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## Top 3 Tips for Understanding how Thinking affects Behavior

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In today's fast-paced business environment, we're often in need of mantras, visions and slogans to maintain balance, peace and serenity in our lives. On a daily basis, the experts say we deal with 20 unexpected situations. So how do your thinking styles affect your behaviour for each of these scenarios? Is it possible that if you thought differently about a situation that you might respond differently? Here are my **Top 3 Tips** for understanding your thinking-to-behaviour connections.

### 1) Recognize and change unhealthy thinking styles that cause ineffective behaviours

I'm a strong believer in the use of diagnostics, instruments, and surveys that allow us to do deep self-analysis. The vast majority of diagnostics out there address things such as personality, technical skills, attitudes, and behavioural competencies (stress, time, and change management). However, if we use the analogy of a house, these are like the walls and the roof. At the foundational level, there are two areas we need to measure, understand, and grow — character and thinking styles (your brain). All too often we search for the Band-Aid solution: How do I improve my stress management? How do I improve my time management? How do I improve my communication capabilities? But working on these areas without understanding the core, the root cause, will trigger you to repeat these patterns. Until you understand what's causing you to communicate the way you do or to resolve conflict the way you do, you cannot "fix" the symptoms. One tool I am known for using is the Life Styles Inventory (LSI). The LSI segregates our 12 thinking styles, and at

the base of these is the equation:  $S + T = R$ , or Situation + Thinking = Response. In our brain, how we think determines how we respond.

## **2) Dive deeper and recognize how your thinking causes stress reactions**

Every day we are confronted with 20 unexpected demands — our boss, aging parents, problematic children, partners who drive us up the wall— as well as demands from within, such as perfectionism or unreasonable expectations. However, 95 per cent of these demands are perceived — meaning it's the perception of all these demands, and the perception of what our resources are, that causes stress. If we think those demands are greater than our resources, then we will send ourselves into stress. This stress is actually distress. Experts tell us that we send ourselves into distress in 7 seconds. It can "show up" or "present" in the form of psychological symptoms (anxiety, feeling powerless, wanting to give up, feeling helpless), physiological symptoms (sweating, heart palpitations, skin rashes, upset stomach), and/or behavioural symptoms, (increased alcohol or substance usages, increased sleeping to avoid the world, increased irritability, increased nastiness). Always remember, if the perception of demands is greater than the perception of resources, this will cause distress. Managing it comes with proper thinking.

## **3) Be resilient and use thinking styles to take action in your life**

My motto is "change your thinking, change your behaviour, change the situation," and in that order. To share an example, clients often come to me and say, "I hate my boss and I want to quit my job." It would be easy for me as a coach to say, "You're right, quit and find another boss." But that would be only changing the situation. I've learned that just changing the situation is almost too easy, and does not correct the potential problem. Give it 3-6 months and see if changing your thinking improves the situation. Because you hate your job and hate your situation, you need to alter your behaviours at the same time as changing your ways of thinking. Improve your fitness; eat better; go out with a friend; take a walk by the lake; create better balance with your family. If 3-6 months go by, you've changed your thinking and behaviour, and the result is still "I hate my boss and my job," then you can change the situation. This eliminates regret down the road, when you might kick yourself and realize the grass isn't really greener.



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