

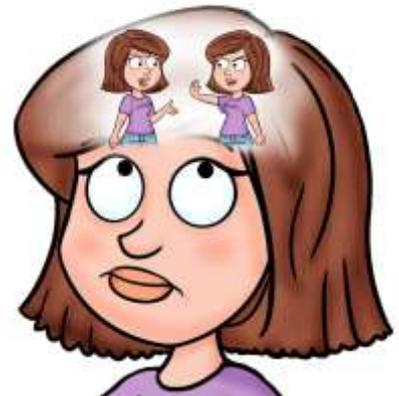
The FAST Pathways® Academy - 'Too Much Mind Chat' in Action

Sarah had started to experience anxiety after a car accident about five years before she discovered FAST Pathways. At first, the anxiety was just related to driving. But it started to generalise, to the level where she dreaded her phone ringing - feeling panicky and sick if it did. She felt increasingly exhausted, trapped in her over active thinking and self-criticism. As well as making life pretty grim, she was concerned that her young son would start to copy her anxiety, so she decided to act.

Within the first couple of exercises, she realised that the main thing driving her discomfort was the way she talked to herself. Her mind-voice never seemed to stop, and it always sounded panicky.

So she practised making it slower and quieter, and as that became more natural, she started to make it sound bored. Pretty soon, that seemingly non-stop voice was sounding much calmer, and saying much more helpful things – like running through what she needed to do that day so she didn't forget. Sarah noticed a big uplift in her mood. She became more able to take things in her stride, like being calmer with her son instead of snapping or shouting.

Taking 10 minutes each day to continue building new, more enjoyable thinking habits, within a couple of weeks, she'd transitioned into a mellower version of herself.



A few years ago, Donna had breast cancer. It was diagnosed early, and her treatment was completely successful. But she was convinced it was going to come back. Lengthy conversations with both her doctor and her counsellor had failed to reassure her. Logically all the facts and figures made sense - it was very unlikely to come back, but the deeprooted fear refused to budge. Her noticing was intensely tuned to any references to cancer (there are quite a lot to pick up on), and any mention of it could set off the spiralling panic that she'd go through it all again, and next time she might not be so lucky.

It was particularly bad in the run-up to any of her routine check-ups – her sleep would be destroyed (and the more tired she was, the more intense the fears became), she'd be unable to answer the phone just in case it was her doctor's office, and she'd end up taking anything up to a couple of weeks off work because she could barely function. It was ruling her life.

She quickly learned to stop the galloping commentary in her mind, and to hear cancer as a word, free from any particular associations. Her sleep settled back to normal, and rather than constantly trying to wrestle the fear back out of her awareness, she could comfortably focus on whatever was important at the time. She stopped thinking about cancer altogether - it became something which had happened to her, and the experience of having got through it became one she could draw strength from.

A few weeks later, she put it fully to the test - a close colleague had died of cancer, and instead of having to go into hiding for weeks, convinced that she'd be next, she was able to go to the funeral. As her next routine check up approached, she felt fine about it.