

Chapter 11 Protecting Your Mental Processes

“Through shallow intellect, the mind becomes shallow, and one eats the fly, along with the sweets.” Guru Nanak

Why would I include a chapter with this title? The reason is that many people, that have observed a particular disastrous action a Millennial has been involved in, say ‘what was he thinking?’ Because of the lack of generational wisdom that Millennials have not had passed down, it is common for them(you) to make some really, really dumb decisions (sorry, but I’m telling it like it is). The chapters in this book focus on advice to help in various aspects of your life. However, what I will address in this chapter is the actual manner of how you use your biological computing device (your brain!).

First, let’s discuss your brain. This 4+ pound organ is the most complex machine in existence. It is made up of tissue, nerve pathways (synapses), and runs entirely on an electrical-chemical process. The brain uses around 20% of the oxygen you breathe in and a good portion of the glucose your pancreas produces. How do the two things get to your brain? By the pumping of 20% of your blood to your brain. Of course your blood doesn’t go directly to your brain as there is a blood-brain barrier in place. This allows oxygen from your red blood cells to cross over to your brain cells. While it’s nice to have this barrier there to protect the brain from many things present in the blood, the downside is it allows some things to pass through pretty well. Hmmm, what could these things be? Answer: chemicals, hormones and alcohol. That is why you can get drunk from booze, high on pot and other pharmacopeia, and become panicked or calm by the transfer of different type of hormones.



It is obvious that even though protected by a hard case of bone and internal shock absorbers, the brain can be affected negatively by the simple act of what you take into your body, either orally or intravenously.

Your brain health is really, really important to your successful behavior as a millennial, so care for it, protect it and help it stay biologically safe.



Ingesting harmful toxic chemicals, breathing volatile vapors (glue, paint, etc.) is a self-destructive assault on your brain – DON’T DO IT!

While you may experience a single overload of toxic substances and come out with all of your faculties still functioning, the danger is that repeated abuses will

take a toll. There's nothing worse than a millennial aged person with unfocused eyes, running drool and the shakes – that's pretty sad.

But there's more to beneficial mental processes than your biological brain health. Even if you keep your brain in physically good shape, what you put into it, and how you train it to do what it's supposed to is just as important.

Brain training starts at an early age. This is unfortunate in many cases, as the dysfunctional behaviors that you experienced from your yuppie and hippy family can be impressed on your pliable growing brain. The old saying 'nuts don't fall far from the tree' is an illustration of this phenomenon.

While this patterning is strong in personality development, it also shows up in other behaviors; food and drink likes and dislikes, views on the opposite sex, political and philosophical leanings, dress and grooming among other things.

So early patterning may be something you want to keep. If it has made you a law-abiding, moral, ethical and all-around super person, then, by all means do it. If, however, your early patterning has left you with bad speech, slovenly grooming, unhealthy diet, or bigoted close-minded thinking, then maybe some adjustments might be in order. In the end, we all understand that people will do what they want to do, so a *desire* to improve has to be the first step.

What mental process dangers do millennials face? Let's go through them in detail:

Marketing Manipulation

"Like manchurian candidates, we have been made into manchurian consumers, who subconsciously buy when we are triggered by our brand masters." - Bryant H. McGill

The whole world is full of customers. There are many businesses, groups, and charities wanting to harvest these customers. They have been doing this for many years and they are really, really good at it. You may not be aware, but there is a lot of science behind marketing, whether it's services, products, brand awareness or shaping your wants and desires. How else could some giant pharmaceutical company run a prime-time TV ad to address a health concern and reel off 3 minutes of a list of disgusting and dangerous side-effects that sound like conditions in a third-world country. And, to cheerfully ask your doctor about _____. The first thing to be aware of is that no company or commercial organization is *concerned about your well-being!* They are ONLY concerned about selling products, making the most profits and gaining the greatest market share.

Another thing you need to understand is that they LIE! Hard to believe, I know, but it's the truth. Just because it is a charity doesn't mean it is any different. Here're some things to practice so as to not be clueless:

- Understand the difference between needs and wants. While advertising does address your needs in some manner, most of it is pitched to your wants. *Needs* cannot be manipulated as they are present or not. *Wants* can be and are easily manipulated. That is the thrust of marketing.
- You can be the flotsam and jetsam in the marketing river, or the salmon, swimming against the current. Don't be weak – be your own person.
- Do aware of the marketing tricks; fake sales, bait and switch, upselling, peer influence. Careful shopping and purchasing shows maturity and intelligence – don't be a sucker!
- The use of subliminal messaging is rampant in marketing. This is the method used to influence your emotions subconsciously with cues, images, sounds and odors. The challenge is to overcome the subliminal triggers with conscious decision making.

"I saw a subliminal advertising executive, but only for a second." - Steven Wright

Behavior Modification via the Media

Marketing wouldn't be effective if there was no communication medium. So, be aware that these channels are used extensively by anyone from businesses to governments. Here are some media channels:

- Newspapers, magazines
- Poster ads, billboards, flyers
- Radio
- TV
- The Internet, smart devices

The oldest form of marketing is the printed media – the newest is the Internet. The Internet is not the channel itself, but it is the services and applications that are reached via the Internet, such as search engines and social media. Without advertising, Google, Facebook, Twitter and many others would cease to exist. So, it stands to reason that this powerful economic force is going to do all that it can to modify your behavior to be receptive to the urge to buy. They use metrics to

track your online activity and dynamically change the messages so as to accomplish this. These companies have also enabled independent websites (through revenue sharing) to join the frenzy. This not to make a judgement on these practices, as it is all legal, but to make you aware that you are being manipulated. You may not care and that's OK. You may care, and if you do, being selective and being your own person is the only recourse.

Idealism Gone Rogue

"Idealism, alas, does not protect one from ignorance, dogmatism, and foolishness". -Sidney Hook

Many people, when young are idealistic. Many older people are skeptics. What transpires between these two stages of life? It could be this:

"Idealism is fine, but as it approaches reality, the costs become prohibitive". - William F. Buckley, Jr.

Yes, many times pure idealism held by young people changes. And, the worst part is that it doesn't change because of experiences learned the hard way, but by demagogues using idealism for specific purposes. This demagoguery can be by anyone, but is often led by political zealots to accomplish their own selfish ends. This can even be by governmental officials. How can you protect your mind from idealistic manipulation? Here's some tips:

- Don't let your idealism be ignorant. Study and learn all the factors – use critical thinking ability.
- Don't be dogmatic – be open to discussion and examination of other views, even those not your own. Pick up that rock, hold it to the light and turn it so as to examine all sides.
- Don't follow foolishness, just because it's campy, exotic, cool, or the current 'in' thing. A mind and personality bakes gradually over time in the oven of human experience and comes out functional and beneficial. A flash burned mind can carry scars that are handicaps for the rest of your life.

Governmental

Everyone has a relationship with some form of government during their life. In most cases, that relationship is a benevolent or benign one. At other times it can be adversarial or conflicted. Governments are generally sustained by an election system that is supposed to represent the governed and is funded by taxes and

fees. At least that's the way it's supposed to be on paper. In practice, it may be modeled after this pattern but corrupted by a number of factors; business and government collusion and influence by lobbyists and others, the exercise of and love of power by governmental officials, and the protection and enhancement of positions by career bureaucrats. This may not sound like what you learned in civics class, but it's the sad truth. Another factor that is present is that government officials evolve from a hired employee mindset to a controlling overlord mindset. In many cases, such as law enforcement, this is close to the model of operation; a sheriff is elected by the people but he and his department have the power to arrest and incarcerate. Unfortunately, many petty bureaucrats start to assume this mind-set and, because they are not directly elected and are protected by powerful unions, gain a sense of imperviousness to accountability. Most of your frustrating experiences will be with this level of government. However, it is what it is, and the inertia to change is great, so do your best to exist, flourish and have a fulfilling life in spite of flawed people executing bureaucratic rules and regulations in robotic fashion.

Here're some tips to co-exist with governmental agencies:

- First step is to obey the laws that are in place to the best of your ability. If you don't like the law(s), then go through the proper channels to effect change. Taking the law into your own hands or selective disobedience is the path to a poor lifestyle and bad outcomes.
- If a law officer tells you to do something, DO IT! If you don't agree with the action, there are means to address it later.
- There are various means to address civil disagreements. Don't try to correct them by force or threats.

Dangers from Yourself

"We have met the enemy and he is us." – 'Pogo' from Walt Kelly

One of the dangers millennials face are certain aspects of their own personalities. The millennial age has spawned an instant gratification mindset, a warped view of values, and a 'me' worldview (sorry again, just being honest).

This behavior has a formal definition based upon this mythological character:



Echo and Narcissus – 1903 – John William Waterhouse

Could this really be the first ‘selfie’?

Narcissism is normally just a behavior that makes you happy, but alienates those around you, and would normally be harmless. However, the ‘me’ attitude of millennials results in obsessive drives to be a) a famous athlete, b) a famous singer, c) a famous movie star, or d) a famous_____. While, I’m not trying to discourage you for having goals and do what you would like to do in life, the quest for ‘famousness’ can degrade the quality of your life. We can see this in efforts of younger people to strive for fame with the total absence of other good qualities that can make them better people. And since the road to fame is an exceedingly narrow one, and after those quests for fame that doesn’t happen, there is restlessness and confusion in what to do in life.

What is the most popular avenue that enables this quest for fame? Surprise! The internet! Yes, that vast public library of pictures, poses, and opinions. Millennials’ fame desires can be UPLOADED to the internet! But, here’s the flip side – the ‘internet is forever’. So what you may view as ‘fame’ in your younger years, may become ‘infamous’ in your later years – just remember this.



The quest for fame means, that since most millennials carry a smartphone with a built-in camera, almost all millennials can snap ‘selfies’ at any time. This quest to ‘selfie’ often takes a bad turn. You can see this by searching for ‘selfies gone

wrong' on the internet. Some have even become ex-millennials with creative selfie efforts. So, don't stay clueless, a little balance here is needed.

Going with the Crowd

The opposite for courage is not cowardice, it is conformity. Even a dead fish can go with the flow. Jim Hightower

Another thing millennials have trouble with, is manning their own rudder. This is understandable as your caregivers had defective rudders, so consequently couldn't instruct you in rudder operation. This is a problem because of a natural desire for you to be approved by your peers. *This* desire is because you are so alienated from previous generations (again, not your fault), that if it wasn't for your peers you *could* believe you were the last person on earth. Because of this, your tendency is to do what your peers do, dress like they do, speak like they do, buy what they buy, and think like they think. It's a good thing millennials aren't preaching individualism like your cookie-cutter 'hippy' grandparents. The good thing about this lemming-like mindset is that you can effectively borrow each other's clothes. The bad thing is that you can be led not only by marketing forces, corporations, and governments as mentioned above, but you can be led by your friends and peers. If you like being manipulated by *anyone*, then it's cool, if you don't then steer you ship by your own rudder. Go where YOU want to go on your life path. Be a rebel, and be a trendsetter yourself. Have confidence in YOU so that you don't wilt when others try to ridicule you. You might eventually find being different is a really radical thing!

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect." - Mark Twain

Summary

All generations have been manipulated by those that are very good at it. If you doubt this just a light reading of twentieth century history – Hitler and the Nazis, and communist countries proves it. However, with today's quantum leap in communication technologies, millennials have the honor to be manipulated by people, groups, movements, companies, and governments. Do NOT be a lemming – be a thinking, confident, and smart individual!