

YOUR THOUGHTS ARE NOT FACTS

If you were to see a lion you may experience a thought: **'there's a lion over there'**

This thought will manifest into an emotional response: **fear**

This emotion will lead to another thought: **'I need to find safety'**



This is a very useful mechanism. It keeps us alive.

But our tendency to turn thoughts into facts can also inhibit us from doing things that we want to do but that create a strong emotional response in us.

- ▶ **The job interview**
- ▶ **Performing or sharing your creative work**
- ▶ **Going on that first date etc**

'It's no good asking me to help. I'm useless.'

Thought-Facts can seep into our unconscious

They can come from all sorts of places:

- ◆ Criticism (the words of other people)
- ◆ Confirmation Bias (reinforcing the world as you believe it is rather than conceiving how it could be)
- ◆ Your own experience

The more aligned they are to emotion (fear, hurt, sadness, anger, anxiety etc) the bigger the impact they have on your own action or inaction later.

For example when I was told **'you're useless'** in front of people, I believed it the next time I was faced with doing something in a group. I felt paralysing fear because I believed the thought to be a fact and wanted to run from that imminent danger (humiliation/embarrassment).

SHAWN'S EXERCISE

- Pick a thought that feels factual to you (e.g 'I am not very good at my job' or 'I'm a great friend')
- Rate the thought on a scale of 1-10 based on how factual the thought seems (1 = absolutely false, 10 = absolutely true)
- Write down the thought and its rating. Put it in your pocket.
- Rate that same thought again tomorrow and over the course of several days (especially apply attention to it after you experience incidents related to it)

You will likely notice that how factual the thought seems will fluctuate moment to moment, day to day. It becomes apparent with practice that what we see as factual in the thoughts we have is not always trustworthy.