you hated your job?

Take 1 minute to see what comes up for you and don't move on until you do that.

If you don't overthink it and truly let the answers surface from within you, without that thought, you will most likely feel and be *happy, peaceful, free, and light*.

Without our usual thinking about a particular event or thing, our experience of it completely alters. This is how we live in a world of thought, not reality, and how our perception of reality is created from the inside out, through our own thinking. With this new understanding, you've just uncovered the cause of all our human psychological suffering...

The root cause of our suffering is our own thinking.

Now before you throw this book across the room and light it on fire, I'm not saying that this is all in our heads and that it isn't real. Our *perception of reality* is very real. We will feel what we think, and our feelings are real. That is completely undeniable. However, our thinking will look like an inevitable, unchangeable reality to us until

we begin seeing how our reality is created. If we know that we can only ever feel what we are thinking, then we know that we can change our feelings by changing our thinking. Thus, we can change our experience of life by knowing that it comes from our own thinking. And if that is true, then we are ever only one thought away from experiencing something different and transforming our entire lives at any moment — through a state of no thought.

In short, the moment we stop thinking is when our happiness begins.

A Young Monk & the Empty Boat (A Zen Story About How Thinking is the Cause of Our Own Suffering)

A long time ago, a young Zen monk was living in a small monastery that was located in a forest which was near a small lake. The monastery was occupied by a few senior monks while the rest were newcomers and still had much to learn. The monks had many obligations in the monastery, but one of the most important ones was their daily routine where they had to sit down, close their eyes, and meditate in silence for hours at a time.

After each meditation, they had to report their progress to their mentor. The young monk had difficulty staying focused during his meditation practice for a variety of reasons, which made him very mad. After the young monk reported his progress, or better said, lack of it, to his mentor, the elder monk asked the young monk a simple question that had a hidden lesson, “Do you know what is really making you angry?” The young monk replied, “Well, usually as soon as I close my eyes and begin to meditate, there is someone moving around, and I can’t focus. I get agitated that someone is disturbing me even though they know that I’m meditating. How can they not be more considerate? And then when I close my eyes again and try to focus, a cat or a small animal might brush past and disturb me again. By this point, even when the wind blows and the tree branches make noise, I get angry. If that is not enough, the birds keep on chirping, and I can’t seem to find any peace in this place.”

The elder monk simply pointed out to his pupil, “I see that you become angrier with each interruption you encounter. This is exactly the opposite of what is the point of your task when meditating. You should find a way not to get angry with people, or animals, or any other thing around you that disturbs you during your task.” After their consultation, the young monk went out of the monastery and looked around to find a place that would be quieter so that he could meditate peacefully. He found such a place at the shore of the lake that is nearby. He brought his mat, sat down, and started meditating. But soon a flock of birds splashed down in the lake near where the monk was meditating. Hearing their noise, the monk opened his eyes to see what was going on.

Although the bank of the lake was quieter than the monastery, there were still things that would disturb his peace and he again got angry. Even though he didn’t find the peace he was looking for, he kept returning to the lake. Then one day, the monk saw a boat tied at the end of a small pier. And right then an idea hit him, “Why don’t I take the boat, row it down to the middle of the lake and meditate there? In the middle of the lake, there will be nothing to disturb me!” He rowed the boat to the middle of the lake and started meditating.

As he had expected, there was nothing in the middle of the lake to disturb him and he was able to meditate the whole day. At the end of the day, he returned to the monastery. This continued for a couple of days and the monk was thrilled that he had finally found a place to meditate in peace. He hadn’t felt angry and could continue the meditation practice in a calm manner.

On the third day, the monk sat in the boat, rowed to the middle of the lake, and started meditating again. A few minutes later, he heard some splashing of water and felt that the boat was rocking. He started getting upset that even in the middle of the lake there was someone or something disturbing him.

When he opened his eyes, he saw a boat heading straight towards him. He shouted, “Steer your boat away, or else you will hit my boat.” But the other boat kept coming straight at him and was just a few feet away. He yelled again but nothing changed and so the

incoming boat hit the monk's boat. Now he was furious. He screamed, "Who are you, and why have you hit my boat in the middle of this vast lake?" There was no answer. This made the young monk even angrier.

He stood up to see who was in the other boat and to his surprise, *he found that there was no one in the boat.*

The boat had probably drifted along in the breeze and had bumped into the monk's boat. The monk found his anger dissipating. It was just an empty boat! There was no one to get angry at!

At that moment he remembered his mentors' question, "Do you know what is really making you angry?" And then wondered, "It's not other people, situations, or circumstances. It's not the empty boat, but my reaction to it that causes my anger. All the people or situations that make me upset and angry are just like the empty boat. They don't have the power to make me angry without my own reaction."

The monk then rowed the boat back to the shore. He returned to the monastery and started meditating along with the other monks. There were still noises and disturbances around, but the monk treated them as the "empty boat" and continued to meditate peacefully. When the elder monk saw the difference, he simply said to the young monk, "I see that you have found what is really making you angry and overcome that."

CHAPTER 3

WHY DO WE EVEN THINK?

“I think and think and think, I've thought myself out of happiness one million times, but never once into it.” — Jonathan Safran Foer

We as humans have evolved to develop a sophisticated ability to rationalize, analyze, and think because it simply helped us survive. Our minds do an incredible job to keep us alive, but it does not help us thrive. It is concerned solely with our safety and survival, but not our fulfillment or joy.

The mind's job is to alert us of potential dangers in our environment that may threaten our lives. It does its job so well that not only will it scan our immediate surroundings for threats, but it will even reference our backlog of past experiences to create hypothetical scenarios and predict what it thinks could be future potential dangers based on our memories.

None of this is wrong by any means. The mind is simply doing what it was designed to do. When we don't understand that its only duty is to help us survive, then we will get angry and frustrated with it. All conflict is derived from an innocent misunderstanding. Our mind's duty is to keep us alive. Our consciousness's duty is to help us feel fulfilled. Your soul is the reason why you're even on this journey in the first place — to find peace, love, and joy for yourself.

Your mind has done an amazing job at what it was made to do, but now you may relieve it of its job because we no longer live in the wild where death could be right around the corner in a bush. If we keep using our minds, we will constantly stay in a state of fight or flight, anxiety, fear, frustration, depression, anger, resentment, and all negative emotions because the mind thinks everything is a threat to our very existence. If you want to be free, happy, peaceful, and full of love, then you will need to let go of listening only to your mind and go beyond it by tuning into something much greater that will help you not just to survive, but to thrive.

CHAPTER 4

THOUGHTS VS. THINKING

“Stop thinking and end your problems.” — Lao Tzu

Thoughts are the energetic, mental raw materials from which we use to create everything in the world. We can't experience anything without thought. It's important to know that thoughts are a noun and aren't something that we *do*, but something we have. A thought takes no effort or force on our end, and it is something that just happens. We also cannot control what thoughts pop into our minds. The source of thoughts comes from something that is beyond our minds — the Universe, if you will.

Thinking, on the other hand, is the act of thinking about our thoughts. This takes a significant amount of energy, effort, and willpower (which is a finite resource). Thinking is actively engaging with the thoughts in your mind. You don't have to engage with each thought in your mind, but when you do, that is thinking.

Thinking is the root cause of all our psychological suffering.

Now you might be wondering, where do positive thoughts fit into the picture? Positive thoughts, or thoughts that feel good, are not a result of thinking. They are, instead, generated by our natural state of peace, love, and joy. They are a byproduct of a state of being, not a state of thinking. We will go into depth about this in the next chapter.

For now, let's do a quick thought experiment.

I'll ask you a question and all you need to do is to be aware of what you're experiencing, and we'll review what happened after.

What is the dream amount of money you want to be making a year?

Pause here and wait for an answer to surface.

Give yourself about 30-60 seconds to think about your answer of how much money you want to be making in a year.