

https://www.idahostatejournal.com/business_journal/east_idaho/rotary-club-using-local-womans-practical-manual-to-help-people-turn-negative-thoughts-into-positive/article_39ec3bdc-5968-5d52-9606-4a37130f538e.html

FEATURED

Rotary club using local woman's practical manual to help people turn negative thoughts into positive ones

By Danae Lenz dlenz@journalnet.com
May 25, 2021



Heather Murray

POCATELLO — Heather Murray is obsessed with thinking about thinking.

Specifically, she wants to help people take control over their own thoughts so that children can become better adults and so that adults can become better friends, spouses, employees and community members.

Her new book, “Think GET A GRIP,” aims to do just that. The book, which is based on principles of cognitive behavioral therapy, is a digestible step-by-step instruction manual on how to think better and healthier.



Murray, who lives in Pocatello, says in the book, “‘GET A GRIP’ means I actually choose the thoughts I think because they are what control my emotions, which in turn impact my actions.”

Murray isn’t a psychologist, but she had a nearly four-decade career in education — both as a teacher and as an administrator. The things she saw in her career and her own experience in changing her perpetually negative thoughts into positive ones inspired her to write the self-published book.

In the book, she says, “Knowing what I know, and therefore able to choose my own thoughts, feelings, and actions, I can’t stand idly by watching children and adults become overwhelmed. It has always gotten under my skin that we don’t intentionally teach the fundamental skills of emotional intelligence during the 13 long years of school. ... In fact, it gets so far under my skin that I am like the movie characters in the 1976 film ‘Network’ who stick their heads out of their house window and yell at the top of their lungs, ‘I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!’”

A MANUAL FOR A BETTER LIFE

Now, with the help of Pocatello’s Centennial Rotary Club, she is looking to help people at local businesses and organizations “get a grip” on their thoughts as well.

Larry Gebhardt, a member of the club, read the book and told Murray it would be a good community project.

“I was thinking just education, just getting it into schools because I would love for young kids to be able to think these thoughts early rather than later in life. But he said this would be better in terms of employment or employees,” Murray told the East Idaho Business Journal. “I always wanted to improve our community. I can’t do much globally or nationally, but I can do locally.”

She agreed to the idea, and they wrote a winning grant proposal, ultimately receiving funds from Idaho’s Rotary District. Centennial Rotary Club used some of its own money to get the idea off the ground as well.

They put together a beta testing group, which gave them positive feedback, and now they’re officially launching their program by reaching out to different businesses and organizations in town to see if they’re interested in using Murray’s book to help their employees “get a grip.”

Gebhardt told the East Idaho Business Journal that the Get a Grip project “overlaps three of Rotary International’s seven areas of focus: disease prevention and treatment, basic education and literacy, and economic and community development.”

He said that mental health challenges can affect a person’s performance, so teaching them tools that help them control their thoughts can have a positive impact on a business, as well as on the individual.

“Mental health challenges impact a person’s EQ, or emotional quotient, which is a measure of their interpersonal and communication skills needed in leadership and group dynamics,” Gebhardt said. “In today’s world of uncertainties, changes, and expectations our leaders should have strong personal control of their thoughts, feelings, and actions so that they can reliably and confidently relate to and communicate with others. Some mental health challenges caused

by trauma require professional counseling. Most of our anxieties, fears and self-doubts prove to be untrue. Most of these challenges can be understood to achieve wellness through shared wisdom and advice packaged in the Get a Grip project.”

While some employees might scoff at being given additional work to do, Murray says she's observed that once people start working their way through her book, they see how it's helping and want to continue.

“What I've found is people want to do it because it's to their benefit,” she said. “It's for their success in leading that life that they desire. They don't see it as homework; they see it as, ‘I want to do this.’”

And the potential benefits include not only having healthier thoughts about yourself but also healthier thoughts in relation to other people — which can help with employees who work a lot with the public and with interpersonal relationships among coworkers.

“(It's) learning how you think and then turning that around and thinking, ‘Ah, that's why that person is so cranky,’” Murray said. “Or changing your thought from ‘That person is so cranky, I can't stand them,’ you can turn it around and think different thoughts.”

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS IN THE BOOK?

In writing the book, it was important to Murray to keep the writing simple. Psychology is a passion of hers, and she says that so much of the literature out there — even the books meant to be read by people who aren't experts — is written in language that makes it hard for many people to get through.

“Think GET A GRIP” is not like that.

“I wanted anyone who wants to learn this to be able to learn it, not just people who love this stuff, but just somebody who could use some help,” Murray said. “It is the way I write. I am a mathematician at heart. I'm not a writer, and I write like I talk — like I'm teaching.”

While it is at its heart a psychology book, it's written in simple language and Murray uses personal stories to get her point across, which makes it feel less academic and more like a memoir.

“I wanted it to be fun to read so that it would be a quick read so you wouldn't put it down, you would want to read more,” she said. “The little stories, I was hopeful that that would make people read on.”

A theme among most of the advice in this book is simply becoming more aware that you are thinking in the first place and then processing through what you are thinking about.

The book is broken down into 13 skills to learn and is intended to be used as a workbook over the course of either 13 or six weeks.

The 13 skills are:

- Catching yourself thinking
- Managing the voice in your head
- Asking yourself, "Is what I'm thinking true?"
- Limiting negative repetitive thinking
- Debunking your limiting beliefs
- Managing fear
- Managing worry
- Controlling judgement
- Asking yourself, "Am I...?"
- Recognizing your triggers
- Planning ahead for emotions
- Setting boundaries
- Mind mapping

In addition to those skills that are tackled each week, throughout the process, Murray's students will journal their gratitude each morning and write down the things that brought them joy that day at night.

While Murray now has a solid grip on her own thoughts, she says she's a worrier by nature. The 13 steps laid out in the book are the steps she uses on a daily basis to control her own thoughts.

"These are my own demons. I have a very harsh inner monologue, very harsh, and I used to believe that everything I thought was true," she said. "They're just the things that are part of my being."

Learning how to think better is essential to being able to tackle the things life throws at you, Murray says.

She says in the book, "Much of what happens on a daily basis, when we least expect it, involves overwhelming emotions. Many demands of living, both large and small ... ruffle our feathers and require that we control our thoughts. As I worked on getting a grip, I learned that many days I just have to push through. I learned that even though experiences can be scary, I can't stand like a deer in the headlights, blinded by the bright lights of fear. And finally, I learned that I can't wallow in regret — I must change my negative thinking."

Though the book is meant to be used by going through all 13 steps week by week, Murray said that if you can only focus on one, it should be the step where you learn to ask yourself, "Is what I'm thinking true?"

"Even in terms of media or the things that you're told or the stuff coming down the pike, asking, 'Is that true?' is very important," she said. "Google and all those different things, they know how to track you. They know how to send you messages because of what you've been looking at, so you always have to be gauging: Is that true? Or with social media, everybody posts only the best of their lives and it makes kids specifically but even grownups feel badly when they look at this lovely life that they see on their friend's post. And you just have to say, 'Is that true?' Well, no. First of all, they Photoshopped the photo and secondly they only post the best of the best."

Murray's hope is that her book will change people's lives for the better. She wants people to understand that it will take work — but if you're willing to put in the work, this is something you can learn.

"Through calculus, anybody can learn math. If you want to put in the work, you can do it," she said. "I approached it that way. ... That's how I approach learning is you've got to meet them where they are so they can learn it if they have the desire."

"Think GET A GRIP" can be purchased on Amazon. For more information or to get your organization involved with the Rotary club's program, contact Murray at thinkgetagrip@gmail.com.