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# uPLifted Series

An Informational Digest of EmpowerM3 by Coach Cindy

## The ADHD Brain, The Power of Thinking Part One: The Racing Brain

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*Your life is a reflection of your thoughts. If you change your thinking, you change your life."*

— Brian Tracy

Could Tracy be onto something? But what about when your thoughts are out of control? Having uncontrollable racing thoughts is one of the most common complaints for many people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Unfortunately, with ADHD brain wiring, it isn't easy to just pay attention or control thinking.

Thinking happens, and it can be a runaway train with significant fallout. Before you know it, you've missed half of what was shared because your thoughts had you somewhere else. Or you are trying to fall asleep, but your brain won't turn off.



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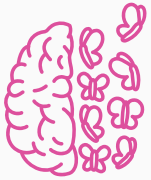
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ADHD is defined as a neurodevelopmental disorder expressed in three types: outwardly as hyperactive/impulsivity, inwardly as inattentive, or combined as hyperactive/inattentive. It is a complex disorder that can be scientifically classified to affect four areas: development, neurologic, psychologic, and psychiatric.

ADHD is stereotypically depicted as the busy boy disrupting class, but it is also a silent and often unseen disorder in the mind's thinking. For some, the young hyperactive symptomology shifts from having a hyperactive body in childhood to having a hyperactive mind in adulthood.

Self-regulation of emotions and behavior is often challenging. ADHD affects three regions of the brain: the frontal cortex, limbic system, and basal ganglia ([ADDA Editorial Team, 2022](#)). This awareness of how the ADHD brain is affected gives insight into how racing thoughts can take hold.

Queen's University Researchers showed in a [study](#) published in Nature Communications that the average young-adult brain getting eight hours of sleep averages 6,000 thoughts per day. So if you have ADHD, you know your brain is far surpassing that number. The researchers concluded that future studies might help better understand thought patterns in the ADHD brain.

If 6,000 thoughts sound like a lot to maintain, imagine having racing thoughts or thought stories that run on repeat. In this article, I will highlight racing thoughts and provide ways to tame your thinking brain. Learning to direct thought and hold attention takes practice, especially for ADHDers'.

Before we proceed, I would like to preface that this information is offered to enhance your conversations with your medical support team. I encourage you to seek support from your medical team and loved ones to find the best coping strategies to live a happy and flourishing life. Perhaps this information curation will deepen your awareness and illuminate possibility. Let's get started.



“  
Only a small  
fraction of  
children with  
ADHD  
demonstrate  
outwardly  
hyperactive  
symptoms.

– ADDitude  
Magazine





## What Does it Mean to Think?

Webster's Dictionary defines **thinking** as the action of using one's mind to produce thoughts.

### What Are Racing Thoughts with the ADHD Brain Style

Having racing thoughts with an ADHD brain style describes a person's experience of having a continuous reel of rapid ideas or thoughts flipping in their mind. This uncontrollable stream of thoughts can make it hard to maintain focus, be productive, stay on task, hold conversations, relax, and cause anxiety, increased stress, and sleep disturbances. These thoughts are often disruptive and can be repetitive and negative in nature. They can be random or linked to previous and future events. They can include repetitive worries. Racing thoughts affect a person's emotional wellness and the feeling of self-control.



Coaches help people with ADHD handle the challenges of daily life by providing feedback, recommendations and encouragement, and directing the individual to attend to their own solutions to problems.

-- (ADHD INATTENTIVE TYPE IN ADULTS: SYMPTOMS, DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT, 2019).





### **Racing Thoughts Can Sound Like This:**

*"I'll never get this done. I should know better than to think I could get that position. Jody is much better than me. I'm so stupid. I'll never be as organized as she is. If I don't remember everything, I'll fail. I don't know what I'll do if that happens. I should have taken that other job last year when I had the chance. If I lose my job, I won't have any money to pay the bills. I need to work harder so they will see I deserve that position. But working more exhausts me, and I don't even like the project they have me working on. I'm so miserable. What am I going to do?"*

*"Why didn't she call me back? I must have made her mad. I should know better than to put myself out there. I do this all the time. She doesn't even like me. If we were real friends, she would have called. I'm always the one reaching out. She is probably hanging out with Wendy. She probably likes her better than me. I'm too much. I probably talk too much. I'm too needy. I guess we are not friends."*

*"I need to get going on this project. If I get started, I won't have time to do anything else. I need to pay the bills. Oh, and I need to get a gift for Aunt Susan. Oh dear, the laundry is all wrinkled now. I knew I shouldn't have started the dryer last night. I think the water bill is due. I should find it. When will I have time to start on my project? Oh shoot, I'm stuck! AGAIN!"*

### **Where Else Do Racing Thoughts Show Up**

\_\_\_Racing thoughts are commonly experienced with ADHD but are also associated with the following:

- Bipolar Disorder
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Chronic Stress

It is essential to share what rolls around in your head openly with your doctor. Racing thoughts are a silent symptom, if not shared, can rob you of living in the present moment, and cause significant challenges in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

**"Be careful  
how you are  
talking to  
yourself  
because you  
are  
listening."**

--LISA HAYES







## Origin: The Brain

**"You are what you think all day long." --Emerson**

Although there is no definitive answer to the cause of racing thoughts with ADHD, it is believed to be tied to the impaired function of the prefrontal cortex (PFC). The PFC is the brain's orchestrator of thoughts (McRae, 2018). The PFC is the brain region responsible for executive functions skills like regulating behavior, decision- making and monitoring attention (Murphy, 2023). All too often, the ADHD brain is firing so fast, lacking the ability to hit pause and self-regulate. As a result, mind-body control is out of sync.

**"Whether you think you can or you think you can't-- you are right."**

**– HENRY FORD**

Directing thought takes practice. The human brain sets us far apart from anything else on Earth.

*"Humans have the largest cerebral cortex (relative to the size of their brains) of all mammals. Because this section of the brain is responsible for the 'higher functions', such as memory, communication and rational thought, it's believed that we owe our intelligence, and difference from other animals, to our highly developed cerebral cortex."*  
*(sharon, 2015).*

Humans have the largest brain to body mass ratio in the animal kingdom, with the prefrontal cortex leading to advanced thinking and innovation. Our ancestors have been solving problems going as far back as sparking fires for warmth to designing the wheel to give way to easier transportation. Two well-known figures, Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein, are believed to have had ADHD. Each had a massive impact on human advancement. What could thinking have been like for them? What kept them up at night?

Some see ADHD only for its hindrances. Others find its' a superpower ability to tap into. Either way, it is critical to learn how to work with the thinking power of your ADHD brain style to achieve success and feel true happiness in life.

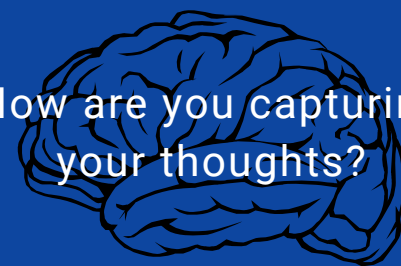
Harnessing thoughts can be challenging, with thoughts entering and exiting with little self-control. This is partly due to weak executive functioning skills related to self-regulation, attention, and working memory. Here are some ways that might spark you to discover your unique way to manage your thinking brain.



Len's  
Approach



How are you interacting  
with your racing  
thoughts?



How are you capturing  
your thoughts?



## Ways to Manage Racing Thoughts

Time to dig into nine options to explore when racing thoughts are stealing your attention.



### Stop Shaming Yourself

Acknowledge your thoughts without shame. It is important to not feed your anxiety about worrying that you are having the thoughts. Stopping giving power to your thoughts by judging them as good or bad. Racing thoughts are clutter in the brain. By giving less power to the thoughts, saying, "These are just thoughts," you are gaining a sense of self-control and deeper awareness.



### Mental Fitness Practice

Mental fitness is the ability to self-command thought. It takes continuous practice. Noticing what you spend your time thinking about is helpful. So often, the saboteur bandits run away with negative racing thought habits stealing strength from our talents and gifts.

When you are caught in racing thoughts- practice pause. Shift attention to something in your environment that will return the brain to the present experience. Shift the brain's fixed attention to a sensation you are noticing using one or many of your senses; sight, hearing, smell, taste, and/or touch.

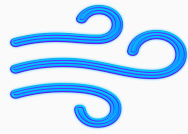
Try exploring other senses like tension sensors in noticing where you feel muscle tension or thermoception, noticing the temperature of hot or cold (Hiskey, 2019). Learn more about mental fitness [here](#)



What we don't need in the midst of our struggle is shame for being human.

--BRENE BROWN





## Deep Breathing

Most often, we do not think to breathe. The majority of the time, you may not even notice your breathing. Breathing is an involuntary action run by the automatic nervous system. The use of breath work has become increasingly common, although it dates back to the first millennium B.C. Breath work taps into the voluntary nervous system using cadenced breathing to calm the body.

Therapists often suggest the "365 method": at least three times a day, breathe at a rhythm of six cycles per minute (five seconds inhaling, five seconds exhaling) for five minutes. And do it every day, 365 days a year (Christophe André, 2019).

Erin Bunch offers an excellent overview of various breathing techniques in her blog post, [15 Easy Breathing Techniques to Help You Take 5 Minutes Out of Your Day To Be Present](#). Examples include Box Breathing, Sitali Breathing, and Nadi Shodhana (Bunch, 2021).



## Journal

Journaling is an excellent way to capture thoughts racing in your mind. Writing your thoughts down externalizes them and helps lessen the demand on your working memory to remember them later. This is especially true when trying to fall asleep. Externally capturing your thoughts just before bed can have a calming effect by allowing the brain time to down process the day. Journaling does not have to take on a "Dear Diary" format. You may explore using writing prompts, bullet journaling, doing a timed brain dump, and mind-mapping. If you prefer technology, try typing, voice dictation, or voice recording.

Slow and deep breathing normalizes the body's stress response and improves attention, mood and cortisol levels.

(What Is Deep Breathing?, 2018)





### Exercise

Exercise is well documented to improve ADHD symptoms. Adding 20-30 minutes of exercise increases dopamine release and helps burn energy. It is important to know how exercise affects your body. Some people have difficulty falling asleep if they exercise within a specific time frame before bed. A tired body is more likely to fall asleep faster when paired with a way to slow down thoughts.



### Turn Off Electronics

Electronics emit blue light, which is documented to alter the brain's natural circadian rhythms. Electronics are stimulating to the brain even though they are consumed in a way to tune out and mind numb. For example, watching T.V. or scrolling socials grabs just enough attention not to allow other thoughts to pop up. Although it may distract some people from racing thoughts, the light tricks the brain of its natural cues for sleeping. If you have racing thoughts and are light-sensitive, you may benefit from turning off all electronics two hours before bed. You may be unaware of blue light's effects on your sleep cycle. Even if you don't think you are sensitive to blue light, try this for at least two weeks. It's important to note that the brain takes time to reset its natural circadian rhythms.



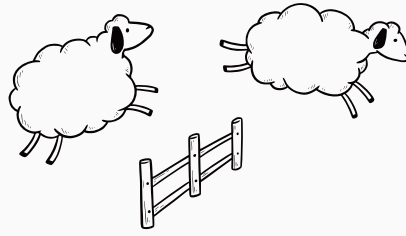
### Schedule Downtime

You may find it helpful to schedule time in your day to let your thoughts flow. Put a timer on it. 5-10 minutes to de-stress. You may pair this with journaling, mental fitness practices, or breathing exercises to allow the thoughts to come as needed. Scheduling a time frame allows time for your brain to down process. You may choose to spread down time several times in your day. This is also referred to as a brain break or recharge.

**"Blue light suppresses the release of melatonin in our brains, which leads to a lower quality of sleep, which in turn can contribute to a variety of negative health effects."**

*(Levin Eye Care, 2018)*





### Intentional Thought Practice

The age-old practice of counting sheep is an intentional thought practice. Through deliberate thought practice, you are choosing what you are thinking about. You can visualize sheep jumping a fence, counting one by one. Try using the ABC Name Game for deep thinkers who need intentional thoughts to be more interesting and capture attention. Take it up a notch by naming animals, brand names, athletic teams, or grocery store items A through Z. Your mind may wander back to the ruminating thoughts. Notice and redirect your thoughts back to your intentional thought practice.



### Medication

For many ADHDers, prescribed ADHD medication is beneficial in curbing racing thoughts, especially when it is causing sleep disturbance. ADHD medication can help stabilize unbalanced brain chemicals. With the brain in balance, ADHD individuals have a greater ability

to strengthen healthy thinking habits learned through Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT). They may also find working with an ADHD Coach to implement strategies to curb racing thoughts and thinking patterns beneficial.



The best ADHD treatment strategies are multimodal ones — combinations of several different, complementary approaches that work together to reduce symptoms.

(THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ADHD MEDICATION, 2019).

[LEARN MORE](#) 



## Hello

Thank you for joining me. My name is Cynthia North, but people know me as Cindy. I am ACC Certified Life Coach with the ICF as a Certified ADHD Life Coach (CALC) and a trained PQ Coach™ member with Positive Intelligence® devoted to partnering with clients to create self-success within ADHD and living life. I work with all ages having a special interest in how the brain affects the outcome. I help ADHDers and stuck people move from crippled in doubt to capable with clarity. I have expanded to offer personalized Mental Fitness Coaching through Shirzad Chamine's Positive Intelligence® Program. New possibilities bloom with deeper self-awareness and through the strength in your mental fitness. I have an innate desire to empower others no matter what difficulties they face with or without ADHD. I believe everyone is worthy of stepping forward out of stuck.

ADHD has touched me personally and professionally.

I know first-hand how ADHD symptoms and behavior can wreak havoc on family dynamics, school, and work success. I chose to become a Certified ADHD Life Coach as well as a member of Positive Intelligence® as a PQ Coach™ because I want others to discover their greatness within ADHD strengths while working with their executive functioning challenges through a positive mindset. I am where I am today because of my two dynamic ADHD children. They both teach me and open my mind to more each day. Their needs were beyond a hug, discipline, structure, or praise. So I sought professional help, ultimately finding a trained ADHD Life Coach. And here I am serving people who want different and deserve ease and flow.

Life experiences have made way for opportunity. I am on a journey to slay stigmas surrounding brain differences. Finding a Life Coach to empower my child led me to become a Certified ADHD Life Coach myself to serve others past their stuck ways and ADHD stigmas. Choosing to strengthen your inner self is where Empower M3 starts. The work is an inside job where your "M3" begins. Connecting your heart and brain with a Coach creates empowerment opportunities. EmpowerM3 - is where the 3 connect to take flight.



There is a more extraordinary tomorrow when your discovery starts today.

ADHD is not  
something you  
outgrow. ADHD  
is something  
you grow with.

— CINDY NORTH,  
LIFE COACH AND AUTHOR







## Resources

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## **Resources Continued**

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### **Disclaimer:**

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