



## Create a Spam Filter for Your Heart

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These days, many of us spend a lot of time with technology, be it I-phones, iPods, PCs, Kindles, voice mail, notebooks, Bluetooth, or scores of other devices. How many hours have *you* spent trying to learn new technology, manage the avalanche of information coming your way or keep your personal information safe and secure?

Most of our technology comes with an array of optional security measures, including passwords, virus protection, identity theft coverage, and spam settings. I admit, without these options I might never again see the light of day. I'm grateful that my computer and phones seem fairly pretty well protected from spam even though my personal data may have been stolen in one of the recent massive data heists.

However, where are the spam folders for our hearts so we can protect ourselves – our very lives and precious spirits – from being sucked away by the sheer volume of demands, confusion, garbage, information and consumerism that often seem to engulf us?

Here are ten optional filters you can use to set up a spam folder for your heart, mind and spirit. Experiment and find one or two filters that work for you, or come up with your own unique filters. The installation options listed here are only examples. Use your own creativity to create your own. You can either work on your own or with a Life Coach or another professional who is trained to guide you through the installation process.

- 1) **The “Beating Up on Myself” Spam Filter** – One of the slimiest ways spam gets into our hearts is through the repetition of self-defeating beliefs and negative self-talk. “I can’t sing.” “I can’t trust people.” “I have to stick with this boring job.” Beating ourselves up is one of the major ways we hack ourselves and steal our own true identities. Installation option: Choose one self-defeating belief or negative self-talk. Counter-balance it with three statements that affirm you. Commit to counter-balancing the self-defeating thought whenever you hear it, for at least one month.
- 2) **The “My (Snail) Mail, My Life” Spam Filter** – I grew up in a household where reading junk mail was somewhat of a hobby for my dad. We can learn a lot from junk mail, but it can also distract us from what is most important. Installation option: Set aside a month’s worth of mail and ask yourself some pointed questions: What need does this piece of mail fulfill in me, if any? What will be the real consequences if I decided stop receiving this mail? Is there another way to get the information I need?

- 3) **The Over-Giving Spam Filter** – Over-giving can take many forms. For some it means feeling compelled to give some amount of money to every single organization or individual who contacts us for a contribution. For others, it may mean being constantly available to help people in need, regardless of our own circumstances. For others, we may be giving at just the right level but chronically feel it's never enough. Installation Option: Make a list of the ways you “give” in various aspects of your life. For each area, ask yourself: What is my motivation in giving? What am I receiving in return and do I need anything coming back to me? Am I giving too much, too little or just about the right amount? If you *are* over-giving, make a decision about a small change you will make - and stick with it.
- 4) **The ‘Negative News’ Spam Filter** – How much news is good for you? People run the gamut from news junkies who want to immerse themselves in current events to those who would prefer not knowing much about what's going on in the world. Regardless of where you fall on the spectrum, it's clear that with current technology, it's easy to be exposed to an endless stream of news about war, violence, pain, and terror. Installation Option: For a few days or a week, pay attention to how you take in the news. Where do I get my news? Does the news serve me and how I want to live my life? Is this healthy for me? Can I use this news in a positive way? Decide whether there is one small change you want to make.
- 5) **The “Living in the Past” Spam Filter** – It's only human to remember the past – our memories and our experiences. Without that, we have no context for the present. However, many of us spend more time in the past than the present. Not only that, we make assumptions that if something was true in the past, it must be true now. Installation Option: For a period of time – perhaps a day or a week, whenever you catch yourself living in the past, stop, turn your attention to your breath or notice something in your current environment – a tree, a color, the texture of the chair where you're sitting, anything.
- 6) **“The Lies” Spam Filter** – It's easy to waste a lot of life energy by focusing on or being influenced by lies we've been told along our life's journey. Lies come in many forms. We learn them from society, the media, families, politicians, teachers, friends, religious leaders, total strangers, and eventually from ourselves. Installation option: Make a list of some of the key lies you've been told. Then go back and write the truth for each of those lies. If there are any lies you still tend to believe, experiment with ways to find keep remembering the truth.
- 7) **“The Grass Is Greener” Spam Filter** – As human beings, we tend to compare ourselves to just about everyone and covet just about everything that others have – houses, vacations, partners, money, recognition, personalities, and much more. Our constant comparing and judging drains us of energy and passion, and can leave us in a frequent state of agitation, wanting and yearning. Installation options: (a) Start with awareness. Work on “catching yourself” when you are comparing yourself to others, judging others or coveting what they have. (b) Start a daily gratitude practice, noticing what you appreciate in your *own* life.

- 8) **“I Have to Save the World” Spam Filter** – It is noble and good to contribute to making your community a better place, relieve suffering, and leave the world better than you found it. Still, many of us live with the burden of feeling we have to single-handedly save the world, regardless of the cost to ourselves – exhaustion, discouragement, guilt, health issues, depleting ourselves. Installation options: (a) Practice saying “no” and set boundaries for your time, energy and resources. Once you can easily say “no” to requests, you have more flexibility to wisely choose when you say “yes.” (b) Notice and appreciate how *other* people are contributing to the world.
- 9) **The “Fast and Busy” Spam Filter** – We all know what’s it’s like to be so busy that we feel like we can’t think straight. We go from one task to another and even when we’re supposedly “resting,” the way we rest may just be another task on our mental to-do lists. “Fast and busy” can make us feel good for a while, but it can also wear us down or distract us from what’s most important. Installation Options: (a) For one afternoon, do absolutely nothing and see what happens. (b) For just one meal, put down your fork or spoon between bites.
- 10) **The “I’m Not Enough” Spam Filter** – The variations of this spam are endless. I am not smart enough, young enough, aggressive enough, successful enough, sexy enough, athletic enough. I am not this-or-that enough. This insidious spam wreaks havoc on our system, our self-esteem, our relationships, even our ability to feel safe. Installment Options: (a) This moment, while you’re reading this, notice that you *are* enough. (b) If you like to make lists, write down the many ways that you are truly enough. (3) Think about the core of who you are – your essence – and train yourself on a daily basis to see that the essence of you is more than enough, regardless of what happens on any particular day.

Remember, there are numerous filters even beyond those I’ve mentioned here, and there are many different ways to install a filter. Use your creativity and curiosity to find what works best for you. Ask for help if needed; just because the instructions on a box say “simple to install” doesn’t always mean that’s the case.

***Your heart, mind and spirit deserve at least as much protection and care as you would give any inanimate piece of technology equipment.***

I’m eager to know how what you are learning about creating a spam folder for your heart. Please send me an email and let me know how it’s going!

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