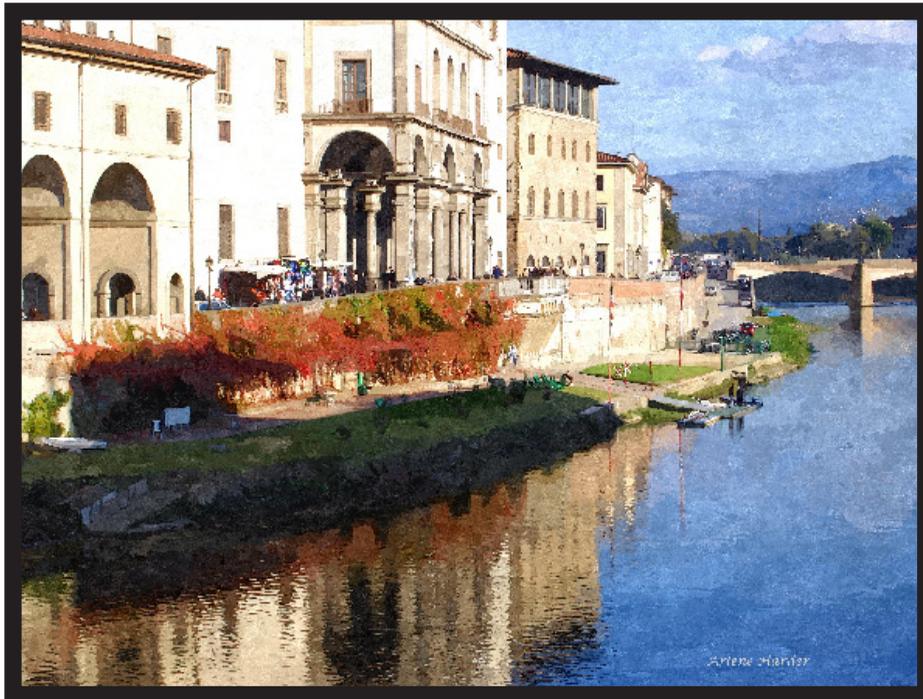


This card—**Five Things Not to Think About**—is Number 8 in a series of “Diversions for You and Your Friends” created by Arlene Harder, MA, MFT, Support4Change Blog.

Being sick or having a major problem in your life is a pain in the neck. This is because, in large part, any situation that negatively impacts your life forces you to think about *it*, rather than more pleasant things. That is why this card is designed to **take your mind off your troubles**, at least for a while—and you can find more diversions every Monday on the blog.

(Be sure to read to the end of Page Four.)



Imagine you are visiting Florence and are standing on a bridge looking at this scene. Don't “think” about it, just do it.

Today I want to introduce you to David Spero. He is a nurse who has multiple sclerosis and works with, and writes about, people with chronic disease. He gave me permission to use

some of his work on a website I ran on support for cancer and healing.

Since then, he created a blog with some of the most comforting and encouraging posts you will find on the Internet. They are spiritual and inspirational in a way that touches me deeply. As one of his readers wrote in a comment, his "subtly healing stories are never preaching; they simply offer guidance and wisdom of the ages."

Today I bring you his post called "Five Things Not to Think About."

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"Name one thing that you can do better without thinking," my science loving friend Parrish challenged. It took me a while to call them to mind, but here are five such things. It turns out a pretty important list. If you think all the time, you will miss out on the best life has to offer and cause a lot of grief in the process. Give your thinking brain some time off when you want to:

**Appreciate and create beauty.** What does thinking have to do with appreciating a work of art, a piece of music, a sunset or a beautiful body? When you want to create, do you think about "Oh, let me put some red here and some blue there," or do you just do what pleases you?

We might do some thinking after we're done, for revisions or edits. Novelist James Ellison wrote, "You write your first draft with your heart, and you rewrite with your head." The creative force is the energy of life, the source of ideas and beauty. The thinking brain can putter around and fix things up, but it can't create.

*[This definitely applies to imagining that you are in the scene in Florence. Just let yourself "be" there without giving it a great deal of thought. If you try to analyze it, you will miss the pleasure of immersing yourself in a wonderful city.]*

**Giving and receiving love.** Does thinking help you find love? For me, it more often interferes with noticing the love that is there. The brain can keep us away from love, because it might be dangerous. That's the brain's function; to protect us from our hearts' rashness and the world's menace. It doesn't help find love, give love, or accept love from others.

**Laughter and humor.** There are thoughtful jokes. "Dr. Pavlov is sitting in a bar having a beer. A phone goes off. Pavlov jumps up, swats his forehead and says, "Oh shit. I forgot to feed the dog." (Pause for laughter.) Most things that make us laugh aren't so cerebral, though. They're funny until you think about them too much. When we stop evaluating what we do, we can sit back and laugh at ourselves. If we analyze our behavior or others', we can't.

**Relaxation.** Probably, most of us have experienced how thinking can make us nervous and wind us up. Physical sensation, breathing, becoming lost in a sensation or an activity calms us down. I was walking in a redwood grove last week and suddenly realized that I couldn't hear the deep silence, couldn't feel the peace, because my brain was making too much noise with useless thoughts. I need to avoid that habit.

**Physical performance.** When a baseball player swings a bat at a ball, he does not think about it. If he did, the ball would be past him before he ever got the bat around. A jazz musician doesn't think about her solo while playing it nor a dancer about her steps while performing them.

The value of thoughtlessness particularly applies to sex. Both men and women can get distracted by thought and fail to experience the sensory delights their bodies are having. Thinking about sex is the opposite of doing it. Thinking in general is the opposite of experiencing.

Have you gone through days of continuous thought, stressful thoughts like worry or excited ones like planning? You get to the end of the day and can't remember a thing

you did. You missed it all. I hate it when that happens, and I try not to have days like that. Meditating helps. I know I still need to think sometimes, but maybe a lot less than I do. Save the brain for what it evolved for, solving real problems, and give it a rest when you want to create, love, laugh, relax, or be sexy.

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When I read this post of David Spero's, I thought about a friend of mine who has cancer. She tries very hard to discover the "reason" *why*. She keeps ruminating on the "lesson" she feels she *needs* to learn from this experience.

But I wonder whether all this "thinking" actually prevents her from allowing love, or the spirit of God if you will, to enter her heart and to simply hear, "Life is what it is. You don't need to know how the weeds got into your garden in order to discover a way to get them out."

#### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Doing nothing is hard. You never know when you are finished."  
— *Anonymous*

*I hope this card helps you create a little  
peace, joy and love in your life*