

# 5 Power Strategies to Defend Your Mind

A recent new mental-health related TikTok trend has gained traction across the app's approximately 1.5 billion followers, claiming to "help" people overcome the pain of intrusive thoughts. The TikTok trend encourages users to give in to their intrusive thoughts, whether their own thoughts or from other people, calling the trend "Let Your Intrusive Thoughts Win."

So, what exactly are intrusive thoughts? Intrusive thoughts are unpleasant urges, thoughts and images that come to our mind, to act on something compulsively. We all experience intrusive thoughts, but for some, these thoughts can be debilitating and disruptive.

Where do they come from? Intrusive thoughts are a direct product of what mental health professionals refer to in a group of diagnoses under the umbrella of anxiety disorders. These include obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or social anxiety, among several others. Each one, though they may differ in terms of symptoms, all share the common symptom of "intrusive thoughts." To clarify: Just because you experience intrusive thoughts does not automatically mean you meet the criteria for a mental health disorder.

Over the last decade, anxiety has accounted for the majority of mental health diagnoses given by professionals on any given day, making it the No. 1 mental health epidemic of our day. It is not surprising, then, that another new social media fad involving intrusive thoughts quickly gained such popular traction.

So, if the trend aims to help people, what's the big deal? As

a clinical counselor, I see red flags all over this trend. And as a pastoral counselor, I see where the enemy, disguised as an angel of light (Rev. 12:9), is using this trend to bring destruction upon its followers' lives.

Throughout this article, we're going to dive into the top five most common groups of intrusive thoughts plaguing our minds today. Using each category we cover, I'm going to shed light from both a clinical and a spiritual perspective on where each type of intrusive thought is rooted, why taking the stance of "letting it win" is dangerous and how to handle it in a way that is both clinically and biblically sound. Let's get started!

## **5. Health Fears**

Do you ever have thoughts like "I'm going to die of cancer" or feel a bump somewhere on your body and think "This is cancer!"? Or perhaps, experience moments of forgetfulness and think, "What if I'm experiencing the first signs of Alzheimer's?" Next thing you know, you're convinced that you're going to die prematurely. Believe it or not, this is a very common type of intrusive thought that falls under the group of health related-fears.

Part of the consequences of mankind's fall is wanting to be in control of our own lives and our own destiny. Unfortunately, since that's not possible, it is often the case that when we undergo a stressful situation, the enemy exploits the fact that we've been under stress for a certain period of time to inject thoughts that exacerbate our already heightened sense of powerlessness. This is because the enemy is trying to capitalize on our stressful state in the hopes that we take his bait by believing one of his lies so that he can disrupt our lives for as long as we're willing to believe those thoughts.

***Breaking news, Spirit-filled stories. Subscribe to Charisma on***

## ***YouTube now!***

I've had patients who were convinced they were going to die of car accidents or they were going to prematurely die of cancer and leave their children orphans. Listen, in Christ, you have the authority to not listen to everything that comes to your mind. God's Word has the power to destroy lies the enemy tries to introduce to you. But you must apply it by not letting a thought get to your heart until you filter it through God's Word.

Here's how to know if it is from the enemy: If a thought you're having is producing fear and anxiety, it is not from God. Refuse delivery—don't let it in. Refuse to believe it. Say out loud, "I don't believe you" and keep moving forward.

## **4. Self-Doubt**

This group of intrusive thoughts often begins with "What if ...". Our brain continuously works hard to protect us from perceived pain, while continuously seeking avenues for perceived pleasure. Part of our brain is a paired structure called the amygdala, also known as the emotional wheelhouse of our brain. The amygdala triggers a surge of emotions when we're in danger, enabling us to quickly escape a potentially dangerous situation and seek safety. The enemy of our souls, who has been studying humanity for centuries, knows how our brain operates so he exploits us by inducing fearful thoughts that correlate with our human needs. For example, to threaten our need for acceptance, our enemy whispers thoughts like, "Nobody likes you," or "Nobody even cares about you." He knows that thoughts like these, once entertained and allowed into your mind and heart, will either make you try to work harder to prove that you are "good enough," which on one end of the spectrum relies on your use of willpower alone to rise above the intrusive thought. or you will align with this new TikTok trend of letting "intrusive thoughts win," thereby succumbing to the enemy's whispers and further sink into a state of

despair. Either way, he wins.

What steps can you take when dealing with intrusive thoughts rooted in self-doubt? First you have to choose who you're going to believe: either God or an outside source. It cannot be both. If it's God and your intrusive thoughts say, "You're a loser," knowing that that's not at all what God calls you in Christ, you have to identify the thought as a lie originating from the enemy, who seeks to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). Stand firm (1 Pet. 5:8), and remind yourself of truths in 1 John 4:4 and Romans 8:31-39.

The devil can't fight against the Word of God, because the Word exposes him as a liar. When you stand against his lies by identifying them, and strengthening yourself using God's Word, as David once did (1 Sam. 30:6), your enemy loses his grip on your mind.

Now that doesn't mean he's not going to try to use any of the other intrusive thoughts, but through time and experience walking with God and pressing in to His Word, you're more capable of identifying when a thought has come to your mind that is not congruent with God's Word, and then casting it down (2 Cor. 10:5).

### **3. Identity and Sexual Orientation**

I have treated patients who have had disturbing thoughts that try to convince them they are gay, even though they are happily married or in a heterosexual relationship. These thoughts are more common among teens and young adults because this is the identity developmental stage in your life. It is during this stage that we begin to explore who we are and try to establish our own identity, separate from our parents.

***Get your FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS today! Stay up to date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!***

Unfortunately, this stage of our lives makes it prime territory for the enemy to sweep right in and start inserting deceitful lies into our minds to warp our sense of identity with thoughts like “How do you know you’re not gay?”, “Have you ever tried to see if you’re at least bi?” or “What’s the harm in at least trying?” The enemy whispers lie after lie hoping you take the bait.

Giving into thoughts like these opens the door for the enemy to wreak havoc on one’s sense of identity and sexual orientation. One of the first main things God set in stone in Genesis when He created people was that He created us male and female (Gen. 1:27). And for those He destined to have a spouse, He destined for them to marry someone of the opposite sex. Any thoughts that are contrary or contradictory to this are straight from the pit of hell, and must be renounced immediately in the name of Jesus. The Bible is very clear that giving in to our sinful nature leads to death, while following the leading of the Holy Spirit leads to life and peace (Rom. 8:6).

Let me be clear: It’s not a sin in itself for evil thoughts about identity confusion or sexual orientation to come to your mind. The enemy is the tempter with no power to make you sin. It is, however, a sin to willingly entertain unholy thoughts and then act on them. I suggest stopping the thought at the entertainment part by saying, “Thank You, Father, that according to Genesis 1:27, You have created me male/female,” (whichever applies to you). And if the thought aims to confuse your sexual orientation, renounce it immediately by saying something to the effect of “I rebuke that thought in the name of Jesus; it is written, ‘If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination’,” (Lev. 20:13).

## **2. Morality**

This cluster of intrusive thoughts deals with acting upon

behaviors that violate your morals. The most common one I have observed is a person having thoughts about cheating on their spouse. Unfortunately, there's unwise counsel out there that seeks to claim that having thoughts like these are the way one's subconscious mind is trying to communicate to them that they're unhappy in their marriage and therefore they should seek happiness elsewhere.

My friends, this is why we must filter any counsel we get through the lens of Scripture.

Entertaining lies can lead to a state known as "sensory acuity." This means that if you believe a false statement and don't reject it, you will become overly fixated on a specific idea or concept that relates to that lie. For example, if you fall for the lie that the reason you're experiencing intrusive thoughts about cheating on your spouse is that deep down you're unhappy, you will become hyperfocused on everything your spouse does that makes you unhappy. Soon enough, that's all you will think about. Meanwhile, the enemy is pulling strings and possibly even presenting an alternative to your spouse to you so that you can act on the intrusive thoughts he sent you in the first place.

How do you combat these types of intrusive thoughts? Understand that the enemy works in the dark. Therefore, he's going to induce feelings of shame so that you'd shy away from talking to anybody about this. Resist the urge to keep your thoughts a secret. Do the opposite, and expose the lie as a lie to a person in your life who is Spirit-led, someone you are certain spends time with the Lord and can understand that your mind is under attack so they can stand in the gap with you and for you to pray against such attacks.

Understand that your enemy is deceptive in nature, the prowling lion desperate to devour every victim it can. So if you don't expose his lies immediately, he's going to use deceitful measures to amplify these intrusive thoughts. He

will induce negative thoughts when you're around your spouse by trying to get you to focus on things that you may not like about them. Meanwhile the enemy will start introducing someone, a coworker perhaps or a friend of the opposite sex, who is desirable to your eye. Flee any sort of temptation (1 Cor. 6:18), be on guard (1 Cor. 16:13) and most importantly, understand that this thought absolutely did not originate from your subconscious mind as if it's trying to send you a message. Rather, rebuke the enemy's lie that originated from that enemy of our souls, who is trying to bring destruction on you, your marriage and your life.

## **1. Harm**

Whether it's the urge to jump in front of an oncoming train or images of you harming someone, these thoughts are distressing to their recipients and can even create confusion and fear such that you feel like you can't trust yourself. You may even find yourself questioning your sanity or asking if you're really capable of doing any such gruesome thing. Much like the other groups of intrusive thoughts, letting these thoughts have free reign will bring nothing but destruction to your life. Intrusive thoughts in general are disturbing, but ones specific to inducing harm on yourself or to others, are particularly painful; especially when they come out of nowhere.

From a clinical standpoint, thoughts like these often indicate that your fight or flight response has been activated. If you take a step back, there must be some external stressors that you have been experiencing in your life recently, over a period of weeks to several months. You've likely tried your best to persist through the stressors, and so what's happened is your brain has been so exhausted trying to persevere through stressful situations that it is in a vulnerable state.

Much as we're more prone to get sick when our immune system is down, this is when the enemy of your soul comes in, exploits

your state of exhaustion and induces thoughts of self-harm and/or thoughts of harming others.

Through the years, I've had people say, "These thoughts/images came out of nowhere!" which makes them very disturbing to their recipient. If you're experiencing these types of intrusive thoughts, please understand that this is not who you are as a person. These thoughts, however gruesome they may be, do not attest to your character. Talk with a professional Christian counselor.

One of the best ways to resist these thoughts is to make sure that you are getting enough rest and eating healthy. Think about the prophet Elijah when he was feeling hopeless and suicidal; he needed rest and food (1 Kings 19). Those two alone can do wonders for our mental well-being.

Keep in mind, harm-related intrusive thoughts, especially if they've come out of nowhere, are an indication that there are unprocessed stressors going on. Unprocessed emotions make you vulnerable for the enemy to insert awful thoughts in your mind. So definitely talk to a professional Christian counselor to work through these stressors. And never ever act on the compulsions.

## **Next Steps**

You may not be able to control when your enemy shows up trying to tempt you or deceive you with lies. What you can do, however, is exercise authority over the thoughts he tries to insert your way. And remember, no matter how bad the thoughts may be, you are not helpless to them, because in Christ you are not defeated—your enemy is (Col. 2:15)! By planting intrusive thoughts in your mind, he is trespassing where he doesn't belong. When you sense an intrusive thought, start praising the Lord out loud and thank Him for all He has done for you. Then watch the enemy flee as fast as he came in.

***Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy***



## ***Spirit is doing around the world!***

**Kenza Haddock, LPCS, BCPC,** is a licensed professional counselor supervisor and an accredited clinical trauma specialist with expertise in treating complex mental health conditions through both clinical and biblical methods. A former Muslim, she has spoken at conferences and churches and been featured in numerous news outlets regarding the intersection of Christianity and mental health counseling. Haddock and her husband own Oceanic Counseling Group LLC, an outpatient mental health agency headquartered in South Carolina. She also was a cofounder of the #healSC campaign, which raised awareness about mental health issues. Her new book, *The Three Enemies of Your Mental Health*, releases this October and is available now to be preordered through Amazon.