

Mind Play.

Pick a time, preferably when you're alone, and when you hear your thoughts, say to yourself, "That's me thinking." And then notice the change. You're now actively listening to yourself think, so an extra dimension has been added. Instead of you simply hearing, you're now actively thinking about what you're listening to. You have entered an altered state: thinking about your thinking, and this is called metacognition. Metacognition means "above thinking", so, for instance, you can now allow yourself to relisten to earlier thoughts and learn to use different strategies for problems or situations that you would previously react to. Metacognition allows you to use your emotions, education, and experience rather than relying on the group-accepted behavior and thinking of the political, religious, or social tribe you decided to join.

Joining any group incurs cost. Every group, be they family, military, religious, political, gender, sexual orientation, or whatever, all have group dynamics that must be followed. Not following the group dynamics leads to rebukes and castigation, followed by either you rejecting the group or the group rejecting you.

Thinking about thinking is very freeing too and allows one to remove oneself from a group or groups without being harmed by threats, rebukes, or chastisement. The ability to think about one's thoughts regarding moral and ethical principles, teachings, and conduct, and then extrapolate that to other, as-yet unquestioned parts of one's moral and ethical foundation, can lead to initial confusion but soon to a foundational certainty about one's own beliefs.

You may not need to change at all. Or, you may experience some, or even radical, changes that manifest into lifestyle changes, including the groups you belong to. But that doesn't matter.

What matters is you, and you becoming the most genuine version of you.

The genuine version of you is you at peace with yourself. If you're angry or prone to meanness, then you're not at peace with yourself. If you're critical or contemptuous of others, then you're not at peace with yourself. To be at peace with yourself is knowing that you only have control over yourself or that you are gaining that control. You can let a group control you, but that control allows you to be defined by the group. Many people like being controlled and would be lost without the group or groups they belong to. But if you are not one of those people, then try thinking about your thinking.

Having a conversation, or many conversations, with yourself requires you to think about your thinking. Are you happy with your thoughts? Where did you learn your thoughts? Are your thoughts genuine to who you are, or do you think one way but feel another way, perhaps so you can continue to belong in a group?

Thinking about your thinking, about your thoughts, is choosing a genuine, common-sense mentor to be available on demand, and the mentor you choose is you.

Written by Peter Skeels © 8-5-2026