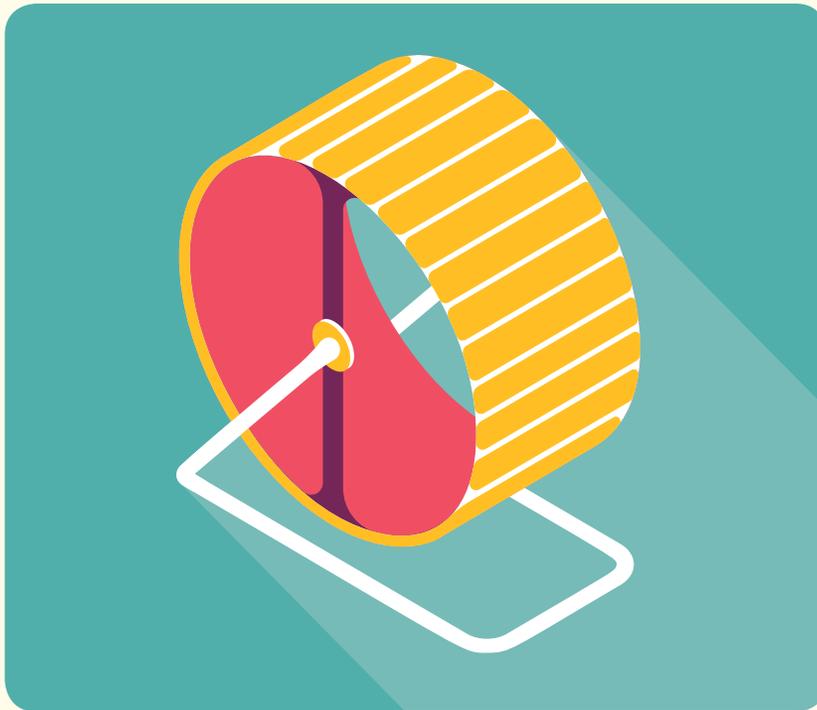


“When you have to leave your comfort zone, this is when you tune into the voice that is a running commentary in your head...”

The RAT Trap:

How to stop your RAtional mind sabotaging your success

When that inner voice tries to shake your confidence, learn how to silence it, says Andro Donovan



When everything in your life is going well and you are having normal, familiar and comfortable experiences, you may never even notice the existence of your inner voice. However, as soon as you experience challenges, difficulties or people who are either blocking you from what you want or telling you how to do things, it's like a red rag to a bull.

When you have to leave your comfort

zone, this is when you tune into the voice that is a running commentary in your head. It starts off something like this...“Oh no! I'm going to have to speak aloud, or share views in the scary boardroom. Oh no! Perhaps I'll have to get up and go to the front and do the whole presentation...” and then goes on to give you lots of suggestions to get out of this uncomfortable situation. “Maybe you should go to the loo and avoid

having to talk? Look away so you won't be asked!” Sound familiar?

Meet your RAT

This is a good time to introduce you to a little character. Imagine a very large RAT, gnawing away at your thoughts, your dreams, your best-laid plans.

This RAT is a metaphor for RATIONAL MIND. The rational mind has one main role in life, and that is to keep you safe or, to put it a better way, keep you surviving. The primary driver for the RAtional mind is – your survival.

If life presents you with a risky choice, this RAT gets very loud in your head and begins to chatter away at a million miles an hour, normally arguing for your limitations.

Your RATTY tape recordings

Imagine your RAT sitting in your brain between your eyes. Like a secret video camera, it captures on tape every experience you have ever had in life that made a deep impression on you.

The RAT sits in the middle of two piles of videotapes. The pile on the right is everything in life you did badly, where you failed, screwed up, hurt yourself, or looked stupid. We'll call these 'toxic trauma tapes'.

On the left, RAT has a pile of tapes of you being great, successful winning and achieving. We'll call these your 'big you up tapes'.

The toxic trauma tapes

Every time life presents you with similar, undesirable circumstances, RAT replays that toxic tape, and you automatically relive all the feelings, emotions and physical sensations. The toxic trauma tapes are very difficult to erase from your memory banks. RAT's intention is to keep you safe and stop you from repeating the same mistake that historically caused you pain or embarrassment. To make the message even more powerful, RAT simultaneously gives you a stream of negative and limiting self-talk to stop you in your tracks and cause you to make a different decision. Decisions that will keep you in your comfort zone and safe.

The 'big you up' tapes

On the other hand, we must remember that >>

RAT also has a pile of tapes on the left-hand side. These are all the experiences where you looked cool, you were winning; tapes of past experiences where you were successful. Those of us who have had a life of positive and good experiences have an easier time, as RAT will replay encouraging self-talk. On these occasions, RAT can be your best friend, encouraging you to take a risk based on past (positive) experience.

Fear and excitement are one and the same

Fight, fright or flight sensations, as they are sometimes called, occur when RAT picks up on threatening danger signals: a physical threat – for example, we are about to be mugged, or a mental threat – someone saying ‘no’ to us when we are trying to get our way.

The physical sensations of fear – heart beating faster, sweaty hands, butterflies in the tummy – are remarkably similar to the physical sensations of excitement.

In other words, adrenaline pumped through the body always creates the same physical sensations. However, RAT puts the experience through different software. When RAT wants to get us out of a dangerous situation, RAT pulls on the adrenaline lever and gives us all these physical sensations. Not only that, he adds in some very powerful instructions: “This is scary, let’s get you the hell out of here, run for your life!”

RAT can convince you black is white

But if RAT feels there is no danger presented, and indeed this is an exciting and enjoyable experience, he creates the physical experience (we only have one kind of adrenaline) and sends you positive messages. “This is exciting; you can enjoy this. When was the last time you felt this?”

Regardless of whether there is a positive or negative experience, RAT is a very powerful advisor. With every experience, the physical sensations are the same. It’s pure adrenaline rushing through your body. The only thing that’s different is the tape RAT is playing for you. Clever RAT can convince you that black is white and white is black depending on the circumstances. He is very efficient at keeping you conscious of anything that threatens your survival.

Where does all this wiring come from?

When our ancestors were confronted with a threat to their survival, it was appropriate to sound the alarm, sending messages that enabled us to survive the imminent threat.

We do not come across many sabre-toothed tigers in the boardroom (though it may seem like it...), but our responses to any perceived threat to our survival are still there. We are hard-wired to survive. However, we are over-surviving, and it’s causing many people a lot of stress.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between real, close and present danger and a threat to our ego. Like our ancestors, most of us are scanning our environment for threats. As we do, we respond by going into survival mode and it feels as though our very life is being threatened. Everyone’s threshold for fear is different; some people find simply walking into a room full of people they don’t know threatening. Social situations can make some people feel very uncomfortable, and their RAT can get loud at these times. Others may find boardroom meetings scary. This is not only stressful but renders us powerless to see the real opportunities life has to offer us.

It takes a lot of emotional energy to be in any of these emotional states, and by holding you in them, RAT is barring you from using your energy in a more positive way to progress out of the situation and move on. The way to break through is to transform your thoughts and channel your energy. A great way of doing

this is to physically move – go for a run and clear your head. Then, once you are feeling more positive, more helpful thoughts will start to come into your mind. This is when it’s important to set a short-term goal and achieve it. Success breeds success – you could start with something as easy as walking the dog.

As you transform your thoughts, you transform your emotions. Your physiology and focus are more positive; you are walking tall, smiling and expressing energy. You are now in the positive emotions of ‘I can’ and ‘I will’. This is a wonderful space to be in and, once there, you will want to stay there.

You can hit any one of these negative barriers throughout the day. Your skill at managing negative self-talk and your willingness to express energy and focus on a small, short-term goal will assist you to move through these states quickly and not wallow

in a self-limiting stream of thoughts. You will be

enabled to channel your energy positively, whether to achieve a better life, to start a new business, or to improve your relationships!



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SO HOW DO WE STOP RAT IN ITS TRACKS AND BREAK THROUGH?

Use the Motivational Breakthrough method. There are four stages to this model:

1. Once you have IDENTIFIED what your barriers are you can break through this cycle.
2. You DECODE your thoughts and feelings and acknowledge that you are trapped.

3. You focus on a SHORT-TERM GOAL (e.g. if you are in APATHY in bed you focus on getting up and going to the shower).

4. You raise your energy and TRANSFORM the negative self-talk to positive self-talk, e.g. “I can get through this, I have done it before and will do again.” Remind yourself that this too shall pass.