

## Praise for *THE FOUR VOICES*

Pat Morley is an amazing writer and an even better person. His books aren't just written—they are lived. There is an old adage: the battle is won or lost in the mind. If that's true, and I believe it is, this book is a game changer! Who is the loudest voice in your life? This book will help you turn down the volume on the wrong voices, and turn up the volume on the still small voice of the Holy Spirit.

—**MARK BATTERSON**

*New York Times* best-selling author  
of *The Circle Maker*

Lead Pastor of National Community Church

If you've struggled to get a handle on what's going on in your thought life, here's your opportunity! Great book at just the right time! Read it and let it soak your mind with God's plan for taking charge of your heart and head. Very readable and biblical, with compelling stories and illustrations. You're going to love this book!

—**GARY CHAPMAN, PH.D.**

Author of *The 5 Love Languages*

Such an important and timely book! What a relief to know that not everything that goes through my head is just "me"! Thank you, Pat!

—**JOHN ELDREDGE**

Author of *Wild at Heart*

Patrick Morley has done it again! *The Four Voices* will equip you to make sense of the voices in your head. Best of all, it's totally based on Scripture. Read it. Absorb it. Let it renew your mind. This book will help you get on top of the thoughts that have been trying to get on top of you!

—**DR. TONY EVANS**

President, The Urban Alternative  
Senior Pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship

In my opinion, this is Pat's best book. It's wise, it's practical, and it's thoroughly biblical.

—**STEVE FARRAR**

Chairman, Men's Leadership Ministries

The competing dialogue in our head isn't just last night's pizza. Pat teaches us how to discern the Holy Spirit's voice from the three most destructive voices that threaten our joy and peace and keep us from the will of God in our lives.

—**DAVE RAMSEY**

Best-Selling Author and Radio Host

For many years I've been challenged by "voices" I hear in my head. The assignment for us is to speak unvarnished truth right back to them. As he does so well, my friend Patrick nails this and helps us navigate the potential treachery that could be in store if we let these voices sneak up on us.

—**ROBERT WOLGEMUTH**

Best-Selling Author

# THE **FOUR** VOICES

TAKING CONTROL OF  
THE CONVERSATION  
IN YOUR HEAD

*The Four Voices, Expanded Edition*  
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## DEDICATION

To the men who showed me the way:

Jim Gillean

Lyle Nelsen

Dan Stanley

The Four Voices

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## INTRODUCTION

**A**RE YOU TIRED OF feeling confused or overwhelmed by the voices competing for control of your head and heart? If so, you're not alone. These voices can be helpful, frustrating, discouraging, or even dangerous.

In *The Four Voices*, you're going to learn what those voices are, where they come from, and how you can take control of the conversation. We all go to dark places from time to time, but we don't have to stay there. You can do a lot to help yourself, and I'm going to show you how.

*The Four Voices* is based on the belief that we should read the Bible to understand our experiences. That said, you don't have to be a Christian to understand what's been written. But if you're not, I hope you will find enough here to become a man or woman of faith or, at the minimum, better understand the Christian view of what's influencing your thoughts, words, and actions.

I'm trained in theology and business, not psychology or counseling, so I've made no attempt to synthesize what I know about Scripture with the behavioral sciences. I will leave that to trained professionals, many of whose contributions to mental

health and human wellbeing are quite remarkable—especially those of faith-based practitioners. If after reading this book you still feel like you have unresolved thoughts and feelings, then I strongly encourage you to seek professional help.

Let's begin with an overview of what's going on inside.

## CHAPTER ONE

# WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE YOUR HEAD?

*Above all else, guard your heart for everything  
you do flows from it.*

—PROVERBS 4:23

ONE WARM FLORIDA DAY near the end of fourth grade, I walked into a convenience store and saw a freezer display packed full of ice cream sandwiches. At that moment, I wanted an ice cream sandwich as much as I've ever wanted anything, but I didn't have enough money.

Then a voice whispered, "It's okay. Go ahead and take one. No one will ever know." So, I tucked one under my shirt and walked out the door.

Immediately another voice started telling me, "You were not raised like this. You need to take it back."

Suddenly, I felt like the rope in a titanic tug of war. I had a choice to make. (I did take it back.) However, as adults, we all know the tug of war only intensifies as the stakes go up, as illustrated in these three situations.

**Situation #1:** Brad has built a highly respected and successful property and casualty insurance business. In a courageously transparent moment, he told eight of us in a small group, “I don’t feel like people care about me—only what I can do for them.”

I was flabbergasted. Brad and I have been involved in ministry together since his college days. I love him to death. He’s one of the finest men I’ve ever known. I know firsthand how much his wife and three children adore him. As his client, I’ve seen how much his employees admire and respect him. Many of his other clients are also friends of mine, and they openly express their appreciation and affection for him.

Why would he think such a thing?

**Situation #2:** No matter what you suggest, it feels like your boss always says something negative about your ideas. At first, you took it in stride. Then it made you so angry you fantasized about choking him for always putting you down. Eventually, you felt like something inside of you gave up.

Now you still have what you think are great ideas, but you rarely share them out loud. Instead, because you don’t feel you receive the respect and appreciation you deserve, you entertain fits of seething bitterness.

You’re still in your thirties, but a recent routine physical revealed that you are borderline for high blood pressure. Your doctor has given you a list of

recommendations, none of which deals with what's going on inside your head and heart due to the stress and anxiety.

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**Situation #3:** You're returning a product you purchased on Amazon at your local UPS store. As you walk out, you make eye contact with a man seated against the wall just outside the door. He says, "Sir, I'm down on my luck and hungry. Could you spare me enough money to buy a decent meal?"

With indifference you say, "Sorry, friend, but I don't have any cash on me." As you walk to your car, you are overwhelmed with compassion and concern for this man. As you slide into the driver's seat, you remember that you have two water bottles in your car and feel prompted to give him, specifically, both bottles.

You walk back to the man and say, "I'm sorry I can't help with food, but here are a couple of water bottles." You sense his humiliation for being in need, but also his gratitude as he gulps the water down. Suddenly you see what you had missed before. This man desperately needed something to drink.

### **That Conversation in Your Head Is a Lot More than Self-Talk**

We all know we carry on a running conversation with ourselves all day. We call it "self-talk."

We need self-talk to help us filter the bits and pieces of everyday life and forge them into a congruent story.

But our “self” is not the only voice in that conversation. Four other voices also constantly exert themselves to shape what we think, say, and do.

Every day when your feet hit the floor, three of these voices rail against the higher principles of your Christian faith. They are the root cause of hurt feelings, living to win the approval of others, not facing your problems like an adult, unforgiveness, holding grudges, oppressive and sad feelings, misinterpreting social cues, false guilt and shame, and generally feeling the weight of the world.

The four voices in your head are the world, the flesh, the devil, and the Holy Spirit. Your job is to figure out which voice is speaking and take control of the conversation.

Fortunately, the fourth voice in your head, the Holy Spirit, is exponentially more powerful than the other three voices combined.

Everything you’re about to learn, or be reminded of, can be distilled down to this idea:

The four voices in your head are the world, the flesh, the devil, and the Holy Spirit. Your job is to figure out which voice is speaking and take control of the conversation.

Understanding how to identify each of these voices and adjust the conversation is going to transform how you feel about getting up, starting your workday, going to the gym, making the most of

your relationships with your spouse and children (if applicable), meeting with friends or strangers, your value as a person, facing challenges, and so many other situations.

### **What's at Stake**

Unless and until you understand the four voices and how they work, you will continue to have inexplicable mood swings. You will continue to act out on your worst impulses and not know why. You will continue to be pleasant at work or school, but irritable around your family.

Until you know how to adjust what's going on in your head, you will experience ongoing frustration because you can't get control of your emotions. You will find yourself going to bed angry, waking in the middle of the night in a panic, getting up in the morning feeling exhausted, and then blindly repeating the cycle all over again.

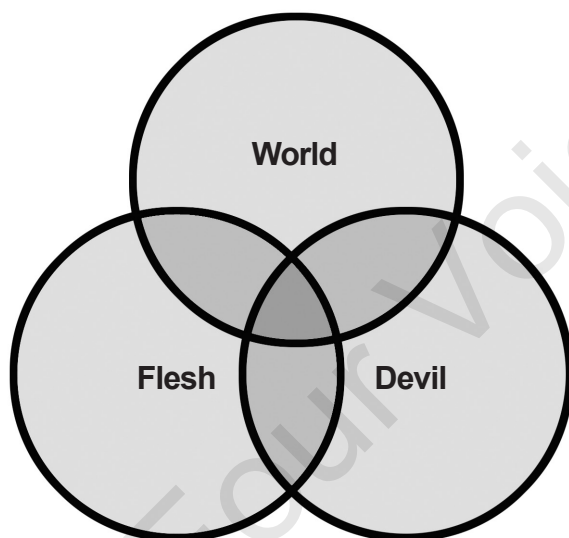
Not mastering the voices in your head will eat away at your self-worth, poison your relationships, stunt your growth as a person, and limit how far you go in life.

So, before you blow up your relationship with your spouse, cuss out your boss, or send that emotionally charged email that's sitting in your outbox, let's figure out what's really going on and consider the higher principles that will help you master the narrative in your head.

We're going to devote an entire chapter to each of the four voices, but let's begin by briefly introducing each voice.

## The Four Voices in Your Head

The first three voices will often overlap as this diagram illustrates:



But for our purposes, we're going to look at them individually so we can get a better understanding of how each voice works.

### The World

The first voice is the world. Scripture tells us our world does not work in the way it did when God created it. You could say it's broken. In Christian terminology, it's "fallen." As a result, you will spend a lot of time managing the consequences of that brokenness. Colossians 2:8 cautions:



*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*

What does the voice of the world sound like?

When I first started in business, I was told, “You have potential, but right now, you don’t have enough gray hair, so people will never listen to you.” That was the voice of the world saying, “You’re too young to make a difference.”

But I’ve heard older men say they’ve been told, in so many words, “You’re not useful anymore. You’re expendable, and you’ve been replaced, so we don’t need you.” That’s the voice of the world saying, “You’re too old.”

As a result of sin, the world we live in is a juggernaut that relentlessly entices you to pursue life’s riches and pleasures—and then crushes you for trying. Essentially, the voice of the fallen world wants you to think, *It doesn’t matter if I’m young or old; I can’t really make any difference.*

That’s just one example of how “human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world” try to turn the narrative inside your head into negative self-talk. We will explore the voice of the world further in the next chapter.

## **The Flesh**

The second voice in your head is the flesh, or sinful nature. We all know we have it, but why? The Bible

tells us our attraction to sinful desires has been a core element of human nature dating back to when Adam and Eve believed the devil's lies about God. Galatians 5:17 says:

*For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.*

What does the voice of the flesh sound like?

While writing this book, I went through a blue period. I was feeling down, like things weren't going the way they're supposed to go. This went on for a few weeks.

What I was feeling inside had nothing to do with my wife, but eventually I twisted things around in my head enough to think, *It's her fault*. This was hardly the first time I blamed her for something that had nothing to do with her. But before saying something I would regret, I took a few days to sort through what was really going on. I asked, "What does the voice of the Holy Spirit have to say about this?"

I had a double epiphany. First, because of my flesh and sinful nature, I often assume it's someone else's fault when something goes wrong. That's just arrogance, plain and simple.

The second epiphany was to realize no one in the whole world cares more about me than my wife. No one. She has always been there for me. She's the one person I can count on to help me when I'm feeling the weight of the world.

At that point, a metaphor popped to mind. I hope this can help you as much as it has helped me. I pictured us walking side-by-side. Suddenly, I stumbled, lost my balance, and started to go down. My wife reached out, took hold of my arm, and steadied me so that I didn't fall to the ground. In my mental picture, it was obvious she hadn't tripped me. I tripped on my own.

So, instead of blaming her, we sat down, and I told her about my epiphanies—and all the ways I love and appreciate her so much. Then I told her about the metaphor and said, “Patsy, I’ve been stumbling for weeks, and I’ve lost my balance. I’m about to go down. I need you to reach out and grab my arm. Can you please help steady me so I don’t fall to the ground?”

She did. And she was able to help me get to the bottom of what was really eating at me.

## **The Devil**

The third voice in your head—the author of confusion and the tempter of your soul—is the devil. Is the devil real? Jesus certainly thought so. In John 8:44, Jesus said to some disbelieving people:

*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Look again at how Jesus characterizes the devil: a murderer, no truth in him, lies are his native tongue, a liar, the father of lies.

Here's the bottom line: The devil wants to destroy what God wants to build.

What does the voice of the devil sound like?

<p>Here's the bottom line: The devil wants to destroy what God wants to build.</p>	<p>The malware of choice for the devil is distrust, doubt, and despair. Once the devil hacks your brain and loads this malware onto your hard drive, it's a virus that spreads very quickly and turns into false guilt, false shame, and self-pity.</p>
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<p>_____</p>	<p>A man who attends The Man in the Mirror Bible Study did hard drugs for years. One day, he said, "I know God has forgiven me for all the terrible things I've done, but I'm having a hard time forgiving myself."</p>
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Strongly suspecting the voice of the devil was working on him, I asked, "So, you believe God has forgiven you, right?"

"Yes."

"But you're having a hard time forgiving yourself, right?"

"Yes."

"So, what you're basically saying is that you have a higher standard for forgiveness than God. Is that right?"

The lightbulb went off, and he took another step down the road to recovery.

But that's how the voice of the devil works. He wants you to carry around the burden of what has

already been forgiven. It really irks the devil when you accept the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to take away the burden of all that shame and guilt—which brings us to the fourth voice.

### **The Holy Spirit**

The Spirit brings calm to chaos, comfort to sorrow, peace to strife, clarity to confusion, and power to weakness. Jesus promised in John 14:26:

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

What does the voice of the Spirit sound like? As my co-teacher at our Bible study, Khayree Pender, says, “If the words don’t sound like the Holy Spirit, it’s not Him!”

For example, let’s take another look at how the world wants you to think: *It doesn’t matter if I’m young or old, I can’t really make any difference.*

The Holy Spirit tells a very different story through the Bible. Joseph, David, and Jesus all started their careers when they were thirty years of age, when they were young men, and they had a tremendous impact.

Many of the most innovative ideas that shape our world start with men and women in their twenties, thirties, and early forties. Einstein introduced his theory of relativity when he was twenty-six. Steve Jobs was twenty-one years old when he and Steve Wozniak started Apple in the Jobs’ family garage.

Rosa Parks was just forty-two when she refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus.

On the other hand, Scripture tells us that Sarah, Moses, Joshua, and Paul all did their best work in

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The voice of the Spirit will empower you to keep the world on a leash, the flesh on house arrest, and the devil on a terrorist watch list.

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the last third of their lives. They were late bloomers. The book *Late Bloomers* features cameos of seventy-five people who made tremendous contributions in their later years—like Colonel Harland Sanders who first franchised Kentucky Fried Chicken at the age of sixty-two.<sup>1</sup> And in both 2016 and 2020,

America elected presidents in their seventies.

As you can see, the Spirit wants you to hear the exact opposite of what the world wants you to hear. The Spirit wants you to know: “It doesn’t matter how old you are, you can *always* make a difference.”

The voice of the Spirit will empower you to keep the world on a leash, the flesh on house arrest, and the devil on a terrorist watch list.

These are the four voices affecting the conversation in our heads: the world, the flesh, the devil, and the Holy Spirit.

## A Note on the Voices of Other People

While this is a book to help you master what’s going on inside your own head, we need to say something about guarding against what’s going on inside the heads of others.

My best friend, Jim, died seven years ago, but rarely a week goes by without me remembering a story about the repetitive cruelty of his father. When Jim was about ten years old, he invited Timmy, his best friend from the neighborhood, over to his house to play. At the end of the day, as Timmy was about to leave, Jim's father heaped praise on Timmy in front of Jim, and then said, "Timmy, I sure wish I had a son like you."

There are people we interact with who, wittingly and unwittingly, speak and act on behalf of the world, their own flesh, and the devil. In the parable of the wheat and weeds, Jesus talked about "people of the evil one" and said, "the enemy who sows them is the devil" (Matthew 13:39).

For example, when you are bullied, manipulated, cheated, abused, or subjected to false teaching—that's always sinful, often evil, and sometimes criminal. (It goes without saying that, if someone does something against you that rises to criminality, you should contact law enforcement immediately.)

When you recognize which of the four voices may be controlling other people, you can adjust your response. You can't control what others say and do, but with the help of the Spirit's voice, you can take the high road through these painful encounters.

But even when we must take action to protect ourselves, we can still have sympathy for sinners, because we know that we all once "followed the ways of this *world* and of the *ruler of the kingdom of the air*... gratifying the cravings of our *flesh*" (Ephesians 2:2–3, emphasis added).

Notice all three of the negative voices are mentioned together in that one passage.

So, let's pray for them—"that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

For the purposes of this book, however, the mission is narrowed to the four voices fighting to control what's happening in our own minds.

## **You Can Take Control**

Proverbs 4:23 says:

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

When a Bible passage begins with, "Above all else," that's like the jet flyover at the start of a race. Sit up, because what comes next is the main event.

Above all else—of all the things that could be said—Scripture isolates guarding your heart as a first principle.

What is the "heart"? Technically, the Hebrew word for heart is *leb* and includes the intellect, will, and emotions—all the things that establish your individual identity.

Today, we're more likely to say "mind" than "heart," but the idea is the same. It's the totality of our inner being. And the Bible says, "Above all else," guard *that*.

Why does the Bible put such extreme emphasis on guarding your heart? Because, as the verse continues, "Everything you do flows from it." Other Bible



versions say: “For it determines the course of your life” (NLT), and “that’s where life starts” (MSG).

Your heart is the starting point for every thought you think, every word you speak, and every action you take.

Guarding the heart is such a big issue because our hearts (minds) are so vulnerable to being hacked or burglarized.

What would an unguarded heart look like? An unguarded heart might look like an unguarded house.

In our neighborhood, we’ve had a few burglaries over the years. My wife and I have taken steps to protect ourselves.

If someone knocks on the door, we don’t automatically open it. We keep our windows locked. We have floodlights on sensors.

We have an alarm system with monitoring. I spent about \$100 and bought some video cameras, so we also have video surveillance. I put a light on a timer in one of the front rooms that turns on at dusk and off around midnight, hopefully to

What would an unguarded heart look like? An unguarded heart might look like an unguarded house.

confuse a burglar who might be casing the place. I found a fake TV device that I plug in, close the blinds and, from the outside, it looks like somebody’s home watching TV.

Then there’s our yappy little dog who goes berserk when anyone steps onto our property, literally bouncing off furniture while racing from window to window. I’m still startled and flinch every time she

lets loose with that shrill, high-pitched bark. If I was a burglar, I would probably laugh at a dog that sounds like it swallowed a squeaky toy, but I would still run away as fast as I could!

Even if a burglar did get past all those safeguards, they would be in for a big surprise. My wife doesn't have jewelry, we don't have art, and whatever papers we have of any value are locked up in a safe deposit box.

<hr/> <p>God would not tell you, "Above all else, guard your heart," if He could not also equip you to do it.</p> <hr/>	<p>We've been intentional to take the obvious, logical, and practical steps to guard our house. And that's exactly what God is telling us to do with our hearts: "Above all else, guard your heart."</p> <p>God would not tell you, "Above all else, guard your heart," if He could not also equip you to do it.</p>
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Just like you might guard your house from unwanted intruders, there are intentional steps you can take to guard your heart.

## **Making the Adjustment**

To that end, chapters two through five each conclude with a Making the Adjustment section, which will equip you with a cumulative set of spiritual disciplines, habits, and virtues that can help you guard your heart and take control.



Here's a diagram with a preview, and you can also view the full list in Appendix 1: Making the Adjustment Summary Chart:

In addition, I've included Reflection and Discussion questions at the end of each chapter to help you begin making adjustments right away. Here's an exercise to help you get started.

### **Quick Start Exercise**

This Quick Start Exercise will help you understand which voices are loudest in your head for many situations over the course of a typical day.

The main point of the exercise isn't precision. It's designed simply to get you thinking about how the four voices influence you in everyday life.

Go ahead and give it a try.

**Step 1.** In the **State of Mind** column below, write down your normal state of mind for each applicable **Situation** listed. For example, you could write:

glad, sad, mad, bad, hurt, moody, fragile,  
bruised, fearful, concerned, anxious, frustrated,  
out of control, impatient, irritable, prickly,  
feeling superior or inferior, competent or  
incompetent, shame, guilt, needed, unneeded,  
wanted, unwanted, loved, unloved, understood,  
misunderstood, useful, not useful, used,  
appreciated, underappreciated, melancholy,  
self-pity, bitter, lustful, greedy, jealous, envious,  
covetous, happy, joyful, at peace.

**Step 2.** Next, take a guess at which voice is most likely responsible for each state of mind you identified: the world, the flesh, the devil, or the Holy Spirit. Write your answers in the **Voice** column. Again, this is a “get-acquainted” exercise, so don’t be concerned about precision.

As a sample, I’ve filled out the chart for the three situations included at the beginning of this chapter:

SITUATION	STEP 1: <i>State of Mind</i>	STEP 2: <i>Voice</i>
Brad at small group	sad, used	devil
Around unappreciative boss	bitter, undervalued	flesh

Meeting man's need for a drink	joyful, moved	Spirit
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Now you try it:

SITUATION	STEP 1: <i>State of Mind</i>	STEP 2: <i>Voice</i>
Got out of bed		
Were criticized for your work		
Got home from work		
Spent time on social media		
Exercised		
Argued with your spouse		
Connected with your spouse		

Saw your child excel or rebel		
Were cheered up by a friend		
Were let down by a friend		
Read the Bible		
Spent time praying		
Went to church		
Woke up during the night		
Thought about your purpose		
Caught up on the news		
Thought about the state of the world		

Throughout the next chapters, we're going to more fully explore how you can better recognize the four voices and make any needed adjustments. As you begin to practice taking control of your thoughts, God is going to honor your desire. He will help you sharpen your ability to figure out which voice is speaking and, when necessary, bring your responses into alignment with the voice of His Spirit.

## **A Personal Prayer**

*Our dearest Father, thank You for revealing the different voices that influence the conversation in our heads and hearts in Scripture. Help each of us to understand that the four voices in our heads are the world, the flesh, the devil, and the Holy Spirit. As we proceed, teach us to discern which voices are speaking so we can take control of the conversation. Grant us wisdom to sort out our thoughts so we can walk in the fullness of Your presence and power. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

In the next chapter, let's explore how you can gain the upper hand on the voice of the world. But first answer these questions.

## Reflection and Discussion

NOTE: If in a small group, share your answers with each other. To start and lead a group, see Appendix 2: How to Lead a Discussion Group.

1. If you have not already done so, complete the Quick Start Exercise. What was your biggest surprise?
2. What are the four voices? Why is it important to figure out which voice is speaking and make the adjustment, according to Proverbs 4:23, cited on page 14?
3. Describe your most prevalent mood or state of mind. For example, you could answer one of the following: confused, overwhelmed, anxious, fearful, sad, numb, easily offended, irritable, angry, ready to explode, joyful, peaceful, content, or filled with love. What have you already read that can help you take control of what's going on in your head?