



# Separating Thoughts from Facts

Have you ever experienced the situation where you find yourself totally overwhelmed or engrossed in your thoughts to the point where you find it very difficult to separate yourself from the content of your mind? Have these thoughts ever appeared out of the blue, but you become so preoccupied with them to the point where they are “real” and you no longer know what fact is from fiction?

This is a very common experience for most people and it can be hard to remove ourselves from our thoughts and refocus on what actual information we have at hand. So how do you do this?

The first step is initially creating a better understanding of what are facts, how thoughts come about and what influences them. Once this occurs, it is about applying developed strategies to ensure that this separation between thoughts and facts remains manageable, providing you with the opportunity to maintain effective emotional regulation, as well as an ability to step back and assess what you are actually dealing with.

A fact can be defined as something that can be proven to exist via evidence and demonstrates consistency with our reality in an objective capacity. For example:

- A banana is a fruit, an agricultural fact and evidence supports that it is a fruit
- Or that you are a human, and this can be supported by scientific evidence.



When it comes to thoughts, they can be defined as mental cognitions or more specifically our beliefs, opinions, and concept of the world and who we are. Thoughts are subjective in nature and are shaped by the environments we live in or are exposed to, such as our education, life experiences, our childhood, societal expectations, genetics, and those around us.

For example, if someone grows up within an environment where it is constantly reinforced that they are “no good” and will “never amount to anything”, it is very likely that this environment will influence their thinking patterns, causing the individual to think that they are “no good” and will “never amount to anything”. This begins to impact upon the individual’s behaviours and the perspectives, especially when they focus their attention on these negative thoughts, causing them to become all encompassing. Someone who believes they are “no good” is more likely to jeopardise their work, causing reinforcement of this belief. It is not necessarily because they want to perform badly or that they are actually “no good”, more so because in their mind this is how things are and should be.

In psychology, we call this the self-fulfilling prophecy – where your thoughts become so prominent that they takeover your self-perception, influence your behaviours and thus your daily outcomes. Does this mean that this person in our example can be defined as no good?

The separation of fact from thoughts is so important, as it can be a key step in exerting more control over your thought processes so that they do not take over your life. Another way to reframe this would be, this individual thinks they are no good. What is happening here is that we are identifying what is the fact (objective concept) and what is the more subjective concept – the thought. This then allows us to be more mindful of the impact these thoughts have on us, which in turn helps us to navigate how we interact with the world around us. Thoughts alone are not positive or negative, it is more about what we associate with them.

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The Corporate Mental Health Alliance (CMHAA) is a group of Australian businesses dedicated to providing mentally healthy workplaces for their people.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:**

Website: [cmhaa.org.au](http://cmhaa.org.au)

LinkedIn: [Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/corporate-mental-health-alliance-australia)



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