

## The Power of Thought

**HOOK** → **70,000 thoughts a day**. According to the article, “Changing your Mind – One Thought at a Time,” humans **“have approximately 70,000 thoughts per day.”** **Research is discovering that we can impact those thoughts and what we learn for the rest of our lives.** As a teacher, I find this welcomed and exciting news. Many of my 8<sup>th</sup> grade students believe that if they are not good at a particular subject, like math or reading, they never will be. But research shows that this is not true. Once you understand how the brain learns, you can choose to increase your brain power by choosing simple behaviors and focusing on expectations.

**S.P. 1** → To begin with, the human brain is an organ that continues to grow and transform all your life. In the article, “Changing Your Mind – One thought at a Time,” the reader learns about **“plasticity,”** the official term for the brain’s flexibility and continued growth. The article also compares the brain to a library filled with shelves of memory and understanding. The hippocampus is like a librarian that **“shelves”** your memories in specific places in your brain, depending whether or not they are long-term memories or short-term memories. According to this article, memory and understanding go hand-in-hand, each helping the other. Furthermore, learning happens when your brain creates pathways – and that happens as a result of experience, instruction, and nurturing your imagination.

**S.P. 2** → When you understand how your brain learns, you can start to make a difference in your own learning. Two studies mentioned in the article, “Our Brains: For Better or for Worse,” deal with the influences of exercise and of sleep. The first experiment studied the effect of exercise. Two groups were compared after **“completing mazes of varying levels of difficulty,”** within a certain time limit. The group who exercised a mere ten minutes, before being tested, performed significantly better. Similar results were found when studying the effect of sleep on the brain. The group that received less than normal sleep performed significantly lower. Simple behavior like getting exercise and enough sleep can increase your brain power.

**S.P. 3** → In addition to exercise and sleep, you can increase your brain power by being aware of your thoughts and expectations. According to “Changing Your Mind-One Thought at a Time,” the more you think a thought, the more likely that thought will form a pathway that makes it easier to be repeated. That’s kind of like The Little Train That Could. When all the big trains believed they could not make it to the top of the hill, they set themselves up for failure. But when the Little Train repeated to herself, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can,” she created a pathway that helped her learn how to overcome the challenge of the big hill. The third experiment in the article, “Our Brains: for Better or For Worse,” deals with this very topic – the effect of positive or negative expectations on academic performance. After giving 500 college Freshmen an Expectation Test and determining whether subjects **“thought positively or negatively,”** the results concluded that those who scored highest for positive expectations were the most successful their Freshman year. The Expectations Test turned out to be a better predictor for success than the formula used by the college. Being aware of your thoughts and focusing on positive expectations is important for success in learning.

Understanding how you learn and how the brain works can help you be a better learner. When you choose behaviors like getting exercise and enough sleep, as well as choosing positive attitudes and expectations, you can help shape **those 70,000 thoughts you have a day.** I love knowing I can help my students and I can help myself to **grow our brain power the rest of our lives.**

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