

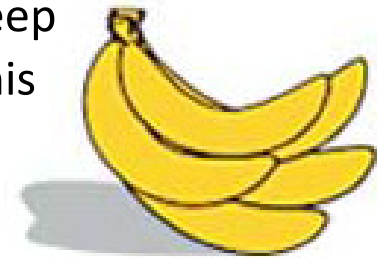


Monkey Mind Symptoms

1. Being vague: Being vague is one of the more subtle forms of monkey mind. What does this look like? Here are clues: When we use words like *sort of*, *kind of*, *probably*, *maybe*, *sometimes*, we're being vague. When we talk around an answer, instead of answering directly, we're being vague.

The problem with vague is obvious – we're not being specific, and it is only when we get specific (ideally by looking, seeing and telling the truth) that we can take authentic actions, or our next meaningful steps. What does being vague buy us? As long as we're being vague, we don't need to commit. It takes courage to tell the truth, to get specific, and to promise to take action.

So the next time you hear (or think) yourself being vague, take a deep breath and ask yourself, "What would it look like if I got specific in this conversation? What promise am I willing to make? And what action am I willing to take?" And then thank monkey for this opportunity to get clear.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



2. Scarcity thoughts: “I don’t have enough _____ (time, money, energy, creativity, patience, stamina, motivation, smarts, etc.) to accomplish this _____ (goal, dream, plan, the authentic action I promised my coach).” Sound familiar? These are examples of the monkey mind symptom of scarcity thoughts.

Scarcity can also show up as not starting a project because we don’t know how to complete it perfectly enough, because there’s a scarcity of certainty around how it will look when we’re done.

Notice the preponderance of “not enough” inherent in scarcity thinking. What if we became willing to be enough, and to see that we have enough, to reach our goals and dreams? Maya Angelou taught us, “You alone are enough. You have nothing to prove to anybody.” We don’t have to prove that we are enough, or that we have enough.

So the next time monkey starts whispering scarcity thoughts in your ear, whisper back, “I am enough and I have enough.” And thank monkey for encouraging you to see this truth of who you are.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



3. Talking of the past or future as if it is the present: “I’ve never done that before.... When I tried that before, it didn’t work... We’ve never done it that way before... I’m not sure if this will work...what guarantee do I have?” These are all examples of the monkey mind symptom of talking of the past or future as if it is the present.

Why is this a problem? The answer is in the symptom. When we are focused on the past or the future, we are not present. We are not open to the possibilities of this moment. Our focus on the past can also be tinged with regret, grief or guilt, further stopping us in our tracks. Our focus on the future can create anxiety, doubt or worry, not exactly conducive to that sense of possibility. Eckhart Tolle advises us to, “Realize deeply that the present moment is all you ever have.”

So the next time you find yourself focused on the past, or anticipating the future, remember... the present moment is all you have. Be open and receptive to the gifts of this now moment, not allowing monkey to rob you of the opportunities found in being fully present.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



4. Defensive: “Whaddya mean by that?” One definition of defensive is to protect someone or something from attack. Another explains that someone on the defensive is concerned with justifying their actions or words. If you know that to defend is *to protect*, you have an idea what defensive means.

When a person is acting defensive, they're trying to protect or justify themselves. So notice that inherent in the symptom of defensive is the assumption that we're being attacked. Remembering that one of monkey's evolutionary objectives was to keep us safe, it makes sense that one of its symptoms would be defensive.

We get to ask ourselves - now that we no longer live in caves with saber tooth tigers on the prowl - what are we keeping ourselves safe from when we find ourselves being defensive, i.e. feeling attacked? Perhaps one of our beliefs is being questioned, or we're being asked to look at an action we've taken. Sometimes we've just been asked an innocent question, but have perceived it as an attack.

The opportunity when we find ourselves feeling and/or behaving defensively is to look at “What do I believe is being attacked?” or to ask ourselves the question, “Am I willing to be curious about that which offends me?” Powerful opportunities for self-inquiry, all thanks to our monkey mind.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



5. Taking things personally: I'm going to reference the master on this one. According to Don Miguel Ruiz, author of *The Four Agreements*,

"Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering. When you make it a strong habit not to take anything personally, you avoid many upsets in your life. Your anger, jealousy, and envy will disappear, and even your sadness will simply disappear if you don't take things personally. If you can make this

second agreement a habit, you will find that... there is a huge amount of freedom that comes to you when you take nothing personally."

Bottom line, when we're taking something personally, we're making it all about us. What if it wasn't? How would I respond differently if I wasn't reacting upon the assumption that this was about me?

Put another way, when I take something personally, I've *made this mean* something about me (remembering that our brains are conclusion creating, evidence gathering, meaning making machines). What if I *make it mean* something else? Something that creates curiosity, and spaciousness, and helps me get back on my card? Or to demonstrate one of my life's intentions?

Try it next time you find yourself taking something personally, and thank monkey for helping you to see this situation/relationship in a different way.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



6. Comparison: The most obvious example of the problem with comparison lies in the observation that when we're comparing, it's our insides to someone else's outsides. Social media is one of the biggest culprits/sources of this type of comparison. Our tendency is to post us at our best, and of course, our friends do the same.

It's not that we're being deceitful, we just usually choose not to share our darker/sadder/angrier/nastier moments, our "shadow" so to speak. This can cause the type of comparison we alluded to earlier, i.e. we see and compare ourselves to everyone's outsides without knowing what's going on on the inside. Everyone sees each other at their best, and can feel inadequate in comparison.

Another form of comparison, that can cause as much or more suffering, is comparing ourselves to our past or future selves. "I used to be younger/thinner/stronger/more productive/had a better memory" or "When will I be wiser/stronger/more patient/more productive...". You get the idea.

Comparison is a notorious joy-sucker. The antidote is to thank monkey for sharing, and to be in the present moment... to remember who we are (our Standards of Integrity), what's important to us (our Life's Intentions) and what we want to do about it (our goals).

When we focus on this, and how we can contribute right now, comparison has no interest or power over us. We can acknowledge that we are all human beings on an incredible journey, with hero's hearts and monkey minds, here to make the difference only we can make. No comparison necessary.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



7. Resignation: “Never mind, it doesn’t matter... it’s really not important. This is much harder than I thought it would be, and it won’t make a difference anyway.” Oh monkey, how you mess with us on this one! How often do we surrender to the defeated energy of resignation, trying to convince ourselves that it really doesn’t matter to us... when it really does.

Resignation is often tinged with sadness, despair, fatigue and/or lethargy. Resignation can make it hard to move in the direction of our goals and dreams. This is where the importance of small, sweet steps comes into play. The paralysis (feeling frozen) often caused by resignation can feel overwhelming, making any movement monumentally difficult.

Taking just one very small - teeny weeny - sweet step starts to thaw us at the border. It’s also important (as it is with all the symptoms) to reach out for support when we realize that we are having a huge monkey mind fit. And as with the other symptoms that stop us at the border, keeping our Standards of Integrity and our Life’s Intentions handy is helpful in reminding us who we are, and that our goals and dreams ARE important.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



8. Being victim or martyr: When we're in victim and/or martyr energy, we believe that life is happening TO us, rather than BY us, or THROUGH us. We're looking for someone to blame, rather than taking responsibility for our decisions and actions. Remember the old Flip Wilson bit, "The devil made me do it!" The problem with not recognizing that we're accountable for those decisions is that we miss the chance to learn from our mistakes. As long as we're looking outside ourselves, for "who's the matter with us", we're not looking inside for the real growth opportunity.

Martyr has a similar, but subtly different, energy. When we're in martyr, we're playing the "I'll just do it myself" card... the "I shouldn't have to ask" card. Ironically, martyr is self-imposed victimhood. It's not someone outside of us that's victimizing us, it's actually us. We're deciding to be a victim by making up stories about how unappreciated we are, or how nobody understands us, or how the "system" is against us.

One of the definitions of martyr from Webster's Dictionary is: A person who pretends to suffer or who exaggerates suffering in order to get praise or sympathy. Is this really how we want to show up in life? Is this how a loving family member, or a financially successful person, or a respected professional, or an effective mentor or coach would show up?

When we recognize that we're in victim or martyr mode, we get to ask ourselves, "What is this getting me? Is there another way to have that need met? How can I be clear and 'on my card' in this conversation and relationship?" This reflection shifts us from victim to victor, from martyr to master, from monkey mind to conscious conduit... a powerful shift indeed.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



9. Either/Or Thinking: Monkey really gets creative with this one. “Either I can save money OR I can pay off my debt. I can’t possibly do both!” “Either I can get a good night’s sleep OR I can exercise in the morning.” Sound familiar? This symptom limits possibilities and stymies our creative process.

The shift here is to both/and thinking. In the presence of either/or, we ask ourselves: How? How can I do both? How can I contribute to my savings/retirement account AND pay off my unsecured credit card debt?

How can I get a good night’s sleep AND wake up in time to get in a productive workout? What plan can I come up with, what support am I willing to let in?

We can enroll a small, sweet step partner to set the arena with us every morning and support us in keeping our promises. When we observe that we’re slipping in to either/or thinking, we can also ask ourselves: What if? What if both options were possible? We become curious, and willing to explore options previously not seen. If this sounds like look, see, tell the truth and taken an authentic action, it is.

Practicing the coaching model helps us to make the shift from the constricted, limited energy of either/or to the open, receptive, curious energy of both/and. This is a wonderful example of monkey being seen and experienced as “the loyal opposition,” of giving us the opportunity to practice our principles and cross the border with a renewed sense of optimism and clarity.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



10. Excuses: We make excuses when we haven't done something we said we would do. Usually anything following "because" is an excuse: I didn't take the trash out because I overslept.

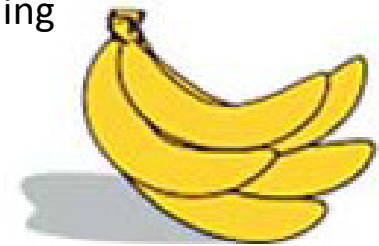
11. Rationalization: A rationalization is an excuse with details: I didn't take the trash out because I overslept. And I overslept because I was up late researching the perfect birthday gift for my partner.

12. Justification: A justification is a rationalization made "holy": I didn't take the trash out because I overslept. And I overslept because I was up late researching the perfect birthday gift for my partner. And I was researching the perfect gift because I love them so much and am such a considerate partner. So really, it's admirable that I didn't take out the trash!

Excuses, rationalizations and justifications are monkey's way of not owning that we didn't keep our promise. Remember that monkey mind has the emotional maturity of a 9-11 year old. It wants to stay out of trouble!

When we're excusing/rationalizing/justifying why we didn't do what we said we would do (or doing something we said we wouldn't do), we're missing the point. It's not about "why". It's about looking, seeing, and telling the truth about what we did or didn't do, cleaning it up, and doing it. No explanation necessary.

This gets us back "on our card" and takes less energy than continuing to excuse why we didn't keep our promise in the first place.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



13. Fragmentation: Fragmentation shows up as the “part of me” conversation. “Part of me really wants to create a goal worth playing for, but part of me doesn’t think it’s necessary.” Fragmentation allows us to talk ourselves out of taking powerful, authentic action.

By going back and forth between two (or more) imaginary “parts” we suck the energy right out of even our most wonderful dreams and ideas. This symptom surfaces old beliefs that have held us back from accomplishing our goals, the voice that is determined to keep us “safe” and maintain the status quo.

When this monkey starts to swing, we get to ask ourselves what ALL of us wants to do. What new conclusion are we willing to create that supports is in demonstrating in our wholeness? This symptom brings the gift of clarity. We actually hear the conversation that has been holding us back by stopping us at the border.

And once we see it, we don’t need to be it.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



14. Deflection: Deflection shows up when we're getting close to the truth, as in look, see, and tell the truth. It's usually in the form of a joke or sarcastic comment intended to deflect attention away from us by derailing the conversation. A common rationalization for deflection is "I was just making a joke. Get a sense of humor!"

Deflection is an attempt to alleviate the discomfort of looking at something we'd rather not see. Webster's Dictionary defines *deflection* as "a turning aside or deviation from a straight line." When we are willing to be a demand for coaching, to search out and bring toward us all the lessons available to us in this interaction/experience, we are on a "straight line" to learning and growth, and the creation of an authentic action.

Deflection is monkey's way of getting us off course and away from the border, of trying to "just get (us) comfortable", as Pema Chodron so wisely observed. When you notice a deflection about to pop out, breathe, get quiet and notice what's up.

Are you willing to be uncomfortable for a moment? It's a small price to pay for the opportunity to wake up to what's been holding us back from accomplishing our goals and bringing our most heartfelt dreams into reality.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



15. Solidifying: Solidifying is treating an abstract concept as though it were an object in physical reality. It is literally to make something “hard or solid” such as changing from a liquid or a gaseous form to a solid one.

This becomes monkey mind when we solidify our beliefs and opinions, or our “issues”. For instance, talking about our self-esteem, or lack thereof, as if it was an actual, physical thing. Or allowing our structures of knowing to become so “firm” that we become intractable and un-coachable.

Eastern philosophies suggest that we become like water, fluid and flowing, supple and moving. When our monkey is swinging with solidifying, we are reminded to be open and receptive, to soften our attachment to even our most closely held thoughts, beliefs and opinions, and open ourselves to the flow of possibility, to new ways of seeing, being and doing in the world.



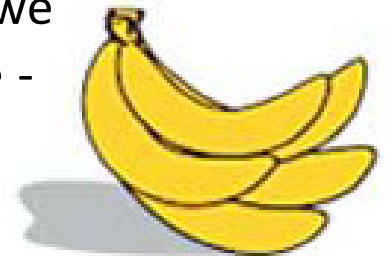
Monkey Mind Symptoms



16. Bargaining: Bargaining exemplifies another aspect of the 9-11 year old monkey mind, that of getting what we deserve. When we're in bargaining mode, everything becomes a negotiation. "If I pay all my bills on time this month, I get to use one of my credit cards to go shopping." Or, "If I stick to my calories today, I can have ice cream before bed."

This conversation implies that we have been deprived in some way, and now we deserve a reward. When monkey is swinging with bargaining, we might see taking an authentic action, and/or keeping a promise, as something worthy of a reward, instead of a demonstration of doing what we said we would do with clarity, focus, ease and grace.

When we notice the energy of bargaining creeping into our life, we have the opportunity to remember the experience of coherence - satisfaction, fulfillment, meaning and harmony - and see that it is its own reward.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



17. Impulsiveness: “I want what I want when I want it, and I want it right now!” Impulsivity by definition is a tendency to act on a whim, displaying behavior characterized by little or no forethought, reflection, or consideration of the consequences.

Think about how this shows up in our lives. We create a goal, and jump into it without a plan or thinking through how our actions will impact that goal or others. We take actions on a whim without first looking, seeing and telling the truth to make sure that they are *authentic* actions.

We engage in wishful thinking, and metafizzle at the border when our lack of forethought has us giving up before we even begin.

Impulsiveness shows up in every form of energy. For example, we spend what we don't have, justifying that if we “have checks” or a credit card in hand, then we have money. We eat unhealthy food without considering the consequences.

When we recognize that we are swinging with impulsiveness, we have the opportunity to pause and reflect on what we are about to do. Viktor Frankl observed, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” The gift of this monkey mind symptom is learning to practice being in that space... before we act impulsively.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



18. Qualifying Statements: Do you remember the last time you tried to explain yourself out of keeping a promise? Or wiggled out of answering a “yes or no” question by not answering either one? Any part of that response is a qualifying statement. “I almost got it done... I’m close to finishing my homework... I sort of stuck to my diet this week.”

When we swing with qualifying statements, we’re at the border of “anything other than yes is no.” We cross this border by answering truthfully (what happened or didn’t happen in physically reality), period. No wishy-washiness, no buying ourselves time or coming up with an excuse, rationalization or justification (don’t you love it when those pesky symptoms start swinging together?). A simple “yes” or “no” will do, thank you. Remember, monkey loves vague.

Our actions don’t move us forward when we’re not clear. It’s simply the buzzing of flies. Qualifying statements keep us in the buzzing, and out of moving forward with our next meaningful step. The opportunity is to practice letting our yes be yes, and our no be no. Clear, sweet and coherent.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



19. Complaining/Petulance: “But I don’t want to do what I said I would do!”, said with the appropriate whine. “Why do I always have to _____?” fill in the blank of your favorite complaint. Petulance stamps its foot, sometimes literally, and demands to get its own way. Complaining finds something wrong with everything. Even when life is good, when monkey is swinging with complaining, we find the dark cloud within the silver lining.

Complaining and petulance are the antithesis of grace. Grace is our capacity to be grateful for our journey, and for those who share it. When we’re focused on gratitude, our complaints are much less interesting. When we shift from complaining to being grateful, our energy shifts from what won’t work to what will, from negativity to possibility. The gift of this symptom is to turn complaints into opportunities.

When tempted to complain, ask yourself (whilst looking at your Standards of Integrity card), “How would a person with these qualities show up in this interaction/ situation/relationship?” As the song says, “Turn a frown upside down, and spread a little love around”. So the next time you’re tempted to complain, thank monkey for sharing, find something to be grateful for, and turn that frown into a smile. You’ll be happier and so will those that share your journey.



Monkey Mind Symptoms



20. Being Paranoid: The definition of paranoid is being suspicious, having illusions about being followed or persecuted, or about being afraid or distrustful of others. In other words, we're operating from the assumption that someone or something is out to get us. This monkey mind symptom can be as subtle as wondering what your two co-workers are talking about over in the corner, to believing that the entire universe is against you.

While all the monkey mind symptoms cause a constriction in our energy, paranoia is particularly effective in shrinking our world. Why? Because inherent in paranoia is the belief that the whole world is about you.... everyone is watching me, talking about me, conspiring against me. What's the common denominator there? Me! What if we're actually not the center of our own myopic universes? What if everyone else is way more focused on their own lives than on what we're doing?

The gift, and the shift, of being paranoid is to be willing to assume a positive intention. Rather than assuming that everyone/thing is against us, what if we create a new conclusion that everyone/thing is for us? And choose to see the world, and its inhabitants, through the green lens? What a powerful shift, and what a powerful way to live in, and contribute to, the world.

