

Monkey Mind

Monkey Mind is a Buddhist term we will be using frequently in coaching. It describes the inner dialogue we all experience that is full of criticism, judgments, self doubt, and “what ifs.” In our coaching we want to recognize Monkey Mind when it surfaces and learn how to disengage with it as soon as possible. So let’s look more closely at Monkey Mind so we are familiar with how it works and how it shows up in coaching and in our lives.

Monkey Mind Chatter

Monkey Mind chatters loudly when we want to change the status quo—even if the status quo is something we long to leave behind. It doesn’t like change, it doesn’t like to take risks, and it doesn’t appreciate any steps we take toward the Border, into new territory.

Monkey Mind chatter gets stirred up when we try to analyze it, suppress it, or argue with it. To quiet the chatter we turn our attention away from the chatter. We let it move into the background so Monkey Mind won’t hinder us. The noise of the chatter won’t go away, but it won’t be aimed in our direction.

Successful people have learned to recognize that they will always have fears, doubts, and worries when they begin to take action. It is inevitable on this hero’s journey. They see that Monkey Mind is not relevant to getting their dreams in life. They focus instead on energizing their goals.

In our coaching we will distinguish three things: what is Monkey Mind, what is your voice of wisdom, and what is *true* about the situation. In this way, your action is based on what has meaning for you rather than upon your doubts and worries.

The Truth About Monkey Mind

Although we mentioned this above, it’s important to underscore that Monkey Mind is inevitable as you take action on your most precious ideas, dreams, and vision. Monkey Mind is not an invalidation of you or your goal. On the contrary, the fact that you’re experiencing Monkey Mind says that you are truly up to something big.

For example, you may have noticed Monkey Mind when you first considered getting a coach. All those customary self-limiting conversations could have surfaced—all the reasons why *not* to proceed with your success and accomplishment. It’s natural. You’ll probably experience Monkey Mind as we support you in going ahead with your plans. One of the things your coach will ask you to do is to look at what Monkey Mind symptom(s) you’re responding to in the moment. We won’t analyze them, but you’ll learn to simply observe them as we move ahead.

Reflection:

Spend time listening and noticing: What are some of your most common Monkey Mind symptoms?

Monkey Mind Symptoms Checklist ✓

	Monkey Mind Symptom	Definitions & Examples
1.	Being vague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think I understand what you're getting at but I'm really not sure. • Maybe I'll do it sometime next month. • I think I'll try to get it done.
2.	Scarcity thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things are never going to get any better. • I don't have enough brains, money, time, etc.
3.	Talking of the past or the future as if it is the present	<p>Forecasting what will be or what has been.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've been down this road before. • You know things will be better for me when I get this project out of the way.
4.	Defensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you mean I'm not trying? I'm trying harder than you think.
5.	Taking things personally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can't believe she talked to me that way.
6.	Comparison	<p>Comparing how you're doing with your judgment of how someone else is doing. In other words, comparing your insides to someone's outsides.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'll never be as good as the other people in my department.
7.	Resignation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's just too hard and I'm not sure it serves people anyway. • This won't make a difference; things might as well just stay the way they are.
8.	Being a victim or martyr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I tried so hard and gave so much, but nobody responded. • When you reach a certain age, no one will hire you.
9.	Either-or thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I don't have five clients by next week, I might as well just give up. • Either I get to use my credit card or I'll feel deprived.
10.	Excuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I couldn't make it because I had more important things to do. • I would have gotten that project in but the email system went down.
11.	Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wasn't going to let going for this goal ruin my weekend, so that's why I didn't make any calls.
12.	Rationalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to do this, but you must understand I wear many hats and have a lot of pressure. • Look, everyone speeds; so I'm sure 10 MPH over the speed limit is built into the system.
13.	Fragmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's a part of me that doesn't have a clue. • If I can pull all the pieces floating around in my head together, then I'll be okay. • I can't help it. Part of me just really wants to blow this off.
14.	Deflection	<p><i>Making a joke that deflects/derails the conversation and takes attention off of you.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hey, I know I have money in the bank. I still have checks left!
15.	Solidifying	<p><i>Treating an abstract concept as though it were an object in physical reality.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My opinion is rock solid. I'm known to be a very certain person. • I have low self-esteem. That's just the way it is.
16.	Bargaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I pay my bills on time this month, I'll deserve a big treat this weekend.
17.	Impulsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want what I want and I want it <i>now</i>. • My goal is to have 25 new clients by the end of next month. • I'm quitting my job tomorrow to start coaching.
18.	Qualifying statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well, maybe, if I get enough time, I <u>could</u> finish that project.
19.	Complaining/ Petulance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do fine on my own. It's just with all this pressure that I fail.
20.	Being Paranoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She doesn't understand what I'm saying. She obviously doesn't care. • Nobody listens to me. They think I don't have anything to say.