

Name the head-chatter threats

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To change the way you feel, when your head-chatter is hammering away on your emergency button, you definitely need to positively disengage from the head-chatter. *Naming the threat* is a tool to give you the leverage when the head-chatter is particularly engaging.

This is the mind-body connection in action. This is all about *meaning* and *response*. There is the meaning (mind) and there is the response (body). There is the meaning that says “threat” and there is the response that feels threatened. So, we address the threat to change the way we feel.

It’s important to understand that we’re talking about skills to use in the heat of the moment. We understand that in the heat of the moment it takes courage to turn and face your threats. But it’s not just courage that we need. We also need preparation and the skills to make it all work.

Be prepared by having your threats named and understood. We’re talking about your head-chatter threats. You need names. You need your list of your favourite threats. This list needs to be on your ‘utility belt’, ready to go, in the heat of the moment.

Your threats

You, as an individual will not have an endless list of head-chatter threats in your life. You probably have more than one, but not an endless list.

For example, think of your values, the things that you want in life. You wouldn’t have just one value. Your head-chatter threats will be, at the very least, the flipside of your values.

You can think of your head-chatter threats as like a playlist. You could say that you have a list of Favorites. Your list of favourite threats will

thankfully be short. There is no need to fire up more head-chatter on the trigger of endless threats. Not only will the list be short but you will be able to rank your threats in order of their daily importance to you.

Your aim is to arrive at a short list that covers all the important button-banging meanings in your head-chatter. This is possible. Much of the hard work has already been done for you.

For example, you don’t have to spend any time dreaming up names for your threats. Here, a lot of thought has already gone into compiling a list of 10 (Table 1).

There is also a threat thesaurus (Table 2) to help clarify the meanings of the threat labels. Also, the threat thesaurus ensures that all the subtle variations for each threat is covered by the list of 10.

List of 10 head-chatter threats

Arguably, we only need a list of 10 threats to cover the field as seen in Table 1. We don’t need an endless list of threats. We don’t need to create more confusion in our minds. We need clarity through well-considered simplicity.

The list needs to cover the ground without containing redundancies or significant overlap of meaning. In other words, each label represents a meaning of its own and this meaning is not found in the other 9 labels.

The 10 threats listed are the sufficient and necessary labels to cover all head-chatter content. Test it out as we go. If we are proven wrong, by finding a threat that is not listed, then we add this new threat to the list. For the time being, see how you go with 10 to start with.

In any case, not all 10 threats will apply to you

in any significant way. You only need to focus your attention on those threats that have significance to you. These are the button bangers. We definitely need to know about our button banging head-chatter threats.

Table 1: List of head-chatter threats

Abuse	Harm will come one way or other
Imperfection	The rights and wrongs
Abandonment	I'll end up on my own
Subjugation	I have no say
Shame	They judge me
Failure	I'll never get it
Catastrophe	Something really bad will happen
Deprivation	I always miss-out
Self-sacrifice	They take advantage of me
Invalidation	I don't seem to matter

The threat thesaurus

To ensure that the list of 10 covers the ground and accounts for all head-chatter threats, we have the threat thesaurus as seen in Table 2.

The main point of the thesaurus is to ensure that the list is as short as possible and that no threat is left out.

For example, you could argue that “awfulness” is a threat on its own. But can we say that awfulizing is an expression of *imperfection*? If this is the case then we just need the one label. The label of *imperfection* not only covers awfulness, but it also covers the threats of, chaos, disruption, stupidity, ignorance, injustice, immorality, misconduct, etc.

Take the example of the *threat of persecution*. We could just say that it is an expression of *abuse* head-chatter. The label *abuse* covers the ground for persecution, but I also cover the threats of mistreatment, negligence, ignorance, exploitation, harm, victimisation, damage, injury, etc.

Table 2: the threat thesaurus

Abuse	Mistreatment, negligence, ignorance, exploitation, harm, persecution, victimisation, damage, injury
Imperfection	Disruption, chaos, stupidity, ignorance, injustice, immorality, misconduct, awfulness
Abandonment	Desertion, neglect, rejection, betrayal, isolation, exclusion, annihilation
Subjugation	Oppression, domination, control, enslavement, suppression, powerlessness, submission
Shame	Humiliation, exposure, disgrace, embracement, dishonour, ridicule, scandal, mortification, disrepute
Failure	Inadequacy, defeat, collapse, downfall, setback, breakdown, shortcoming, ruin
Catastrophe	Disaster, calamity, devastation, crisis, tragedy, mayhem
Deprivation	Missing-out, loss, scarcity, hardship, deficiency, shortage, impoverishment
Self-sacrifice	Exploitation, used, unfairness, surrender, self-denial
Invalidation	Rejection, dismissal, negation, discredited, devaluation, exclusion, disregarded

Find your threats

You will find your threats in your head-chatter. You can develop the skill of tuning your ear to listen to the head-chatter, to learn from it.

To make it possible, there are three considerations...

1. Look past being triggered in the first place. This is a useful attitude to develop. It focuses your attention on a resolution rather than retribution. The sooner you arrive at a resolution, the sooner the suffering will be over.
2. Identify and accept the elements of truth. This means that there just might be something that actually has to be done. For example, you might have to actually upgrade your skills, or you might actually have to apologise to that person, or you really might have to find a better way to say it, etc.

3. The head-chatter, what does it *sound-like*? This is where you develop the habit of tuning your ear to your head-chatter with Mindful observation. So, over and above the *elements of truth*, what's actually going on? What's the threat?

Tune your ear

Ear-tuning, here, refers to the skill of listening to your head-chatter with Mindful observation. This means that you are open to learning from your head-chatter.

To learn from your head-chatter you look past the outrage for being triggered in the first place. Also, you accept the elements of truth as **elements** of truth (read *The Head-Chatter Honey trap*).

Sounds-like

Let's do a series of exercises to illustrate this essential skill. The skill is to listen to your head-chatter in a particular way. Take these examples in Table 3. Read each example to see if you can empathise with button banging meaning in each example.

Table 3: Examples 1

"If I make a mistake everyone will think I'm a fool"
 "I can tell you they won't get away with this nonsense"
 "I won't give them the opportunity to prove me wrong"
 "Only fools get it wrong"
 "I must meet everyone's expectations to get their respect"
 "Why on earth did they do it that way"

Can you empathise with these statements in Table 3 to feel the *threat*? You could say that these examples *sound-like* the threat of *imperfection*. Imperfection may not be one of your threats. All the same you can join-in the empathetic exercise to experience the threat of imperfection in the Table 3 examples.

For this exercise, you are looking for the meaning. Therefore, there is no need to rationalise, analyse or challenge the meaning. You can just feel it. Your mind does the reading and your body does the feeling; feeling is not a theory.

In the example above, we looked at head-

chatter that *sounds-like* the threat of imperfection. See if you can pick what these next examples in Table 4 *sound-like* as a head-chatter threat.

Table 4: Example 2

"If people knew the real me they'd run a mile"
 "Making a mistake in public is the worst thing ever"
 "Honestly I can't let anyone see the real me"
 "If I don't live up to their expectations, I'll die"
 "People judge me"

Can you empathise with the Table 4 statements to feel the threat? So, what do these statements *sound-like*? Straight up, you'd say that it's not the same sound as imperfection. You could say, they *sound-like* the threat of *shame*. Even if shame is not one of your threats, can you all the same feel/empathise the shame in the Table 4 examples?

Straight up we have two sets of head-chatter samples that sound different. The first examples sound like threat of imperfection – *the rights and the wrongs*. The second examples *sound-like* shame – *they judge me*. With a bit of practise, it wouldn't be hard to tell the difference between *imperfection* or *shame* head-chatter.

See if you can pick the threat for this third set of examples in Table 5. These examples sound different to both imperfection and shame.

Table 5: Example 3

"She keeps on getting text messages"
 "I'm not good enough to keep him with me"
 "She'll find someone better and forget about me"
 "Why isn't he here who's he with I wonder"
 "People don't stay in my life for long I'm just going to end up alone"

If you empathise with these examples and you feel *abandonment* then you're on the right track. The point being that abandonment does not sound the same as imperfection or shame.

So, what sounds do you have going around in your head? What do your stories *sound-like*?

Thought Sorter

The Thought Sorter will help you to name those significant button banging head-chatter threats. At the very least you will have a list of likely suspects. This is a start. You can work with this information, to make a difference to how you feel.

The Thought Sorter (link below) presents 10 head-chatter examples for each of the 10 threats.

Read through each set of ten head-chatter examples. Do not skip over examples because you think that you've "got it". Read each example and decide whether it *sounds-like it could come from your head-chatter*. If yes, then tick the box for that example.

See how many items you tick for each threat. Or for that matter, see how many items you don't tick for each threat.

You will probably tick at least one item for each of the threats. But which of the threats get many ticks?

The number of ticks is your score for that threat. Write the score in the box provided for each threat in turn.

To make sense of your scores, fill out the *Likely Suspects* form at the end of the Thought Sorter.

Find your highest score and write the threat name on Line 1 on the Likely Suspects form. Then find your second highest score and write this threat name on Line 2. Proceed writing in the names of the threat and the score, from highest to lowest.

Likely Suspects

The only threats that will be of much interest to you are the ones with most meaning to you. These would be the threats at the top of the list. As you look down the list the threats would presumably be less meaningful to you.

Cut-offs for the Suspect List

The main outcome that you need from the Thought Sorter is a short list of Likely Suspects. Here are some considerations to help you to

decide where the cutoff is.

What we're looking for are those threats with a score of more than 5.

If you score 5 or less for any threat then this could mean that it's not so significant for you. In other words, your score of 5 is possibly a 50/50 chance that the threat applies to you in any significant way. A score of less than 5 is not showing a bias for that threat. We are looking for the bias.

If you have a number of threats with a score of 6 or more, then you can conclude that you have a bias for those threats. In the context of the Thought Sorter, these will be your Likely Suspects.

If you find that your scores are not easily interpreted, then you can always go back over the items to see if you haven't over-identified or under-identified.

Just be real in your self-assessment. The results of the exercise are for your eyes only. The results will be meaningful to you and of no interest to other people.

In the long-term you will convert your list of Likely Suspect into you list of Favourites. With a list of suspects, you have a head-start. Much of the work is done. It's the ongoing Mindful observations, the noticing and focusing that will create the sustainable ability to change the way you feel.

- [Thought Sorter: phone](#)
- [Thought Sorter: PDF](#)

Resources

To make life easier for you, there are resources here for you to tap into.

- [The Skillful Mind Perspective articles.](#)
- [Telehealth coaching sessions.](#)

The Skillful Mind articles can be a great self-help resource. Telehealth consultations will speed up your efforts. You probably can do it on your own, but you can lighten the load.

With telehealth consultations your efforts will be solid and sustainable. Phone for an appointment.