

# The Day Sue Almost Got Mad at Me

Have you ever wondered why thoughts appear and can motivate you to do things you wouldn't otherwise do? One afternoon, Sue (my wife) called me at work to tell me she was going out with friends after work, and it was up to me to get dinner and do homework with the kids. Sue and her messages were (and remain to this day) very motivating for me, so I packed up and went down to my car. On the way to the car and during the drive home, I randomly thought about what I would cook for dinner, which kid was having a test and would need help, and various other plans for the evening. About halfway home, Kyle from the pub called. He was energized because a buddy from southern California had just flown in and thus Kyle was rounding people up for what sounded like a really fun night. I was going to tell him, "Sorry, I can't make it," but then the 20 beers on tap suddenly popped into my mind, as did the hilarious time we had the last time we all got together. Pretty soon I wasn't thinking about dinner plans or school tests any more. I was making plans to be with my friends and thinking about the latest release IPA from the local microbrewery. When we ended our call, I had told him that I wasn't sure what I would do. At this point, we might ask ourselves what is more motivating: going home to cooking and homework, or going to the pub for beer and friends. Each one of us faces these types of decisions, big and small, all the time, and what we do depends largely on how we organize our thoughts about each possible scenario and which ultimately seems most important to us. In this story, if you know Sue, you pretty much know already that I went home and had to hear about all of the pub hilarity the next morning. But, if I suffered from alcohol use disorder, thoughts about what would happen at the pub, the taste of the beer, and past really fun pub experiences would have inevitably intruded until they all but squeezed out thoughts of dinner and homework with my kids. My plans to go home would begin to fade until they were all but forgotten, or perhaps I would rationalize that stopping by for one of the special IPAs before going home would somehow work out.

The story above illustrates how thoughts of pub friends and beer can intrude in substance use disorder. However, the intrusion of traumatic events in post-traumatic stress disorder, rumination on negative outcomes in depression, or hearing voices in schizophrenia are all examples of thoughts generated by your brain that can contribute to debilitating psychiatric disorders. Of course, it is a natural and healthy adaptive process to produce thoughts either randomly or in

association with the world we are experiencing, and then to use these thoughts to navigate successfully toward desired outcomes.

This volume explores and provides the best possible explanations for what this process is, how it gets usurped in psychiatric disorders, and what this knowledge of how the brain handles thoughts means for concepts of free will and one's responsibility for poor decisions, especially when a thought disorder exists. It addresses how the brain is organized to create thoughts that can be ignored or can build in motivational content, and how we then weigh thoughts to decide on behavior that best adapts us to the world. It also poses and attempts to answer a number of questions that are commonly asked: How do the mechanisms of thought intrusion and decision making get corrupted in psychiatric disorders to create intrusions that cannot be controlled? How are thought intrusions usurped by motivation to produce behavior that may be maladaptive, at least according to social norms? What is free will and what responsibility does free will (or lack of it) create for how we behave?

— Peter W. Kalivas