

# STOP OVERTHINKING

3 BOOKS IN 1

OVERTHINKING, SELF-DISCIPLINE, COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY.  
DECLUTTER YOUR MIND, CREATE ATOMIC HABITS AND HAPPINESS TO  
MANAGE ANGER, STRESS, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION



JASON GRAY  
DANIELLE MOORE

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**3 Books In 1: Overthinking, Self-Discipline, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Declutter Your Mind, Create Atomic Habits and Happiness to Manage Anger, Stress, Anxiety and Depression**

Book 1

**OVER THINKING:**

Declutter Your Mind, Overcome Negativity. Create Atomic Habits to Stop Worrying. Manage Stress, Anxiety, and Depression. Improve Your Brain, Social Intelligence and Self-Confidence.

Book 2

**SELF DISCIPLINE:**

Develop Mental Toughness and Focus On Achieving Your Goals. Learn Daily Habits to Program Your

Mind, Build Self-Confidence and Willpower, Manage  
Anger, and Become Highly Productive

Book 3

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY:

Retrain Your Brain. Master and Train for Happiness.  
7 Simple Strategies to Free Yourself from Anxiety,  
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## **OVER THINKING:**

**Declutter Your Mind, Overcome  
Negativity. Create Atomic Habits to  
Stop Worrying. Manage Stress,  
Anxiety, and Depression. Improve Your  
Brain, Social Intelligence and Self-  
Confidence**



# Introduction

## What is Overthinking?

The mind is our more precious tool. But what happens when our thoughts start to get out of control? Humans are gifted with a superior thinking capacity that sets us apart from other living beings on this planet. The human brain can create great things like buildings, literature, movies, novels, and thousands of other inventions that have enhanced our way of life throughout history. It is remarkable what we can do when we put our minds to it.

Thinking allows us to excel in school, go to college, plan for the future, get a job. No doubt, our mind is our biggest asset, but what happens when the mind stops being your ally and starts becoming your enemy? What if your mind starts to get out of control and starts eating away at your happiness? What would happen if your mind started producing destructive thoughts that threaten to hold you back in life and ruin the relationships you've worked so hard to build?

## Overthinking Explained

Thinking too much. That is exactly what it means to overthink. When you spend too much time thinking instead of taking action, when you analyze and repeat the same thoughts in your mind but do very little about it, you're overthinking.

Or how about another, more relatable example of overthinking happening in a relationship. You send a text to your crush whom you've recently started dating. You wait eagerly for their reply, but an hour passes. Two hours. Three hours. Still nothing from them. Your mind starts to go into overdrive. Why aren't they texting me back? Are they busy? Have they lost interest in me? Was it something I said? Maybe they're annoyed that I'm texting them first. Maybe they want to break up with me. Could they be ghosting me? Is it me? Why does this always happen to me?

## The Reason Behind It

To be trapped by the thoughts in your mind is torture. Being locked in and unable to escape the negativity is mental torture. The brain is tricky in that way. Telling it not think about something rarely ever works. We naturally

want certainty. We want control. We want to know what's happening. We want concrete answers to the questions we have. When we don't get what we need to satisfy that urge, the brain goes into overdrive, coming up with scenarios of its own.

Why does overthinking happen? Well, along with the ability to think, humans have another special ability called intuition. Intuition is defined as the ability to immediately understand something without any need for conscious reasoning. Have you ever been told to "go with your gut" when you were stuck on a decision that had to be made? "Gut" in this context refers to your intuition, and it does highlight the fact that your intuitive thoughts are not coming from your conscious mind. Instead, they stem from your subconscious mind. If you've ever experienced those moments when it feels like your brain is arguing with itself, this is the reason why.

Your subconscious mind sometimes tries to give you answers to the problems you're facing. You need to make decisions every day. What makes it scary for a lot of people is how those decisions determine the direction your life is going and what you're going to experience next. This can be an overwhelming notion for many and why overthinking is such a problem. We're afraid of regret, and since time continues to move forward instead of backward, it feels like every decision that is going to impact our life matters. Once a decision has been made, you cannot go back in time and change the moment. You can't alter the choice you've made most of the time, and you must live with the consequences of your decisions. The last thing we want is to make a decision that we come to regret. We don't want to live with the possibility that we could have experienced something better if only we had made a different decision. See why overthinking is a big problem?

Ask anyone you meet, and they'll tell you that they don't want to look back on their life with regret when they're old one day, wishing they had done certain things differently. To complicate matters more, we never know what the guaranteed outcome is going to be for most of the decisions we make. Overthinking happens because the mind is constantly wrestling with the many possibilities it is faced with. The uncertainty of not knowing which decision is going to be the best decision only makes it harder to figure out the right choices to make.

Ultimately, the root cause of overthinking is fear. The seeds that it sows in your mind will prey upon your thoughts to the point they become out of control. None of us came into this world being afraid. The fear we experience today is what we've developed out of trauma or life experiences. Even when the traumatic experience has passed, remnants of that fear remain, and we continue to carry that fear around with us for the rest of our lives. Fear is the poison that latches onto our mind and, if left unchecked, triggers a lot of the overthinking that happens. These destructive thought patterns become an inescapable habit once it starts. The more we overthink, the more fear we invite in. The more fear we invite in, the more unsettled our thoughts are. It takes considerable effort to break out of this cycle and without the right support and tools to do it, it can feel nearly impossible to do.

## The Causes

There is always a reason or a cause behind everything that happens. This includes the thoughts you have. Very rarely do thoughts randomly spring to mind for no apparent reason. When you catch yourself overthinking, there is always going to be a reason behind it. Something that sparked that train of thought. It is now up to you to identify what those triggers are. Now, this may be something you're reluctant or hesitant to do at first, but it needs to be done nonetheless. It is important to identify your causes. Only when you know the root cause of any problem can you then begin to fix it.

You're not alone. Excessive thoughts are something a lot of people struggle with each day. We've all had those moments where the brain seems to go a mile a minute, and it seems impossible to quiet all that noise that it's making. Telling your brain to slow down and stop is not easy, especially when the brain seems to come up with more problems faster than it can produce the solution. Let's look at some of the common excessive thinking triggers:

Trigger #1: Social Media

Social media usage has skyrocketed within the last decade. We spend more time on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snap Chat more

than we do on any other online space. What do you do when you find yourself idle or with some free time on your hands? You pick up your phone and start scrolling through your newsfeed. Whether we like to admit it or not, social media is changing why and how we do certain things. It is even changing the way we think and has become one of the many triggers for the tendency to overthink. Why? Because when we're on social media, we start comparing.

We compare the life we have to the ones we see on social media. We compare our lives to that of our family and friends who seem to be having it all. Someone just got engaged. Someone's celebrating an anniversary. Someone else is about to jet off on a holiday you've been dying to go on. Someone just got promoted. When you look at all these, it becomes almost impossible not to compare. You look at all the smiling faces and enthusiastic announcements and start to think: Why not me? Why do they seem to have it all? Why can't I get that lucky? Why does my life have to be this way? It's no wonder social media usage has been linked to higher levels of depression on loneliness. An entire generation is growing up with lower self-esteem levels than the generation before. As if that wasn't worrying enough, they're growing up with higher levels of anxiety and a penchant for excessive thinking. They don't want to be obsessed with their thoughts, but they can't seem to help it.

Amid all that comparison and overthinking, we forget that not everything we see on social media is as it seems. The grass will always seem greener than it is on the other side. As excessive negative thoughts start swimming through our mind, we forget to remember that social media is where people come to share the positive aspects of their lives. Most people don't share the struggles they go through because they don't want anyone else to know they're struggling. Would you share your struggles on social media? Regardless, since social media is a big part of our lives today, it has unfortunately become one of the biggest contributors to negative excessive thinking, poor self-esteem, self-doubt, and dissatisfaction.

Trigger #2: Relationship Anxiety

Excessive thinking is a regular occurrence among those who struggle with anxiety and who also happen to be in relationships. Specifically, romantic

relationships. Now, relationship anxiety may not be a common diagnosis under the list of all the other anxiety disorders, but it is common, and the effects can be as devastating as all the other forms of anxiety. Overthinkers and anxiety sufferers struggle when they are in a relationship. They constantly seek reassurance or approval from their partner, looking for validation that they are still loved. When they don't get the desired response they were hoping for, their mind starts going into a tailspin, churning out all sorts of possible scenarios about why their partner is not responding the way that they hoped.

There could be several reasons why relationships might become a trigger for your excessive thoughts and anxiety. It could be a bad dating experience you had in the past that left you scarred to this day. Perhaps you struggle with insecurity and low self-esteem. Maybe you're afraid to open yourself up to your partner and expose the vulnerable side of yourself out of fear of getting hurt. Even the fear of getting hurt could send your thoughts and emotions hurtling out of control. Here's the interesting bit: People who struggle with relationship anxiety would STILL rather be in a relationship than be alone. Yet, when they become intimately involved with someone, the anxiety rears its ugly head and sabotages the relationship, thanks to all the overthinking and doubt, insecurities, and fears that are present. Without any way of controlling your thoughts or emotions, they can quickly get out of control, and it won't be long before you end up pushing your partner away.

Your excessive negative thoughts will always be at the back of your mind, whispering ideas that the relationship is either doomed to fail or will eventually fail anyway. For that matter, how do you be sure that you genuinely love the person you're with? Where's the guarantee that the relationship is going to last a lifetime? How do we know if our partners love us the same way we love them? Could it be that we love them more than they love us? Overthinkers need constant validation, guarantees, and the need for control. They crave certainty and the security of knowing exactly how everything is going to turn out. Unfortunately, that's not possible.

### **The Dangerous Effects of Overthinking**

Overthinking is a dangerous and unhealthy habit that needs to be broken. It will do nothing for you except to consume your energy and suck the

happiness from your life. It puts a halt in your ability to make effective decisions, and you end up wasting a lot of time and energy being stuck in your head instead of taking proactive measures to create the outcomes you want. It's a habit that will leave you stagnant, sort of like tying a rope around your leg, and at the other end of the rope is a pole. Instead of moving forward, you find yourself running in circles around the pole, going nowhere fast.

Overthinking is the root of several problems, one of which is that it leads to an increased risk of developing mental illness. According to a [study](#) conducted in 2013 that was published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology, and overthinking can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems. Ruminating traps you in a vicious negative cycle that can be extremely difficult to break out of if you don't have the right support and tools at your disposal. The unhappier you feel, the more your mental health declines, which eventually leads to some of the mental health problems talked about below. Some of these problems include:

- *It Causes Mental Illness* - According to a [study](#) conducted in 2013, that was published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology, overthinking can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems (if you weren't dealing with these already). Ruminating traps you in a vicious negative cycle that can be extremely difficult to break out of if you don't have the right support and tools at your disposal. The unhappier you feel, the more your mental health declines, which eventually leads to some of the mental health problems talked about below.
- *It Causes Anxiety* - Your thoughts create emotions. It could be anything from grief, anger, sadness, happiness, joy, jubilation, eagerness, nervousness, and more. These are the sensations produced by thought. Anxious people are known to be overthinkers. They create so many possible scenarios in their minds about all the bad things that could possibly happen that they find themselves constantly plagued by anxiety. They worry about the future, and that stops them from living freely

in the present. Living with so much anxiety each day makes them miserable, exhausted, and in more dire circumstances, it could lead to depression and suicidal thoughts. Yes, it is quite possible to literally think yourself to death.

- *It Causes Depression* - Anxiety comes from worrying about the future, while depression is a consequence of holding on to the past. Your thoughts keep you trapped in the events that have already happened, even though there's nothing you can do to change it now. However, overthinking is just one of the many possible causes of depression, and it is not solely responsible for this condition alone. Thinking about past events repeatedly wishing you could go back in time or change it will only make you miserable. Because there's no way to go back in time. Yet, some people continue to allow thoughts of the past to be a heavy burden that they carry with them every waking moment, leading to their feelings of unhappiness so strong it becomes depression. They waste precious time almost every day thinking about the "what if's" and wondering what would have happened if things had gone differently. "What if" is a question that weighs heavily on their mind and each time they think about it, they only become more miserable. The past cannot be changed, and the best you can do is to take the lessons from experience and use them for the benefit of your future to make better decisions. Like anxiety, depression can eventually lead to suicidal thoughts if your thoughts get the better of you.
- *It Causes Insomnia* - Does your worrying brain keep you awake all night long? Tossing and turning, you try to go to sleep, but the minute you close your eyes, your mind goes right back to whatever it is you were worrying about. Overthinking causes insomnia and even when your body may be tired, your mind remains active enough to keep you awake because your worried thoughts just won't leave you alone. Forcing yourself to go to sleep is not going to work either.

Falling asleep is a mechanism that your mind cannot control and if your mind is too busy overthinking to shut down properly for the night, you'll be left to deal with insomnia. Trouble falling asleep is not something to be taken lightly. Sleep is essential for our overall well-being. To function at our best each day, we need to get enough sleep every night. To get the proper sleep, our bodies need each night; the mind needs to be fully relaxed, which you can't do if your mind is consumed by an unending stream of thoughts.

Your thoughts are powerful. They create the experiences that you have, and each time you overthink, you're sabotaging your happiness and wellbeing. If you've tried to forcibly control your thoughts before this, you probably haven't had much luck. This is why you're reading this book. The more you try to forcibly control your mind, the more resistance it seems to give. That's why overcoming negativity feels like such a struggle. Your mind is resisting because it is biased toward the negative, and it wants to stay in that zone where it feels comfortable. But when you observe your thoughts rather than try to control them, they'll automatically start to slow down as they pass in and out of your mind. Overcoming the habit of overthinking is not about forcing control; it is about understanding and acknowledgment. To understand what you're up against, acknowledge its presence and try to find a workable solution without trying to force control, that's when you're one step closer to becoming the master of your mind.



# Chapter 1: How to Stop Overthinking

Overthinking is one of the most common mental conditions in the world, and unfortunately, it is also one of the most debilitating. You might think that it is no big deal, everybody gets lost in their thoughts sometimes, right? But when overthinking hits, you, it hits you hard. This is especially troubling if you have trouble with anxiety.

Now, if you have any past experience in falling into the almost endless spiraling pit of despair that is overthinking, then you know just how horrible it is. Overthinking can prevent you from enjoying the things that you used to love doing, like going to parties, walking in the park, or just meeting with friends. Overthinking can also negatively affect your performance at work, it makes you lose motivation, makes you procrastinate on your tasks, and thus ruining whatever chances of job progression you might have. Overthinking can also ruin your personal relationships; no one wants to be around a person who is always complaining, cranky, and has such a short temper, so you will have very few friends, and they might not be sticking around for much longer.

If the picture painted above seems familiar to you, then you are probably already aware that there is something wrong about you, and that you are already desperate to find a way to fix yourself and start living again. However, it seems like everything you do seems futile, it's as if there is always an insurmountable hurdle in front of you. Overthinking not only leaves you mentally drained, but it also makes you feel exhausted physically. It's like having an energy vampire latched permanently on your neck, and it is constantly feeding on what little mental and physical energy you have.

However, you should not lose hope just yet; there are plenty of ways that you can use to overcome your chronic overthinking problem. But first, you need to start with understanding the core problem; you need to know what overthinking is, and from there, you can start looking for the most viable solutions.

## *Overthinking Disorder Defined :*

Everyone gets sucked into the rabbit hole of obsessive thoughts sometimes, and when it happens occasionally, then it is fine. However, when

overthinking starts to consume your life, that is when it becomes a chronic mental problem.

Not everyone is prone to overthink, but some are more likely to suffer from it. For instance, people with a history of struggling with anxiety are almost always dealing with overthinking and its consequences daily. In fact, overthinking is actually one of the triggers that cause anxiety in most people.

Even if you do not have any history of mental health problems, if you consider yourself as a “problem solver” of sorts, then you are prone to overthinking. The thing you consider as your most valuable asset, which is your analytical mind, can become your worst enemy when your overthinking is triggered. Analytical thinkers are the ones that are easily pulled into an endless loop of unproductive and irrational thoughts.

In addition, if you are at a low point in your life where you have unusually high levels of uncertainty, it can trigger your overthinking disorder. If you just experienced a major loss in your life, like you just got fired from your job, your significant other left you, or someone close to you recently died, these events might cause your mind to an uncontrollable spiral of unproductive thoughts.

#### *What are the Symptoms of Overthinking? :*

Now that you have an idea of what overthinking is, the next thing that you need to know is the signs of overthinking to look out for. Knowing the symptoms will inform you that you might need to be wary of the status of your mental health, maybe consider getting professional help. You can somehow gauge how deep into overthinking you are by identifying which symptoms have already manifested; if you find that you have signs of being a chronic overthinker, then you should probably consider getting professional help ASAP.

#### *You Have Trouble Getting to Sleep? :*

You cannot turn off your thoughts, even when you try; in fact, your thoughts actually start racing even faster when you try to stop them. All of these worries and doubts swirling in your head agitates you and prevents you from getting enough rest.

Overthinkers know the feeling of not getting enough sleep, almost too well actually. Insomnia happens because you have no control over your brain;

you cannot shut off the chain of negative thoughts going through your mind at a hundred miles an hour. All of the things that worried you throughout the day come back just when you hit the sack, and you feel so wired that you cannot fall asleep.

If you are having difficulty calming your mind on your own, you can try different relaxing activities before you go to bed. There are plenty of things that might help you ease your mind just enough to let you get some sleep, like meditation, writing on a journal, adult coloring books, drawing, painting, reading a book, or even just having a nice conversation with a loved one. Do anything that can shift your attention away from the negative thoughts long enough for you to get some sleep.

#### *You Start to Self-Medicate? :*

Numerous medical researches have discovered that most people suffering from overthinking disorder have turned to use recreational drugs, alcohol, overeating, or other ways to get a grip on their emotions somehow. Overthinkers feel the need to rely on external stimuli because they believe that their internal resources (aka their minds) are already compromised.

It is never a good idea to turn to try to treat yourself from overthinking. Odds are, you will still be overthinking afterward, and you have to deal with a different problem brought about by your self-medication.

#### *You are Always Tired? :*

If you are constantly feeling tired, you need to take action. Fatigue is your body's way of telling you to listen to it because there is something wrong going on; you should not ignore it and just hop from one activity to the next.

Usually, fatigue is caused by physical overexertion and lack of rest. However, overthinking can also cause fatigue and exhaustion. Your mind is like a muscle; if you are constantly burdening it with dozens of heavy, negative thoughts all the time, and not even giving it some time to recover, it will get exhausted and cause you to burn out.

Back when humans were still living off the land, people did not have that many things to worry about, which means they do not have quite as many things to think about as well. In today's modern world, people lead complicated lives that require them to accomplish a lot of things in a short amount of time. In this fast-paced world, the need to slow down every once

in a while is crucial for people's well-being. So, whenever you feel fatigued, or better yet, if you feel close to it, slow things down and figure out what your body and your mind need before doing anything else.

*You Tend to Overanalyze Everything? :*

Overthinkers have one major problem, and that is that they always feel that they need to be in control of everything. They plan out every aspect of their lives, some of them even go as far as planning up to the smallest detail. They feel that doing this is the only way they can feel safe, but it always seems to backfire at them because it is actually impossible to plan for everything that will happen in their lives.

Even so, they still continue to plan out their futures, and they get anxious when unexpected things happen, and they always seem to be unexpected things happening all the time. Overthinkers hate dealing with things that they do not have control over, and they fear the unknown. When unexpected problems do surface, they cause them to sit and mull things over instead of taking immediate action to solve the unexpected problem. Numerous medical studies have shown that overthinking leads to making poor judgment calls, which is why overthinking does not really help.

When you catch yourself just before you start overthinking, try your best to bring your thoughts back to the present by taking deep breaths and thinking happy thoughts. Before your negative thoughts go rampant inside your head, acknowledge them, and think about what they can do for you presently; doing this alone is usually enough to get rid of these negative thoughts because you will discover that their only purpose is to cause you stress.

*You are Afraid of Failure? :*

You fancy yourself a perfectionist, and you often think about how awful you would feel if you were to fail somehow. This fear of failure can be so strong that it paralyzes you, and it keeps you from learning from your prior mistakes, which often lead to you repeating them.

Overthinkers often cannot accept failure, and they will do everything they can to avoid it. Ironically, they think that the only way to not fail is to do nothing at all. They mistakenly believe that to avoid failure, they should not put themselves in a position to fail at all, which also means they are not in the position to succeed as well.

If this sounds like you, remember that you are more than just your failures; no one could even remember the last time that you screwed up, it's just you. Also, keep in mind that it is impossible to escape failure, and you should never avoid it at all. For failure allows you to grow and evolve.

*You are Afraid of What the Future Holds? :*

Instead of being excited about the things that you are yet to experience, your anxiety and fear of what could go wrong paralyze you into doing nothing.

If you are afraid of what the future could bring, then your fear keeps you trapped inside your own mind. Research shows that this fear of the future can be so crippling that sufferers tend to turn to drugs and/or alcohol just so they can tune out the negative thoughts that are clamoring inside their heads.

*You Don't Trust Your Own Judgment? :*

You cannot help yourself from second-guessing all of your decisions, from your outfit, what you will be having for lunch, or even what you will be doing for the day. You are always afraid that you will be making the wrong choices, and you often rely on others to reassure you that you made the right call.

Overthinkers are natural perfectionists; they constantly analyze, re-analyze, and re-analyze again, all situations that they find themselves in. They do not want to put themselves in a position where there is even a slight chance of failure. They do not want to make the wrong choice, so they take their sweet time making up their minds; they do not trust themselves enough to make the right decision for anything. They are so out of touch from their intuition that all of their decisions come from their brain, and this is not always right as there are times when you just need to follow your gut instinct. Also, if your brain is bogged down from dozens of negative thoughts, it is hard to make a clear decision.

*You Suffer from Frequent Tension Headaches ?*

Tension headaches feel as if there is a thick rubber band wrapped around your temples, and it is slowly getting tighter. Aside from the headache, you might also feel a sharp pain or stiffness in your neck. If you suffer from chronic tension headaches, it is a sign that you are overworking yourself, and you need a rest.

And by rest, it also includes rest from mental activities, like overthinking. Headaches are a sign that your body needs to take a break. This includes your mind. Besides, you might not notice it, but when you overthink, you are actually thinking of the same things over and over again.

Overthinkers usually have negative thought patterns that loop around themselves. To fight this, you need to break this loop by reinforcing positive thoughts. Take deep breaths, and focus your mind on every time your chest rises and falls, being mindful of the present will help you get rid of negative thoughts and the tension headache that came with them.

#### *Stiff Joints and Muscle Pain :*

It might sound far-fetched, but overthinking can actually affect your entire body, not just your mind. And once your physical body is affected by your out of control negative thoughts, it will not be long until your emotional well-being gets hit too. Until you address and get rid of the underlying issues that cause you to overthink, the body pains will continue. Overthinking might start in your mind, but its effects will gradually creep into the other parts of your body.

#### *You Cannot Stay In the Present? :*

When you overthink, you will find it difficult living in the present moment and actually enjoy your life as it happens. Overthinking causes you to lose focus on the things happening around you, you are so engrossed at thinking about your problems over and over that it seems like you are trapped inside your own mind. If your mind gets bogged down by a ton of unnecessary thoughts, you are removing yourself from the present, and this can and will negatively affect your personal relationships.

You need to open yourself to the world around you; do not let yourself get too wrapped up in negative thoughts. The only thoughts that you should allow inside your mind are those that serve your well-being, ignore, and forget about the ones that bring you down. There is so much beauty in life, and the opportunities for incredible experiences are unlimited. However, you can only appreciate them if you can manage to tune out the idle chatter in your mind and start listening to your heart instead.

#### *Different Causes of Overthinking :*

Again, there is nothing wrong about thinking about your problems so you can think of a solution for them, it becomes worrisome when you have a

bad habit of twisting narratives around in your head until you can see every angle and side to it. Overthinking is not productive as it just makes you dwell over your problems; you are not looking for a solution for them, and you are only making yourself feel miserable.

To find an effective way to break your overthinking habit, you need to find out what caused it in the first place. Below are some of the more common reasons as to why people tend to overthink their problems rather than actually find a solution for them.

### *1. Lack of Self-confidence*

If you are not self-confident, you tend to doubt every little thing that you say or do. When you hesitate, even a little, about the things that you want to do, you are letting uncertainty and fear creep into your mind, and it will be very difficult to get them out of there. You can never really tell what your decisions will take you; even if you planned every little detail, the outcome will still not be exactly what you hoped for (it could either be better or worse than what you planned). This is why you should learn to take risks and not torture yourself when you did not get the results you wished for.

### *2. When You Worry Too Much*

It is only natural to worry when you encounter new and unfamiliar things and events. However, if you worry too much that you cannot even imagine a positive outcome, then it will trigger you to overthink. This is problematic because worry attracts even more problems, sometimes it creates ones out of thin air, which causes overthinking to go even deeper. Instead of mulling over how things could go wrong, it is better to entertain more positive thoughts, like how much better you would feel if a certain event turns in your favor.

### *3. When You Overthink to Protect Yourself*

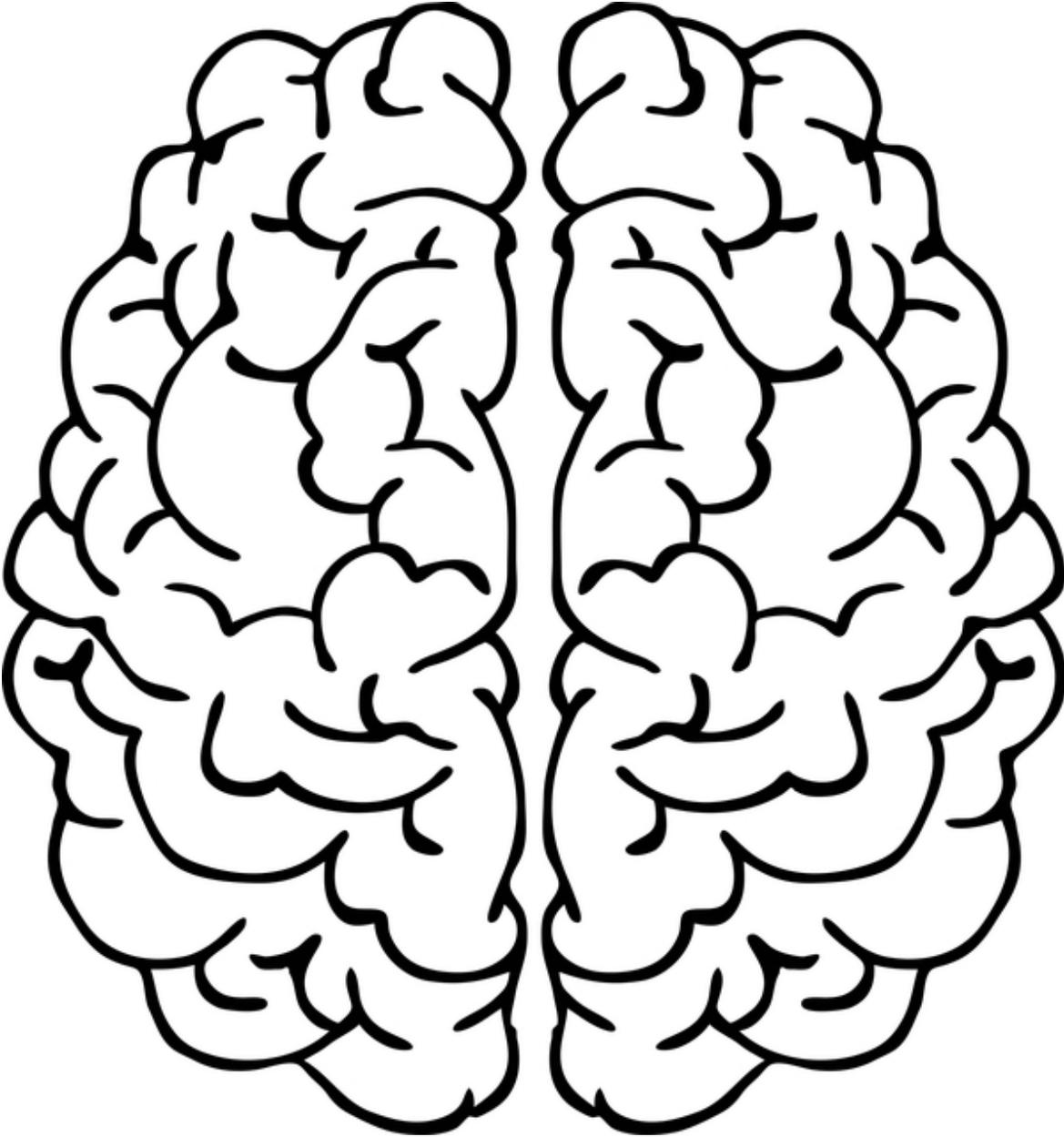
Some people believe that they can protect themselves from troubles whenever they overthink, but the truth is that overthinking is a trap that kills your progress. Overthinking and not doing anything to change the status quo might seem good, but stifling your progress is never a good thing at all. Also, when you overthink, you are not really staying in the same position. You are actually undoing whatever amount of progress you achieved thus far.

### *4. You are unable to “Turn Off” Your Mind*

Many overthinkers became that way because they cannot seem to get their minds off their problems no matter how hard they try. People who are sensitive to stress live as if they are constantly wound up tightly; they have somehow forgotten how to relax and change their chain of thoughts. Overthinking happens when a person stresses too much on a single problem, and he could not turn his focus away from it.

#### *5. You are Always Chasing After Perfection*

Being a perfectionist is not necessarily a good thing. In fact, one could argue that being a perfectionist is not good at all. Most people who struggle with perfectionism are constantly anxious. They often wake up in the middle of the night, thinking of the things that they could have done better. Being a perfectionist causes overthinking because you are always trying to outdo yourself.



## Chapter 2: Improve your Life

Focusing on getting rid of the bad habits isn't enough. Now, we need to introduce good habits into our new life.

I hope you've continued to work on the thought interruption for all those unneeded or negative thoughts. You've even come up with a new activity to try or go back to from when you were a child. It's time to focus on you as a person and what it is you want out of life. There are several things you can do regularly to prime your mind, body, and spirit for the new you. Let's look at a few of them.

Prioritize relationships with people—not things

In today's information-saturated society, it has become natural to pull out our phones whenever there is any amount of downtime. When you look at people waiting in lines all over the city, in stores, waiting to be seated in restaurants, they are always sitting or standing with their heads down, noses in their phones. And why not? On our phones, we can play fun games, chat with friends, read blog posts or news stories, keep up with our celebrities... Wait a second, didn't we just talk about getting rid of information overload? That's right. Now, it is time to prioritize your relationships and interactions with other people. Let's set a small challenge for you to try this week.

When you go to the grocery store or to the bank, or maybe even when you take your family out to dinner next time, leave your phone in the car. What?! Yes, that's what I said. Leave your phone in the car. When you are standing in line—and this may be a little nerve-wracking—try saying something nice to the person behind or in front of you. I know...you might get a confused look, maybe they will be too immersed in their own phones to notice you, or perhaps it will have been so long since they've received real human communication, they won't even know what to do. But I challenge you. Talk to someone in line, then see what happens. Odds are, you're going to have a positive interaction that will stay with you for the rest of the day. Most people really enjoy chit-chatting with strangers at the store. A lot of people get a big boost in mood from even the littlest interactions like that. No matter how good it seems to feel when you get a new text or a like on your Facebook post, it's never going to feel the same as genuine human interactions. So, do yourself a favor and challenge yourself to connect with someone you don't know at least once a week.

Now let's concentrate on the relationships in your life with your loved ones, friends, and/or family. Think of one person who you consider a good friend that you haven't spoken to in a week or more. Why is that? Is it because you've been busy with work? Busy with the kids? For whatever reason, you've decided that other things in your life take precedence over your relationship with that friend. I would ask you to consider if you've really been too busy to fit in a 15-minute phone call with a friend. Perhaps you think you've been too tired after work and just haven't made it a priority. This is something I would challenge you to change in terms of mindset. Human relationships and friendships are the most important aspects of our lives, and it would be a shame to sacrifice valuable time with those people for a night of Netflix and pizza every single night of the week. I know work is exhausting, and you want to come home and just watch TV and forget about the world. But we've talked about this, too. Why would you waste away your life like this? If your job is so taxing that you can't concentrate on anything else and you are so desperate to get away from it that you can't function in the evenings, maybe it's time to reevaluate your career choices. But I'll wait until we get to that tip in a few minutes. Right now, your challenge is to set a date this week to go out and meet up with one of your favorite people for a chat and maybe dinner. If you don't want to spend money, invite them over to your place and plan a meal together. Maybe you want to go over there because their house is quieter...that's fine! Whatever you decide to do, the important thing is that you set the goal of making time for a friend this week. This is a really great habit that you will get a lot out of. Much more than that pint of Moose Tracks ice cream in the fridge can offer!

Maintain that journal and track your progress

Journaling is a great way to keep your mind focused and record your progress. It's great to have a written source to come back to any time you feel like you need a little encouragement. Try to write a little bit in your journal every single day. Write about how you feel, what challenges you've succeeded with recently, and your determination to keep going. This is also a great way to keep yourself accountable. Write down what you've challenged yourself to do this week and write it down right away when you've completed it. Keep going, and soon you will have pages of great work to look back on when you feel you are losing steam or need a pick-

me-up. Because we all have those days and that's okay! Like I said before, this is a big undertaking. And it's important that your challenges not turn in to chores and sources of overthinking just like the ones you've worked so hard to banish! Challenge yourself, but don't over-burden yourself. I'm laying out several options in the hopes that there will be a few that really stand out to you as something you think would drastically improve your daily life and your thought processes. And remember, no one changes their lives overnight!

Keep in mind that your journal doesn't have to just be filled with words. If you're like me and you enjoy motivational quotes or inspiring pictures, use your journal or notebook as a sort of scrapbook and include pictures, quotes, cartoons, even stuff like ticket stubs and birthday cards, stuff you might otherwise lose or throw away. These things are a lot of fun to look back on, and you will be happy you kept them later on.

### Eat healthier

Eat healthier—not “eat healthy.” I put it this way because there is no surer way to derail your progress than to overload you with a challenge like completely changing the way you eat immediately. If you are already a pretty healthy eater, that's great! But I would caution you and others alike to not get too caught up in any nutrition hype or fad that seems to be eating up your Facebook and social media feeds. This is another great example of letting something intended to improve your life become a source of obsession, overthinking, stress, and feelings of failure. Nutrition plans and supplement marketing is just as big as any other form of marketing, and you should never adopt a diet or nutrition plan as the final say of nutrition. Use some common sense, don't overeat, and try to eat more healthy stuff than unhealthy stuff. That's really all you need to worry about right now. Don't go on an extremely low-carb diet right now. You're dealing with something far more important than that.

If you're wondering what a healthier eating habit looks like, I would suggest keeping a record of what you eat in a day for two or three days. Then review it. Is something standing out as potentially harmful? For example, if you're eating frozen pizzas and cookies every night and notice you feel like crap, this could be a good reason why. I'm not saying eat salad and quinoa every day, but everyone can make one or two small changes to

their eating routines and see a big improvement in overall energy and mood. Try to lower your sugar intake and eat a few more green things a week. That's all you need to do to start. Small steps, like anything else, will see you go far.

### *Exercise*

It's time for everyone's favorite healthy mind/body tip—exercise! Now, don't groan. No, you don't have to start training for a marathon or buy a complete set of dumbbells for your new impromptu home gym. I've said it before, and I'll say it for nearly every tip on this list—one small step at a time. When you break things down and take it one step at a time, you will be far more successful with your goals than if you try to take on too much at a time. It is also so important, especially with exercise, to evaluate your personal condition and ability. Don't compare yourself with the YouTube fitness stars doing crazy workouts every single day and chugging protein shakes. This is about you and your personal improvement, and no one else's plan is going to match yours perfectly.

Just like with healthy eating habit, the first step is to take a look at what you are already doing and move up a rung on the activity level. That's all. If you're someone who enjoys working out but doesn't seem to find the time to do it, then I'm calling you out! Exercise is not about the length of time, it's about how hard you work, and I'm only talking a few minutes each day to start. If you are starting at zero activity, then your goal is simply to think of opportunities to walk or stand instead of sit. If you can, fit in a walk around the block or go to a park and walk a little bit. If you're at home, get up from your desk and do something physical every hour or two to get your blood pumping a little more. It's about making small changes. Turn those small changes into habits then concentrate on moving up another rung.

A lot of people think they need a pricey gym membership to get in better shape. This is just not true. There are tons of exercises you can do at home with zero equipment and little space that are very adequate for improving overall health. Maybe you're a unique case if you're actually training to compete in body-building competitions. But most of us are going to see a huge improvement in mood, energy, and overall health from simply turning some of that sitting time into a little exercise. Search the internet or go on YouTube if you are unsure of what to do. Things like squats, push-ups, sit-ups, plank hold, jogging, walking, running, and dancing require zero

equipment and can be done almost anywhere you feel like it. If you think it would motivate you if you had a partner alongside you, go for it! Go to a group fitness class every week if you think that would be more fun. The main goal is simply to add some physical activity to your schedule that amounts to more than you were doing before. Again, don't overwhelm yourself by trying to start a 30-day challenge or extreme 5-day workout schedule. Your focus right now is your mind—don't clutter it back up where you've worked so hard to find clarity.

### Make time for you regularly

This is another one that can mean lots of different things to different people. Making time for you simply mean setting aside time every day to engage in an activity that makes you feel good and calm you. The exception I'm going to suggest here is that you don't make this chocolate or junk food time. Yes, chocolate makes you feel good...for a few minutes...but overall, it would be a terrible idea to form the habit of eating badly in the name of "you" time. I'm sure there are other, more healthy alternatives!

Do you enjoy massages? Of course, most people aren't going to get a massage every single day, but maybe once a month you treat yourself to a professional massage. On a daily basis, find something that relaxes you and set aside half an hour or more just for that. Even if it's just taking a nap! Read a book, light a candle, do something that clears and relaxes your mind and doesn't work you up. This is about unwinding, but instead of replacing the stress of your day with something loud and distracting for the rest of the night, the goal is to calm and quiet your mind and body. Stretching is a great way to do this, especially if you've been stuck in an office chair all day. Maybe you just want to have a conversation with your partner or a friend over a cup of coffee. If you need to, brainstorm on a piece of paper before choosing something that speaks to you.

### To-do lists

Many of us like to have every day organized and that's great. The problem of overthinking creeps in when we start to obsess about getting every single thing on the list done, even those things that are not essential. Part of forming good habits is learning when to say no to something that you just don't have the mental energy to do if it is non-essential. If you feel stressed

but you're making strides toward changing your life and habits, then it's ok if you want to pass on that work outing or that birthday party for a friend of a friend you don't even know very well. If you think your time would be better spent at home relaxing or doing something you enjoy, then choose yourself. You don't always have to choose to give your valuable time and energy to others just because they ask for it. The obligation is a powerful force in a lot of people's lives, and many people end up feeling guilty if they don't always say yes to invitations or requests. But this is just another pile of clutter building up in your mind leading to overthinking. Feelings and thoughts of guilt are just as powerful as any other emotion, and you should protect yourself from them.

Organize your to-do list by priority. Obviously, grocery shopping to feed your kids comes before trimming the hedges in the front yard and this chore should be further down on the list. Maybe make a separate list for things you need to accomplish today and things that need to be completed this week. This will give your mind a little more space and comfort. Instead of seeing a list of 20 things to do today, you may get to 5 or 6 things today and the rest can be planned throughout the week as you have time and energy.

Ask for help when you need it

This can be a big one for those overthinkers who are also overachievers and perfectionists! Sometimes, we commit to too much, then feel obligated to push ourselves too hard to fulfill what we've committed to. Don't try to be superman or superwoman. There are going to be times when you need help, especially if you are juggling responsibilities with work and also a family. Have a conversation about it with your loved ones and friends, and you will find that most of the time they are willing to help you out. It is important that you not feel like a failure for asking for help. No one gets through life alone. Let this be an opportunity to bond and form fresh connections while learning to work together. You will feel much better and your relationships will become stronger.

Be grateful

Clearing your mind of clutter is also about cleansing your emotions. When you begin to get rid of clutter and negative thoughts in your mind, as well as clutter in your environment that is connected to harmful emotions, it is

important that you start replacing those negative feelings with positive ones. At first, it may take effort and a written reminder to get yourself going, but eventually, the goal is to make these thoughts automatic.

Gratitude is a powerful thing for the mind. It can instantly turn a stressful, bad day into something positive and hopeful. Instead of concentrating on the challenges you are facing and the things you don't have, think about all of the wonderful things in your life that you can be thankful for. Even the small things. Is the utility bill paid for this month? That is something to be thankful for. Do you have friends who care about you and that you have fun spending time with? Lots of people don't—so be grateful. Is your bed nice and soft with clean sheets? Look forward to sleeping tonight and be grateful. There are a thousand reasons all around you to feel grateful and it is important to start noticing them, each and every day.

Gratitude comes with a lot of wonderful, warm feelings. It also forces you to refocus your mind on what's going on right in front of you and around you in the present moment. A lot of us get stuck in thinking about yesterday or the week before or even years before...then our minds shift to tomorrow and what's happening this weekend and next month and next year... How often do you just sit down and look around you and feel thankful for where you are in life? This is so important and I hope you make this one of your top priorities as you build new positive life habits.



# Chapter 3: Positive Attitude and Effective Tips to Change Negative Thinking

## Positive Habits Require Positive Thinking

You are about to go on a vacation to Bali. Here are a few situations that I would like to present to you. See if you like any of them.

- *You are an adventurer. You love taking risks. It's all about the adrenaline and facing your fears. You enjoy extreme sports. However, I tell you that all you get to do on your vacation is stay in your hotel and relax.*
- *You are an explorer. You love to see the sights, people, food, and events of the city you visit. To you, the excitement of discovery comes before everything else. I tell you that you are only allowed to visit a restaurant frequented by tourists and nothing else. And maybe a shopping mall.*
- You enjoy relaxation. The main purpose of your vacation is to sit back, remove your footwear, and sip on that cocktail while enjoying a lovely book. But guess what? I wake you up at 5 am and tell you that we are going rock climbing!

Would you really enjoy your vacation in any of the three scenarios? Would you have positive emotions when thinking about your trip? In fact, you might not even listen to what I have to say and do what you came to do.

If you do not like something, chances are that you are going to find a way to avoid it. It might happen immediately or it might happen eventually. The same goes with your habits as well. All of the above steps mentioned under “Sticking to Good Habits” try to encourage you to do so. But they will need the assistance of your positive mindset.

Now the important question is; just how do you develop this mindset?

## The Power of Positive Thinking

You might think that any subject related to “positive thinking” might be covered mostly by psychologists or life coaches. You might have never thought that the medical community might actually start looking into the topic. But they did, and the results are pretty surprising. According to Mayo

Clinic (Mayo Clinic Staff, n.d.), positive thinking provides you with many benefits including:

- *Lower rates of depression*
- *Longer life*
- *Lower stress levels*
- *Improved cardiovascular health*
- Improved coping skills during times of stress

Of course, a lot of people might say, “How is cardiovascular health involved in all of this?”

Your cardiovascular health depends on a lot of factors. It depends on your diet, the hours of sleep you get, the degree of stress you face, and more. Negative thoughts fuel negative emotions, which in turn causes stress to arise easily in your brain. For example, you are in bad traffic and your thinking is already in a negative state. You are already adding stress to your brain because your thoughts keep conjuring ideas and memories that trigger stress. Because of that, you might not be able to deal with the traffic well. This means more stress. Which in turn means that you exacerbate your negative emotions. And eventually, you have a cycle.

When your body is under a lot of stress, it increases cholesterol and blood pressure levels. That in turn affects your heart.

Positive thinking is not just essential for good mental health, but contributes to good physical health as well.

How exactly can we create a positive mindset? Let us examine some of the ways.

#### **Tip #1: Start Your Day with Affirmations**

The tone you adopt in the morning can dictate how the rest of the day might proceed. Why not set a positive tone for yourself? In fact, have you ever had an experience where you woke up in a state of panic, wondering if you forgot to complete an important task or if you are late for something, only to realize that nothing has happened and it was just your nerves? Or have you woken up once in such a state of stress that you could not even finish the coffee you made for yourself? All of these situations have occurred because when you start your day poorly, the emotions trickle over to the next day. Eventually, you are living in a constant state of stress and

negativity. Affirmations are simple phrases that help you focus on positive emotions. Every time you wake up, start the day with phrases like:

- *Today, I shall face my day with courage and positivity.*
- *Today might be challenging, but so is any day of the week. I shall not let these challenges change my perspective of the world and create negativity.*
- *I am an incredible person and despite today's events, I will not look down on myself.*
- *Today is going to be a good day.*
- I'm going to be awesome and nothing is going to convince me otherwise!

You can always create your own positive affirmations depending on the situation.

#### Tip #2: Think About the Good Things, No Matter How Small They Are

Don't wait for a big moment to occur in your life. Look at every small event as another positive contribution. Here is the reality of life: no matter how much you want to avoid obstacles, you are going to encounter them every day. Each obstacle is something that has the potential to add to a whole pile of negative things. Eventually, you will feel that your life has too much negativity in it. What you are experiencing is small things that have accumulated to become something intimidating.

The same rule applies with the positive things in your life as well. Keep collecting them, no matter how little they seem. Eventually, the number of positive things will add up to become a dominating presence in your life.

#### Tip #3: Crank Up Your Humor

Don't let the dark situations get you down. Teach yourself to see the humor in things. Remind yourself that the situation you are in is going to get better eventually. After all, life goes on. Regardless of what happens to whom, life is a continuous ticking clock. So, make a joke out of the things that have happened to you and move on.

#### Tip #4: Failures Are Lessons

Success finds those people who are not brooding over their failures, but are finding ways to move past them. But the only way that can happen is if they choose to learn from their failures.

You too should approach your failures with tact and wisdom. Let your failures teach you a lesson; do not let them define your life. Bill Gates is defined by the success of Microsoft because he let that be the focus of his attention. If he had let his failures define him, then he would be in a different position rather than on the Forbes list of billionaires.

#### Tip #5: Watch Out for Negative Self-Talk

It's not unusual for people to berate themselves when they commit an error. How many times have you thought "I shouldn't have done it. I was going to fail anyway" when you tried something and didn't succeed at it? Or you might have thought one of these critical thoughts:

- *Why do I even bother with such things anyway?*
- *What am I doing? I should have just stuck to what I know.*
- *If only I hadn't tried something new, this wouldn't have happened.*

Every time you create a negative statement about yourself, you are forcing your brain to think in a particular manner. And we don't need to go into the details of how your subconscious is going to latch on to those negative thoughts and run with them.

So, what should you do if you are faced with negative self-evaluations? You turn them into positive ones.

Let's say that you tried to do something and it failed. Rather than thinking:

- *I shouldn't have tried. This is what happens when you don't stick to what you do.*

Think of it this way:

- *So that's what happens if I do it this way! Interesting! I'll remember this and make sure I don't do it this way in the future. Or even if I do, I will plan better. Let's look at my other options.*

Notice the difference? In the second response, you acknowledge that a mistake has been made. But you see it in a positive light. You allow it to teach you rather than defeat you. Make sure that you are not denying the fact that you have made a mistake. Denial has its consequences.

What is so bad about denial, you ask?

A lot.

One of the things that denial prevents you from doing is seeking help. We are not all perfect. Sometimes, we need help in our endeavors. That does not mean that we are weak or unskilled. It just means that we might need an extra pair of hands (or more) to help us with our project.

Denial also prevents us from acknowledging problems. If you feel that there are no problems, even when there are, then you won't learn to grow or deal with them. Eventually, those problems worsen and affect your life immensely at a later time.

There are two things you can do with a problem.

You can choose to face it and learn to handle it. Or you can choose to ignore it, and watch it dismantle things in your life.

Among the two options, the ideal choice is obvious.

### Focus on the Present

People often misunderstand this advice. They think that by being focused on the present, they have to be aware of every ticking minute that passes by.

That's not true at all. The idea of being in the present – or practicing mindfulness as people like to say – is that you don't let your mind wander toward things of the past or events of the future. The reason for this is that the things of the past have already occurred and there is nothing you can do to change that. But, what about the things that are yet to happen? Use the steps below:

- *Step 1: Can you deal with the situation? If yes, move on to Step 2, else move on to Step 5.*
- *Step 2: Have you already thought of ways to deal with the situation? If yes, move on to Step 5, else move on to Step 3*
- *Step 3: Can you come up with recommendations, ideas, or solutions to deal with the situation? If you yes, move on to step 4, else go to Step 5.*
- *Step 4: Do you have a plan of action? If yes, then move to Step 5, else create a plan of action and move to Step 5.*
- *Step 5: Continue with your day and bring your mind back to the present.*

When you allow the past or present to occupy too much of your time in the present, then you might not perform well or achieve much in the present.

### Have a Positive Circle of Friends

Let me meet your friends and I can tell you what your future looks like. You might have heard that phrase repeated often. And for good reason. Since it does bear some truth.

When you surround yourself with friends who are positive influences in your life, you in turn improve your positivity.

Take this study conducted by Harvard psychologists as an example (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). The study was conducted over a period of 20 years and the results showed that happiness is greatly influenced by your social circles. In other words, you might very well be the company you keep.

When you surround yourself with positive people, their positivity seeps into your life. You become a sponge, absorbing their attitudes and eventually adding certain quirks to your own personality.

Have friends who support you and accept you for who you are.

Hence, surround yourself with people who help you increase the positivity in your life.

Additionally, you can also find people who can act as your mentors. It could be your parents, siblings, friends, or even grandparents. Being in the company of positive people will allow you to learn from their attitudes. They might even be able to share some of their worldly wisdom with you.



## **Chapter 4: Become A Positive Thinker: Start with Your Body**

Now that you know how powerful thought is and how it attracts specific events, it is time for you to become a positive thinker.

Positive thinking will transform your life and your environment in a way that you never imagined possible.

Bob Proctor was just one example of a person who achieved tremendous success after changing his way of thinking.

If he didn't do it, he might have stayed in his dead-end job and continued living his life unhappily.

Another example is Pema Chödrön, a world-famous Buddhist nun, who was also the author of the best-selling books *When Things Fall Apart* and *No Time to Lose*.

When Chödrön found it hard to cope with her second divorce, she went to the French Alps to study the ways of Buddhism. It was when she learned the nature of things: that everything passes.

She learned that whining about negative circumstances does not help a person at all.

She also learned meditation, and how it helps in achieving peace of mind. She started becoming positive, and in just a few years, she became the first American woman to receive full ordination from the Chinese lineage of Buddhism.

Afterwards, she has written best-selling books and was teaching positive ways of thinking in different countries.

They make it seem easy, but a change in ways of thinking is not an easy feat. It requires a deep understanding of the self. Becoming a positive thinker does not happen overnight.

It's not like saying "I'll think positive from now on" and the next morning, you'll just smile at every misfortune. You would have to take baby steps. You would have to slowly transform yourself until positive thinking becomes your second nature.

The best way to start is to be healthy. If you find it hard to start thinking positive, there is actually a way that you can encourage positive thoughts by having a healthy body. The brain needs nutrition to function.

It doesn't matter how much optimism you already have, if your brain doesn't get the nutrients it needs, positive thinking will not yield any significant results. Achieving a healthy body is the first step to becoming a positive thinker.

### *Eat Right*

#### Water

Most people underestimate the value of drinking enough water, but it's time that you realize that your body is composed of 70% water and if does not get replenished constantly, most of the nutrients will not get into your blood.

Water contains oxygen, which is needed by your blood. When oxygen is absorbed by the blood, it carries with it all the vitamins and nutrients that were dissolved by water as you digest your food.

When water is excreted, it carries all the waste that your body collected. Without proper water replenishment, you will have a serious health decline.

Drink at least 8 glasses of water every day. Do not count caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, because they actually dehydrate you faster than they hydrate you. Drink a full glass of water right after waking up and right before going to bed. The six other glasses should be distributed throughout the day, preferably before and after a meal, to aid digestion.

If you want to take advantage of drinking water to boost your health, drink fruit-infused water in the morning. Adding fruits to water at least an hour before drinking adds vitamins and minerals.

Fruits contain Vitamin C, calcium, magnesium, iron, antioxidants and other valuable nutrients. You can ensure immediate absorption of these components when you take it with water.

#### Protein

Your body needs protein to repair your muscles. You have muscles in almost every part of your body, so it is important that you get as much protein as you can every day.

It is hard to think positive when your muscles are tired and burning, or when your stomach is upset (yes, it has muscles too) so make sure that you get your daily dose of protein.

Extreme health advocates would recommend avoiding all types of meat as protein source because it takes a long time to digest it and most types have too much fat. It is not advisable for you to do this as a beginner (unless you're already a vegetarian).

Meat is actually a very good source of protein, and it is very accessible. Fat is also not really that bad, as long as you do not consume too much of it. Your brain itself is very fatty, so you cannot avoid it altogether.

Your body needs fat as an energy reserve. The key is to find good meat with very little fat. You can start by avoiding red meat.

Stick to the white ones like fish and chicken. Also, try your very best to avoid processed meat. Chemical preservatives are known to have ingredients that cause different health problems.

If avoiding meat altogether is okay with you, then you can get protein from several different sources. Legumes, spinach and moringa are very good sources of protein.

Add some of these leafy wonders to every meal to ensure that you are getting protein. Eggs and beans are also very good alternatives to meat.

## Carbohydrates

Most people in the health industry would frown at the thought of recommended carbohydrates. The thing is, too much of anything is bad. Popular diet programs exclude carbohydrates in their recipes because people who have already gained weight have slow metabolic rates. This is usually because of lack of exercise, and unhealthy eating habits.

When a person has high carbohydrate intake and slow metabolism, carbohydrates is just broken down to sugar and it stays in the body - this leads to weight gain and diabetes.

Just like fat, you cannot remove carbohydrates altogether. Sugar gives your body energy. The best thing is moderation. You can consume carbohydrate-rich food an hour before exercising or doing any strenuous activity. If you are not that active to begin with, then limit your carbohydrate intake to whole wheat bread, fruits, and vegetables.

Occasional pizza and pasta are alright; just don't consume it more than twice a week. The sugar that carbohydrates provide will definitely help you feel good and energetic.

## Vitamins

A lot of people think that it is okay to have unhealthy eating habits, as long as you have a set of tablets to take, you're good to go.

That is not true at all. There is a reason why Vitamin tablets are called 'supplements'—they are supposed to go hand-in-hand with your diet.

Vitamin capsules may contain what your body needs, but if you do not take enough water, it is not going to be absorbed properly.

Some multivitamin capsules also contain minerals that are not digested properly if you do not have enough amino acids, so you still need protein.

Food supplements are good as long as they are taken within the right dosage. If you are not sure whether the supplement has the right dosage of the vitamins, then resort to eating fruits and vegetables instead.

Getting vitamins from food is a good way to ensure that you do not overdose.

The body has its own way controlling mineral levels, so getting it directly from food is definitely much better than getting concentrated versions of it.

Also, fruit and vegetables will not cause your liver any harm, and would actually give you fiber to aid in your digestion.

Vitamins aid in adrenal function – the main body function for releasing and inhibiting hormones that directly affect stress and relaxation: adrenaline and cortisol.

A person who has balanced adrenaline and low cortisol is more likely to feel happy and content than the one who has low adrenaline and high cortisol.

## Exercise

Deep Breathing – One of the best and easiest exercises that you can do to help you become positive is breathing.

You breathe every second, of course, but you are not really breathing to exercise. Regular breathing only allows your body to take in enough

oxygen to keep your blood pumping.

However, it does not allow for your lungs to reach its maximum capacity. If you would want to feel positive, exercise deep breathing after waking up and before going to sleep.

How to do a deep-breathing exercise:

1. Slowly breathe in, silently counting up to 8 (inhale through the nose). Your belly should slowly 'deflate' as your diaphragm inflates.
2. Once you have reached your lungs' full capacity, hold the air in for 5 seconds.
3. Slowly exhale through your mouth while counting up to 8.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 at least five times.

Stretching — Your muscles suffered long hours of inactivity. Some sleeping positions sometimes cause cramps and numbness as well. To wake your muscles up, you would need to stimulate blood flow.

Stretching is a good way to do this without abruptly increasing your heart rate. You can do the simple stretching routine below:

1. Stand with your feet apart. Put both of your hands up with your elbows straight, then imagine that you're reaching for something way above you. Try your best to reach it by stretching your arms and legs to its full length and hold that position for 8 counts, before putting your feet down. Repeat 5 times.
2. Put your right hand above your head, then slowly lean your head to your right shoulder (it will not touch your shoulder, but go as close as you can). Hold this position for 8 counts, then switch to the other side. Repeat 3 times for each side.
3. To stretch your shoulders, lift your arms to your sides. Keep your elbows straight and your palms facing forward. Then stretch your arms backwards. You will feel your back muscles and shoulders contracting. Go as far back as you can and hold it for 8 counts, then go back to your original position. Repeat 5 times.

4. Place your hands on your waist, then lean your upper body to the right side. Keep your back straight. Go as far to the side as you can and hold it for 8 counts before going back to standing position. Afterwards, lean to the left. Repeat 3 times for each side.

5. Finally, to stretch your legs, stand you're your left leg while you 'hug' your right leg. Keep your back straight and try to keep your knee as close to your upper body as you can. Hold this position for 8 counts before putting your right leg down. Afterwards, do the same for your left leg. Repeat 3 times for each side.

Doing short stretching exercises after getting up stimulates blood flow to the muscles. Stretching is also known to stimulate dopamine release in the brain. Dopamine is a 'pleasure hormone'.

It is the reason why you get that pleasurable sensation when you stretch in your bed after waking up. Positive thinkers usually have good dopamine levels.

Jog/Jump— Increasing your heart rate stimulates blood flow, adrenaline release and cortisol inhibition.

Having a good blood flow ensures the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the brain. Adrenaline provides a 'pumped-up' feeling that makes a person look forward to activity, whether physical or mental.

Cortisol is a stress response hormone, so lower levels of it reduce the feeling of being upset. Doing little jumps and jogs will help you in increasing the heart rate.

It is important to increase the heart rate gradually, as abrupt change in blood pressure may cause problems for those who have constricted blood vessels. Do not do jogs and jumps without stretching first.

Jumping/Bouncing – Lift both of your feet just about an inch off the ground and do it continuously for a minute. Do not do higher than 2 inches, as higher jumps might make you dizzy because of the sudden movement of the cerebrospinal fluid in your head. Keep your knees straight and your arms at your side as you do it.



## Chapter 5: Challenge your Thoughts

Like I said, social media has become the most common distraction that people deal with. We all know that technology plays a huge part in people's lives. We believe it is also a reason for the problem of procrastination. But ironically, it has the answers to your procrastination habits. Since there is technology, you don't have to worry about ending your habit of procrastination. Why? There are numerous ways to overcome the habit of procrastination. Yes, for example, through motivation you can overcome procrastination, but apps and tools sound more practical than motivation. Don't they? So, if you are looking for best anti-procrastination equipment, know that there are many.

### Small habits, big change

You already know small habits have a bigger impact on your life. For example, if you brush twice a day, you will not see the changes right away, but you will have a great set of teeth when you grow old. Just like that, when you practice simple habits, for now, there will be a massive impact on your life later. So, here are some of the tips that you should follow:

#### An organized individual

Do you think plans can't change your level of productivity? Well, try creating a plan, maybe for the work you have for next week or the work you have to complete tomorrow. And then, stick to the plan and see what happens. It might sound simple. You might even wonder if a simple plan can bring so much difference. Well, yes it can! Through a plan, you organize the work that you have to do. When you organize the work, you understand the process clearly. For example, you have to complete a massive project, but if you just let the huge project be as massive as it is, you will not feel like doing it. You will not be able to see the amount of work you have to do in a day and that will create boredom and ignorance. Thus, you have to organize the work that you have. Luckily, there are so many great tools and apps that you can find to organize work (more on this later).

#### Make it simple

Another common reason for procrastination is due to having complex tasks. Of course, some tasks can be complicated, but it is not as if you can't

simplify them. For that, you have to set simple, achievable goals. Instead of saying “I’ll complete the project” say, “I’ll complete the first part of the project today.” When you make it sound simple, it will actually be simple.

### Have a schedule

Once you have a goal, it is important to schedule it because scheduled work has a higher rate of achievement. Break your work into chunks and set a deadline. If you set your own deadline, you will be able to achieve them before the actual deadline boggles your mind. Sometimes, you might come across unexpected situations in life, thus, completing the work before the deadline will help you stay in the safe zone.

### Set aside distractions

You might already know the things that distract you. For example, if you are addicted to Snapchat, don’t keep it your phone near you until you get the work done. Or if you are a LinkedIn enthusiast like me, stay offline until you complete the work. Don’t even add the Google chrome extension of LinkedIn because it is incredibly distracting. The moment you see the notification, you might want to check the messages even if you have so much to do. Thus, it is better to put all your distractions aside and focus on the work you have.

### The Pomodoro Technique

If you don’t know what this means, this approach promotes working for 25 minutes and taking a break for 5 minutes. Most people consider this as an effective and excellent solution for procrastination. Honestly, this is a fantastic technique, and you will be able to get a lot of things done if you follow this approach. Moreover, by following this technique, you can ensure the quality of your work as well. During the break, you must not get distracted, thus do something like listening to music, walking, or even screaming to release stress. Whatever it may be, make sure it makes you feel relaxed and comfortable. Thus, the activity that you chose to do should be something that you like, but not will divert your focus!

### Reward yourself

I don’t think anybody hates rewards, so it is highly recommended to reward yourself when you follow your plan. For example, if you set a goal to write 2500 words within 5 hours, you must treat yourself once you have achieved it! You can reward yourself with ice cream or an episode of your favorite

show. However, make sure that you'll get back to your routine once you've rewarded yourself.

### The myth of doing the hard thing

So far, you have probably heard that doing the hard things first, help you get other things done sooner. REALLY? Let me ask that again, REALLY? The rule of doing the hard things first don't work for me. If it works for you, then, please ignore this point. But if you really give it a thought, you will understand the underlying concept. When you do what's possible, you become motivated to do the hard things too. Besides, when you try to the hard tasks and if it looks harder than it seemed, you might even delay the work. Thus, it is usually better to do things that are manageable first.

These are the small habits and changes that you must incorporate to become a productive individual. But there are many more anti-procrastination tips that I want to share with you.



## Getting started technique

If you want to do something, you must get started. People usually procrastinate the beginning of a project, so it is important to understand the techniques to get started. How can you do it? Starting a project or a task will not be easy; in fact, it can be the reason for delayed submission.

Whenever you plan to do a task, you need something to boost your mood. At first, getting started can be difficult, but when you move on with the task, it might seem possible. Thus, compare the way you feel when you start the work and the way you feel when you delay the work.

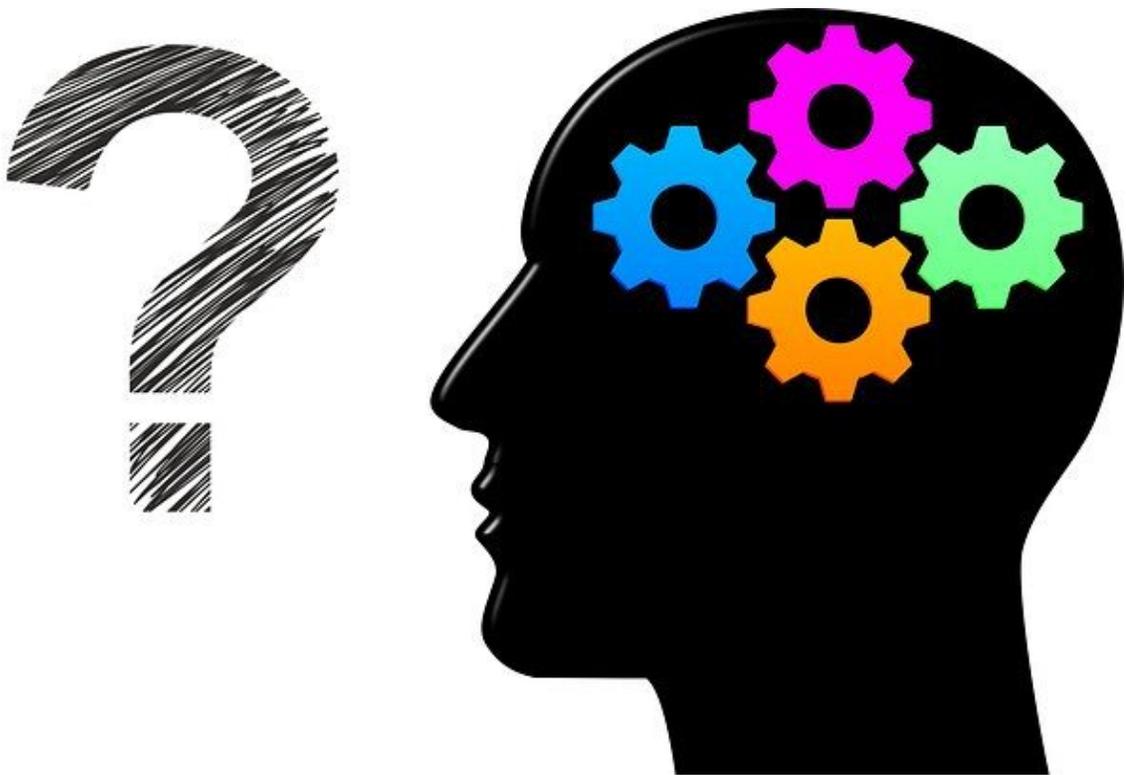
Even if you have done a little from the whole project, it's a good start. Starting the project is important, so it doesn't matter even if you do a very little portion of the whole project. There is a trick to make your mind like the work, and that is to start thinking about the work. When you keep your mind occupied with the task, you might somehow end up starting it. The reason is it is tiring to think, so you eventually start work.

For example, say you should edit an article. If you don't begin editing, you will never do it. Thus, just take the draft and change a few words.

Eventually, you'll end up changing the major sections where you wanted to change. You will do it even without forcing yourself to do it, which is amazing!

Or you can set a timer. What can you do with a timer if you really can't start the work? Simple, set the timer to 10 minutes or less and then, once the timer starts working you just remain seated. Even if you don't do the work, just sit there. Eventually, you'll start work, and you will not even feel that you have started. This is an easy trick because when you are within your workspace, you can't help, but work.

Thus, these tricks and tips might help you get better at what you are doing. The simplest mantra is "get started!"



**Useful Tools and Apps**

Now that you've learned almost all the possible trips and tricks, it is time to get a grip on the tools and apps available. Beating procrastination will not be easy until you get help from the technology that you blamed for your reluctance. You have so many great tools and apps to select from, yet we'll discuss a few beneficial tools that you can rely on. Here we go!

### Procraster

This is one of the procrastination-busting apps, but compatible only for iPad and iPhone. The app will support you throughout the procedures by providing the right answers and advice as for the option that you provide. For example, if you select the option "I don't know how to start" the app will suggest breaking the tasks into chunks. It provides not only ideas but also guidance to do the work. You'll find a rhythm to your work, and you can even check the statistics related to your productivity. The statistics will become a motivation to reach the goals.

### StandStand

Anecdotally, it is considered that changes in the working environment can cause positive changes to your productivity. Thus, the introduction of the portable standing working table has become a great piece of equipment to fight against procrastination. Sometimes, you might get bored by sitting for long hours, in such case, you can consider the StandStand table. The StandStand table helps to increase productivity by allowing you to alternate between sitting and standing at your workstation. Once you change your posture, you'd be able to do focus and get a lot of things done. This is available for purchase on Amazon.

### Focuswriter

If you want to type something on the laptop or computer screen, you must make sure that you don't get distracted. It is easy to get distracted when you have the option to open as many as tabs as you want. While working on screen, if you have too many tabs open it will definitely kill your productivity. So, for that Focuswriter is a great tool. This is a program that works exactly like a Word document. It also has built-in timers, better ambiance, daily goals, and many other options. This program supports Windows, Mac, and Linux system. By using this tool, you will be able to do your work on time with better productivity. Moreover, the time that you usually kill can be saved.

## Freedom

This app provides peace of mind by helping you focus on the important things and avoiding distractions. Once the app does it for you, you will be able to focus on the work you do. People often procrastinate when they slowly shift from an important task to another entertaining activity. For example, say that you are working on a project, but meanwhile, you are scrolling through Facebook feeds, so do you really think that you can give your best to work? I don't think so. When your attention is divided among other unimportant tasks, you will not be able to give the best to your MOST important project. So, the Freedom app will help you by blocking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and so on. The Freedom app will block almost all the time-consuming sites. So, there's no reason why you must not consider it.

## Todoist

This is one of the popular apps that you might have often come across. People usually procrastinate because of not having a proper plan. Or not knowing the task to do next. If you have a structured plan, you will be able to understand the task that you must do next. So with the help of the Todoist app, you can get the structure of the plan. You can use this app to track and sync the tasks to your mobile and other devices. The app is available for Android, Windows Phone, iOS, and the web. Once you download the app to your device, you will be able to get the To-Do-List!

## Write or Die

This is an excellent app for the ones who can't overcome procrastination even after changing their behavior. If you are still struggling to focus even after changing your behaviors, you must take extreme measurements. The app Write or Die will avoid procrastination by sending annoying pictures and sounds. This is called Kamikaze mode (derived from the term created from Japanese suicide pilots during World War II ). When you delay work, the vowels on your documents will automatically be deleted. Perhaps, you wouldn't prefer deleting the words you hardly type. Thus this can be one of the best anti-procrastination equipment.

## Spotify

This app will help you stay entertained while you are working. Whenever you find it boring to get your work done, you can play some great music on

Spotify. This might help you avoid procrastination. Besides, if you play some motivational songs, you'll be driven to do the work.

### Tomato Timer

I mentioned about Pomodoro Technique, and this app relates to it. You usually procrastinate when you don't feel like doing a big task. But you still have to get this task done, and for that, you have to divide the big task into smaller tasks. The Tomato Timer app is the idea to help you to get things done by dividing them into chunks. You just have to set a timer, and then, you will be able to get the work done.

Even though there are many more tools and apps that you can consider, these are treated as the most important and beneficial ones! Select the most suitable tool or app as per your preferences and make use of it!



## **Chapter 6: Practicing Positive Mindfulness**

One way to reframe your negative thoughts is to practice mindfulness. You might be wondering, “What exactly is mindfulness?” You have probably heard about it before and want to explore the topic more.

It is actually a pretty simple concept that suggests that the mind is fully aware of what is happening, what you are doing, and the place that you are moving in. This may seem like a no-brainer, but the thing is we often go in different directions. Our brains have no way to focus on what’s important, so we lose ourselves in obsessing over what has happened in the past or think too much about what will happen in the future. Then we become anxious about a situation.

Mindfulness is being completely present in a situation and conscious of our surroundings. When we are mindful, we are aware of what we are doing, and we do not react too much to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. We stay in control of ourselves whatever is occurring around us.

Mindfulness is a practice learned through different techniques—for example, applying mindfulness in the way we sit, walk, and stand. We can also combine mindfulness with different meditation activities.

Mindfulness reduces stress and gives us time to stop judging our surroundings. It releases our natural curiosity about the world around us, and we approach everything with gentleness and warmth (Cullen et al., 2014).



## **What Is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is not some exotic practice like Buddhist meditation. It is something that we have already implemented in our lives. It is a state of being. It is something that can be taught and cultivated (Cullen et al., 2014).

To use it, you don't have to change your personality. Mindfulness helps us to appreciate who we are and be the best version of ourselves in the world. We don't have to change our personality and do something radically different.

Anyone can practice mindfulness. Because mindfulness focuses on universal human values and characteristics, we don't have to modify our belief systems. Everyone can enjoy its benefits, and it can be easily learned.

It is a lifestyle. Mindfulness involves more than just doing it. It involves every aspect of our lives, and it is a way that we can live our lives to make everything a bit better than before (Cullen et al., 2014).

It is proven to work by science. Science has proven that this method works well and gives positive health benefits for everything. It contributes to our personal life and meaningful relationships with others.

Mindfulness can transform society. Because mindfulness can spark a certain level of creativity, it helps people to be innovative and create new solutions

to the world's problems (Cullen et al., 2014).

It is essential that a person becomes aware of their feelings. This is a skill that can be acquired through therapy sessions, such as dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) or cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which provide training and support to patients who are dealing with mental illness. However, the same could be applied to other people who are dealing with different issues, including worry and anxiety.

Here are some strategies that are used in the process of guided meditation and mindfulness.

### Observation

Observation is the first ability to cultivate when doing mindfulness. In this part, the person should become aware of their own thoughts, situations, behaviors, and emotions without wanting to change them. Instead of trying to change these things, the person merely collects data from what they are experiencing. This skill includes note-taking to write down all that is happening around a person (Arnold, 2008).

### Description

Having observed their surroundings, a person can describe the situation, feeling, or behavior. With more description of these things, a person can develop a more empathetic attitude and exercise their self-control. During this phase of mindfulness, the person will look at the situation objectively while collecting data and separate the facts from what they perceive to be true (Arnold, 2008).

### Participation

The third skill to be acquired is participation in the current moment. Once the person has become aware of their surroundings, they can be present in the moment and live in that every day in a positive way (Arnold, 2008).

It is vital that a person develops the skill of mindfulness to promote a better life with less worry and hassle. Using formal mindfulness, a person can become more aware of situations. For example, when a person holds their breath, they can observe different breathing patterns and what is going on in the body. How fast or slow is the person breathing? Also, you could go on a walk in the countryside to become more aware of your senses. You might heed the sights and sounds of all the things that surround you, including the

sound of the grass that is blowing, the leaves on the trees rustling, or the sound of cows mooing. You might also notice the dripping of rain or the chirping of birds in the trees.

You can practice mindfulness anywhere. You do not have to be with a therapist or psychologist to practice it. You might be sitting in a meeting room, trying to focus on what your boss is saying to everyone when, all of a sudden, you start to worry that you left your heat on at your home. That got your attention, and now you are very concerned. But when you practice mindfulness, you can get back to what you were focusing on and get out of that cycle of worry.

Mindfulness enables you to get rid of the distractions that are bothering you and then brings your attention back to the task that you are completing. You begin to notice the disturbances in your experience and within you and then you go back to what you were doing. You should recognize what is distracting you and think of ways you can get yourself back in the game again with whatever you are trying to focus your energy on.



## **Tips to Help You Practice Mindfulness**

1. Think about only one task at a time.

To do mindfulness properly, you will need to think about each task separately. Don't try to do too much at one time. You should think about each thing that you have to do to reduce the risk of making mistakes during an activity.

2. Make your observations by talking out loud.

One way of looking outside of yourself is by externalizing your experiences. This includes talking to yourself. When you notice something, say it out loud. Voicing your thoughts gets you outside of your internal self.

3. Make detailed notes of your distractions.

Next, you should notice when you begin to drift or nod off during situations. Take note of these things and write them down so that you can be more proactive about them in the future. Be aware of your situation, but try not to be reactive.

4. Be kind to yourself.

When you do mindfulness in the comfort of your own home or elsewhere, you have to take care of yourself, but it may take time to get used to it and to develop it. But once you are kind to yourself and give yourself the chance to become accustomed to it, then you will enter into a more tranquil state of being.

## **Techniques to Use to Practice Mindfulness**

There are many techniques that you can try to apply the principles of mindfulness to your life. The following methods will help you to de-stress and worry less and will enable you to feel a lot better about your life.

### **Meditation**

This seems like a no-brainer, but it is going to help you relax and enjoy your surroundings as you become more attuned to what you are doing in the present moment. Take a moment to get an exercise mat, sit on the floor, and close your eyes. Get a candle and light it and play some quiet meditative music that will help you to engage your heart and mind to something that

will quiet your soul. Allow yourself to unplug from the worries and cares of this life. Then you can think of things that will get you out of the stressful situations of your everyday routine.

### Audio Recordings and Guided Meditation

In this meditation, a recording is used to guide you through the meditation. The recording tells you what you should think about during the meditation, and usually, there is some soft music playing in the background. You can do this technique while you are in a dark room where there is not a lot of noise. In addition, you can use some noise-canceling headphones to remove the background noise from your ears.

### Raisin Exercise

When you do this exercise, you can use any kind of food, but let us use the example of a raisin. You take a raisin and describe how it looks, feels, smells, and tastes. As you look at it, focus on what is in the present moment.

### Full Body Scan

In this exercise, you concentrate on each part of your body. It is almost as if you are doing a full body scan. You lie on your back or sit still. At the beginning of the exercise, you focus on your breathing, including how you inhale and exhale. Then the therapist or someone else will show you how to think about each part of the body and how it feels. The full body scan will go from the head to the neck to the chest and all the way down to the knees and eventually all the way down to the feet.

### Mindfulness and Observation

For this exercise, you can look outside your window and look at everything that you see there. Instead of naming the objects you can see, like a leaf, tree, bird, or dog, you should take note of the colors, images, and other shapes and figures out there. You should pay attention to the sounds, such as rain falling, grass blowing in the breeze, and others. Try to stay concentrated on the task and don't get distracted by your cell phone or other media. If you need to take a break, get away for a few minutes. Take a brief walk or go to the bathroom if you need to. Then come back to it.

### Mindfulness and Listening

Mindful listening can help you think about the things that you are worried about and try to think about the future. You can do this with other people.

Often, this can take place as group therapy in which each person shares about their experiences. You reflect on how you are sharing with others and then talk together about the various issues you are facing.

### Self-Compassion Break

Showing yourself some compassion is one of the best ways to feel better about the stresses of life. When you find yourself burdened about the various situations that you are in, then you can close your eyes, breathe in and out, and then embrace yourself or give yourself a big hug. Then you can say some encouraging words to yourself, such as, “I know your life is hard. You’re going through a tough time these days, but you are doing a good job of holding yourself together. I love you! You’re awesome!” It is important to practice giving yourself a pep talk, which will help you get through any curveball that is thrown at you.

### Hold-and-Stretch Exercise

Another thing you can try is to hold and stretch your muscles and tense them, which causes you to feel uptight. You can then put pressure on different muscle groups and think about each part of your body. Then you can get rid of the stress and tension even after a few seconds of doing it.

### Mindful Eating Habits

When you are practicing mindfulness, it is important to consider what is going into your mouth. This method involves thinking about what you are eating. Before putting the food in your mouth, put it in your hands and feel it. Notice how it feels, looks, smells, and tastes. Eat slowly and notice every aspect of the tasting experience. It will be amazing how you feel afterward because you have looked at every part of your food experience and are mindful of what you are eating.

### Reflect on Your Own Thoughts

This is an exercise in breathing that helps you to be in tune with what you are thinking. Consider the ideas that are coming out of your own head and then make judgments about each one of them. If your mind becomes distracted, try to guide yourself gently and kindly back to your meditation.

### Anger Management

Mindfulness can help you when you are prone to going off the edge when you feel like you are about to snap from some situation. With this technique, you can calm your emotions and feel better (Cullen et al., 2016).

First, you should sit up in your chair. Make sure your feet are touching the floor below. You should do some deep breathing. Think about a recent experience of anger when you are able or unable to cope with the situation. Remember the strong feeling that came over you at that time and your body's response to the anger.

Notice how your body is tense or stressed and look at what is happening physiologically in your body. Then say some kind words to yourself. Say, "It is okay to be angry. Don't worry too much. It is going to be okay. It will pass." Then rid yourself of anger by saying, "Goodbye, anger." As soon as you focus on your breathing again, then you can calm down and let it go. It should also be used to help you avoid exploding. You should start using mindfulness in the milder episodes of anger and then gradually go up to the more explosive episodes.

### *Stare at a Circle and Think*

This final exercise allows you to slow down your thinking and focus on just one thing. You can look at a circle. Reflect on your thoughts and how you are thinking about something and then assess if it is valid or plausible or not.

### *Case Study*

Henry (17) was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and he also had an acute anxiety disorder. Many times, he would become upset and get angry because he was not as fast as other students and would become distracted. Sometimes, he would get mad or even have nervous breakdowns at school. Sometimes, he would explode in the middle of the classroom. Often, his teacher would send him out of the classroom until he could pull himself back together. Later, Henry's parents took him to a psychologist to find out what was going on. The doctor recommended that Henry practice mindfulness to help his condition.

With his therapist, Henry practiced mindfulness. In one exercise, he would do a hold-and-stretch. He would flex his muscles, close his eyes, and count to twenty. He focused on how he was breathing. That way, he could take a timeout whenever he felt like he might go over the edge. He was able to manage his temper tantrums and nervous breakdowns successfully by going to therapy sessions with his therapist. In addition, Henry went to group therapy meetings where he could meet other young adults struggling with the same condition. This step helped him a lot to get on the right track.

After six months of being in the program, Henry got things under control, and he felt like he could go about his life free from worry and anxiety.





## Chapter 7: Self Confidence

Now that you have accepted the fact that self-confidence can be developed, let's look at practical ways you can go about the business of building your self-confidence. I will give you a step by step approach that will give you the results you want if you follow it diligently. Are you ready? Let's go!

### Step 1. Determination

How many times have you made a decision to do something only to go back on your words and your old ways after just a few attempts? It is the same with building self-confidence. Anybody can make a decision to do something, but only a determined person can actually keep to their words. This is usually because, as the saying goes, nothing good comes easy. Anything worthwhile you want to do in life will cost you something.

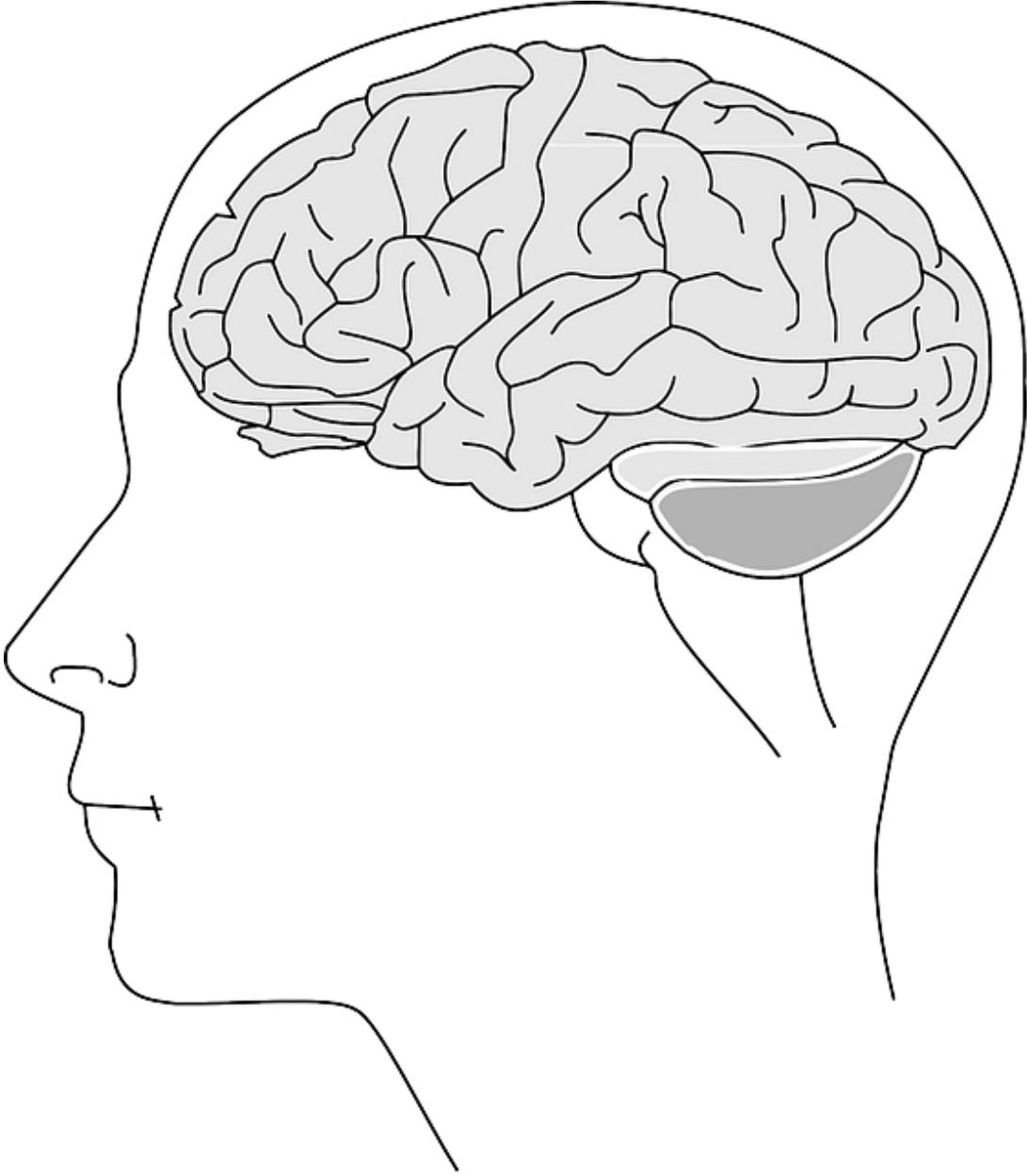
Becoming a confident person will cost you some time, effort, strength and courage and if you are not very determined, you will go back to your former ways even before you have started. It is a determination that will make you intentionally blind to all the reasons why you should abandon your journey of self-confidence.

### Step 2: Learning from Confident People

There is hardly anything you will want to do in life that someone else has not done already, but maybe in a different way. Even when it comes to learning how to develop self-confidence, you have to watch people to do. This is not very difficult, though, and I will show you how to do it. I believe you have role models and people you admire and wish to be like. Good. You can start observing their lifestyles within a closer range now. Study their biography, read their stories, follow them on social media, listen to them. Their lifestyle will gradually start rubbing off on you, in the sense that you will begin to learn to face life with the same level of confidence they exude.

This does not mean that you should copy other people's way of life. A self-confident person does not imitate other people. The difference here is that you are trying to get started and you need some kind of direction. While you observe the lifestyles of the people you admire and become used to how confident they are, your subconscious mind will get the message and

start exhibiting confidence as well. So, do not imitate; just watch. Learn, and grow your own style.



### **Step 3. Attacking your Fears**

Anybody who lacks self-confidence misses many opportunities in life because they do not believe that they have what it takes to go out there and do stuff. The only way to face your fears is to do it head on, and until you start confronting those fears, you will remain at the same level that you have always been.

To grow, you have to act, and you have to act now. What are the things that make your heart skip anytime you remember them? What are the things you should do, but have not done because you think you are not good enough? You have to get up right now and start doing them. You may have heard that courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to do what you are supposed to do even in fear. You do not have to wait till you have zero fears because that time will never come.

Nobody has zero fears at any point in their lives. Even your role models and great public speakers have their fears, but you hear their names today because they do not allow their fears to determine their actions. For you to become a confident person, you need to get up and act on your fears. They will always be there, anyway; so do not let them stop you.

### **Step 4. Constant Practice**

Anything you repeat over and over again becomes a habit with time and you can start doing it without having to think about it. The same goes for developing self-confidence. When you have acted on your fears, you should repeat your actions over and over again until they become a habit.

Generally, if you repeat the same thing for at least 21 days, it will become a habit. Make a list of the major areas of your life that you are lagging behind in because of the lack of self-confidence. Pick the items on the list one after the other and practice each of them for at least 21 days. Believe me, you'd be amazed at the result you will get. Repetition makes for emphasis and when you emphasize your abilities over your fears, you will push the fears down and be in charge of your life. Conquering a particular fear once is never enough. You need to conquer it again and again and on different occasions until you believe beyond doubt that you are capable.

If for instance, you are scared of speaking in public, there are things you can do to bring yourself out of that fear and build the kind of confidence you need to make things work for you. You could start by standing in front

of the mirror in your room and speaking to yourself alone. When you know that no one else is watching and you are not scared of being judged, you can freely try your best. When you speak, turn on the voice recorder on your phone and record your voice, so that when you hear the sound of your own voice, the fact that you were actually able to speak successfully will be a push for you to continue.

After perfecting the act of speaking in front of your mirror, you can use your video recorder to record the performance, which you can then post on your social media channels. You should feel free and remember that you are not participating in a competition or anything; it's all for the fun of it. When you get feedback from your online friends, you will know your areas of strengths and weaknesses and improve accordingly. If you keep doing this, you will no longer find public speaking as terrifying as it used to be for you. And after you have made your first actual speaking engagement fearlessly in the presence of an audience, do not relax and think that you have won the battle. You should search for other speaking engagements so that you will have more opportunities to keep the fire burning.

### **Step 5. Persistence**

As I am showing you things you could do to build your self-confidence, they may sound very interesting to you and you might want to jump right in and start trying them out. That is fine, but there is something else you should know, too. It is never easy to change from one lifestyle to another. After becoming determined to be a confident person, learning from other confident people, attacking your fears, and repeating the process through constant practice, you should be persistent in all these and know that even when you feel like throwing in the towel and giving up, you can still continue in your practice. It is not easy, and there are times when you will feel really low. But you should be persistent enough to continue and make it work. Every successful person you know had to pass through a period of persistence in little actions, which yielded the big success you are seeing now.

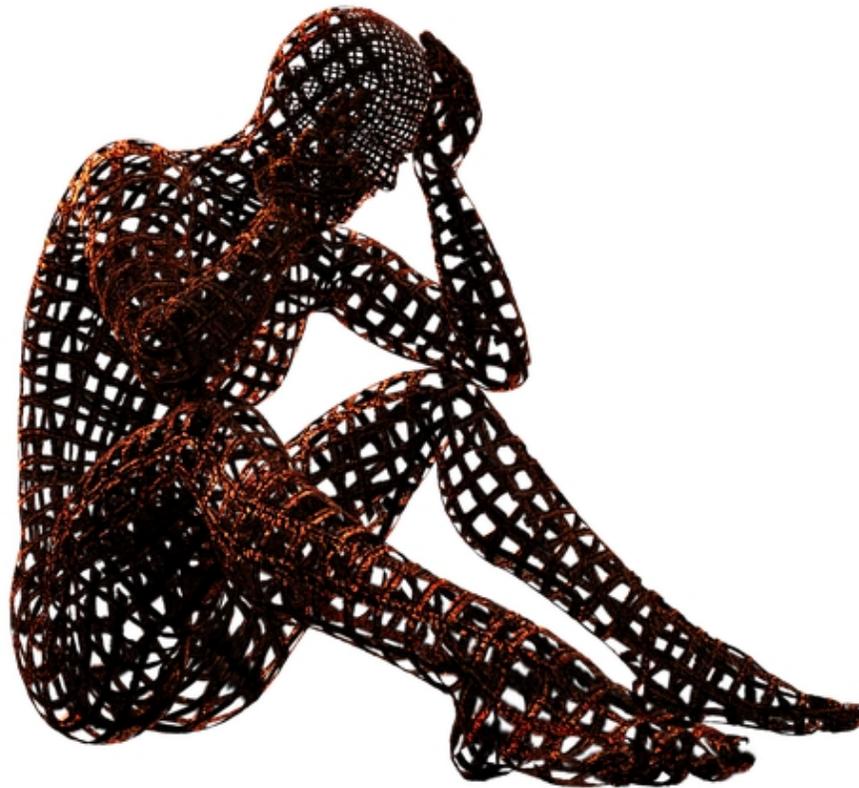
### **Step 6. Positive Affirmations**

In order not to give up on your journey of self-confidence halfway, you need to have constant reminders in the form of positive affirmations. Keep telling yourself that you can do it. The words we speak to ourselves are

powerful and they get registered in our subconscious mind with time. Write down some things you want to see manifest in your life and speak them to yourself every day while taking the necessary actions to bring them to reality. You can write these positive words and place them at strategic points in your room or in your office where you will see them every day, to remind yourself what your goal is.

### **Confident Affirmation**

I believe in myself and in my ability to do whatever I put my mind to. I will keep working on myself until I have no fear left in me. I am the master of my own life. I have confidence in myself.



## **Chapter 8: How to Manage Stress, Anxiety, and Depression**

It is fascinating to learn that our thoughts define what happens to us. From a psychological perspective, it means that we can control what happens to us by simply learning how to control our thoughts. This is a powerful technique indeed. Knowing that you have power over what happens to you is something that most people are unaware of. The reality is that you become what you think. If you look closely, whatever happens to you, good or bad, stems from your thoughts.

What you think about affects your mental health and wellbeing. Your thoughts lead to the emotional state that you might be experiencing. Often, this will affect your health. If your thoughts are preoccupied with sad events, then chances are that you will constantly feel sad. If you are constantly thinking about the fun activities that you engage in with your friends, then you attract the same energy to your life. From this, you will garner a deeper insight into why your thoughts could be identified as the cause for your dwindling productivity at work, lack of sleep and your failing social relationships.

### **The Law of Attraction**

If you are concerned about the direction that your life is taking, then the law of attraction may be a useful tool to get you back on track. On the surface, you might conclude that this is a law that helps you to attract things around you. Well, just as the name suggests, this is a powerful law which suggests that you attract what you focus on. Believe it or not, this law is always working to shape your life. What people don't understand is that they are constantly shaping their lives consciously or subconsciously. The life that you have today is attributed to what you thought about years ago. Sure, you might not get exactly what you wanted, but you will be better off than thinking negatively.

Your future is shaped by the way you think and the way you respond to situations today. Therefore, if you think that the coming months will be difficult for you, rest assured that they are more likely to be difficult. On the other hand, if you have the perception that you are going to have fun, then you are more likely to enjoy life as it unfolds itself to your expectations.

The law of attraction is based on a simple concept. You attract what you choose to focus on. Whether you choose to think negatively or positively, it's all up to you. If you choose to focus on the positive side of life, then you will attract good things your way. You will always be full of joy and abundance; you will live your life feeling energetic and ready to handle anything that comes your way. On the contrary, if you choose to focus on the negative, your life will be full of misery; you will never be happy with the people around you. Often, you will feel as though you are tired of living. Your productivity at work and at home will be negatively affected. You will always be that person that finds the negative in everything. All of this is a result of what you choose to focus on.

Knowing how the law of attraction works can unlock the doors of success in your life. This law opens your mind to the realization that we live in a world of infinite possibilities, infinite joy, and infinite abundance. Think about it, you can put your faith in your beliefs and help change future outcomes. Isn't that amazing? Unfortunately, few people understand the law of attraction and how to effectively use it to transform their lives.

Your thoughts and feelings will work together to build an ideal future for yourself. Since you have the power to decide what you want, you ought to request a life that you've always dreamt of living. Your focus and energy should be in line with what you want to attract.

### How to Use the Law of Attraction

After understanding the fact that you are the creator of your own world, you should begin thinking consciously towards creating a better life for yourself. In this case, this should encourage you to think positively since your thoughts define what you want in life. This requires that you channel your time and energy on thinking about the good things you want in life. It also means that you should deliberately manage your thoughts and emotions as they have an impact on what manifests.

### Ask, Believe, Receive

The law of attraction appears to be a straightforward process where you just ask for what you want and you will receive it. However, the application process requires more than just asking and receiving. If it were this simple, then everybody would be living happy lives free of stress and anxiety. So, what is it that makes the law of attraction simple yet daunting to apply?

## Ask

People make requests to the universe every day, either consciously or unconsciously through their thoughts. Whatever you think about is what you focus on. This is where you have channeled your energy. Using the law of attraction, you should realize that it is crucial that you take deliberate actions to manage your thoughts and emotions. In this regard, you have to intentionally decide that you want something. This also demands that you should live and act as though you already have that which you are asking for.

## Believe

For you to manifest what you want in your life, it is imperative that you truly believe that you will receive what you want. Your thoughts should reflect the certainty that you have in knowing that you will get what you want. Therefore, your mind should be free of doubts. This is the trickiest part of the law of attraction.

Most people simply ask. However, they find it difficult to believe that they can get what they want. The aspect of belief diminishes when individuals realize that what they asked for is taking longer to manifest than they expect. So, they turn their attention to negative thinking. They begin to convince themselves that it is impossible. Life is not easy. Such perceptions only affect what you are asking for from the universe. The worst thing is that negativity bias begins to take shape. Without realizing, they attract negativity in their lives because they simply failed to believe.

## Receive

The last thing that you need to do is to receive what you were asking or hoping for. Perhaps this is the easiest part since it only requires you to position yourself in the best way through your emotions to receive your gift. Consider an ordinary situation where you are receiving a gift from your loved ones. Certainly, you express from your body language that you are happy. Emotions of love and appreciation should be evident when receiving any gift. This is how the universe expects you to receive your reward.

You should live your day feeling thankful and happy for what you already have. This is the best way in which you can practice receiving what you want even before the world gives it to you. These emotions can also be shaped by how you choose to think. Accordingly, it is recommended that

you should live mindfully by enhancing your self-awareness so as to stop yourself each time negative thoughts develop in your mind.

At first, it won't be an easy feat to control your thoughts and emotions. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that everything good calls for patience and practice. As such, for the law of attraction to work for you, you have to be patient. You have to keep practicing the habit of believing. Most importantly, always remember that you can create your happiness.



### **Anxiety; Stopping Negative Thoughts**

Anxiety is caused by numerous factors. At times, it is caused by a combination of genetic factors and environmental factors. Fear within you

can easily make you feel worried about things that haven't happened. In extreme cases, this leads to panic. Your mind can easily amplify the fears within you and make you believe that something bad will happen. In social settings, anxiety will leave you in a constant state of worry of saying the wrong thing in front of other people. Also, you might gain the assumption that other people will not like you. Such negative thoughts only prevent you from being yourself. It holds you back from living your life.

### Common Thoughts in Anxious People

There are certain stressful thoughts evident in anxious people. Below are a few examples of some of these thoughts. Identifying these thoughts is helpful as it ensures that you find a way to deal with your anxiety. Examples of common thoughts in anxious people are as follows.

- **“I am not good at what I do.”**

Anxious individuals will focus more on the negative aspects of themselves. In any setting, their minds will constantly think about their weaknesses. It will be difficult for them to reflect on their strengths and why they were chosen for a particular role in their place of work. Anxiety will make you feel as though your boss will fire you anytime, for example.

- **“I am going to forget.”**

Have you ever felt that you were going to forget something even before the actual thing occurred? This is a sign that you are anxious. Believing that you are going to forget something simply means that you can't trust yourself. You're raising doubts in your mind that you can't remember to do something either during the day, tomorrow, or in the near future.

- **“Nobody likes me.”**

In the social media world, it is very easy for an anxious person to conclude that people don't value them because they are not getting any responses to their posts. This trait portrays someone who thinks too much. This is a person who is always worried about what other people might say. As a result, they will be too concerned about their social media posts and the responses they will be getting.

- **“What if I am next?”**

Without a doubt, we live in a world of uncertainty. You can never be sure about tomorrow. This can have an impact on your attitude towards the unknown. There are times when you might be scared that the worst could happen to you at any time. In relation to this, you should understand that it is common to experience such thoughts. However, this doesn't mean that you should allow such thoughts to overwhelm you. Since you have some level of control of your thoughts, you should learn how to manage them. Living in constant worry that you might stumble any minute is no way to live.

- **“My partner hasn't called, they must be mad at me.”**

Anxiety can also affect your relationships in many ways. Consider an ordinary example where your partner fails to call you during the day. There are many reasons why this could have happened. Maybe they were busy or their phone was out of battery. However, your worrying nature will give you the assumption that your partner is upset at you for some reason. Having this perception will only ruin the beautiful relationship you share with your partner.

- **“Did I leave the door open?”**

Most people will worry too much about the simple things that they might have forgotten to do. For instance, you might question yourself about your door, appliances, or your light switches. You will find your mind wandering thinking about whether or not the appliances were switched off. Doing this repeatedly will only lead to anxiety.

Judging from these ordinary examples of anxious thoughts, it is clear that overthinking can lead to anxiety. The simple truth is that you can stop yourself from thinking too much. Your partner failing to check on you, for example, there are many reasons as to why this could happen. Maybe they are busy at work and that their smartphones are on silent mode. It could also be that they are in a meeting. Therefore, there is no need for you to think too much about it. Embrace the idea of taking things as they are without complicating them.

## Anxiety Triggers

There are numerous reasons why you will be anxious. There are certain events, experiences or emotions which could worsen anxiety's symptoms. These elements are termed as anxiety triggers. The following is a brief look into some of the common triggers of anxiety.

### Health Concerns

Health concerns can be a major trigger of anxiety. Usually, this happens after an upsetting medical diagnosis such as chronic illness or cancer. It is common for people to be concerned about the direction that their life would take when suffering from chronic disease. The good news is that you can deal with this anxiety by changing how you think and perceive your life. Living an active life, for example, will prevent you from paying attention to the disease. Instead, you will appreciate what life has to offer and enjoy it.

### Medications

There are certain medications that can also make you feel anxious. This is due to the fact that these medications have active ingredients which affect how one feels. Common medications that could cause anxiety include weight loss medications, birth control pills, and congestion medications.

### Caffeine

Caffeine can worsen or trigger the symptoms of anxiety. With social anxiety disorder in particular, it is advisable to lower your caffeine intake.

### Skipping Meals

There are instances where you may feel jittery because of skipped meals. This happens because of the drop in your blood sugar. Eating a balanced diet is recommended for numerous reasons. It is worthwhile that you strive to eat a healthy diet regularly to ensure that your body gets all the nutrients it requires. Filling yourself up with healthy snacks helps to maintain your blood sugar levels. Therefore, it reduces the likelihood of you feeling nervous or agitated.

### Negative Thinking

Thinking negatively will likely corrupt your mind with feelings of frustration. This means that you are likely to feel anxious since you worry too much about the worst that can happen.

### Financial Concerns

With the harsh economic times, it is daunting to prevent yourself from thinking too much about your finances. This becomes a major problem when you have debts to pay and everything appears out of hand. To deal with triggers relating to finances, you should consider seeking professional assistance.

### Stress

For instance, when missing important deadlines, you will worry about the potential loss of something important. You could end up developing a fear of lose your job. Indeed, this will stress you out a lot. In some cases, stress can have a negative impact on the quality of your sleep. This worsens your situation as anxiety tends to worsen when you don't have enough sleep.

### Destructive Thinking; A Common Cause of Stress

Negative thinking will often lead to stress. When you constantly dwell on negative self-talk, this is what your subconscious mind will focus on. Instead of ruminating on how bad things seem to follow you, it is vital to realize that such thoughts can have a negative impact on your emotional wellbeing. To comprehend how our thoughts lead to stress, let's consider how stress works.

### How Stress Works

Psychologist Albert Ellis proposed the ABC model of understanding how stress works. According to this model, external events (A) do not trigger emotions (C). However, beliefs (B) can cause emotions. This is to mean that people's emotions are not directly influenced by their external environments, but they are affected by how they process what happens around them.

Arguably, stressors will always be there. For instance, getting stuck in traffic is a common thing. It only leads to stress when you handle it in a

negative way. In this regard, having a pessimistic view about traffic will cause anxiety and stress. Recognizing that you have the power to control how you think should help you recognize that you can easily evade stress. So, why should you fuss about a traffic jam when you are certain that there is nothing you can do about it? To effectively deal with such a situation, you should keep your mind engaged with something else. Listen to your favorite music as you wait for traffic to open up. Alternatively, you can listen to positive affirmations to warrant that your mind doesn't slip into negative thinking.

### Stress and Negative Self-Talk

Self-talk is the inner voice that talks to you. Depending on how you use self-talk, it becomes a make or break situation. Positive self-talk will remind you of the great things that you can achieve. It will help you approach life with optimism. Negative self-talk, on the other hand, will attract negative energy. You will pay too much attention to the possibility of all the bad things that could happen to you. Negative self-talk will not help you overcome the stress that you might be going through. In fact, it worsens the situation as you will feel more stressed.

Clearly, overthinking can affect your life in many ways. Whether you are feeling anxious, stressed, or unmotivated, all these can be attributed to how you think. Thinking positively can attract good things to you. The law of attraction will always apply to your thoughts and emotions. It is through these thoughts that you create the world that you want. Negative thinking breeds negativity in your life. It will affect your relationships, work life, and your productivity in varying aspects. Instead of worrying about the future, you should use your energy to focus more on what you can do today for a better tomorrow. Frankly, your actions determine your future. Hence, thinking alone is just not enough. You need to act.







## **Chapter 9: How to Create Habits to Stop Worrying.**

No doubt, you've heard of the saying "looking at a glass half full." That's the whole point of this. Both positive and negative people live in the same world—they only look at things very differently. They look at things quite oppositely, in fact.

Your goal, therefore, is to learn how to look at things in a more positive light. While this isn't easy, given what you're used to thinking, it can be done with a bit of practice.

### **Trying Something New**

Negative people tend to fear the unknown, but those who have a more positive outlook see them as opportunities. May it be for business, travel, or even new taste, it's important to avoid focusing on the fact that you haven't experienced something yet and look forward to the idea that you're about to try it for the first time.

**Don't Say:** I've never tried this before, so I don't know how to do this.

**Say:** This looks interesting! I want to try it!

A good way to get into this mindset is to read about the good things about the experience. Chances are, people have already tried what you're about to try for the first time. If they have good reviews, then you're good to go.

### **Looking at Complications**

Complicated stuff can be very daunting, but if you're interested enough in it, you'll find a way to solve any problem. As the old saying goes, "If you can see the problem, then there isn't any." All you have to do is to look at the problem from a different angle until it all makes sense. You'd be surprised at how perspective can make a difference between positive and negative thinking.

**Don't Say:** This is hard to understand!

**Say:** Maybe I'm missing something here.

Moping around and dwelling on the complexity of the problem will only make you go around in circles. The solution to complexity is knowledge. Try learning more about the problem and see if you can pick something up.

It also matters that you learn to love what you're doing. By doing so, every problem you face, no matter how difficult, will feel like a fun game to play, but with higher difficulty.

### Slow or Gradual Progress

Hardworking people don't always get overnight results. But that doesn't mean that progress isn't there! And even if it's not there, it doesn't mean that you can't attain that progress anymore. This is why it's so important to take your focus away from the short-term results and invest in what you can do to finally achieve the long-term ones.

Don't Say: Nothing's happening. I'm not getting better at this.

Say: Maybe I need to give it a few more tries OR maybe I can tweak my methods a bit and then try again.

This is very common for people who like to work out but don't see results immediately. It's likely that they just need to keep going with their regimen or need to have their routines adjusted to progress.

### Unfamiliarity

This happens when you move to a new neighborhood, attend a big party, or simply get a new job. You'll be surrounded by new things that you have to get used to. Your shyness could be a result of negativity, and it's very important that you deal with it immediately, or else you could be seen by others as a loner who prefers to be left alone. There's really nothing wrong with being alone, but if you don't feel good about it, then you need to get accustomed to the new environment.

Don't Say: I can't seem to fit in because I don't know many people.

Say: Time to make new friends! Maybe I can learn something new from them.

If you're doing this in the workplace, then you're going to be working with these people for a long time. Try to make a good impression with them while you still can, instead of when you're off guard, because you're already too busy with work.

### Failure

Guess what? This happens all the time! And if you're not yet the person who can find something positive in the face of failure, then you're going to

be depressed a lot. Dealing with failure can be tough, but the sooner you get over it, the better. There's always something good to learn from our mistakes, and one day you'll find the chance to apply what you've learned and be more successful the next time around.

Don't Say: I've failed.

Say: I wonder what I did wrong.

Don't let the consequences of failure overwhelm you. There is always something to learn from every mistake you make.

Challenges

The most satisfying accomplishments in the world are never easy. It is the more difficult competitions that have the greatest prizes. More complex jobs usually pay more. If you don't take up the challenge for fear of the possibility of failure, you're not going to do much with your life.

Don't Say: I don't think this is going to work.

Say: This will work! We just haven't figured it out yet.

Those who are persevering, patient, and hardworking, among other traits, tend to be very positive thinking people. They know that success is not achieved overnight and find comfort in that feeling.

The good thing about the tips in this is that they don't require much to apply. You simply have to think about them and apply them to your own situations. If you want, you can look at yourself in the mirror and talk to yourself, but that's not necessary. When the situation arises, make sure you think the right things, because that will make the difference between being positive and negative



## Chapter 10: Simple Daily Practices to Overcome Procrastination

When talking about procrastination, everyone might relate to it because there's none who could deny it. At least, once or twice in your life, procrastination would have played its role. Whenever you miss your deadlines, the level of anxiety rises above your head and you are forced to complete the project as soon as possible. But deep down, you know it is impossible to complete because there is so much to do. Yet, you try! Procrastination will make your life miserable, so try not to make it a habit.

Some people want to stop procrastinating, but they are unable to because they don't know how to do it. Or sometimes, they might be missing the motivation they need. And it can be frustrating, I know. You must understand the fact that procrastinating factors differ from individual to another:

A writer will procrastinate on the project he/she was assigned. And then, he/she must work day and night to complete the project.

A student will delay school work and then, complete at the last moment.

An athlete will delay medications because he is so concerned about the current game.

If you evaluate each example above, you will understand that through procrastination every individual mentioned in the example will be affected. For instance, the athlete will have to deal with a lot of severe issues if he doesn't treat the injury right away. Likewise, there will be a lot of emotional drawbacks as well.

I'll share some of the practical daily practices that you can follow to overcome procrastination. These practices will help you beat procrastination even if you are feeling lazy or unmotivated. Before you begin reading the practices below, you must bear in mind that you can select any of the following practices. This means you are not forced to practice all the habits below. Let's get started!

1. Find solutions to potential emergencies

Procrastination is not a simple bad habit; rather it is dangerous. It will have a huge impact on your health. Sometimes, you might even lose the great bonds that you shared with your family members. They might even come to a point where they assume that you no longer care. There will be situations in life where you have to deal with unexpected priorities such as death, sickness, and much more. Such situations can't wait because you will have to address them immediately. In such an instance, you would have to drop all the scheduled tasks. Some other times, great family events might turn into dreadful situations, and you can't avoid them and get back to your work. Emergencies don't come with a warning, so you have to put up with the obstacles it creates. How can you avoid emergencies? Are you going to stop everything and address the issue? Or if you have already delayed the work and then, something urgent comes up, how are you planning to handle it? What might happen when you ignore the emergencies?

To handle emergencies, you have to have a clear picture of the type of emergencies that you are dealing with. You can think about the aftereffects of avoiding the emergency. Or think about the people who are related to the emergency, how will they feel if you ignore it? What are the actions that you can take to solve this emergency issue so that you can get back to work? Or can you put off the emergency issue because it is not life-threatening?

Before you dig in further, let me tell you. If you are working so hard that you don't even have time for your family, it means you are losing a lot of good things in life. You are not actually living your life — this where the concept of smart working comes into the picture. You can easily get busy and forget about the people around you. Or you can easily put off emergencies that you believed as not important, and those emergencies might actually turn out severe. Of course, you might be so busy that you don't even have time for important things, but it is all about your priorities.

No project, appointment, or meeting is worth ignoring for the emergencies that might affect the life of a loved one. I'd suggest stopping other things when something urgent comes up because procrastination is not only about work but also about life. If you address emergencies right away, you wouldn't have to deal with the worst cases down the line.

Most of the time, we think procrastination is all about work and how we delay work. But here I pointed out something that you should consider.

Basically, if you organize work-related activities and complete before the deadline, or if you have completed half the work already, unexpected priorities might not create a huge impact on your work life. What matters is being organized and knowing how to prioritize your life matters.

## 2. Do daily review

Another best way to avoid procrastination is through daily reviews. If you allocate ten minutes from your day, you can do the review. When you are doing the review, you will be able to find the priorities of your day. Then, you can analyze the tasks that will have a huge impact on your short-term goals. To make this review session simpler, consider carrying out a Q&A format. What are the scheduled meetings that you need to attend? Are there any emails that you must reply to today? Are there any documents that need to be edited today? Are there any appointments that will take more time than you allocated? What are the tasks that require more attention?

Likewise, you must do a Q&A to find out the layout of the day. But you don't have to stick the questions that I have mentioned. Instead, you can prepare your own Q&A and follow it. If you do this daily review, you will be able to understand the layout for the day. When you have a layout, you will be able to stay on the track. You will have proper knowledge of the tasks that need more time or a quick response. Hence, you will not procrastinate because you are aware that it will impact your goals negatively.

If you want to know one of the best concepts that beat procrastination, it will be the Pareto Principle. This is all about 80/20 rule. Try to learn more about this concept before you actually apply it on your day to day activities.

## 3. MIT's or the Most Important Tasks

It's tough to beat procrastination if you begin your day with a to-do-list that burst out with tasks. You must have a simplified to-do-list if you want to get things done on time and correctly. How can you simplify your to-do-list? It is pretty simple if you focus on MIT's - most important tasks. You have to settle for the tasks that will have a considerable impact on your long term goals. This is recommended by many experts who focus on productivity.

My tips are to select the top three important tasks that need to be handled by the end of the day. It is better to pick two important tasks that have tight deadlines and another that will impact your long-term career goal. If you keep an eye on MIT's concept, you will be able to curb procrastination. Once you complete the two most important activities of your day, you will be interested in doing the other activities by the end of the day. And that motivation is very much needed if you want to succeed in beating procrastination.

#### 4. The Eisenhower Matrix

Of course, who doesn't like productivity? You'd be glad if things happen the way you planned. But sometimes, things don't work as you planned. If your life is also like mine, filled with constant emergencies and changes, you must have the ability to make quick decisions.

If you want to make a quick decision, you need the support from the Eisenhower Matrix. The founder of this concept was in the army. It was the reason why he invented this concept. It's not possible to work according to the plan when you are in an army. There will be sudden changes and importance. In such an instance, the Eisenhower Matrix concept was the guideline.

If Eisenhower utilized this in the army, why can't you utilize this in your life to avoid procrastination? When you are dealing with this concept, you shouldn't forget the four quadrants related to it. By focusing on the four quadrants, you will be able to approach your day to day tasks accordingly. Let me mention the four quadrants in detail:

##### Quadrant 1: Urgent plus important

These are the tasks that need to be completed first because they are way important than any other tasks and they directly deal with your career goals. Plus, you must complete the tasks right away because they are urgent. If you complete these tasks, you will be able to avoid negative consequences. Once you get your Q1 tasks completed, you will be able to focus on other tasks. For example, if you have to submit a project at the end of the day, your complete attention should be given to that project because it is both urgent and important.

##### Quadrant 2: Important yet not urgent

The tasks under Q2 are important, but they are not urgent. Even though they might have a huge impact, they are not urgent. Compare Q2 to Q1, and then, you will understand the difference clearly. Typically, Q2 tasks will include the ones that have a huge impact on your long-term career or life goals. Yes, you need to allocate more time and attention to these tasks. But you seldom do it because your mind knows that the tasks in Q2 can wait. Meanwhile, you'll be focused on the tasks in other quadrants. Don't make this mistake because your long-term goals are the reasons why your short-term goals exist. For example, your health is one of the important factors, so if you don't spend enough time on it, you will regret it. Yet, when you get busy, you are unlikely to spend time on Q2 tasks. Especially, you are not obliged to answer anyone about Q2 tasks.

### Quadrant 3: Urgent yet not important

The tasks under Q3 are urgent, but you don't necessarily have to spend your time in it. You can either automate or delegate the tasks to someone who can handle. These tasks are not so important, so it is okay to delegate them. These tasks often come from a third party and the tasks under Q3 will not have a direct influence on your career goals. But when you are handling Q3 tasks, you must note down the tasks that you delegate. For example, if you are working on a time-sensitive project and if the phone rings and if you attend you might get distracted. Or sometimes, it might not even be an important call. For such activities, you can assign someone. Even if it's an urgent call, you can still assign it to a person who can handle it. Through this, you will be able to manage your day!

### Quadrant 4: Not important plus not urgent

The tasks under Q4 includes the tasks that need to be avoided. These tasks kill your time unnecessarily. If you don't spend ANY time on Q4 tasks, you will be able to spend more time on the tasks under Q2. By now, you'd know what Q4 tasks consist of. Anyway, they are such as watching TV, surfing the internet, playing games, and much more. So, should you eliminate Q4? Well, NO! You shouldn't. If you don't have a balanced lifestyle, you might even struggle to protect your job. The tasks in Q4 will help you whenever you take 5 minutes break or whenever you want a break from work. These tasks shouldn't even be in your mind when you are trying to be productive.

To apply the Eisenhower Matrix in your life, you must draw a table on a paper or your journal. And then, divide four columns and seven rows.

Divide the rows according to the days and mention the quadrants on the columns. And then, analyze your week. But don't write down anything. Before you start the day, think and analyze again and allocate the tasks as per the matrix. If something else comes up, you must take some time to analyze the nature of the task, and then classify in the right quadrant.

Once you complete seven days, you can study the table and evaluate your effectiveness and productivity. This will not be amazing when you try it for the first time, but don't give up. Keep trying, and eventually, you will find yourself spending more time on the important and urgent tasks.

If you keep following this technique, you will be able to structure your day-to-day tasks, and it will help your success become better and better!

#### 5. Do it quickly

You come across tasks that don't need a lot of time, not even five minutes, yet you delay it. For example, cleaning after dining, sending an email, or even changing into your PJs (this is laziness). Even though these tasks don't take much time, you don't do them because you consider yourself too busy.

Your way of ignoring quick or minor tasks is by telling yourself you are busy. But the problem is whenever you delay minor tasks, it builds up into a pile, and you might have to deal with huge tasks at the end. If you don't act immediately, you will have a lot to do when you take days off. Also, if you complete the minor tasks quickly, you will be able to avoid them from piling up. There are two practices that you must know if you want to get minor tasks done.

The Two-Minute Rule is one of the practices that you must follow. If you think that the task will only take two minutes or less, you can just do it instead of putting it off. Right? So whenever you come across any minor tasks, think whether it will take longer to finish those. If they don't, why not get them done? Also, if you follow this habit throughout, you will feel that you are removing a lot of negativity and you have more time to spend on important tasks. Besides, you'll feel that you are more organized than before.

In contradiction, if you find tasks that will need more than five minutes, you must schedule a time to do it.

The second practice is to single-handle all the possible tasks. Let me describe an example, say that you've received an email and even though it requires a reply, you just delay answering it. But then, when you check it later, you would have forgotten the details on the email itself and so you have to go through all the details again. Instead of making this simple task a huge pain, you can easily get it done. The concept of single handling helps you complete the tasks. If you can see the end clearly, you must make the necessary actions. For example, you can do the dishes right away instead of putting it off for later. Likewise, there are many tasks that you have to complete immediately.

If you follow these concepts, you will be able to complete minor tasks quickly and overcome procrastination. In fact, the stress that tags along with procrastination can also be eliminated completely.

These are the simple practices that will help you beat procrastination. You don't have to worry or think low about yourself just because you are a procrastinator. We all have been procrastinators at some point in our lives. Everyone can beat procrastination if they try! Now, you have many practical tips that you can follow. You can utilize them and see if there are any changes!

You are way more powerful than you think, so **ONLY** you can decide whether to become a procrastinator or a productive individual!





## **Chapter 11: Additional Ways to Naturally Heal Depression**

In addition to CBT, there are plenty of other natural ways that you can focus on healing your depression. Often, the most effective way to heal depression comes from a combination approach that includes lifestyle changes, psychotherapy, and occasionally, medicines for people who find that lifestyle changes and psychotherapy alone don't help. Incorporating these additional healing methods can help you naturally begin to heal your depression while also improving your chances of maintaining a depression-free lifestyle following your healing.

Note that it may take a while to find the right balance for you, so you may want to practice balancing these different natural healing methods out in your life, as you begin learning how to take better care of yourself and your depression. You may find that keeping a wellness journal, separate from your CBT journal, helps you keep track of all of the changes you are making so that you are more likely to recognize what is helping and what is not. When you do implement a lifestyle change, make sure that you record how you have been taking care of yourself in that particular area of life and how you have been feeling about it so far so that you have a clear understanding of where you are starting from. This way, as you continue to track your growth and changes, you will find where your improvements are helping and where you might be able to further improve to support yourself with experiencing even more healing from your depression.

As you begin working on taking care of these areas of your life more intentionally, you will likely find that you experience a general improvement in your health overall, too. For many people, especially those who have suffered from something like depression, taking basic care of yourself can be challenging and not taking basic care of yourself can lead to symptoms far beyond depression itself. You will likely find that your general mood improves, that you have more energy and stamina, that your immune system feels stronger, and that you have a greater sense of vitality, in general, when you follow these practices.



## Getting A Healthy Amount of Sleep

One of the most important things that you need to do when you are learning how to heal from your depression is to focus on making sure that you are getting a healthy amount of sleep. Sleep can rapidly become disturbed by depression, and it can get worse over time if you are not careful and managing your depression intentionally and effectively. If you want to improve the quality of your life and start helping yourself naturally heal your depression, you need to make sure that you are sleeping enough but not too much.

Not sleeping enough can obviously lead to you experiencing low energy and struggling to engage in your day-to-day life. This chronic exhaustion can lead to an increase in depression as you have to fight extra hard to try to make it through the day and you struggle constantly with symptoms of exhaustion. Likewise, oversleeping can lead to problems as well which includes reduced energy and symptoms similar to exhaustion.

The average adult needs between 7-9 hours of sleep per day, at most. The older you get, the less sleep you need. Ideally, you should be sleeping

within this timeframe to ensure that you are getting plenty of rest and that you are not oversleeping. As well, you should avoid routine naps when you are depressed as they can lower your energy throughout the day. Instead, focus on how you can naturally boost and maintain your energy throughout your day.

### **Engaging in Regular Physical Activity**

The flip side of adequate rest is adequate activity on a day-to-day basis. Being depressed can lead to an increased feeling of being fatigued, even if you are struggling with sleeping on a regular basis. This mixed with a lack of motivation can lead to many people with depression dropping their regular physical activity and instead finding themselves feeling too exhausted to engage in regular activity on a day-to-day basis.

Engaging in physical activity is going to support you in naturally healing your depression while also helping boost your ability to engage in a healthy sleep cycle each night. Exercising at the right time throughout the day can boost your energy levels throughout the day while also helping you naturally feel more sleepy at night time, helping encourage a healthier circadian cycle.

If you find that you feel too tired or weak to exercise too much, try engaging in something simple like a brisk walk or some yoga at home. These types of regular activity will help promote more energy within you while also boosting natural endorphins and hormones that support you in feeling happier and healthier overall.

### **Eating A Healthy Diet**

Did you know that serotonin is actually made in your gut? Your gut and digestive system are responsible for a large amount of the hormones and chemicals that are produced within your body. Eating a healthy diet on a consistent basis can help you manage your depression while also encouraging you to experience a boosted mood.

People who are depressed often fail to eat enough, or eat excessively, and generally find themselves indulging in things that are not particularly healthy for them. Learning how to commit to eating healthy and maintaining a healthy diet on an ongoing basis can help boost your mood while also improving your health overall. This improved health can also

reduce the amount of stress your system is experiencing, which means you are less likely to experience hormones and chemicals like adrenaline and cortisol which can reduce the production of things like serotonin and dopamine.

If you have a particularly difficult time eating healthier and maintaining a healthy diet, focus on making eating as simple as possible. You can easily pre-cut and prepare healthier foods when you are feeling more energized so that you are more likely to eat them when you are feeling low energy. If a friend or family member asks how they can help you, you can also ask them to help you in this way so that you have healthier foods on hand to eat as you navigate your low energy and depression.

### **Herbs that Might Support Healing Depression**

While there is no guarantee that herbs or supplements can support you with healing your depression, there are some herbs that have shown positive effects on people healing from depression in clinical studies. As long as these herbs do not contradict any medicines you may be on or illnesses you may have, incorporating these herbs into your diet or drinking tea with these herbs in them may support you in boosting your mood.

St. John's Wort is often known as being a mood enhancer as it is a plant that has been used to support mental health for hundreds of years. With that being said, you do need to be particularly cautious with it as it is not known as a long-term healing method, and it can affect the effectiveness of antidepressant medications if you are using any. As well, people who are pregnant or nursing should not use St. John's Wort.

Ginseng is another great mood enhancer that can also increase your ability to overcome depression. As well, chamomile and lavender have both shown promise in helping calm people's moods while simultaneously gently uplifting their moods which can lead to improvements in managing both depression and anxiety.

### **Supporting Healthy Brain Function**

In addition to focusing on your mood and your ability to eat and live a lifestyle that supports a healthy body, you should also focus on living a lifestyle that supports a healthy brain. Your brain is often where depression is said to reside, so knowing how to support the healthy function of your

brain will assist you in being able to create a healthy foundation for new neural pathways to be formed as you engage in healing therapies.

You can support the wellbeing of your brain, especially through omega fatty acids. Omega-3 specifically is said to support your brain while also helping boost your mood and reduce the instance of depression. While some studies show that it may not target depression specifically or serve in healing stronger levels of depression, it can help support healthy brain function which is incredibly important when healing depression.





## **Maintaining a Healthy Social Life**

When people begin to suffer from depression, they can often be found isolating themselves from their friends and family and cutting themselves off from their social lives. Depression is often seen as synonymous with spending copious amounts of time lounging around in bed or on your couch blowing everyone off and doing nothing. Except, it feels less like lounging and more like laying on the couch or bed feeling completely drained and incapable of actually engaging in life itself.

Isolation is a huge symptom of depression, and one way to naturally combat depression is to gently overcome your isolation tendencies. Spend time engaging with your friends as much as you reasonably can when you are feeling depressed so that you are less likely to isolate yourself and make your symptoms worse. Text your friends, call them or even invite them to sit and have tea with you if you are feeling too depressed to actually go out with them. You may feel like you are being a burden because you are depressed and low on energy, but it is likely that your friends or family will not see it the same way. Make sure that you are transparent with them about how you are feeling and the support you need and let them come over and sit with you, even if you are not up for much talking. Often, just having loved ones around and spending time with you can help you feel supported

and cared for, which can help massively when it comes to overcoming your depression.

### **Enjoy A Healthy and Fun Schedule**

One way to heal from and prevent depression is to enjoy a healthy and fun schedule that you maintain with the intention of helping you fulfill your needs while also having fun in your life. If you find yourself typically having an unplanned schedule that is full of spontaneous activities, a packed schedule that isn't organized, or one that does not leave enough time for you to do the things that matter to you, you may be more vulnerable to depression. Learning how to manage your time effectively will help you make sure that you are feeling supported and cared for by the activities that you engage in so that you can find your way to feeling your absolute best.

If you are not particularly keen on scheduling, you might find that the practice of having one helps you have something to look forward to while also minimizing the overwhelm that can come with not knowing what happens next. Make sure that you schedule in everything that you need to do with adequate time to get it done, and that you leave plenty of time before and after for you to relax and enjoy your days. As well, make sure that you fill your calendar with activities that you find fun and enjoyable so that you look at your calendar and feel a sense of excitement, too. Only focusing on what has to be done can increase stress, as it can lead to you forgetting that you can have plenty of time to do the things that you want to do, too.

Avoid letting your life be about doing the bare minimum and then sitting around watching TV or playing on your phone in between everything else. Focus on doing things that really boost your energy like exercising, taking a class, going on a trip, or spending time with loved ones. The more you can make these things a priority for you, the more you are going to enjoy your schedule and everything that you need to accomplish on a regular basis.

### **Take Care of Your Emotional Needs**

In our modern world, it is only now starting to be recognized that we need to take care of our emotional wellbeing on a regular basis if we are going to avoid developing a mental illness or emotional problems in our lives. Learning to fill up your emotional cup, so to speak, is a great opportunity for you to allow yourself the opportunity to feel emotionally nurtured,

supported, and expressed so that you can stop holding onto emotions and building unhealthy resentments in your life.

There are many ways that you can begin taking care of your emotional needs. From learning to express your emotions in a healthy and productive manner by increasing your emotional intelligence, to spending time engaging in things that help you feel the way you want and need to feel, you can do plenty to support your wellbeing. For example, let's say you are feeling stressed, and you need to feel supported and to feel relieved from the burdens you have been carrying with you for some time. Taking some time out to take a bath, meditate, join a yoga class, hang out with a friend, or otherwise engage in something fun and non-stressful can help create that relief and promote emotional wellbeing. The more you can learn to understand your emotions, understand your emotional needs, fulfill them, and express yourself in healthier manners, the better you are going to feel. This is a great way to both overcome depression and prevent problematic depression from coming back in the future.



### **Boost Your Mood by Helping Others**

There is a popular saying that goes “if you feel like you can’t help yourself, help someone else.” This saying is rooted in the idea that we can forget our importance and our ability to help ourselves and others when we are focused too deeply on ourselves and what we need. What can happen is we

find that we begin isolating ourselves, and we find that we begin feeling helpless and hopeless. We also begin feeling like we are not worthy of receiving help because we are not helping others, which tends to be a common trend. As humans, we like things to be balanced and even, and we hate being indebted to other people, which is often how we begin to feel when we find ourselves receiving favors but never doing anything in return.

If you feel like there is nothing you can do for yourself, do something for someone else. Take some time out of your day to support someone else in feeling better, or to help them experience a higher quality of life. Hold doors open, volunteer at a shelter, support other people in feeling cared for and healthy, and otherwise help by offering your service and time to other people. If you can, join an ongoing volunteer program that supports something that you love and cherish in your life.

The more you can help other people, the more you are going to witness the development of gratitude in others. As you witness deep, pure gratitude in other people, you will also begin to experience deep gratitude in yourself for your ability to help these other people. You will also begin to realize that you have a lot of power within yourself to help others, which means that you also have the power within yourself to help yourself as you need it. This realization can massively boost your energy and support you in going to get the help you need or engage in the helpful practices that you need to overcome your depression.

## **The Power of Gratitude**

Gratitude has an incredible ability to help uplift our moods while also helping reframe our awareness and train our brains to focus on more positive things in life, such as the things that make us happy and grateful. Researchers have learned that a daily gratitude practice being completed for as little as 30 days can drastically rewire your brain and support you in having a healthier cognitive framework that is wired for optimism instead of pessimism.

Expressing gratitude is something that can become particularly challenging when you are depressed and can become even more challenging the longer you experience depression for. If you find yourself feeling depressed, you might find that you struggle to experience gratitude and that you are

constantly noticing the things you don't like in your life, but never noticing the things that you do like. If you take the time to recognize what you do like by recognizing the things you are grateful for, you can begin to change this habit and all of the mental processes that lie around this habit, including your feelings.

In order to pick up a healthy gratitude practice in your everyday life, all you need to do is sit with your journal every single day and journal about 5-10 things that you are grateful for. Even if you are struggling to think of anything, take some time to think about the small things and don't be afraid to write down things that seem incredibly basic. Do your best to make them different every day so that you are not habitually focusing on the exact same thing, but you are proving to yourself every day that you have plenty to be grateful for. Even after you begin feeling better, you should continue engaging in this gratitude practice so that you are consistently uplifting yourself and incorporating this into a part of your preventative healing routine.



## **Conclusion.**

At this point, you should have developed a positive mindset towards life knowing very well that it's never too late to start fresh. Overthinking is an issue that holds people back from reaching their full potential in life. It occurs when you spend too much time ruminating about what needs to be done instead of actually doing it. A major problem caused by overthinking is that you will never take the time to simply act. This means that you will have a lot that is pending in your life. Your relationships will be affected, your career will always be at a standstill, and your business would even stagnate. This is because there is nothing that you do about the thoughts that come to your mind. You only waste your time and energy thinking.

The concept of overthinking has numerous detrimental effects on the body and in your life. Since you feel like there is little that you do about what needs to be done, you will live a life full of worry. You will always worry that the worst could happen since you are not working towards achieving your goals. Nobody knows what the future holds. As a result, thinking too much about what might be will only lead to stress. Failure to deal with this in time could escalate to depression.

Certainly, there are individuals who struggle in life just because they don't know what to do with their lives. They are always stressed because they can't seem to get over the habit of procrastination. Yes, they know what they should be doing, but they never do anything about it. Ultimately, this creates a scenario where a lot of time has been wasted and you cannot do anything else but feel regret. Blaming yourself for the mistakes that you have made in the past will never help you overcome the challenges that you are experiencing. The worst case is that it only makes things worse since it evokes negative emotions about yourself and your abilities.

Overthinking can happen to anyone. As a result, it is a common thing to find yourself thinking too much from time to time. Regardless, it is worth taking the time to understand how your mind works to ensure that you can catch yourself overthinking and stop it. For instance, as human beings, we are more inclined to thinking negatively because of negativity bias. Often, it is easy for people to remember all the bad things that occurred in their lives. Conversely, it will take time for people to recall something good that has happened recently. When watching the news, we usually find ourselves

paying a lot more attention to bad events that are being shown. Little attention is paid to good news.

Still, with negativity bias, it is often daunting to focus your mind on the good side of life. Have you ever stopped to wonder why it is easy to think of all the bad things that could happen to you? In fact, the mind naturally drifts to think negatively even when you are trying to live an optimistic life. Therefore, through this understanding, you should develop a habit of training your mind to think positively. This can be done by using positive affirmations and mantras that constantly remind you of how beautiful life can be.

How do you know that you are an overthinker? There are signs that will indicate to you that you are thinking too much. For instance, if you find yourself over-analyzing things, then you are likely an overthinker. Sometimes life is just as simple as we perceive it to be. However, we make it difficult by thinking about it too much. When you meet someone for the first time, you might be overly judgmental as a result of thinking too much about how they are behaving. Avoid this by perceiving things as they are. In addition, if you find it difficult to let go of your past, then this is another clear sign that you are an overthinker. What happened in the past has nothing to do with your future. In fact, it only threatens your future since it holds you captive and prevents you from realizing your dreams.

As you go through your daily life, you should always remember that what you think about is what you become. This is the main reason why overthinking is tied to anxiety, stress, and negative thinking. Based on the law of attraction, you attract what you want in your life through your thoughts and emotions. Consequently, if you are always worrying about your future, then you will prevent yourself from truly being happy with the life you're living now. Similarly, thinking negatively about how your life doesn't help to save you from the situation. Sure, you might be going through a tough time. However, this doesn't mean that you should dwell on the negative. You should strive to find good in everything you go through in life. For instance, if you are going through a difficult time, consider this as a lesson worth going through. Life without challenges can be boring and risky at the same time. This is because you will be unlikely to learn and grow. As such, it is imperative that you embrace the notion of positive thinking since your life is dependent on how you think.

Digitally speaking, there is a lot of nonsense that we consume on a daily basis. While we might perceive this as entertaining and an ideal way of killing time. The reality is that we are polluting our minds. The same way you take care of your body by eating right is the same way that you should be treating your mind by consuming quality information. At first you might not notice the negative impact of consuming undesirable information, but in the long run, it will affect how you think. So, if there is nothing good to watch on TV, switch it off and spend this time reading a book.

Alternatively, you can choose to take a walk or visit your friends. This is more productive compared to lazing around and filling your mind with unnecessary information.

With regard to the process of decluttering your mind, it is vital that you find the time to free your mind from thoughts and emotions that only weigh you down. Why should you waste time ruminating over what you did in the past? Let bygones be bygones and focus on molding your future. What you do now determines how your future will be. At some point, your future will be your past. The clock is always ticking. Whether you choose to do something today or not, the future will tell a lot about what you had been doing all along. The world will be there to witness you benefiting from your efforts. As a result, if you choose to spend your time focusing on your past, it means that there is little that you are doing about your future. Living mindfully and anticipating for the best to happen in the future can make a huge difference in your life. So, do what you need to do without falling for the urge to procrastinate.

Overthinking is not something that should overwhelm you since there are practical steps to beat overthinking. Increasing your self-awareness, for example, can be of great benefit since it can help you deal with overthinking. As you develop this quality, you will consciously be aware of the instances when your mind tends to overthink. In this case, each time you feel that you're tensed, stressed, or overwhelmed, your awareness will help you stop overthinking.

Similarly, overthinking can also be stopped by seeking second opinions from those around you. Why should you stress yourself over something that your friend can effectively help you to handle? If you are going through an emotional phase, individuals who are dear to you can give you a shoulder to lean on. Talk to them about what you are going through. There is power in

sharing your feelings with others as it releases tension in your body and anxiety from your mind. What's more, you can write what you are feeling in a journal. This is yet another effective strategy of dealing with overthinking.

Lastly, practicing positive self-talk can transform how you think. Remember, you are what you think. For that reason, if you think positively about yourself, it likely means that you are being the best version of yourself. Eliminate any negative thoughts from your mind by developing a habit of looking at life from a positive perspective. Sure, you can't prevent yourself from thinking negatively all the time. However, it's what you do to manage your negative thoughts that matters the most. Accordingly, stick to the recommended strategies of taming your thoughts discussed in this guide. Mold your life by thinking right. Think of a beautiful life full of hope and optimism. Practice living that life now by doing the things that you would like to do to contribute to a happy and blissful life. Arguably, this is the best way of preventing yourself from experiencing the negative effects of overthinking such as anxiety and stress.

Good luck!

# SELF DISCIPLINE

**Develop Mental Toughness and Focus  
On Achieving Your Goals. Learn Daily  
Habits to Program Your Mind, Build  
Self-Confidence and Willpower,  
Manage Anger, and Become Highly  
Productive**



## **Introduction**

During our day to day activities, we may have overheard people stressing that self-discipline is paramount. Matter of fact, a life without self-discipline is similar to living without wisdom and knowledge; you can't succeed. The question is, what exactly is self-discipline?

Self-discipline can take many forms. It could be in the form of persistence and discerning before taking any action. It can be doing whatever we had planned to do. It can also be endurance as well as doing what is required of us even if there are barriers overcome. Therefore, to be self-disciplined, we must possess the traits of self-control.

The most recognizable aspect of self-discipline is the capability to shun immediate returns or pleasure for a more long-term return gained after a more extended period. This shows that you have complete power over what you love, and you can control your feelings, although they can be stronger at times.

Therefore, self-discipline is about enduring some discomfort or resisting temptations of doing what seems more comfortable.

The word self-discipline is known to cause uneasiness and resistance because of the mistaken belief that it is hostile, hard to achieve, and requires a lot of input, as well as denying oneself life's pleasures.

Self-discipline is the opposite. It is pleasant, comfortable to achieve, and does not require a lot of input, not to mention the numerous benefits involved.

Limited self-control does not mean a prohibitive way of life as specific individuals might suspect. It has nothing to do with being an extremist. It is an inward quality and backbone that is crucial for managing the issues of everyday life and for the accomplishment of objectives.

Self-discipline, together with determination, can enable you to beat laziness, lingering and hesitation. These aptitudes make it conceivable to make a move and continue with it, regardless of whether the activity requires exertion.

Self-discipline empowers you to practice balance in what you do, become increasingly persistent, tolerant, understanding, and prudent. It enables you

to become self-restrained. A self-restrained individual is increasingly reliable and puts additional time and exertion in what the person does.

A self-restrained individual is bound to assume responsibility for his or her life, set objectives, and find a way to accomplish them.

Strong willpower and self-discipline are fundamental directions for expanding both self-restraint and resolution. These are abilities everybody requires for making progress.

Here are a couple of statements about this significant point:

"Self-control starts with the dominance of your contemplations. Provided you don't control what you figure; you can't control what you do. Self-Restraint empowers you to think first and act a while later."

Napoleon Hill, "Control truly implies our capacity to get to perform unintended tasks."

Arden Mahlberg quoted, "Self-control is a type of autonomy from sluggishness. Opportunity from the desires and requests of others, break from shortcoming and dread and uncertainty. Self-restraint enables a pitcher to feel his uniqueness, his internal quality, his ability. He is ace of, as opposed to a captive to his thought and feelings.

### **What Is Not Self-Discipline?**

Self-restraint is accomplishing something regardless of whether you loathe it or do not have a craving for doing it.

Accomplishing something since you appreciate it does not equate to discipline.

Numerous months prior, I began a workout routine, where I needed to get up ahead of schedule and complete a concentrated exercise. Indeed, it's merciless in the first couple of weeks. Inevitably, you get somewhat accustomed to it. Months after the fact, the propensity is there. I do it consistently. However, it doesn't mean I like it! I absolutely would like to rest that additional hour. However, control is driving me out of my bed and into the exercise.

When you comprehend that, you will most likely never like doing whatever it is that you need to do, you can begin to manufacture extraordinarily

extreme self-restraint. If you practice self-discipline today, you will feel extraordinary about it in the future, and it will be effortless.

On the off chance that you anticipate that it should be hard, yet you push through each, and every time, you will be practicing discipline that will benefit other parts of your life. This is the place you can start to make real changes and reach your dreams.

Self-discipline is similar to a muscle. The more you practice it, the more you become accustomed to it, and the further you can propel yourself. Much the same as you can't lift the most significant loads immediately, you need to work your way up. Begin with something little to get your feet wet. Become acclimated to the possibility that accomplishing something that you would prefer not to do, or that you will never like, is OK! Indeed, it's through this action that you will accomplish your life's most noteworthy victories. At that point, after some time, you can continuously add more to your rundown of activities that you don't especially like. You will feel accomplished, and this translates to self-respect.

Accomplishing something that you totally would prefer not to do is simply a definitive method to express train in its most flawless structure.

Remember that you will most likely never appreciate doing it, however, if you continue doing it, the prizes that you will procure will be a long way past the measly little fulfillment that you get by not doing it in any case. If you can wrap your head around this idea, you are assured to dispense ground-breaking self-restraint into your life, which will change your goals from being of fantasy, into sheer reality.

### **A Brief History Of Self-Discipline**

In 1978 instructor Dr. Tree Tanner wrote the content "Classroom Discipline." She provoked teachers to put the word SELF into dialogues concerning train. Twelve standards were recommended as rules for guardians and instructors to use in reconsidering their jobs as slave drivers, and educators of self-restraint. Two instructors, Barbara Vasiloff, and Paula Lenz, with more than 40 years of consolidated showing knowledge, acknowledged this test and made Dr. Leather treater's hypothesis functional. The aftereffects of their endeavors ended in the arrangement of the 15 self-restraint abilities that are utilized as a structure for settling on choices about an individual's development in self-control. This edgework is the core of the

Discipline with Purpose program. Since Discipline with Purpose was framed in 1984, it has turned into a broadly acclaimed program that is right now being instructed in several schools by a considerable number of instructors, guardians, and understudies. After finding out about the 15 self-control aptitudes, a fifth-grader commented "I constantly needed to act naturally taught. I was oblivious on how to arrive."

### **Are You Free?**

Discipline is the skeleton upon which opportunity is based. Possibility implies that you intentionally grow an ever-increasing number of alternatives throughout your life. You need not to accomplish something you'd like to do now so that you can improve.

Discipline fundamentally implies the controlled articulation of our life power. When we discipline our psyches by arousing and restraining the resources thereof, we become in-subordinate. The ONLY evident opportunity in presence is restraint, accomplished through self-control, which is living in arrangement with the divine law composed inside us. When we are self-restrained, we are FREE to apply our wisdom and love as we explore Life.

### **Self-Restraint Requires Unwavering Commitment And Accountability**

Presently, the reasons alone are never enough. You will likewise require a steadfast pledge to doing whatever's required to achieve your objective.

This is once in a while simple. Long haul responsibility takes discipline, and ordinarily, this is not something that the vast majority of people are great at doing without anyone else's input. What these individuals lack at the fundamental level is a bit of responsibility.

A long-term commitment to something necessitates that we consider ourselves responsible or we have another person consider us responsible for our activities.

Either of these strategies will work. Nonetheless, when they work in the mix, that is the point at which you'll harvest the best outcomes.

If you aren't excited about waking up every day to get down to business, then you can overlook building up any propensities that enable you to be

beneficial and productive at work. So, what method can you use to make an 'energizing' daily practice? Right off the bat, make a propensity for getting up ahead of schedule.

### **Ensure Unwavering Commitment And Accountability**

To do whatever is required to accomplish an objective, you will need an enduring commitment. In any case, duty comes simply sometimes. Instead, it requires discipline, which is something the vast majority can't accomplish independently from anyone else. One approach to train yourself to guarantee steadfast duty is making yourself responsible for your activities. By guaranteeing responsibility for your actions or your disappointments, you will have another reason, another drive, and somewhat more energy in your life.

### **Build Up A Sense Of Responsibility**

How you work and the measure of work you achieve every day relies upon how substantial your awareness of other's expectations is. You access work on time, invest your best exertion, and complete assignments/ventures as well as could be expected. Keep in mind, nobody will do your work for you and neither will anybody drive you energetically. You should do this without anyone else's help.

If you need to create a positive, hard-working attitude, stay away from lethargy or stagnation. Build up an awareness of other's expectations that urges you to move. Make a move, change, and develop. Nonetheless, this will possibly happen when you settle on individual decisions and get moving.

Additionally, make a point not to mistake apathy for simplicity. Apathy will yield challenges and difficulties over the long haul. You will be the one to fault for it because these issues would have been dodged had you built up an awareness of other's expectations and ventured up your game. Ensure this does not transpire.

### **Guarantee Persistency**

Perseverance is one of the essential things required to construct a stable or restrained hard-working attitude. You come up short on this quality if you can't remain concentrated on an assignment for long or rapidly wear out after a brief time of work. Much the same as it is critical to assemble

perseverance for a race, building tirelessness is required to rouse yourself to work for longer timeframes. While guaranteeing persistence is significant, you should offset industriousness with times of rest. This is to your benefit. Regardless of whether you have a positive, hard-working attitude, working for eleven or twelve hours in a row is never a conventional methodology. In any case, preparing yourself to work for such long work periods will guarantee that these periods appear to be shorter to you than they are, which will make work more straightforward and less unpleasant for you.

### **Act With Good Purpose**

Working without a final product is a NO. Abstain from going in circles doing work that won't lead you to the ideal results. Set up a reason and afterward guarantee your activities are lined up with it. Plan each workday ahead of time, in a perfect world toward the finish of the last workday. In the meantime, seek out your motivation. Discover approaches to build up a reason or set up clear objectives on the off chance that you don't have an apparent reason or objectives.

When you've set up the reason and objectives, guarantee that your workdays are lined up with these needs. When you begin to think about potential activities, consider which ones will matter in a year or something like that. Devote a large portion of your time or workday to activities that you expect will help you the most in accomplishing the set reason and objectives.

A robust, hardworking attitude is required to accomplish profitability and be fruitful at work, and this hard-working attitude is a result of taught work propensities rehearsed day in and day out. The approaches to make these propensities and assemble a dependable, hard-working attitude are referenced previously. By adoring what you do makes these propensities simple to acquire.

### **Self-Discipline Requires Penalties And Rewards**

Our inspiration levels regularly undergo back and forth movement as we seek our objective. At specific occasions, you will feel incredibly spurred, while on different occasions, you will battle to traverse explicit undertakings and exercises.

To abstain from falling into these cycles, you should set up specific punishments and prizes. Disciplines and grants can be utilized to help direct your conduct for the day.

You can, for example, remunerate yourself for settling on specific decisions or for sharing in particular sorts of practices. In like manner, you can punish yourself for enjoying different sorts of practices or for settling on poor decisions.

These punishments and prizes will add another component to the heater that will keep the fuel of self-restraint consuming for the day.

Do you recall your school days, when your instructor disclosed to you that you ought to have the self-restraint to be useful at school, and you feigned exacerbation? Presently self-control is what is essential.

In any case, what is self-restraint? Self-restraint is tied in with preparing yourself to pursue principles and guidelines that help you to accomplish your objectives. It improves your profitability. Self-control causes you to remain centered for an extensive period.

### **Initial Steps For Creating Self-Control**

Self-control isn't a component that is given during childbirth. It resembles a muscle that you should prepare. So, you need to extend some push to get it into the propensity.

Most significantly, you need a motivation behind why you do something. A powerful urge, inspiration, and motivation are fuel for self-restraint.

Without them, there are fewer materials to create self-restraint. You ought to ask yourself:

- What is my objective?
- Why do I need it?
- Why should I try these endeavors?

Personal standards

Individual principles matter when you progress in the direction of your objective. They impact your conduct, activities, and decisions throughout the day. That is the reason you should layout measures that you'll maintain. Ask yourself:

- What norms will I maintain?
- What norms will I not acknowledge?
- What decisions will I acknowledge when I get off track?

These inquiries are imperative to make concurrences with yourself. It'll make your life way more straightforward.

With stakes and motivating forces

Sometimes, the circumstances around you may get you off track. It might occur, because of our inspiration frequently rhythmic movements. To keep away from that, you ought to build up punishments and prizes framework. For instance, you may remunerate yourself for the specific sort of the conduct or for settling on the right decisions.

### **1. Without uncertainty**

This way includes a tremendous exertion since it's difficult to change yourself. Charles Duhigg, the creator of *The Power of Habit*, clarifies that "propensity practices a bit of the cerebrum related to feelings, examples, and recollections. Choices, then again, are made in the prefrontal cortex, a unique region. At the point when conduct moves toward becoming propensity, we quit utilizing our basic leadership abilities and rather work on autopilot. In this way, getting out from under a negative behavior pattern and building another propensity not just expects us to settle on dynamic choices, it will feel wrong. Your cerebrum will oppose the adjustment for what it has been customized to do."

In this way, buckle down, and you'll, without a doubt, accomplish your objective!

### **2. Identify what you want**

You ought to comprehend what you need to change or get. It very well may be a propensity that you need to create or an achievement that will enable you to prevail at work. So, ask yourself the significant inquiry, "What do I need?" And the appropriate response ought to be precise.

### **3. Begin with little things**

Consistently state that this year will be extraordinary. You can do this year, yet you can't make a huge difference in your life on the double. What's more, after you chose to create self-restraint, you'd not wake up as an alternate individual. Arm yourself with persistence and pick only a specific thing.

#### **4. Make a list**

You ought to comprehend what you should do to accomplish your objective. Understand what it's going to take to get where you need to be and create steps to get there. What's more, begin your day with a rundown of undertakings that you have to achieve. It tends to be a daily agenda, yet an arrangement for multi-day. It ought to contain everything-from browsing messages to shopping. Monitor your achievements to see the improvement.

#### **5. Inspiration**

In case you truly need to change your life recollect that you're a grown-up. Grown-ups don't lounge around and hold up until somebody guides them, they get it done. Only trained individuals succeed. So, resist the urge to panic and buckle up.



# Chapter 1. What Is Self-Discipline

People often struggle with self-discipline because they must step out of their comfort zone to improve themselves. It is a working progress that you will focus on every day of your life. You won't be perfect at it every day, but you will always do your best, and this is exactly what you need to do. It is always important to take the success along with the failures as this shows your progress.

## What Is Self-Discipline

Self-discipline is controlling your own thoughts, emotions, actions, and desires through self-improvement methods. The goal is that you will focus on developing your self-discipline by trying to better yourself every day. Learning self-discipline is not easy, but you will quickly notice the benefits and strive to better yourself in order to keep those benefits in your life.

Many people see self-discipline as an uneasy and difficult road to follow. As someone who has worked on developing their self-discipline for years, I will admit it is not easy. There are days where you find yourself struggling more than most to stay in your disciplined mindset. However, once you gain the willpower, you will find a strategy that works for you. You will find yourself practicing self-discipline throughout your day. It will become a natural part of your routine.

Self-discipline is not denying yourself life's pleasures. It is not making sure you always walk in a straight line along your life's path. There are always bumps, curves, and even some potholes that you need to navigate and that might take you a bit off course. Self-discipline is a pleasant experience that you will find achievable. You will start to notice some of the benefits within days of working on your self-discipline, which will start to keep you more focused. In many ways, self-discipline is part of the puzzle of your life. Sometimes you lose the pieces and you need to look for them, sometimes they are right in front of your face, and other times it seems they fall from the sky and directly into place.

Self-discipline is one of the most important life skills for people to develop. Many people, especially those who have mastered self-discipline, compare it to a superpower because it allows you to remain mindful of your actions, thoughts, and emotions.

Mindfulness is when you are aware of everything going on in your environment — especially yourself. You notice if you ate enough, you know when you start to feel overwhelmed, when your thoughts are negative, or when you are tired and need to rest. Mindfulness and self-discipline go together, you cannot have one without the other. This is because the opposite of mindfulness is mindlessness, which is when you are not aware of your environment, thoughts, emotions, and actions. Take a moment to think about when you are driving your regular route to work, the grocery store, or your friend's house. You are used to the scenery and know exactly where you are going, so you let your mind wander. When you park your vehicle, you ask yourself how you got there because you don't remember part of the route. This is an example of becoming mindless. If you are mindful, you would remember everything about your drive.

### **Self-Discipline And Willpower**

Do you feel that you're lacking the necessary inner strength to persevere or take action? Do you have certain habits that you like to change, but your lack of inner strength prevents you from doing so? If your answer to both questions is yes, then you're not alone. There are numerous people who have the same problem as you. Fortunately, your willingness to cultivate both willpower and self-discipline can significantly help you.

Both self-discipline and willpower, along with your high level of confidence and motivation, are crucial in your attempt to attain success. It promotes personal growth while also allowing you to make a huge, positive difference in your life. All of them are helpful in attaining not only your major goals but also in fulfilling simple, daily tasks.

So how do you cultivate both self-discipline and willpower? Below are some useful tips.

Get rid of all potential temptations

Keep in mind that willpower is a limited resource. That said, it's crucial not to waste it. Each time you force yourself to say no to temptation without removing it from your sight, you are also gradually depleting your willpower. The problem is that it often takes some time to replenish it. If possible, get rid of everything that you find tempting so as to avoid losing your willpower – requiring you to replenish it all the time.

If you love TV shows too much, but you need to complete a project for your boss within a month, then it would be best to remove anything that will tempt you to watch your favorite shows, instead of doing the project. You can unplug your TV from your wall, so you can no longer see it. You may also choose to stop your cable subscription.

If your goal is to eat healthier foods, then let go of junk and processed foods, especially if you're used to eating them before. Remove them from your sight and fill your kitchen and fridge with healthier food options. Doing so can help strengthen your willpower to stick to your new habits.

Improve your ability to handle stress and pressure

Learning how to handle stress and pressure is crucial if what you're aiming for is to build a high level of self-discipline and willpower. Extreme pressure and high-stress levels that are left unmanaged can use a lot of your body's energy. This can cause you to make decisions not rationally, but impulsively and instinctively. You will most likely make decisions based on short-term satisfaction only. That said, improving your ability to handle pressure and manage stress is one of the most vital steps in boosting your self-discipline and willpower.

The good news is that there are several ways for you to let go of stress. One is to stop occasionally, especially if you're doing a stressful task. Take a break and do some breathing exercises during those breaks. Do these each time you feel too overwhelmed with all the tasks you need to do. This is just a simple step, but it plays a huge role in effective stress management and in boosting your willpower.

Other things that you can do are yoga, meditation, and regular exercise. You may also start reducing your commitments to prevent yourself from getting too overwhelmed with all the pressure that usually come with them.

Create a solid plan

When you notice your willpower starting to get depleted, you can always go back to the plan you have developed, as well as the goal you have set, so you can mitigate the negative effects of lowered willpower. While it's true that even those who have developed the most solid plans are still at risk of failing (since there's actually no guarantee that you will be successful all the time), having it around will help keep you move forward despite

challenges. This means that you'll continue trying until you see all the steps in your plan taken into action.

### Eat and hydrate well

You have to eat well to prevent your self-discipline and willpower from depleting. Note that nutrition is extremely useful in the proper functioning of your brain. The brain cells that are working to retain a high level of self-control also require sugar or glucose. If you have low glucose, then there is a risk for your brain to respond strongly to instant rewards. This causes you to disregard your long-term goal.

Fortunately, it is easy to maintain a healthy level of glucose in your body. All it takes is to consume balanced meals with the right amount of fiber and protein. It can also raise your energy and keep you mentally alert, thereby preventing you from succumbing to potential temptations and making impulsive decisions.

Hydration is also essential to overall nutrition. Note that a lack of water can hamper your cognitive performance. Water is crucial whether you are in your class, in the workplace or at the gym. You need around 1-4 liters of water daily to ensure that your mind functions well.

There are also times when people confuse thirst with hunger. In case you feel hungry even if it's not yet your mealtime, consider reaching for one glass of water instead of a snack. You have a lower risk of losing your willpower and self-discipline by letting your brain and body function at their best. That's possible through a healthy and balanced diet and proper hydration.

### Get enough sleep

Getting enough sleep is essential in allowing your brain to manage your energy more efficiently. It also plays a huge role in ensuring that your prefrontal cortex works at its best. Depriving yourself of sleep, which usually happens when you just get less than six hours of sleep per night, can cause you to experience chronic stress, which tends to damage the way your brain and body utilize energy. Your prefrontal cortex suffers the blow the most, causing some parts of your brain, especially those that form cravings and stress response to lose control.

You can prevent this from happening by ensuring that you get high quality and enough sleep each night. Go for 7-8 hours of sleep every night. Sleep researchers prove that those who get enough hours of sleep actually live happier and longer. They are also more productive. This is the main reason why even the best athletes, who need to have the highest level of self-control and discipline, have their own sleep couches. This helps ensure that they still get their needed amount of sleep despite all the training that they need to do.

Adequate and quality sleep can also prevent you from dealing with excessive tiredness that may only impair your awareness, reaction time and damage. It should also be noted that lack of sleep can change hormones that regulate appetite in your body. This can also impair your metabolism. That said, it's time to make it a habit to have enough sleep each night.

### Improve the flexibility of your mind

Having a more resilient and flexible mind is crucial in boosting willpower. You can improve your mind's flexibility and resiliency by embracing changes and accepting challenges. With this improvement, it will be easier for your brain to form constructive responses to stressful circumstances. Your goal should be to direct your mind to what you want to achieve especially for the long term, instead of letting past failures and setbacks control you.

### Make the most out of your imagination

Using your imagination is one of the most powerful techniques in boosting your discipline and willpower. Note that your body has the tendency to respond well to situations that you've imagined similar to the situations you actually experienced. For instance, imagining that you are currently in a peaceful beach allows your body to respond by relaxing. Imagining that you arrived at a meeting with your presentation unprepared may also cause your body to tense up. Your body's reaction to your imagination is actually useful in improving your willpower.

If you're dieting, for instance, then there's a great chance that you feel more intense cravings plus other effects, like minor irritations. It is mainly because your mind can make you feel like you're deprived. In this case, you can use your imagination (imagining the negative effects of not following

through your diet plans) to deal with cravings and other factors that hamper your willpower and self-control.

When implementing the tips, keep in mind that no matter how smart and talented you are, you will still have a hard time reaching for your goals if you don't have self-discipline and willpower. You need to develop self-control as it helps you in balancing your immediate wants and needs and your long-term goals.

While cultivating discipline and developing strong willpower is not that easy (you can't expect it to happen with just one meditation or relaxation session), note that performing certain practices on a regular basis is helpful for you. Just like other things in life, trying to establish more meaningful and purposeful habits requires a lot of commitment on your part. With strong willpower and discipline, it will be easier for you to stick to your goals.



## **Chapter 2. How to Develop Self-discipline**

Adding self-discipline into your relationships, work ethic, nutrition and fitness is needed to be happy, lead a healthy lifestyle, and accomplish goals. Feelings and impulses should not dictate your choices. It should be informed and rational. Of course, you can train yourself to be self-disciplined. Through practice and repetition in your everyday life, you can create good habits, dissolve bad ones, and improve your decision-making process. This way, you live a life that free and full of healthy choices.

Self-discipline is not inborn. It is just like a muscle that toughens as you work out over time. Here are ways to improve your self-discipline.

### **Understand Your Motivation**

First, before you can develop self-discipline, you should have a strong desire to accomplish a specific goal. A strong desire fuels self-discipline. Something needs to inspire that change. To stay focused on your path self-discipline, there must be a compelling reason why you are taking on a project or task.

What do you want? Why do you want it? Why precisely do you need to get it done? What desired outcome you have in mind? This could be a habit you want to develop or a goal you want to achieve. The more compelling your reasons, the stronger your self-discipline.

### **Eliminate Temptations**

Your self-discipline can be stronger when you follow the “out of sight, out of mind” principle. This means doing your possible best to remove all distractions and temptations from your immediate environment. Trying to adopt a healthy diet? Toss out the junk food in your fridge. Want to become more focused while studying? Switch off your smartphone!

### **Adopt A Healthy And Regular Diet**

Scientists have found that your resolve lessens whenever your blood sugar is low. When you are hungry, your ability to concentrate is impeded because your brain isn't working at its highest potential. Hunger not only reduces focus; it also drives pessimism and grouchiness. A poor diet can affect your self-control in all aspects of your life—from relationships to work. With

healthy and regular meals, however, your blood sugar level is regulated, and your concentration and decision-making skills are enhanced.

### **Do It Even If Doesn't Feel "Right"**

To improve your self-discipline, you must be prepared to change your regular routine. This is often difficult and painful for many of us. The thing is our habit behaviors are linked to the basal ganglia (a part of the brain responsible for memories, patterns, and emotions). However, our decisions are linked to a separate area of the brain called the prefrontal cortex. When a behavior turns into a habit, we go auto-pilot and stop using our decision-making skills. So, to break a bad habit and build a new one, you have to make active decisions; this process often feels wrong because the brain will fight the change and stick to what it has been programmed to perform. This is why you need to make active decisions even when you don't feel like it.

Procrastination plays a great role here. Self-discipline says: do it now! While a reprieve is good, embracing procrastination means sinking deeper into stagnation. Channel your energy into what matters the most and keep anchoring yourself to your goal.

### **Create An Action Plan**

To achieve your goal, you need to create an effective action plan. This plan must come with mini-milestones and a reasonable deadline. Mini-milestones help you splitting your goal into manageable chunks—moving toward your goal in small pieces at a time. This way, you remain in control of the goal, and you are not overwhelmed. By taking one step at a time, you simplify the process and begin to build momentum.

An overwhelmed mind easily procrastinates. And procrastination is a major stumbling block to self-discipline. Therefore, your action plan must have progressive steps and small wins as you edge toward your goal.

A deadline gives a sense of urgency and focus. Your path to self-discipline should have a practical deadline. A clear deadline disciplines your focus. When there is a specific end-date, your energy and resources are appropriately used in maintaining the needed momentum to follow through with your actions.

### **Have A Self-Disciplined Mindset**

Your state of mind is connected to your self-discipline. There are specific qualities— such as optimism, courage, enthusiasm, excitement, passion, diligence, passion, patience, and diligence— you must imbibe. You must be committed to doing whatever is necessary to achieve your goal. You must be prepared to enjoy the process and make it a part of you.

Likewise, a self-disciplined mind knows the essence of priorities. A disciplined life is all about flow and structure. By focusing on the most important thing, you are less likely to get sidetracked with irrelevant stuff.

### **Visualize Your Desired Outcomes**

Being self-disciplined in one specific aspect of your life is the goal. Keep visualizing that desired outcome. This gives greater clarity about your goals and the actions needed to accomplish them. After you have defined your goals, imagine how you would feel when it comes to fruition. There is power in visualization and imagination. By creating a mental image of your target, you have taken the first step toward making it palpable.

Note that visualization is not the same as daydreaming. Visualization is built upon detailed and outlined goals. A daydreamer only fantasizes without lifting a finger toward any plan. When you visualize, remove all self-doubt. To be self-disciplined, you must learn to go head-on, leaving no space for negative thoughts to crawl into your subconscious.

### **Monitor Your Progress**

Appreciate every progress you make toward your goal. Whether you are making use of a journal or calendar, track every progress, and measure your growth. This will keep you focused and motivated as you reach your milestones. And even when you fail to reach a milestone, tracking your progress helps you see the adjustments you need to put in place to get back in the game and the pitfalls you have to eliminate. These pitfalls are often natural. The most important thing is learning from them and moving forward.

Find out the possible roadblocks and challenges that may pop up along the path to self-discipline. Take into account your weaknesses and commit time in sharpening the skills needed to overcome those lacking areas.

### **Be Accountable And Committed**

You need an unwavering commitment to accomplish any goal. Long-term commitment powers self-discipline. But because there is often no accountability, we quickly lose commitment.

Accountability is a focal point of self-discipline. For long-term commitment, you need someone to hold you accountable for your actions. A friend, family member, mentor, or even a fitness trainer. Someone trustworthy checking in on you to assess your progress. This second motivating voice goes a long way in helping you achieve your goals.

You should also be accountable to your standards. Something to keep you straight when you go off track. As you find someone to hold you accountable, you must also hold yourself responsible for your everyday decisions and choices.

Also, look out for role models (family, friends, and colleagues) who have previously accomplished the goal you desire. From coaches to professors to even colleagues, many people are better and more experienced than you are. These are people who have gone through your current situation. Rather than stumbling about in the dark, toying with trials and errors, there is no harm in asking for help and direction. Using their experience and learning how they followed through with certain actions that got them these goals, you can work self-discipline into your personal journey. A supportive environment is important. New habits are easily formed when you have people to keep you committed, inspired and focused.

Commitment fuels self-discipline. No matter what challenges lies ahead, you must be ready to stick to your goal. One thing I have found useful is to make a public commitment. For instance, I told several family members, friends, family members and colleagues about my plans to stop smoking. This way, I was held more accountable for my actions and I was helped to stay disciplined along my non-smoking journey.

But commitment is never about your final goal. You have to be committed to each step that would lead to that goal. To avoid smoking, for instance, I did not just go cold turkey. I had to be committed to preventing gatherings that would prompt to smoke; I had to attend Nicotine Anonymous meetings, use NRTs, and so on. Committing to little actions means being consistent with many habits that would culminate yours in the final goal. This way,

you can avoid getting sidetracked sucked into the trap of instant gratification.

### **Be Forgiving Of Yourself**

Self-discipline is hard. There will be up and downs. The most important thing is to keep trying. Acknowledge your setback and move forward. Instead of lingering in frustration, anger, or guilt because you slipped back into a bad habit, forgive yourself and get back in the game. The longer you mourn your failure, the harder it becomes to get back on track.

That little voice inside your head, the one that always reminds you of the negatives, is capable of dragging you down to the gutters. Most times, we are our own enemies on our path to self-discipline. We put ourselves down and think we will never be good enough.

Learn to forgive yourself. As simple as it sounds, forgiving oneself is one of the hardest things there is. But it's the most important. Understand that nobody is perfect. We all have our insecurities. But life needs not to be perfect for people to be happy about themselves. There is a virtue in acceptance, working to be better, and contentment.

### **Avoid The Trap Of Perfectionism**

Perfectionism is a self-sabotaging force. Perfectionism tricks us into thinking we are actually making progress. Perfectionism, in the real sense, is a defensive mechanism that shields us from doing the real work. To see perfect, we focus on the trivial tasks that give us some semblance of control; Thereby, we keep fooling ourselves into thinking we are exercising self-discipline.

Expecting a lot from yourself is a good thing, but perfectionism can have a paralyzing effect if not properly handled—a roadblock toward your progress and achievements.

While, on the surface, being a perfectionist sounds nice: you have a keen eye for details, always looking to surpass expectations and focused on the next big thing. However, there are several ways in which perfectionism can serve a roadblock for you.

When you strive for perfectionism, you may end up procrastinating about the goals you are even passionate about. Because you spend a lot of time conjuring the perfect vision of how things should be done, you become

overly detail-oriented and obsess about every issue. Soon, because it is painful expending too much energy on that project, you push it away and wait for that “perfect” moment—which may never come.

Another issue with perfectionists is the problem of skewed reality. Because by setting a high personal standard for perfection, they tend to expect more than what is realistic. Because they keep exhausting themselves physically and emotionally to achieve that “perfect” outcome, they end up missing the big picture due to their immense self-expectations.

There is a deep sadness that plagues most perfectionists. The desire for precision can create feelings of misery daily. Anxiety will always ensue when you keep obsessing over the outcome of a goal or when you keep beating yourself up about a slip-up. You eventually become dissatisfied and trapped, regretting even the smallest of things. In other words, perfectionists tend to keep battling depression, questioning their self-worth based on their output and performance.

When you are always striving for perfection, there is a chance that you are disregarding your health in the name of achieving the perfect result. To beat a deadline or adopt a habit, you practice self-neglect, allowing your health to fail over the years.

Finally, perfectionism can lead to compromised relationships. A perfectionist may put work above his or her loved ones and can be over-demanding of them as well. Perfectionists are also prone to lash out when things do not go their way. To overcome the roadblocks of perfectionism, consider focusing on what truly matters in your life, stop defining your self-worth by a list of accomplishments, and see errors as a chance to learn.



## **Chapter 3. Motivation**

We all want to achieve something, so we set up a goal and try to accomplish it. But you would surely accept that setting up a goal is one thing but turning that goal into reality is completely different and a hard process. We often set a million goals to fulfill, but at the end of the month, most of the goals are become abandoned by a precious number of people. When we set a goal, we often tend to get dreamy about it. We sit back and get us into the fantasy land, where we dream ourselves as winners, with all of our goals accomplished. But after some days of the initial enthusiasm, we forget to light up that fire inside ourselves.

If you really want to be a successful person, you must keep the fire lit within yourself. To stay motivated, you must need some outside stimuli. That's why we're offering you some ways to help you do that.

### **Write Down The Reasons Behind Your Claim.**

As you list down your goals, write a few reasons why you want to accomplish it. This will give you a fair purpose not to give up. Name those things you will be able to do after accomplishing your goals that will give you some inspirations and will energize you. This will also help you to track the progress of your journey. This is very important for people to be aware of why they have been performing the tasks.

### **Give Yourself A Reason To Smile**

Smile is the best remedy of all sorts of negative impacts that we have in our life. So, whatever happens to us we must not give up the habit of smiling that keeps us alive even at the darkest hour of our life. This concept is also applicable in this case of gaining motivation to focus indomitably on your goals. Though we have many negative issues to deal with in our daily life but there are a lot of reasons too for making ourselves refreshed from the dilemma of internal and external affairs. Here the smile acts as the mentor of those small but everlasting memories that opens an affirmative doorway for us in the world surrounded by downwards conceptions and chaotic mentality created by conventional maintainers.

To keep your smile fresh and active you must follow some healthy habits that are both philosophically and socially very wealthy. First of all, you have to found always the positive sparks not only in the outer world but

also within yourself that always gives you to be one step ahead from where you generally belong to. It is only possible when you make your mind free to deal with any kind of situation in your daily life. When you become habituated by that kind of activities, you become also a person to keep yourself positive through the appearance of a smile in your face.

Secondly, don't take the pressure to make others happy through your personal choices. Your personal choices are mainly built up to refresh your mental situation apart from outward belongings. So, if it is combined with outward, it is spoilt, and moreover, the people would interfere in your own world, and it will make a negative impact on your mind.

According to the need of globalization, one must follow some attitude to deal with this particular era. One of them is diplomacy. You must be diplomatic to make yourself perfect to the outer world and on this occasion, you should always think positive about anyone you meet. But don't let them understand your drawbacks.

### **Maintain Your Grass-Root Beginning**

It is no doubt that success is the most preferable option of life that is inhabitable, and the way of this ultimate goal is not comfortable so much. It is like a staircase where you have to achieve the sky view through one by one step. So, you have to start with an impression of learning from experiences. It will make you confident about yourself because in this process there will no gap exist in your way to achieve the goals. Always think yourself as a learner and keep yourself ready to enjoy new experiences.

### **Judge Yourself First.**

A mistake is a part of your activity as we all know- "Failure is a pillar of success". So, it is very essential to identify your mistakes, learn from them and rectify them as soon as possible. But here, one thing keeps our road blocked. That is the way of judging, not of oneself but the others. It is a very negative attitude in the field of application. Sometimes it makes you to give lame excuses against your fault and complaining about others and make them responsible for the act. So, you should change this attitude. You must judge yourself first and make yourself eligible by collecting them with your sincerity and attentive behavior. It will also help you to focus on

yourself. Otherwise, your motivation would be diverted, and it will be harder to achieve your dreaming goals.

It is also a public relationship motto that we should always maintain in every field of our life. When you judge others and cover your false with lame excuses, it spoils your social relationships and affects your co-operative surroundings. The consequence of this act will make you suffer from helplessness during the time of vital assistance. So, always find your own fault by examining own attitude and behavior and make it perfect and more acceptable to the people you surrounded by.

### **Overcome Your Fear**

Each and every moment we have to step forward to make our life affirmative and successful. But it is not an easy process. There are many obstacles found in this way of success. Some of them belong to the external world which can be ignored or solved by our attitude, determination and liabilities. But some of them make their residence within our sense. These are more harmful than the past, because we have to fight with them without any external support. One of them is – ‘Fear’. Though the word is very small to hear but it is one of the most harmful terms that make us inactive and downward throughout our life. Fear cannot be objectified. We can only feel it according to our situation. Though it is an abstract object but in our practical life, it decreases our determination and makes us think from a negative corner even at the door of our success.

Fear can be categorized into many parts. One thing is clear. Whatever the fear is, we have to fight against it all alone. Sometimes we can share our situations with the dearest ones. It will give you an assurance that fear is not the only element that exists within yourself. So, during the investigation, you should also find out your positive skills that will definitely defeat your fears and make you think affirmative about yourselves.



# **Chapter 4. How to Manage Your Time Productive Efficiently**

## **Why You Cannot Manage Your Time Efficiently?**

Managing your time effectively is an important part of self-discipline. If you are unable to manage your time properly, you will not be able to accomplish the goals that you wish to complete in life and work. Time management is something that most people are taught in school. However, it is often not taught to them efficiently, and those that fail can contribute their failure to lack of time management. By putting pleasure above workload, you are creating an imbalance with your time management strategy. This means that you are using instant gratification as your driving force instead of long-term gratification. Those that are in balance will experience greater happiness, less stress, and more financial freedom.

Time management is the act of prioritizing the tasks that you must do in a schedule that is specific and calculated. Several mistakes are made by those that fail at time management. Each one of these mistakes is listed below with details on how it will affect your life. I have also included ways to combat these failures.

### **Mistake: Personal Goals Have Not Been Set**

Your personal goals pertain to the goals that are specific to your needs and your desires for the future. So, what is it that you want to do in the next year? What about the next five years? You can take this even further and determine what you want to do in the next ten years. This will help you to schedule your time wisely so that you can begin to build upon your goals.

This is an essential part of managing your time and building a foundation for your future. To reach your destination, you will need to have a vision of what you want. This vision will help you to make small achievable steps to accomplish all the things that need to be done to get you to the result. This helps with management of resources as well as, priorities that are necessary for a proper SMART goal.

These will also help us to determine what is the most important tasks that need to be done first as well as, the things that you need to avoid so that you do not have distractions.

SMART goals are goals that are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Accountable
- Realistic
- Trackable

By setting goals for each one of these categories, you will be able to build a foundation for discipline and goal setting that is sustainable.

### **Mistake: Not Scheduling Your Tasks By Priority**

It is extremely hard to understand prioritizing the tasks that you have in a proper and functional manner. If you are currently working on an important task, then you need to stay focused and not allow distractions to interfere with your train of thought. This means if something comes up that is not life or death, then stay focused and determined not to be sidetracked. Then when you are done, you will be able to handle the situation that arose while working. This allows you to show priority to the things that are most important at that time.

In those moments when you find your secretary or assistant presenting you with another task to complete, you should inform them that you are in the middle of a task already and will place this one on the list in the proper prioritization category. If your children interrupt your train of thought while working on something important than simply ask them to wait their turn. This is a simple way of showing priority over a situation that seems dire but is not. False emergencies will arise throughout your day; the key is to prioritize properly so that you do not allow distractions to interfere in your workday progress. Not all things will need to be immediately started or accomplished; some things can be put off till a better time presents itself. So, consider what the most important task is and finish that before being distracted by other things that are less important.

By prioritizing the tasks that you need to do, you are learning how to manage your time efficiently. This can lead to a more concise and steadier schedule. Determining what is most important for completion within your workday is crucial to accomplishing the tasks at hand. Place those things

that are most important within prominent spots on your schedule and at times that you are most alert and energized. This will ensure that you have completed the important work first and then you can tackle the other work in a systematic order.

### **Mistake: Distractions Are Interfering With Your Focus, And You Fail To Manage Them Appropriately.**

It is scientifically proven that you will lose at least 2 hours out of every day due to unwanted distractions. Consider how much time you are losing in your day and determine if you are wasting more time than you are utilizing properly. Are you distracted easily? Do you find that others interrupt your focus regularly? Is there something that you can do to avoid being distracted?

Distractions are an inevitable part of work. When you work in an environment that involves several co-workers, then you will be faced with the distractions that stem from interruptions, meetings being called, and sometimes tedious and pointless social interactions with others. These things can be avoided if you have a private office where you can close the door and limit the interaction with others. By placing a closed-door policy at your office, you are able to instill some boundaries and guidelines that will help you to avoid distractions from others. Inform your office staff that if the door is closed, then you are not to be disturbed. This sets a precedent on when and how they can approach you for questions and complications as well as, any other distracting interactions. However, make sure that you do not keep the door closed all day since they will need your guidance throughout the day. In order for your workday to run smoothly, you will need to have the channels of communication open and running smoothly. However, setting a time of day that you need to be left alone is optimal for continued focus on your workday without distractions.

Another way to avoid distractions is to be fully in the moment. For instance, do not handle emails, and work-related stuff during dinner with the family. You also do not want to handle family-related stuff during your workday. This will place you in the right time right place mentally. Do not allow emails, IM's, phone calls, or other distracting communication to interfere in your mealtime with family. You also do not want to be interrupted when

dealing with work-related times or those times that you are super focused on the task at hand. Find a balance between personal and work hours.

You need to have a proper balance and flow when it comes to your schedule. To balance your schedule, you need to determine what is most important for that day. When you are able to be 100 percent in your current task, then you will be able to provide more focus to that task which makes completion effortless. By not allowing distractions in your workday, you are allowing yourself to be focused on completing the work you are assigned promptly. By minimizing distractions, you can gain the control you need to work through the day and complete the best work that you can for that specific project.

There are a few things that you can do to avoid distractions:

- Turn off your instant messaging options on the computer.
- Turn the sound off on your phone.
- Shut down all social media notifications.
- Shut your door and inform co-workers that you are busy.
- Place a do not disturb sign on your cubicle.
- Have an auto responder for emails so that you can alert others of your focus and that you wish to be left alone during this time.
- And communicate effectively with the other members of the team and schedule a specific time that is distraction-free during your day.

### **Mistake: Avoid Procrastination**

Avoiding procrastination is important to your ability to complete goals. You will need to gain focus and discipline to build a foundation of growth. You will eventually feel guilty if you are spending more time in procrastination and less time accomplishing your goals. If you dread doing tasks, then you will struggle to get to them. But eventually, this will catch up to you, and you will have to explain why you are either, always late with work or rushing to get things done.

A good way to avoid procrastination is to set a time for beginning the project or task. I often find that if the task I need to do is something boring

or tedious, I will tell myself “in 15 minutes I will get started”. This sets a time limit on how long I have until I need to start working on this specific task. I will also schedule out each task that is needed to be completed so that it is not overwhelming to me. Many procrastinators feel as if they need to complete the tasks, they are assigned all in one go. This is not always an easy thing to do and can be very overwhelming. So instead, schedule the steps that you need to complete the tasks you are assigned. Locate the most important parts of your tasks and begin with them instantly. Do not put off what can be done now, especially if it is difficult. This will create a pattern of procrastination and decrease the quality of work done. Once these more difficult tasks are accomplished, you can start on the much simpler tasks with motivation to complete the full project. This also allows you to knock out those tasks that are dreaded, first and foremost. This allows you to put more effort into the tasks that need the most focus right away and provides an easier completion of the assignment.

Another thing you can try is an action plan. Action plans help you plan out the actions that you need to do in order for proper completion. This makes the project and the steps more manageable. This will also allow you to see the steps that you need to take in a visual format. It makes your whole process much easier and less overwhelming.

### **Ways To Manage Your Time:**

**Know what your goals are.**

Know exactly what the goals you wish to accomplish are and how you will achieve them. You should sit down and make a list of the short-term goals that you have on one side and the long-term goals that you have on the other side. Once you have established these, then you will need to start making a plan that is revolving around the steps that it will take to achieve these goals. There are many ways to set goals. One way is to compile a list in a journal or notebook that will hold all the steps, and details that you need to know about your goals. I find this is the most effective way to do this. Since I have written down my goals, I can then go back and monitor my progress.

**Set a Priority for all your projects wisely.**

Prioritizing the steps that you need to take is crucial to know what to start on. This can be done by following this simple tutorial on prioritization. Start by categorizing the steps into 4 categories:

- Important tasks that are urgent ones.
- Important tasks that are not urgent ones.
- Urgent tasks that are not important.
- Tasks that are not urgent as well as, not important.

An important task that is urgent would be something that you would need to have done right away. A task that is important which has no urgency is a task that appears especially important but does not necessarily need to be completed right this second. An urgent task that is not important is one that is super important to complete but once completed creates extraordinarily little impact. Then you have the tasks that are not urgent nor important. These tasks are super low on the priority scale and only offer the illusion that they are busywork.

Start with the first one and write 3 to 4 tasks that fall under this category. Then, write down the ones that fall in each additional category. Then, you will start to work towards completing these tasks in a timely order. Once you complete one of the tasks, mark it off to show that it has been completed. This will raise your motivation and give you something to celebrate. Celebrate all of your wins so that you gain the motivation to keep pushing forward.

Learn to say “no” more often.

“NO” is a super hard thing to tell others, especially when you can see they are clearly in need. But sometimes it is for your own good that you say “no” to others when they try to overload you with tasks that would otherwise be completed by them. Many people will try to get you to help them, especially if you cannot say “no.” If you start to say “no” more often, be prepared to piss some people off. They will find that you are being selfish, simply because you will not do the things, they should be doing for themselves.

The night before, clear your desk and your mind of that day’s work activities.

At the end of the day, take a quarter-hour to clear your mind and write down the information that you obtained that day as well as record the important tasks that took place and what needs to be completed still. This is an excellent technique for decompressing after a long day or completion of a task. You should feel much more empowered while sitting at a desk that has

been wiped of all the preceding day's workload the next morning, especially when you walk into work the next day and only have to focus on the day's tasks.

**When you arrive at the office in the morning.**

Arrive earlier than you traditionally would. This should be several minutes early. Then use that time to prepare a list of prioritized to-dos for that day. This could result in the most efficient use of your mornings as well as, a more productive time period during your workday.

**Let the distractions which interfere in your day be completely eliminated.**

Begin to pay close attention to those times that others are more distracting throughout your workday. Track any interruptions that are induced by yourself — especially those that tend to be of the social media type. Your smartphone can be an extremely helpful device to have; however, the smartphone is additionally an addictive device.

It will take an exercise in self- discipline to shut out the distractions that can be causing loss of focus on your tasks. This limits your ability to maintain the proper focus that is needed to complete your work. Eliminate immediate access to smartphones, the internet, and outside communication with others. This helps you to maximize the productive time that you are spending in work mode. Rather than living as if you are “always on,” set up an opportunity within the day to catch up on incoming email, contacting clients back, speaking with employees, and all the other distracting activities that derail your progress.

**Delegate the tasks that you cannot do to someone else more times than not.**

If you have diligently hired the right and most talented employees, then you should have a dedicated and hard-working staff. This will help you get much of the work checked off of the to-do list, once you start to delegate the assignments. Managing a smaller business can depend on your abilities to maintain faith in your employees, and the ability to trust that the tasks will be completed appropriately and on time. This limits your involvement in the operation of each said task without having to delegate or micro-manage each person. Exploring every opportunity, delegating businesses responsibilities is a great way to maintain your workload and show the team that you trust their judgment and work ethics. This also increases morale and pride in their work.

Keep track of your productive hours and the time that you spend focused on one single task.

How many minutes per week are you cramming in productive work? By using an easy to fill out a timesheet, you will be able to identify the moments that you are productive and the moments that you are not. This allows you to have a quick in and out process for clocking your time. This also allows you to process the varied tasks that are in your day. Note down the jobs done for each day with a process that allows you to record the steps that you took and empty your mind of the tasks that you just completed. This opens your mind for the coming tasks without any hindrance or distraction. You can utilize a mobile app, or a written time tracking system that is directly connected to your desktop. This will give you the ability to have reports of your time spent in each task as well as, examine the productivity that you have had overall in your day, week, and month. This is also a great way to track the time of your employees as well.



## **Chapter 5. Improving focus and concentration**

Of course, what is self-discipline without any focus? You must be willing and able to focus if you want to ensure that you can, in fact, figure out how to be self-disciplined. After all, how can you really and wholly dedicate yourself to making the right decision if you cannot focus on what is right in the first place? When you cannot focus, you cannot really make a meaningful, practical decision because you are not giving anything the actual levels of focus and attention that they would deserve.

The state of focus is one that is fleeting for many people—they struggle to find that state in which they are so incredibly engrossed, they fail to ever make the proper decision in the first place. Focus is that feeling when time ceases to matter. It is that time in which you are so completely in tune with the world around you and what matters that you do not feel like you are wasting major amounts of time. Your entire mind is homed in on one thing to ensure that you can, in fact, make that decision without wasting time.

What if you could turn that intense focus on at will? Think about the potential that you would have to succeed—you would be able to succeed simply due to having the drive to do so, and that is important. You would be able to completely and utterly engross yourself in that particular activity, and because of that, you would be sure that you could actually make what you wanted to happen actually come into fruition.

You would be so absorbed in what you are doing that it hardly seems like work in the first place. You are too busy focusing on what you are doing to notice that the time continues to creep by. You do not feel the fatigue that those around you seem to feel because you are naturally engrossed rather than constantly forcing your mind back to it.

### **The Benefits Of Focus**

When you learn to be self-disciplined and therefore focused, you begin to reap all sorts of benefits in your life. These benefits include:

- You get stuff done sooner: Just by virtue of not having to jump around so much with what you are doing; you often find

that whatever task that you have on hand at any given moment becomes infinitely easier. You do not struggle to make sure that you meet your tasks because you simply do them without worrying. You do not find that you feel tempted to check your phone for messages every two minutes, nor do you feel like you need to flip-flop between several tasks at the same time. This means that you can focus entirely on one task at a time and make it happen quickly and simply.

- **Your work improves:** Along those same lines, when you are focused and entirely dedicated to what you are doing, you will find that your work gets done better. You focus on one task entirely, and that means that you are able to really give it the attention it needs in order to double-check all of the necessary details. You will be able to focus without mumping around so you will be able to ensure that you have made the appropriate decisions and given it the appropriate amount of focus in the first place.
- **Your stress levels decrease:** When you are no longer concerned about how to get your work done because you are focusing entirely on it, you will very quickly find that you are able to better regulate yourself. You will be able to avoid being stressed because you know what you are doing when to focus on it, and how to make good use of your limited time in the first place. You will make sure that you are avoiding outside stressors simply due to not paying any attention to them, and you will also recognize that you can better ensure that everything is done according to command.
- **You allow the subconscious to take over:** Your subconscious mind is almost like a copilot for your body— you and your conscious mind are obviously the pilots, but your subconscious is along for the ride, taking care of all of the lesser tasks that have to occur. If it is muscle memory, your subconscious mind will do it. When you strongly focus on

what you are learning to do, you teach your subconscious mind how to do what you are doing. Over time, your subconscious becomes capable of activating automatically and taking care of the brunt of the repetitive, mindless work.

## **The Struggles Of Focus And How To Defeat Them**

When you struggle to focus, however, you start to see problems. Focus is something that is, unfortunately, in short supply these days—you cannot often find the focus that you need without intensively learning to do so. Focus has been dwindling as the need for it has dwindled. Even cars have begun to take away some of the mental loads for drivers, allowing for uses of sensors, cameras, and other articles that will directly manage the road right around you for you. There are some cars that will even auto-manage so you are kept in the right lane, so you do not have to do it yourself.

With focus being hit from all around you, you are going to find that you struggle. You are inundated with advertisements when you try to watch a 3-minute video online—the advertisements may even last longer than the video in some situations, and you are likely to see at least one in the middle as well. When you see these ads breaking up the video that you are watching, they damage your focus. They remove your focus from what you were looking at in hopes of telling you, at least subconsciously, to buy their products. They try to snipe you away from actually making sure that you make good choices with your money and that can be a problem for you.

This is exactly why it is so important to learn how to focus in general and why self-discipline puts so much focus on the art of being able to focus in the first place. Thankfully, even if you currently lack the mental capacity to really focus well, you can learn to do so. You can develop your ability to focus, training the brain to really harness its abilities to stay on one task before switching to a new one. When you learn how to do this, you will find that you can create the sharp focus that you need to avoid the distractions. You will be able to cut out all of the distracting stimuli from around you to ensure that at the end of the day, you will be able to achieve your goals with ease.

When you want to learn how to focus, the most important thing that you can do is ensure that you repeatedly correct yourself. Every time that your mind wanders, you must be willing and able to pay closer attention to what you were doing. You must return your wandering mind to where it belongs. At first, you may feel like you are desperately trying to gather up a bunch of ducklings on a mat, and every time you set two down, three more takeoff running. You may feel like you are fighting this impossible uphill battle. You may worry that you cannot possibly manage to develop this focus to the capacity that you need it, and that can be absolutely terrifying.

However, rest assured that you can learn how to focus. You can learn how to guide your mind and ensure that you do not let it wander constantly. You can learn how to keep yourself on track and focused, so long as you remember to teach yourself to be self-disciplined.



## **Chapter 6. Build Mental Toughness**

The process of building mental toughness takes dedication and practice. The progress and improvements that you will see in your mental toughness will take time and a significant amount of practice. The amount of mental toughness that you develop is dependent on whether you practice these techniques and focus on developing mental toughness for a specific goal with a set date such as joining the police force or becoming a professional athlete, or whether you want to hone your skills by slow and steady progression with the intention of putting them to use over a lifetime.

### **Take A Long Hard Look At Yourself And Evaluate Who You Are**

One exercise that you can do to enhance your mental toughness is to take a good look at who you are, your values, and your beliefs and see if you are living up to those values and beliefs in your daily life. This is part of familiarizing yourself with yourself. Most people believe that they know themselves, but many are surprised to find out that they might be wrong. You may have done things a certain way for so long that you have never thought about why you are doing them; they are just habits. You could have gotten them from your parents when you were young, watching other people, television, and more. You may believe that these actions and thoughts say a lot about you and your values, but they may not say as much as you believe. This is why it is a good idea to take a long hard look at yourself and evaluate who you are. You may find out that you are a little different than you originally thought you were.

Examine things about yourself such as your personality. What are some of your character traits? What is your personality like to you? What do the people around you think of your personality? Where do the answers to the last two questions differ? Examine what emotions you need to control and what emotions you need to show more of and develop further.

### **Your Values And Beliefs**

Take the time to identify and examine your core values and beliefs. What are they? Be as specific as possible and jot them down. After writing down your values and beliefs, it is a tie for you to try to access why these are your core values and beliefs. Is it because they were your parents' values and

beliefs that were handed down to you? Are they the same values and beliefs that you had when you were a child? If so, do they still apply to your life today? Really take the time to think about it so that you can assess whether these values are a good thing for you to hold on to and aspire to as you try to achieve your goals.

Don't let old values and beliefs keep you from achieving your current goals. Many of the values that you had when you were younger may have been due in part to your age, the experience that you had in your life and the current state of society. You may have outgrown these values and belief, and they may no longer apply to you.

Don't let other people's values get in the way of you achieving your goals. We often have adopted values that were essentially given to us by other people. Our parents taught us their values. Some of our values were learned from our grandparents. School teachers gave us some values. We pick up some of our values from church when we were younger. These values sounded good and allowed us to fit into with the people around us but were they and are they still your values as well. It is difficult to work toward achieving values that you do not really believe in. Thus, it is very important to assess who possesses these values that we believe that we hold now.

Next, ask yourself this question: Are you living up to your values and beliefs? If the answer is no, then you need to step back for a second and figure out where the problem lies. Why are you falling short of living by your values and beliefs? The most common answer to this question is that the values and beliefs that you have identified are not truly your values and beliefs; however, they are great ideals that you believe make good values and beliefs.

Are your values in line with your goals? For instance, if you value church, Christianity, and putting out positive messages becoming a rapper is not a goal that fits with these values. When your values and your goals do not align, it is important to determine which one is more important to you and which one needs to fall back so that you can get on your way to achieving your goals or aspire to other goals. You cannot have this conundrum and effectively pursue your goal because there will be a lot of times when your values conflict with what you are asked to or need to do to succeed (unless you want to be a Christian rapper).

## **Develop A Belief System That Is Conducive To You Achieving Your Goals**

Restructure your beliefs so that they are in line with your goals. Some of your core beliefs should center around hard work and developing drive to push on and succeed. When your goals and beliefs work together and complement each other, the mental debate that would take place if they were in conflict is eliminated.

It is completely counterproductive to have a belief system that is not in line with the goals that you have set for yourself. Your belief system should push your goals forward.

## **Identify Your Strengths And Weaknesses**

One way to build mental toughness is to identify your strengths and weaknesses.

Ask others for their honest input about what your strengths and weaknesses are. Seek constructive criticism from those around you. Knowing your weaknesses will help you know where to put your focus. Since it is concerning mental toughness be sure to ask questions and assess areas which are directly related to mental toughness such as emotional balance, emotional intelligence, mental clarity, drive, focus, and more.

After identifying your weaknesses, write a step by step plan to improve upon each one of these areas so that you can become stronger in these areas. Get other people's opinions as to whether you have any other weaknesses that are not listed so that you can improve upon areas in which other people around you believe that you may be falling short.

## **Do Not Allow Your Mental Energy To Be Wasted**

Part of developing mental toughness is to develop the ability to focus and eliminate the mental clutter. Learn to differentiate between problems and issues around you that you can do something about and the ones that you cannot. Anything that you cannot do anything about should not be a focus in your mind. You need to accept these things so that you can move on to concentrate on the things that you can control and change.

Also, problems and issues of little significance should not be a focus that weighs on your mind and keeps you from doing other things. Do not

concentrate on trivial things that have little to no impact on your life. This will only weigh your mind down, cutting down on the focus and the time that you can give to other things.

### **Avoid Being A Perfectionist**

You need to do things well, and to the best of your ability in life; however, there is a line that when crossed is obsessiveness. Everything does not have to be perfect down to the last detail. Take some time to evaluate how significant the details are about a task or project that you are working on to avoid obsessively trying to be perfect. Perfection is not the key to success, it is the key to obsession, and it should be let go of in order to develop other more important things that are going on around you and in your life.

### **Actively Eliminate Your Negative Thoughts By Finding Positive Thoughts To Replace Them – Write Down Negative Thoughts When They Creep Into Your Mind**

When you are trying to accomplish a goal or simply when you are going throughout your day, negative thoughts may creep into your mind. These negative thoughts get to you, the more and more you have them, and they make you less likely to believe that you can achieve and excel at the goals that you have set for yourself.

One active step that you can take to eliminate some of your negative thoughts and their confidence draining effects is to write down your negative thought on a piece of paper. Look at the thought and read over it. Is it accurate? Notice what time you experienced the thought and what brought it on. Was it talking to someone that has a negative effect on you? Was it looking at someone who you believe may be more talented than you? It is important for you to notice everything about what brought on the negative thought so that you can understand why the thought crept into your head.

Write all of the negative thoughts that you have in a day down in a journal so that you can see how many negative thoughts creep into your mind during an average day. Do this for a week so that you can notice what days of the week are the best and which are the worst. Where do you tend to be when you have negative thoughts? Maybe consider carrying a mini tape

recorder with you so that you can make a note if you have a negative thought at the grocery store.

After writing down all of your negative thoughts and analyzing where they come from and the basis for them, assess what type of an impact of effect the negative thought is having and will have on your performance of your daily tasks and you're achieving the goals that you set out to achieve.

Be sure to notice any patterns that may appear with negative thoughts. Are all of your negative thoughts centered around one goal? If so, this may be a sign that you should let this particular goal go. If something that you want to achieve is always causing you to have negative thoughts, evaluate why these thoughts are raised with this particular goal to see if the goal is one that is worth having.

Are your negative thoughts surrounding a person? Sometimes all of the people in our lives are not good for us and we need to take stock of how a person affects our life before we make the decision on whether or not to keep the person in our life. A toxic friend or a toxic relationship can take a toll on your emotional and mental toughness and consume a significant amount of your thoughts. This is a problem that needs to be solved effectively and fast so that you can be more productive. And oftentimes, the solution is cutting the person out of our lives or keeping that person a farther distance away. If this is what it is necessary to do, then make sure that you do this in order to maintain and develop your mental and emotional strength so that you can live a productive fulfilled life.

Come up with positive thoughts to combat some of the negative thoughts that creep into your mind. Think about your strong points and the good things about you and around you that can counteract the negative thought that you are having. Make a list of these positive thoughts and keep them in a journal as well. Try to make sure that your positive thoughts always outweigh your negative ones.

### **Have A Ceremony To Let Go Of The Past**

If you often find yourself thinking about past events and occurrences in your life that have had some impact on you whether they were positive or negative, this is counterproductive and not a valuable use of your time or your mind. Still, it is often hard to let go of the past. We often stay stuck in certain moments in our past and relive them in our minds, sometimes even

years after. We may dwell on or obsess about past mistakes, wishing that we could go back and change them and thinking about how great our lives would be if we could. But no matter how hard you wish that you could do something to change the past, there is no way that you can, and you have to live for today and tomorrow, not yesterday.

You may have had some negative experiences in the past that you cannot get out of your mind. You may have been mistreated in the past, perhaps you suffered some type of abuse at some point in your life. If you do not want this event to define your entire life, you have to find a way to get it to stop creeping into your mind. Identify the negative thoughts that you have internalized as a result of past events. You may want to write these down as well so that you can take a better look at them. Some of these thoughts may have to do with dealing with certain types or groups of people. Others may have to do with going to different types of events. You need to take the time to think about whether these negative thoughts and feeling that you brought with you are still valid and true today. Sometimes, if we look at our negative experiences again and really think about it, we have moved on in our lives and should be ready and willing to let the past go and start fresh in the present without all of the negatives of the past weighing us down.

If you find that the past is continuously on your mind, you may want to hold a ceremony to release yourself from the past and move into the present. This is true whether the memories in the past that are holding you back are good or bad. If you lost a relative or friend in the past, hold a celebration of life ceremony to remember the person and make a pledge to yourself to not dwell on that event of those memories again. If you were a college football player or cheerleader, have some of your teammates over for a party to reminisce; after the party is over but the memorabilia away and make a vow to move on.

### **Meditate And Reflect On Your Day At The End Of Each Day.**

Each day brings new experiences with it that you can learn from and grow. In addition, there are many repeated experiences that a person has each day that he or she can improve upon. At the end of the day each day, it would be a good idea to take the time to reflect on the day that just passed and think about everything that happened, how you felt, how it affected you, why you

believe that certain things occurred, and whether there is anything that you would have done differently.

Try taking about ten minutes at the end of each day to sit quietly in the back of a room, maybe play some meditation music, and strike your favorite yoga pose if you would like and reflect on the day that just occurred so that you can make an assessment of how it went and if there are things that you would do differently or change about your day to make similar days better in the future.

### **Practice Staying Calm In High-Pressure Situations**

Practice has a way of improving the way in which we handle things. That is what it is designed to do, and when it comes to emotional toughness in high-pressure situations, practice may be the best thing that you can do to develop your mental toughness and better handle high-pressure situations.

The main key to succeeding in high-pressure situations is to stay calm and not overreact or become intimidated, but that is often much easier said than done. For example, if you are a musical performer, you can practice your music for hours and hours until you have it perfect when preparing for your first live performance in front of a large crowd. You know that you need to relax and perform the way that you rehearsed, and you are fully prepared; however, this does not guarantee that you are going to execute the performance well when you get in front of that large crowd for the first time. You may execute the performance very poorly once stage fright takes over.

In order for the performer to perform at his or her best when he or she has never done a large live performance before, the performer should practice giving performances in front of smaller crowds and work his or her way up to a larger crowd.

This strategy works well for acclimating one's self to other high-pressure situations as well. Start with lower pressure situations such as the smaller performances and gradually move towards higher and higher-pressure situations as you become more comfortable and acclimated to the pressure situation. This is similar to what organizations such as the military and NASA do with simulators. They simulate actual flight scenarios to train their pilots on how to handle real-world flights.



## **Chapter 7. Build Routines and Habits for Ultimate Self-discipline**

If you wish to be self-disciplined, you are not alone. People everywhere want to develop this skill, but they never manage to master the habits that they need that will facilitate the process. When you are able to recognize that at the end of the day, the most important thing that you will need to do to support your shift into self-discipline is to make sure that you develop the habits, you will be able to find that shifting to these habits actually comes relatively simply.

Here, we will look at several habits that you can use to help yourself learn how best to become the self-disciplined individual that you wish to be. Remember, your thoughts and behaviors are inherently linked—if you create these behaviors, you can facilitate developing the inherent mindset that you need in order to become the self-disciplined individual that you want to be. It is only when the lifestyle and mindset come together that you are able to truly become the self-disciplined individual that you want to be.

### **Find Your Passion And Stick To It**

One of the best ways that you can help yourself develop solid self-discipline habits is to make sure that you are always finding work that you love. When you find something that you genuinely love to do and work with it, your discipline will come inherently. You may love to write, for example, so you find that you work best in a job that requires you to write often. This means that the writing itself does not become tedious or something that you wish you could avoid altogether. When you are passionate about what you are doing, however, it never becomes a chore for you. When you are passionate, you are able to draw from that passion to keep you moving forward, and it will be much easier to be self-disciplined when you find genuine enjoyment in what you are doing.

### **Gratitude**

Your gratitude helps you keep a positive mind, but it also keeps you satisfied with what you have, which can help keep you from being sidetracked as you go about your life. When you are able to recognize that what you have is enough for you at any given point in time, you are going

to find that you are better able to resist all of those instant gratification temptations that you see.

For example, imagine that you have a phone. Your phone works well enough, but it is older. You do not have many of the more modern features—maybe it does not work well with wireless charging, for example, or maybe it struggles to function well when you are trying to use it in a certain manner. It could struggle to load up the apps that you want or the games that you like to play. Overall, it does its main job; however—it allows you to talk to people. It just requires you to inconvenience yourself occasionally.

Maybe you also are saving up money because you want to be able to pay off the rest of your student debt. You are really eager to be done with that payment, so you have been making it a point to pay as much as you can into your student loans. You could buy a new phone if you wanted to, but the phone that you have been eyeing is an extra \$1200, which would be several months of that student loan payment. You are really tempted to get the phone.

When you can practice the habit of gratitude, however, you can be thankful for what you have. You can be thankful for the fact that you have a phone that works. You can be thankful that your screen is not damaged. You can be thankful that you are in a position where you are able to be paying off your student loans, so you are not crippled by your debt. All of this gratitude, being thankful for what you have, keeps you satisfied. You are able to resist that inherent tendency to upgrade your phone because you are thankful for the one that you already have, and that is enough for you at that point in time. You can accept what you have is enough.

## **Meditation**

Another great habit to help with self-discipline is meditation. When you meditate on the regular, you are going to be ensuring that you are able to focus. Meditation itself requires self-discipline to perform, meaning not only will it help you remain disciplined, but it will also be an exercise in it as well. When you meditate, you are able to clear out your mind. You are able to focus on what you need to do. You can make sure that any decisions that you do make are well-thought out. You ensure that you are not acting on emotion or other impulses that are likely to cause you problems in the future. When you use meditation, you make sure that you are able to focus

more on what you should do and help yourself avoid the distractions and temptations around you.

You do not need to spend all your time meditating, but even picking up on meditation a few times a week, or every morning for five minutes can help you immensely. When you use this meditation, you can make sure that you keep your eyes on the prize. If your prize is paying off those student loans, for example, you can make sure that you resist purchasing the phone. You may start out feeling like you really want to make the phone happen, but then you realize something—if you make the phone happen, you are only acting on impulse. You will still have several more months of loan payments, and that money could go elsewhere. When you meditate, you can stop and clear away all of the emotions surrounding the issue. You can make sure that when you do decide to deliberate on whether or not to buy the phone, you do so with a mind free from the excitement that would normally push you toward buying.

## **Persistence**

When you are self-disciplined, you must develop a habit of persistence. This will ensure that you never give up—even when you are faced with a difficult choice or a situation in which you are more likely to fail than not if you are persistent, you will try anyway. You will do your best to continue forward.

This will be the ability to pick yourself up after you fall. You will fall sometimes—everyone does. The strongest people, the ones with self-discipline, are able to pick themselves back up and keep fighting, however. They can keep moving forward with ease because they are not inherently upset over making that mistake in the first place.

When you develop persistence as a habit, you will have to simply force the point. You will have to make yourself push forward, building that mental fortitude that you will need. However, that fortitude that you will be developing will help you greatly in life. You will be able to use it constantly, allowing yourself to keep yourself motivated and moving forward toward what matters. When you develop this skill, you tell yourself that you are willing to get up and keep moving when you fail. You try again when something goes wrong. You move forward, even when you feel like giving up would be easier.

## Organized

When you are organized, you are able to keep everything that you will need to juggle straight and organized. You will be able to make sure that everything is in its place, and you will be able to maintain the schedule that you will need to ensure that you stay on track. You may find that you do this by creating a big schedule and routine. You may do this by making sure that everything has a place and a method to being done. At the end of the day, however, you make sure that everything is right where it belongs, and you save yourself the hassle of trying to figure out where everything is when you need to look for something.

## Developing Good Goal-Setting Skills

When you want to be self-disciplined, one of the best habits that you can develop is the habit of mastering goal setting. When you set good goals, you ensure that you are able to achieve just about anything in your life. Good goals are SMART. They are:

- Specific
- Measured
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timed

This makes them something that you can manage to use with ease. When you use SMART goals, you set yourself up for success nearly every time. These goals will help you ensure that they are achievable just by the way that you structure them.

### Specific

When you make your goal specific, you are narrowing down exactly what you wish to achieve, so you have a clear picture of what success is going to be. Instead of saying that you want to save money, you say that you want to have \$10,000 saved by next year. Notice how with one goal, you could literally save up \$10 and succeed technically but not actually achieve the desired result. When you specify exactly what you want, you know exactly what you are working for.

### Measured

Making sure that your goal is measured means that you can assure yourself that you have a way to judge your own progress. This is easy with goals that can be measured in numbers, such as money saved, or weight lost. However, sometimes, you have to get more creative. If you want to stop your anger issues, for example, you may say that you are going to cut your outbursts by 50% and then track how often you have them. This will enable you to actively measure what your progress looks like and where you are in your progress.

### Achievable

When you make sure that your goal is achievable, you are looking at whether it is something that you can do in the first place. This is where you look to see if there are any obvious obstacles that will keep you from succeeding, such as potentially having some sort of disability, or otherwise trying to achieve a goal that is not possible for you. This is where you determine if your goal is realistic for you. If it is achievable, you list out how it can be achieved in the first place.

### Relevant

When you study the relevance of your goal, you identify whether it is something that you actually care about. This is different than whether it is achievable. Think of it this way—you may say that you want to run a 10-minute mile. You say that yes, this is achievable for yourself. However, you must then look at whether the goal is actually relevant to you. You may then realize that, actually, you can run an 8-minute mile. In this instance, that goal becomes pointless. Why would you use this goal if you already have achieved it? You will be looking to see if this is something that you can already do or see if it is something that you have an interest or reason to do in the first place.

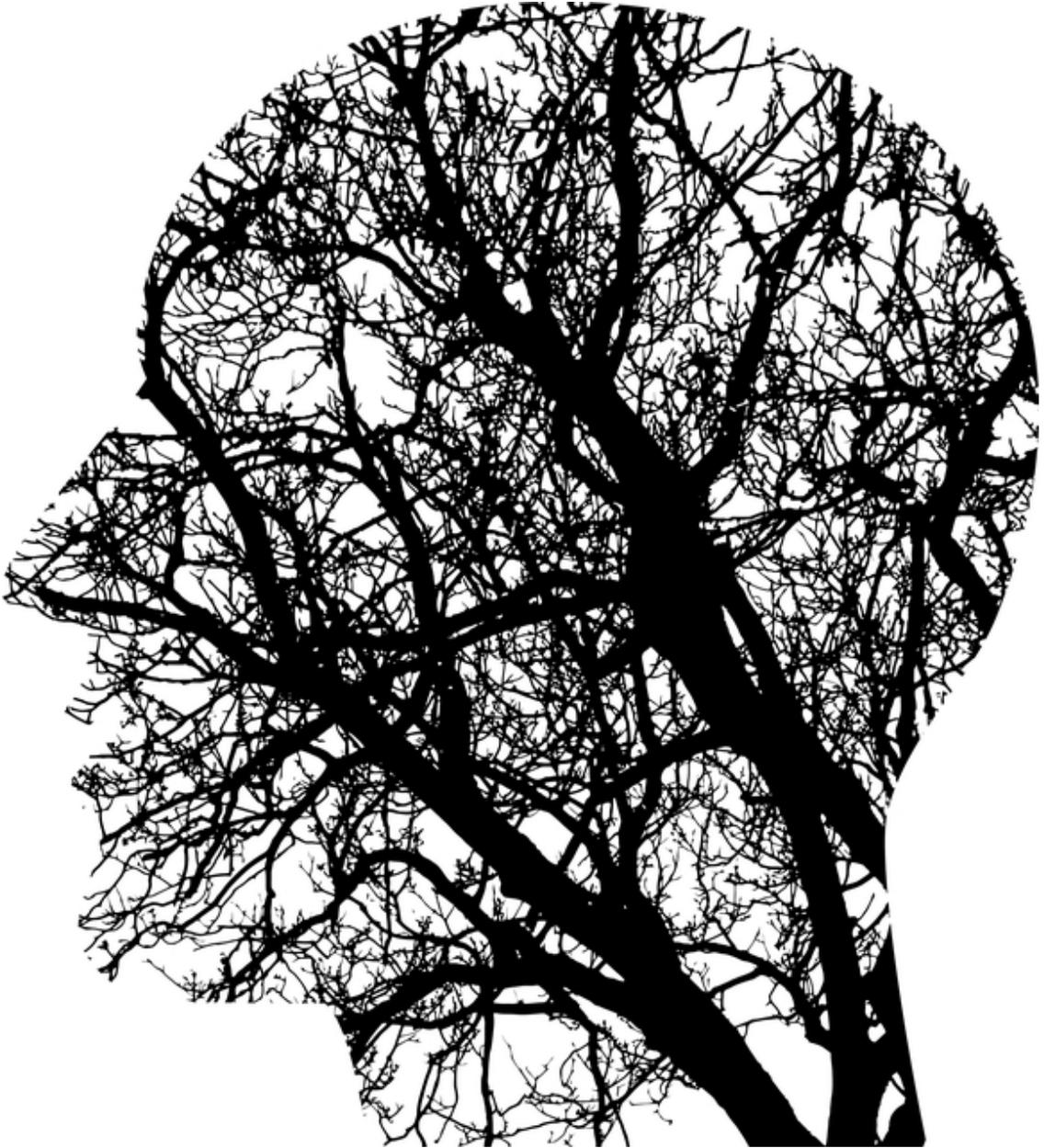
### Timed

Finally, you make your goal timed in some way—when you have a timed goal, you have a clear deadline that will mark you as having failed. You have an ending point for your goal when you do this, which means that you cannot get trapped in saying that you will do it tomorrow until you eventually never actually do what you were supposed to in the first place and fail.

## **Mastering Time Management**

Finally, one last habit of considering when you want to have a life of self-discipline is the ability to manage your time. Time management becomes an important skill—if you cannot manage your time, then you cannot make sure that you are actually attending to anything that you should be doing in the first place. If you do not manage your time well, you will never actually ensure that you got through everything on your to-do list, which can make achieving that self-discipline an impossibility.

This can be achieved in all sorts of ways. You could try by setting yourself a routine that you always follow without deviation. This can help you stay on the right track to ensure that you are actually able to get to everything. You could try creating lists of everything that you need to do and rank them by importance. At the end of the day, what matters most is being able to ensure that you manage your time well in a way that works best for you. How that manifests in your life will be dependent upon yourself and your own preferences that.



## **Chapter 8. Being Self-disciplined**

When we say that guy, for instance, is self-driven and disciplined, what does it mean? This statement is enough proof that mental strength and self-control link up and make individuals successful. Self-discipline can also be referred to as willpower. It is the ability to resist desires that are quite hard to say no to, but you get the ability to forgo them. Mental strength, on the other hand, is the capacity to deal neatly and effectively with negative pressure, thoughts, stressors, and challenges and come out as the best. Mental strength assists you in making a way through those obstacles irrespective of how challenging or against us. A combination of mental strength and self-control will give you the ability and confidence to make sure you make it through pleasures and desires and enjoy the rigidity on the other hand. A man in which both traits knitted together is highly perceived successful.

### **The Brain as a Control Unit**

Being mentally strong is directly proportional to self-discipline. A mind is a great tool and device that has powers and capabilities, both positive and negative. The human brain can destroy or build. Always keep in mind that the choice is yours and for it to build or destroy, then it has to be well equipped and trained in that aspect. Whatever you feed your mind with is what it will radiate in exchange. By training your mind to be strong, it achieves brain muscle, and it becomes strong and capable of fighting whatever situation comes to its way. The power of the mind is valued so much. Even during job interviews, the questions thrown at you help describe the person you are, how you think, act, and answer the questions tells a lot about you.

Like bodybuilders go to the gym and lift weights to strengthen their muscles, so should you? Nonetheless, the brain's gym in this world is the day to day situations. They are the weights. To build brainpower, you need first to be someone who is positive and a believer. Live positively, and even if the world throws you negative things from them, find at least one positive, and it will stand out. If personal development is your goal, then mental strength is a great tool. To obtain the mental strength here is where self-discipline kicks in, you have to focus on healthy mental habits. To concentrate on the habits, you will require self-control, which will be a

reminder that you are doing this to achieve that. With self-discipline, all will all in place, and the mental muscles will experience constant exercises. Mental strength is not something that will be obtained overnight. You have to work hard for it and avoid habits that will affect the process. Practice virtues focus on yourself and believe in yourself in that nobody can put you down. The advantage of this combination of self-discipline and mental strength is that your self-worth will elevate, and you will feel good about yourself eventually.

### Saying No to Temptations and Other Habits

Temptations are part and parcel of the life we live. It takes a strong mind and self-discipline to keep away some temptations. Temptations, however, come in different magnitudes and areas. Some temptations are easy to forego, but others seem like huge barriers ahead of us. It is a mindset though, what you perceive as impossible to avoid to you is a piece of cake to another person and the vice versa is also true to some extent. To expound better and understand this, let me use examples.

Early in the morning, some of us have a tendency to feel bad if woken up early. If the alarm is responsible, we have the great will to snooze it and continue sleeping, if it is someone else, then we feel the nagging effect, and we may even get angry and emotional at them. To overcome this, get the courage to wake up, leave the warm, comfortable bed, and face the happenings and schedules of the day, it requires a strong will and discipline. Practicing daily waking up and moving on will build the muscles of the mind and gain discipline. It is something that will take a while, but repeatedly doing the same will make you more focused on what lays ahead of you than what is in the bed.

Let us take another example of someone who is already married, has a job, and is successful. The only thing this person lacks is the ability and courage to say no to alcohol. His wife at home is constantly complaining, and some evening, they even get into arguments. This guy, however, is one of the good guys, but his friends are not that disciplined. After work, this guy lets name him Peter, will pass by a joint that is strategically situated on the route that he uses while going home, and it is a few meters from his working place. They will leave work in the evening, and his friends will ask him out for drinks. He doesn't want that because firstly he has a family and

secondly, he is not willing to get drunk. Due to a lack of self-drive, he will accept the offer and promise to take only two beers. Peter ends up getting drunk by taking more than the two beers. He will go home, and the argument starts, and many issues will follow. If this cycle continues even if not on a daily basis, then it is a bad habit.

Advice to him would be that he focus on the keeping of bad friends and alcohol. This, however, cannot be achieved overnight. To become self-disciplined as well as gain the power of the mind, it will require him to practice wisdom and virtues so that he can turn down the offers of his friends without breaking the relationship and also without hurting their feelings or being afraid of hurting them. That's just a step towards a better direction, and he also has to make sure he has made a firm decision on avoiding alcohol since the club is just along the way to his home. He can find another route or face the situation and focus ahead.

Indicators of mental strength and self-discipline are lack of excuses and courage to say no to temptations that add no value to you. Mental toughness once acquired, will make you stop making excuses and will help you also focus ahead and avoid any attempt against achieving your set goals. Mental toughness, therefore, goes hand in hand with the ability to control one's desires. Practicing emotional intelligence and saying no to temptations and excuses repeatedly will increase and broaden your will power. You become stronger against these temptations, and you will face them head-on.

### Self-awareness

The focus is on you; it has been proven that individuals that are able to attain mental toughness are well behaved and very successful. Your body health state also contributes to the progress of attaining mental toughness. You need a healthy body to facilitate the process of self-discipline and mental toughness. Feeding right and healthy foods will keep the body in good shape. A well-informed person will not forgo the need for a good healthy body statue. Nutrition will help provide the energy required by the body and brain in taking up the challenges and facilitate the process of change. The brain releases free radicals while working; the number of free radicals released is directly proportional to the activity of the brain. The food we take in, on the other hand, has elements that will bind to these radicals and eliminate them. The complex made by element and radical will

exit the mind, and it will feel fresh again hence the need for good feeding habits.

By taking care of the body also involves avoiding and stopping the use of substances that will cause harm to our bodies. These substances include drugs and alcohol. A sober mind is quite a special and great tool in life. Alcohol is a stimulant, and sedative hence will influence the ability of the mind. It can also impair your perception and judgment at the moment. Other drugs are either stronger than alcohol, and hence their effect on the brain is higher, and therefore, the mental toughness is reduced or even doesn't exist in such individuals. If you are committed to making it in life and living a life that has no pressures, it is best you invest in yourself.

Those that are aware of their capacities will take good care of their bodies and will make sure the body is in a sane condition. While in a sober mind, it is easier to do exercises of the brain, read more, exercise better decision making, and be aware of yourself. A mind is a magical tool, and it will do magic if treated with the right treatment and conditions. Self-awareness and self-knowledge will be so helpful. Once you know who you are and what it is that you need in this world will help you gain the mental toughness to attain the goals set. Self-discipline will come in automatically to make sure the mental strength is well in place and installed.

### Goals Commitment

A strong will to achieve the set goals and self-discipline will anchor you to your path, and no wavering will be observed. Without mental toughness, you will set your goals and outline your plans, but you will be swayed away by other distractions. Commitment to the goals will need more than mental toughness, and here self-discipline kicks in. If your power of will and interests are in place, not forgetting the passion, all you now need is to lock mental toughness and work on your self-control. Commitments are important, and if they mean a lot to you, then you will sacrifice all that needs to be sacrificed. You will also make sure all team players towards your achievements are in unison as well as being in place. These team players are mental strength and self-discipline.

Focus is important. Mental toughness will require you to focus on the commitments put in order to attain the bigger picture, your goals. Mental toughness will make sure no laziness sets in, and you are all alert of the

surroundings to ensure no opportunity goes untouched. With the mind alert, you now focus on other desires and distractions. Train yourself to say no so as to maintain the eyes on the prize ahead. Self-control will require you to take control of your emotions and physical desires and weigh them out to select only those that will add value to your goals. Be assertive and also selective. Emotional intelligence calls will also play a great role in maintaining feelings of anxiety or any other emotion that can be a distractor.

The medical field is a demanding area that requires full attention. Medical students have to be resilient and focus on the way to completion of their medical degrees or their equivalent. These students have self-discipline, and some have mental toughness. It is true to say that not all that get enrolled in medical school make it to the graduation time. The learning there is so much, a lot of memorization and activities that are monitored. Here, mental toughness and self-discipline will even make life easier. The combination will allow you to focus ahead and maintain cohesion with a colleague without much straining or pressure. A responsible and good doctor is one who has a sense of direction and has a feeling of self-dependency. Self-confidence is a trait that one acquires with more and more practice on mental toughness and self-control. Patients will feel safe in the hands of a doctor that will believe in himself, his skills, and experience rather than one that has to confirm of seeking permission to do a certain procedure. Boldness is key.

### **How To Increase Your Self-Discipline (Practical Advice)**

Be aware of the weaknesses

Get to know of the weaknesses that you have, be it weaknesses in food, in clothing, in certain events, and get to know them so that you can devise proper ways in which you will deal with them. This is to ensure that they do not hinder you from accomplishing your set and planned goals. Your weaknesses could also be in things such as social media and the internet, and by getting to know them, you'll be in a better position to devise ways in which to avoid the distractions. You are not to give a cold shoulder on the fact that between you and your goals, there might be preferences that you hold dear to that could actually be stumbling blocks and hurdles to your

achievement and being self-disciplined. In a nutshell, knowing your weaknesses will help you to be more self-disciplined.

### Doing away with tempting factors

Once you identify the weak points that may hold you down from being self-disciplined, do away with them. It may not be easy to discard off things that you treasure dearly, but you must strive to do so, for they will just be holding you down from being fully set on self-discipline. Psyche up yourself to put behind the distractions, willing yourself to do so, and tapping into your inner owner when the temptation to hold on to them becomes too much.

### Have well-set goals with a planner on how to implement them

Of importance to increase your self-discipline is to write down the plans and the goals that you have and have planner here you do so. Having goals and ambitions is a great motivator to become disciplined to reach the goals that you have set. Plan them, accordingly, making sure that you are comfortable with the time frame that you give yourself to achieve them. Planning them will be a more permanent way of a start on actualizing your goals, where self-discipline will be required. Last, but not least: Do not fear them.

### Develop your self-discipline step by step

The skill of being self-disciplined is not one with which people are born with. It is one skill that will require your constant devotion in its build-up to increase its levels. Self-discipline is actually a behavior that you learn along the way in life, so, therefore, make a point to learn and incorporate self-discipline in your life. Self-discipline is well built up in situations where your will power and resilience are tested. Where the temptation to slump back is greater, that's where self-discipline is required in a great measure, and it would do you good to overcome the temptation, thus increasing your self-discipline.

### Have new habits and practice on them

Greater levels of self-discipline would require you to form new habits and stick to doing them. Such habits of attaining higher standards are an uphill task to form at first, but with proper practice on them, they become a part of you that you do naturally. You become more at ease with them, and there is

no strain on your part when doing them. Practice on them daily to be a part of your daily habits. You may want to go slow on yourself when practicing and not too hard, for they are new habits you are trying to instill in yourself.

### Go healthy on foods and diet

Self-discipline requires a higher level of mental state, a clear and stable mind. Greater psychological power is required to be more self-disciplined. One of the factors that may increase your mental capacity is going healthy on your diet. The food you eat plays a huge and crucial role in strengthening or deteriorating your mental capacity. Healthy foods such as complex carbohydrates are great in maintaining your mind in great shape. Sugary foods, on the other hand, reduce your mental prowess, and should thus be avoided. With greater mental capabilities come a greater ability of self-discipline. Keep healthy and fit to be more self-disciplined.

### Have a turnabout of your perception on resilience and willpower

Your thoughts on resilience and willpower are determinants to a great deal of how self-disciplined you will be. More willpower in situations will increase the self-discipline you have. Think about being more resilient in situations that require perseverance, and you will be more self-disciplined from the thoughts you feed your mind. Make yourself believe in them too.

### Create a backup plan for situations

Draw up a plan that you will employ in situations that require your self-discipline. If you know that you are doing to delve into scenarios where your willpower will be tested, draw a plan in your mind to help you get through it. This is a technique to be prepared for the challenges testing your self-discipline. When you overcome such a situation, you will have boosted your self-discipline, which increases with every temptation that you face and overcome.

### Acknowledge and appreciate yourself

When you have attained what you had planned for successfully, give yourself credit for the work well done. Having achieved a task, with no distractions whatsoever and not giving in to temptations, appreciate your efforts. This will keep you motivated and in good spirits, looking forward to the next task that you are to achieve. Anticipating for the next thing to do

and the next objective to meet is a powerful tool in ensuring that you are on toes ready to focus. Praising yourself for the tasks accomplished with self-discipline motivates you to be more self-disciplined over future tasks.

Learn to forgive yourself over mistakes done and move on

When you have made a mistake, say where self-discipline was needed, but you did not employ it as required, learn to forgive yourself and let go of the self-loathing and bitter emotions. Fringing yourself gives you a chance to let go of past mistakes and taking them as lessons that you learn. From the lessons, you will learn how and when to apply self-discipline, thus increasing the self-discipline in you.



## **Chapter 9. Gratification and How to Delay It**

Gratification can be a good element of your life when there is sufficient balance. However, it is natural human instinct to give into any gratification so that you can experience the associated pleasure. When you want to enhance your self-discipline, it is important that you work to improve your ability to delay your gratification to a time when it will not inhibit your ability to attend to responsibilities and be productive.

### **What Is Gratification?**

Gratification is a source of pleasure, and our brains perceive gratification from a variety of activities and sensations. For example, someone might smoke a cigarette for the calming effect, or buy an expensive pair of shoes for the thrill of novelty or luxurious feeling that it provides. There is nothing wrong with gratification in general, but when the pleasure you get is outweighed by negative associations, it can become problematic. For example, with smoking, that sense of calm is fine, but the long-term damage that the act of smoking can do to your body will outweigh the benefits of the calm that you get.

Knowing when to delay gratification is a skill that you are not born with. However, you can learn it, so that you can stop allowing gratification to get in the way of getting things done.

### **How Gratification Contributes To Success**

As you become better at delaying gratification, you will find that it is much easier to achieve success. In fact, research has shown that knowing when to delay gratification is one of the most prominent elements of success.

The Marshmallow Experiment is a common resource that people use when discussing the positive effects of delayed gratification. This study analyzed 500 children aged four to five. The researcher conducting the study told the kids that they could choose between having a single marshmallow right away, or if they waited for the researcher to leave and return, they would be able to have two marshmallows.

The 500 children who were part of this study were then monitored for 40 years. The research found that the kids who chose to wait and get two marshmallows (those who delayed gratification) fared considerably better in basic success metrics compared to the kids who did not wait but took the

single marshmallow right away (those who could not resist instant gratification).

A wealth of similar research has been performed over the last five decades. For the most part, the conclusions are in line with those of the Marshmallow study. There are numerous benefits of practicing delayed gratification that were noted in the conclusions of the research. These benefits include:

- It teaches the advantage of hard work
- It helps people develop meaningful motivation
- It helps people learn and develop sufficient impulse control
- It aids people in living healthier lives
- It helps people save money and create a solid plan for personal finances
- It allows people to be more appreciative of the good in their lives and in the world
- It makes it easier for people to develop healthy habits
- It allows people to put their focus on other elements of gratification
- It makes it easier to live a life that is free from guilt
- It allows people to enjoy life more, from the smallest acts of kindness to the biggest experiences that they have

### **How To Improve Your Ability To Delay Gratification**

Now that you know what delayed gratification is and its possible positive impact on your life, the next step to learn how to improve your ability to delay gratification. This is something that takes some practice, so do not get down on yourself if it takes some time. In fact, acquiring this skill through a slow and natural progression is a good thing.

Clearly envision your future.

It is important to see yourself in the future and be able to imagine what you are doing. You want to think beyond the next year and think at least a

decade in the future for this. To aid in this, write down your goals in five-year increments.

Distract yourself.

If you feel tempted to give into gratification, you may want to distract yourself so that you do not give into it. For example, if you feel yourself about to smoke a cigarette, go for a walk instead. Your distractions should be something that gives you some enjoyment so that you do not mind doing them.

Do not exhaust your willpower.

Testing your willpower is a good thing, but do not test it to the point of exhaustion. For example, if you have a goal to lose weight, you don't want to get on a diet that is too strict. If you do, it would be easier to fail at the diet, and then binge eat to satisfy your urge for gratification.

Make spending appear boring.

This might sound overly simplified, but it is not. You simply want to focus on the boring nature of bills and similar things so that spending becomes a cumbersome experience. As it becomes less exciting, you will be less likely to do it without a good reason.

Track everything.

When you track the specifics, such as what you eat and your expenses, it becomes harder to justify your bad decisions. You should start with one thing to track at a time, or else this can get overwhelming and easy to give up on.

Do not think 'all or nothing.'

You have to think in shades of gray to be successful. When you think all or nothing, as soon as you make a mistake, you will stop trying and will ultimately fail. You instead have to think of any one failure as a minor detour so that you can quickly get back on track.

Utilize visual reminders.

This is always a good exercise and is one that can make it harder to give into temptation. Put up visual reminders of the positive things that you want. When you feel the need for gratification coming on, look at these to

help yourself to stay focused on the good things that will come if you choose to delay gratification.

Remember the discomfort.

The last time you gave into gratification, what negative things happened? Recalling them might be of help. Write them down and make sure that you associate them with the negative consequences. Then, when you find yourself about to give into temptation again, it will be easier to avoid.

List your common rationalizations.

Everyone rationalizes their behaviors, even when they are bad. Write these down and learn to recognize (and ignore) them.

Enjoy the benefits of your self-control.

Make note of the good things that are happening and use this to keep yourself on track for delaying gratification. Carry a list with you if need be so that you always have a reminder.



# Chapter 10. Dealing with Negative Emotion

## Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness is a type of meditation that is used as a mental training practice that requires you to focus your mind on your thoughts and sensations in the present moment. Your thoughts include your physical sensations, passing thoughts, and current emotions. Mindfulness meditation often utilizes mental imagery, breathing practice, muscle and body relaxation and awareness of your mind and body. For beginners, it is recommended to follow a guided meditation to direct them through the entire process. If there is nobody guiding you through this meditation, it is easy to drift away and fall asleep. That is not the purpose of meditation. When you become more skilled in doing mindfulness meditation, you will be able to do it without a guide or any vocal guidance.

The most original and standardized program for mindfulness meditation is called the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MSBR) program. This meditation was developed by a Ph.D. student who was a student of a famous Buddhist monk. This program focuses on helping the individual bring their awareness to the present and to focus on their own awareness. This meditation has increased in popularity and is not incorporated into medical settings to treat health conditions such as anxiety, negativity, insomnia, pain, and stress. Although this meditation is quite straightforward, professionals would recommend you find a teacher or a program that can act as a guide when you begin. Most people are recommended to do this meditation for at least 10 minutes per day. If you don't have a lot of free time, that's okay. Even just a few minutes a day plays a huge role in changing your wellbeing. Follow these instructions below to get started:

1. Find a place that is quiet, and you feel comfortable in. Ideally, this is your home or a place where you feel safe. Sit in something comfortable like a chair and make sure your head and back are straight and aligned. Try to release any tension you feel.
2. Begin to sort your thoughts and put away the ones that are of the past or future. Focus on your thoughts that are about the present.

3. Begin to bring your awareness to your breath. Focus on the sensation of air moving through your body when you inhale and exhale. Focus on this feeling. Begin to feel the movement of your belly as it rises and falls. Feel how the air enters through your nostrils and leaves through your mouth. Pay attention to how each breath is different.
4. Watch your thoughts come and go in front of you. Pretend you are watching the clouds, letting them slowly pass before you. It doesn't matter if your thought is a worry, anxiety, hope, or fear - when these thoughts pass by, don't ignore them or suppress them. Simply just acknowledge them calmly and anchor yourself by focusing on your breathing.
5. If you find yourself being carried away by your thoughts, observe where your mind drifted off to, and without judging yourself, simply anchor yourself by focusing on your breathing. This happens a lot with beginners, so don't be hard on yourself if you drift away. Always use your breathing as an anchor.
6. When you are nearing the end of your 10-minute session, sit still for two minutes and bring awareness to your physical location. Get up slowly.

Mindfulness meditation is the simplest technique in the meditation field. However, there are other ways of practicing mindfulness that isn't only in the form of meditation. There are a few opportunities in your day where you can use to practice mindfulness. Here are a few suggestions of when you may have the time to practice mindfulness:

1. Doing the dishes: This is a wonderful window of time where you can use to practice mindfulness. Typically, when you are doing the dishes, there isn't anyone trying to get your attention. This is a perfect time to try mindfulness. Try to focus on the feeling of warm water on your hands, the look, and feeling of bubbles, the smell of your dish soap, and the sounds of your plates clunking in the water. Try to give yourself to this experience and feel your mind refreshing and your anxiety fading.

2. **Brushing your teeth:** Since you have to brush your teeth every day, you can use this time frame to practice mindfulness. Start by feeling your weight on your feet against the floor, the feeling of your toothbrush in hand, and the movement as you begin to brush your teeth. Focus on these feelings and the thoughts you are having in the present. Don't dwell; just acknowledge those thoughts as they come and go.
3. **Driving:** This is one of those activities where it's easy for people to do mindlessly. This is especially relevant if you are driving the same route every day. Make use of this time by not letting your mind wander off to think about tasks that you need to do that day. Practice mindfulness by trying to keep yourself anchored. Take in sensations and visuals like the color of the car in front of you, the smell of your own car, and the feeling of the steering wheel. Focus your attention on all the sounds and noises you hear. If you find yourself wandering, bring your attention back to where you are in your car.
4. **Exercising:** Make your workout routine a time to also exercise mindfulness. Try to exercise away from screens or music and focus only on your breathing and where your feet are moving. Although watching TV or listening to music will make your workout go by faster or distract you from any anxiety, it won't actually help in managing any unhealthy thoughts. Bring your attention to feeling how your muscles feel and pay attention to how your body is reacting to your workout. Instead of ignoring the pains you may be feeling, acknowledge it, and let yourself feel the exercise.
5. **Bedtime:** This is normally the time where you begin to get things ready for the next day. Instead of battling too much with it, just keep in mind what needs to be done. Stop trying to rush through it to get to bed but try to enjoy the experience of completing those actual tasks. Focus on what needs to be done and don't think about what is next. Start early to leave yourself with enough time so you don't need to rush through things. Any thoughts or anxieties that come up should be acknowledged and let go.

## Improving Your Self-Esteem

One of the most effective ways of improving your self-esteem is to use self-acceptance. By improving self-esteem, you can reduce the amount of negative thoughts in your mind. Let's take a look at this concept and use it in practice to help your self-esteem. Self-acceptance can be defined in three different ways:

- 1) Self-acceptance is the feeling of being satisfied with yourself despite your past choices or behaviors
- 2) Self-acceptance is being aware of your strengths and weaknesses
- 3) Self-acceptance is having a realistic assessment of your capabilities, talents and overall worth

In summary of those three definitions, self-acceptance is the happiness and satisfaction that you have with yourself that is needed to achieve good mental health. Having self-acceptance means that you are able to understand who you are, be realistic about it, and be aware of what strengths and weaknesses you have. Those who have high levels of self-acceptance tend to also have a more positive attitude, do not wish to be different from who they are, accept all traits of themselves, and are not confused with their identity.

Self-esteem is defined as having confidence in your own ability, and self-worth and self-acceptance are being aware and satisfied with all your strengths and weaknesses. Self-acceptance does not need to rely on achievement to make one feel worthy. It makes people feel worthy by simply being comfortable and happy with who they are.

So how does self-acceptance work in the real world? Based on scientific studies, self-acceptance has 5 different stages. The first stage is Aversion. People's natural response to uncomfortable feelings or situation is either avoidance or resistance. For instance, if somebody dislikes a trait that they have, it is natural that they avoid it rather than dealing with it head-on. The second stage is curiosity. When aversion no longer works, people will become curious to learn more about their problems. This curiosity is the driving factor behind people looking to learn more about their problems. The more curious a person is, the more likely they are to have a fulfilling life. People who lack this curiosity tend to shy away from problems leading to get stuck in stage one, which is aversion. The third stage is tolerance.

Those in this stage will wish that their problems will go away while enduring it the entire time. Many people in this stage still suffer the effects of their problems but are forcing themselves to tolerate it so they can go on with their everyday life. The fourth stage is allowing. As people's resistance slowly drains away, they then allow themselves to feel. Rather than just recognizing and tolerating, they acknowledge them and feel the emotions that occur. This is the stage of acceptance where they accept their problem and allows themselves to feel all the emotions that come with it. The fifth and last stage is friendship. During this, people begin to see the value that their feelings bring and decide to accept them rather than willing them to leave. They become comfortable enough to be friends with those feelings regardless if it's good or bad.

Self-acceptance is different for everybody. It heavily depends on the struggles that a person has gone through and what parts of their lives that they'd rather not look at. Right below are a few examples of what other people's self-acceptance looks like:

- A person that is in the process of divorce feels like they have failed in life. However, this person experiences self-acceptance by realizing that they have made mistakes in their life, and their marriage has failed but it does not make them a complete failure.
- A person suffering from bulimia may accept themselves as a person with an imperfect body or perception but is committed to changing their perspective.
- A student who studies really hard in college only to get mediocre marks can reach the point of self-acceptance where they realize that test-taking and studying may not be their strength, but this is okay because they have other strengths that they can build on.
- A person with low self-esteem who avoids acknowledging their self-deprecating beliefs may experience self-acceptance by first acknowledging them and realizing that not every single thought that they have is necessarily true.
- A worker who is having trouble meeting the goals set by their unreasonable boss might accept themselves by accepting the fact that there will be times where they won't be able to deliver on

unreasonable timelines. However, they are still a good person, even if they couldn't deliver on time.

Hopefully, you were able to see the pattern in these examples. Self-acceptance is the act of realizing that although you may not be perfect in all aspects of your life, it doesn't mean that you are completely invaluable. By having self-acceptance, you are giving yourself permission to be bad at certain things but also giving recognition to the things you are good at. For a person to have healthy self-esteem, they must learn to be self-accepting and to let go of any negative judgments they have for themselves.

## **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

One of the fundamental parts of CBT is to help a person determine whether or not those negative thoughts are true and to identify their own unhelpful thinking styles in order to begin changing them. Let's take a look at what CBT is and how we can use it to challenge a person's unhelpful thinking styles.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is used to treat mental disorders, primarily anxiety and depression. Due to its long history and development, CBT is a practical and time-saving form of psychotherapy. CBT focuses on your here-and-now problems that come up in daily life. It is used to help people make sense of their surroundings and events that happen around them. CBT is very structured, timesaving, and problem focused. These advantages are the reason why CBT is one of the most popular techniques when used to deal with mental disorders in our fast-paced modern lives.

In the present day, CBT works by helping clients recognize, question, and change the thoughts that relate to the emotional and behavioral reactions that cause them difficulty. By using CBT to monitor and record thoughts during undesirable situations, people begin to learn that the way they think is a contributor to their emotional problems. Modern-day Cognitive Behavioral Therapy helps reduce emotional problems by teaching individuals to:

- Identify any distortions in their thinking process
- See their own thoughts as ideas rather than facts
- Take a step back from their own thoughts to look at situations from another perspective

The new CBT model used in the present day is built on the relationship between thoughts and behaviors. Both can influence each other. There are three levels and types of thoughts:

- **Conscious thoughts:** These are rational thoughts that are made with complete awareness
- **Automatic thoughts:** These are the thoughts that move very quickly; you are likely to not be fully aware of their movement. This means that it's difficult to check them for accuracy. A person suffering from mental health problems may have thoughts that are entirely not logical.
- **Schemas:** These are the core beliefs and personal values when it comes to processing information. Our Schemas are shaped by our childhood and other life experiences.

### Challenging Your Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Once you are able to identify your own unhelpful thinking styles, you can begin trying to reshape those thoughts into something more realistic and factual. We have categorized all the different unhelpful thinking styles and what questions you should be asking yourself to develop different and more positive thoughts. Keep in mind that it takes a lot of effort and dedication to change our own thoughts, so don't get frustrated if you are not succeeding right away. You probably have had these thoughts for a while so don't expect it to change overnight.

### **Probability Overestimation**

If you find that you have thoughts about a possible negative outcome, but you are noticing that you often overestimate the probability, try asking yourself the questions below to reevaluate your thoughts.

- Based on my experience, what is the probability that this thought will come true realistically?
- What are the other possible results from this situation? Is the outcome that I am thinking of now the only possible one? Does my feared outcome have the highest possibility out of the other outcomes?

- Have I ever experienced this type of situation before? If so, what happened? What have I learned from these past experiences that would be helpful to me now?
- If a friend or loved one is having these thoughts, what would I say to them?

### **Catastrophizing**

- If the prediction that I am afraid of really did come true, how bad would it really be?
- If I am feeling embarrassed, how long will this last? How long will other people remember/talk about it? What are all the different things they could be saying? Is it 100% that they will talk about only bad things?
- I am feeling uncomfortable right now, but is this really a horrible or unbearable outcome?
- What are the other alternatives for how this situation could turn out?
- If a friend or loved one was having these thoughts, what would I say to them?

### **Mind Reading**

- Is it possible that I really know what other people's thoughts are? What are the other things they could be thinking about?
- Do I have any evidence to support my own assumptions?
- In the scenario that my assumption is true, what is so bad about it?

### **Personalization**

- What other elements might be playing a role in the situation? Could it be the other person's stress, deadlines, or mood?
- Does somebody always have to be at blame?
- A conversation is never just one person's responsibility.

- Were any of these circumstances out of my control?

### **Should Statements**

- Would I be holding the same standards to a loved one or a friend?
- Are there any exceptions?
- Will someone else do this differently?

### **All or Nothing Thinking**

- Is there a middle ground or grey area that I am not considering?
- Would I judge a friend or loved one in the same way?
- Was the entire situation 100% negative? Was there any part of the situation that I handled well?
- Is having/showing some anxiety such a horrible thing?

### **Selective Attention/Memory**

- What are the positive elements of the situation? Am I ignoring those?
- Would a different person see this situation differently?
- What strengths do I have? Am I ignoring those?

### **Negative Core Beliefs**

- Do I have any evidence that supports my negative beliefs?
- Is this thought true in every situation?
- Would a loved one or friend agree with my self-belief?

## **Chapter 11. Staying Self-Disciplined**

Beginning the journey of self-discipline can be somewhat simple but staying committed to the path after you started can be challenging. Most people find that they have a high amount of energy, commitment, and motivation to get started with something new early on, but as time goes on, they find themselves struggling to remain motivated and committed. This happens because, over time, your brain wants to go back to engaging in your habitual activities rather than the new activities that you are trying to introduce to it. Those habitual activities are automatic, feel easy, and resemble comfort and familiarity, which are all things that your brain loves to experience.

When you find yourself being tugged back toward your habits, this is when you really need to lean into your self-discipline. This is when you need to focus even more on moving forward with your new discipline so that you can move beyond your habits and create new, healthier habits that support you in creating the lifestyle that you actually want to be living. The more you practice these new self-disciplined habits, the easier it will be, and the more you will find yourself adapting to your chosen way of life rather than your automatic way of life.

### **The Inevitable Reality Of Failure**

We touched on recognizing failure as a part of the process, but I want to dig deeper into what failure is and how it can lead to resistance in your life. When you are afraid of failure, or when you have dealt with the sting of a moment of failure, it can be easy to come up against resistance and find yourself wanting to go back to doing things “the old way.” Failure can leave you with a number of overwhelming feelings ranging from rejection and embarrassment to disappointment and frustration. When you begin to feel this way, it can leave you feeling as though you need to cling back to what used to make you feel comfortable so that you are no longer being exposed to those painful triggers. The reality is failure is only painful if you allow it to be.

Yes, even when you have a healthier perspective on failure, you are likely to feel things like embarrassment, rejection, disappointment, and frustration. However, those who are disciplined have learned to set a time limit on how long they are willing to let themselves sit with those feelings and have

resolved to find a way to allow themselves to move beyond those feelings after that time passes. As soon as that time frame passes, they will start looking into why the failure happened, what they can learn from it, and how they can apply those lessons to growing and doing better in the future.

Recognizing that failure is inevitable may not give you the opportunity to stop it from happening, but it will allow you to mentally and physically prepare for failure when it does take place. Plus, adjusting your mindset around failure early on can allow you to see things differently so that you are not so afraid of failure happening in the future. If you plan ahead and resolve to take control over the situation, failure does not have to remain so painful.

### **Give Yourself Time To Feel**

When you are going through moments of resistance or failure, one of the most important things you can do for yourself is let yourself feel the feelings that come along with the situation that you are in. People who are self-disciplined have not reached a point where they suppress their feelings and refrain from ever engaging in any emotional-based experiences. In fact, anyone who does this should acknowledge that this is not a symptom of self-discipline but rather a symptom of a lack of self-discipline that stems from not knowing what to do with one's emotional state.

Giving yourself time to feel means that you are letting your body and mind work through the difficult emotions and thoughts that come with a painful situation so that you can let it go and move on in a healthier way. Self-disciplined people know that by feeling their feelings, they can bring closure into their life and, through that, they are able to leave those feelings and that situation behind them. Rather than bringing it with them, suppressing things, and exploding out of nowhere or running into burnout, they move forward with a clear mind and a light heart.

When you do give yourself time to feel through things, it is important to do so in a self-disciplined and constructive way. For starters, you should never feel into your emotions to the point that you lose control over yourself and begin to act out on your emotions in an unhealthy manner. Doing so will result in greater feelings of resistance, shame, and disappointment, which can perpetuate the cycle and make it even worse. Find ways to navigate your emotions in a healthy and productive manner so that you can release

them without causing so much pain in your life and in your heart. Next, you need to make sure you have a rule around how long you let yourself deal with emotions. With failure, you should always give yourself anywhere from a couple of hours to a day or two to deal with your emotions. Then, you should resolve to move on and get going with your next course of action. This way, you have plenty of time to deal with your feelings, but you do not find yourself trapped in those feelings or dwelling on things that are no longer important.

### **Create A Plan Within Your Plan**

When you find yourself experiencing resistance or coming up against failure, you are going to need to find a way to get through it. People will often quit when they come up against resistance because they realize the plan, they set in place will not work for them so, rather than trying again, they admit defeat and put down their flag. Rather than waving your white flag in defeat at the first sign of trouble, use this as an opportunity to practice being flexible and adapting to the unexpected.

Anytime you find yourself facing significant resistance, failure, or obstacles in your path, make a plan within your plan. Or, in other words, consider what your goal was and decide what you are going to do as your “Plan B” to get ahead to where you want to be. Allowing yourself to move forward with a plan B means that you will continue past any resistance and keep making progress toward your goals.

Just because you thought you were going to do things one way, and that way did not work out does not mean that you cannot continue to move forward in your life. You can continue to make progress by allowing yourself to be adaptable and flexible and to decide that your desire to reach your goals is bigger than any obstacle that could be placed on your path. You are stronger than that, and your ability to adapt and keep going is more powerful than you think. Keep practicing this flexibility and adaptability anytime you need to and, before you know it, you will have an easy time thinking on your feet and staying the course in the face of trouble because doing so will come naturally for you.

### **Remember Why You Started**

One of the reasons you may be losing momentum and meeting resistance when you are trying to make a change through increasing your self-

discipline is that you are not putting enough effort into recalling why you started this in the first place. Whenever you set a goal of any variety, regardless of how big or small that goal is, you need to do whatever you can to keep the goal in the front of your mind. Remembering why you got started in the first place can help energize you by giving you the same buildup of inspiration and momentum that it gave you when you first started on the journey of making changes.

Ideally, you should seek to remind yourself why you got started in the first place as many times as you possibly can, regardless of whether or not you are feeling resistance toward taking action. Keeping vision boards nearby and regularly engaging in visualization surrounding your goals is a great opportunity to keep yourself focused on what it is that you are working toward so that you can continue to increase your momentum over time. As you think about how exciting the end result will be and you continue to see yourself progressing toward it, that goal becomes more meaningful to you, and you begin to realize that it actually will become a reality if you stay the course. As a result, you are far more likely to keep working toward achieving that goal.

When you find yourself feeling resistance or experiencing doubt or negativity toward your goal, this is when you need to pull out all the stops. A person with self-discipline does not let things like doubt and negativity rise because they know that these feelings will only increase their resistance and prevent them from making progress toward their goals. Rather than allowing that to happen, they focus on surrounding themselves with even more visuals and inspiration reminding them as to why they got started in the first place. They will then expose themselves to the reminder so much that they rebuild the same level of excitement and then some and use that to get moving toward their goals all over again.

### **Resolve To Staying On Track**

If you have tried everything and you are still feeling caught in a state of resistance, sometimes the best thing you can do is resolve to stay on track even if you don't feel like it. If you can see that your efforts are paying off and that you are making progress toward your goals, keep moving forward even when you are not really into it. The more you continue to move forward, the sooner your inspiration and momentum will come back, and

you will see that resistance fading away, allowing you to move forward full force all over again.

The truth is, the pursuit of your goals will not always be as exciting as those stages where you are full of momentum and inspiration, and it feels like all you want to do is work toward that specific goal. Sometimes, the pursuit of your goals is going to feel relaxed, boring, or even a little mundane as you realize that not every day can be as exciting and upbeat as the ones you look forward to. This does not mean that you will not be excited and upbeat again soon, nor does it mean that you have lost passion for your work, it simply means you are human and you are going through different emotions at that time.

If you find yourself feeling a deep lack of passion toward your goal for a long time and no amount of moving forward with it is bringing you into a state of excitement again, then you can start considering whether or not this is the goal for you to pursue. At that point, you may find that you need a subtle shift in the way you pursue it, or you may find that your passion now lies elsewhere and that you need to change your vision. It is okay to change, as long as you continue to exercise discipline, and you do not change your path before you are absolutely certain that this is what you want to do.

### **Get Back To The Basics**

You are going to go through many phases in your life, and some of those phases are going to take you away from who you are and what you know. Some of those phases that take you away could be provoked by stress, while others could be provoked by curiosity. In either scenario, being led away from your path can lead to you feeling overwhelmed and disconnected from your original vision and your true goals. You may find yourself realizing that in the midst of stress, you gave up on something that was important to you, or that as you got excited and curious about something, you went deeper into a path of exploration than you meant to. Trust that no matter what the case is, it is perfectly fine and normal to find yourself removed from your authentic path from time to time. Finding yourself here is not a cause for concern; it is simply space where you can be reminded to come back to what you truly want for yourself in life.

As soon as you realize you are away from your chosen path, use self-discipline to bring you back to the basics. Focus on getting your basic daily

routine back in order and get close to the practices that helped get you on course with your authentic path in the first place. Getting back to the basics will help you reconnect with who you truly are and what you want to achieve and will bring you back to a centered state. From there, you can move forward in pursuit of your next leg of growth so that you can continue on toward your goals.

### **Keep Yourself Accountable**

At various points in your life, you may find yourself settling back into a state of mind where you feel as though someone else should take responsibility for you, or where you feel like you are making “enough” progress and so there is no need to rush yourself. Slowing down from time to time is okay, especially when you are in need of a break, but getting complacent or completely falling off of your path to success is not a good idea. The only person who can get you back on track following an experience like this is yourself, which is why you absolutely must learn how to hold yourself accountable and keep yourself on track for success.

Holding yourself accountable can be done in incremental ways. By having multiple ways that you hold yourself accountable, you ensure that if you make intentional choices along the way that include resting or taking a break, you are not turning that break into an indefinite hiatus. Ideally, you should hold yourself accountable daily, weekly, monthly, every six months, and annually. Daily, you should be holding yourself accountable for necessary day to day tasks. Weekly, you should be reviewing your commitment to your tasks and helping yourself come up with ideas for how you can stay even more committed going forward. Monthly, you should be reviewing your weeks to see how much progress you have made and to consider adjustments you can make to your daily and weekly processes to improve your progress. Every six months you should be reviewing your goals to see how you are doing in terms of milestones and if you need to pivot or make any changes to your approach for where you are heading. Annually, you should be reviewing your past years’ goals to see how many you achieved and creating your goals for the coming year so that you have something to hold yourself accountable toward during that coming year.

## **Chapter 12. Tips to Build Self-Discipline**

### **Don't Procrastinate**

Procrastination gets you nowhere. It hampers productivity and ensures that you don't pursue positive habits. You need to discipline yourself to avoid procrastination. Get your priorities listed and set goals to improve your life. Take the time to note down the various ways you procrastinate.

### **Shun Excuses**

Excuses seek to limit how far you can go. When you find excuses, you are essentially telling yourself that what you're dealing with is beyond your control. Thus, you will see that as a legitimate reason to not even bother trying.

### **Stand Firm**

If you are indecisive or if you tend to follow the crowd, you will have a difficult time exercising self-discipline. Self-discipline is about controlling your actions. If you cannot make decisions, someone else will gladly step in to control your life. In order to avoid this, learn to evaluate situations and make objective decisions. You can be assertive without being disrespectful. And when your decisions are born from the knowledge and evidence you possess, you will have firmer grounds to stand on.

### **Determine Goals**

The first element of success that we need to consider is being able to determine goals successfully. As a major element of success in general, learning to determine goals means putting into action a long-term plan. To avoid this problem in the future, you have to make up some actual goals to aim for. Everything else we'll be discussing needs solid and achievable goals around it for it to be a possibility. If you determine your goals today, then your overall discipline will begin to improve.

### **Devise A Plan Of Action**

Now, we have to work out how to make these goals a realistic possibility. What you need to do, then, is come up with a genuine long-term plan of action. A plan of action is so important to make sure that you can reach your potential as a person. We have goals to follow, so now we need to start

actively planning and preparing your plan of action for each. Every goal needs to have a genuine plan waiting for it at the end that can be used to make that goal a possibility.

### **Creating The Plans**

The easiest ways to manage a plan of action is simply to begin researching. Let's say that you want to try and run your own business but lack the discipline to start the process. Your first goal should be to work out the feasibility of setting up that business in your own area.

### **Prioritize Tasks**

Task prioritization means that we can ensure that our plan of action and our goals are running alongside each other. As we mentioned before, the main goal should be to put your tasks in chronological order.

### **Visualize Success**

The ability to see yourself doing something is a great way to stay disciplined. We lose discipline when we lose faith in our chances of succeeding at something – anything. If you want to avoid this kind of negative downturn in thinking, then you have to be able to properly visualize what is to come. The reason for doing this is quite simple – when you visualize success, you feel easier about the reality of it happening.

### **Develop Self-Awareness**

A bit of self-awareness can go a long way when it comes to keeping your discipline. Having self-awareness means that you are far more alert to your role in both success and failure. Those who are self-aware can see their own limitations and flaws and are less defensive when someone actually points them out.

### **Eat Right**

If you eat right, then you give your body the nutrition that it needs to run properly and thus make success more likely. If you eat right, too, you make sure that you have the energy to get through those sapping days. When a problem comes up that tests your discipline, eating right can help you get through that problem.

### **Exercise Right**

If you start to exercise right, then you give your body an immense lesson: that it can deal with challenges. That you can overcome personal problems. That you are able to fight back. Many of us find it pretty tough to get to that stage but when you do, self-discipline becomes far easier to get a hold of and actively control.

### **Morning Routine**

Discipline means making sure that your life has a very specific style and routine to it – and this is no different from having a morning routine. If you can make sure that your mornings are more balanced and have a specific plan to them, then the rest of the day can fall into place. It creates a uniform nature in your mind that takes away the uncertainty at the beginning of the day. By doing this you become far more likely to reach specific targets throughout the day and thus are more likely to be where you want to be, come to the end of the day.

### **Practice Self-Control**

Self-control is such a vital skill that many of us never bother to investigate or use it properly. We all just believe that we have it — but practicing self-control can be such a therapeutic skill. If you want to make sure that your day can go ahead smoothly and that you can retain your discipline, you need a more effective level of self-control or your day will just spiral into confusion.

### **Control Your Finances**

Let's speak again about the importance of having domination over your finances and your overall financial command. By learning to control your finances, then you can make it much, much easier to control other aspects of your life. Let's say you are looking to make your life easier by having financial control so that you can begin to invest in a long-term business idea.

### **Find Your Mission**

We all have a mission in our lives, and the hardest part of maintaining any form of self-discipline comes from finding your mission. If you don't know what these goals and targets, we spoke of are supposed to achieve, you'll never get anywhere!

## **Find What Fulfills You**

Take the time to really consider every element of what will fulfill you. Is it a personal success? Fame and attention? Financial security? Helping others? Shining a light on a particular issue? Whatever the aims and reasons are, you'll find that what fulfills you can be easily understood if you head down a particular route. To find out what is going to make you feel happiest and most secure, you simply have to start believing and understanding in your own personal beliefs.

This is the most powerful part of self-discipline. When you are doing what you believe is the right thing, very little can slow you down or limit your chances of being a genuine success.

## **Ignore Naysayers**

When you are trying to stand firm and practice self-discipline, you should not be surprised to face opposition. However, you need not succumb to naysayers. You can learn to ignore them. First, determine whether what they are saying is valid. Sometimes people tell you well-meaning things in a hurtful manner without intending to. Sieve through the words to see areas in which you can make improvements and use the criticism to improve yourself.

## **Have The End In Sight?**

It is vital that you have the end in sight at all times. Of course, you don't want to be so caught up in the end product that you forget to work on the process. However, it would help to remember what you are working towards. This way, even when things get difficult, you will have the needed self-discipline to keep going.

## **Limit Distractions**

Distractions come in many forms. Few people have the luxury to work in solitude. Every now and then, you may find someone poking in to check up on you or someone stopping by to chat with you because they are bored. You may also find yourself answering phone calls and checking email. You need to know beforehand how you will deal with such distractions. This is

because you may find yourself wasting a lot of time on things that lessen productivity. Limiting distractions is part of self-discipline.

### **Finish What You Start**

You need to promise yourself that you will finish whatever you start. If you make it a habit to finish projects, you will gain the self-discipline needed to improve your life for the better. Half-finished projects are a sign of disorganization and a lack of motivation. Start by finishing smaller projects as soon as you start them. This way, you will be in a better position to complete other projects that need your attention.

## Chapter 13. The Pitfalls of Improving Self-Discipline

Discipline is by far the most important virtue. After all, every single other virtue relies on a strong discipline. That being said, in the process of developing any quality or skill, there are certain risks associated with it.

### Jealousy

As a direct result of becoming more disciplined, your accomplishments will be more impressive. Some of the people around you are likely to feel personally threatened by your success. It's not their higher self that is threatened; it is their identity. After all, if you are able to do so much, what does this say about them?

When you are close to someone, your identities will make an agreement behind your backs. They will decide to coordinate efforts to make sure that both of you don't change. However, when you are improving your discipline, you will experience some of the greatest changes in your life. If the people close to you are weak and are controlled by their identity, they may lash out at you when they see you becoming a better version of yourself. This might manifest itself in blunt "you have changed" comments, or it may show with more subtle jabs at your newfound success. These sorts of comments or actions are particularly dangerous because their identity isn't the only force trying to hold you back; your identity is trying to do exactly the same thing. Their identity is using whatever methods it can to try to give your identity the fuel it needs to retake control.

When you hear these sorts of comments laugh them off. If they make you angry use that as fuel to become more disciplined. If they make you question what you are doing, remember that their comments don't come from genuine concern, but rather they come from a place of insecurity. In some cases, their jealousy will cause them to somehow try to sabotage your success in more sinister ways. For example: a boss or a coworker who tries to prevent you from getting a promotion. Or a friend who attempts to sabotage your marriage.

Because you don't necessarily know who will be offended by your success and who will lash out, it is best to remain humble and downplay your accomplishments whenever possible. Naturally, if you are trying to sell

something or are running a business, it is a good idea to talk about what you are doing at every opportunity. But make sure to intersperse your sales pitch with a self-deprecating comment or two. Not everyone is controlled by their identity, in fact, many people will be overjoyed by your new zest for life. They will encourage you; they will push you to the next level, and they will want some of what you have made for yourself. Always remember who celebrates your success; these people should be treasured.

## **Perfectionism**

There is a feedback loop between self-discipline and trying to be the best version of yourself you can possibly be. As your discipline increases, you will need to seek out new challenges to stretch your abilities; this means that you are constantly looking for ways to improve yourself. In order to continue to stretch your abilities your self-discipline will need to improve in order to compensate. If you can enter into this feedback loop, you will be able to rapidly transform your life. This transformation is generally positive, but the side effects can be a certain amount of neurotic perfectionism.

Having so many things you can do to make your life better should make you feel optimistic, however, some of the time you may feel overwhelmed by all of the different parts of your life you will eventually need to work on.

People respond to perfectionism in three different ways.

First, some people will try to do everything at once. They will want to improve their fitness, their career, their diet, their courage/vulnerability, their education, and start meditating all at the same time. If you try to do this, you will probably only last for a short period of time before your motivation disappears and you revert to the same habits you had in the beginning or possibly even degenerate below your baseline.

The second typical response to perfectionism is to do nothing at all. You may feel like you will never be able to improve all of these different aspects of your life, so you don't end up improving any of them. This is a form of "paralysis by analysis."

"Prioritize and Execute."

- Jocko Willink, former Navy Seal Commander

Find one or two aspects of your life, which need to be improved, create a plan lasting anywhere from two to twelve weeks, execute your plan. After you have followed through with your program, reevaluate, and create another plan.

Do not feel like everything needs to be improved all at once or even within the following couple of years. Decide what is going to have the biggest impact right now and focus on that. You can move on to the other aspects of your life when it is the right time.

### **Losing Flexibility**

In recent decades the bodybuilding and powerlifting community has learned to embrace the importance of stretching and other mobility-based exercises. Muscle-bound beasts like Kelly Starett have been able to earn a comfortable living teaching lifter how to increase their range of motion. This is in stark contrast to the “17 exercises for giant triceps” approach.

Why are gym rats suddenly so focused on mobility? The answer is actually fairly self-evident. If you move a muscle through a range of motion for years, particularly if it is a partial range of motion, you lose flexibility in that joint over time.

So, if you go into the gym and push heavy iron day in and day out without stretching you will become more and more immobile. Bodybuilders don't have to move like ballerinas, but the gradual loss of range of motion from resistance exercises can limit the sorts of exercises which they can perform, and, in some cases, it can result in pain or injury.

Fortunately, for serious lifters, it turns out that it is actually fairly easy to maintain and improve flexibility by performing certain mobility exercises every day.

Note: the problem is not that the lifters are too strong or too muscular; there are plenty of examples of very strong muscular people who are also totally mobile and healthy. Instead, the joint problems emerge in the process of developing muscularity and strength. This distinction is important when we draw our connection back to discipline.

Discipline has a lot of the same properties as a muscle. And if you use it every single day without stretching, it can become tight and immobile.

There are two implications of this analogy. One of them is literal, and the other is figurative. However, both of these implications are important for someone who is putting in a strong effort into developing their discipline.

The first, more literal implication, is that in the process of becoming disciplined, there is a tendency to become too structured and orderly losing one's ability to adapt in the process. Fortunately, it is possible to become extremely disciplined while maintaining your adaptability at the same time.

One strategy for maintaining adaptability is to dedicate some period of the day to free time. This doesn't have to be purely recreational time; however, it shouldn't be dedicated to any particular activity. You could spend this time reading, writing, or working on projects which you normally wouldn't have the time to get around to doing.

Another technique you can use to maintain your flexibility is to push yourself and try to do something which you aren't sure you can actually complete. This will have the added benefit of testing the limits of your discipline. Many people drastically underestimate their capacity for discipline until they actually test it.

A good example would be a casual hiker deciding to test themselves on a more difficult mountain. By doing this, it takes them out of their comfort zone and also pushes their limits.

The second more figurative loss of flexibility is a loss of spirit. You don't want to lose your playfulness in the process of developing your unshakeable resolve. It is important to remain goofy, silly, and to remember to smile.

Living a serious disciplined life without any jokes is not only dreary, but it is also ineffective. This approach to discipline is more brittle and more prone to psychological problems than discipline interspersed with humor.

People in some of the most difficult professions (miners, Sherpas, special forces operators) are known for their constant ribbing and sense of humor. These are some of the toughest people on the planet, but they usually understand that humor is as important as anything else in their line of work.

Remember to laugh, joke, or smile during the most challenging moments. Don't let your pursuit of discipline turn you into a dull humorless person.

Instead, let your discipline make you confident enough to make fun of yourself and not take life so seriously.

## **Conclusion**

Self-discipline is your ability to be sure to do things without someone. I have seen no quality or characteristic that has an overwhelming effect on the success of entrepreneurs. If you want to be a successful millionaire and entrepreneur, no doubt the single most important characteristic that you will guarantee your success in every area of your life is self-discipline.

There is no point in setting long-term or short-term goals if you are not going to get the self-control and self-discipline to do what's demanded to bring them to fruition. You will reach your aims if you've got self-discipline that is high.

Look around your life and notice the difference between people who have no discipline or very little and elevated levels of discipline. People that fail do what losers do and the winners follow through and do what needs to be done. Losers aren't prepared to pay the price, even if they are aware of what they are supposed to do, they don't do it. Why? Because they do not have sufficient self-discipline to follow through on their commitments, to themselves and others.

Millionaires realize that they have get in the habit of directing and assessing themselves with achieving outcomes and consequently to pay a price for success. They do exactly what it takes and don't allow tension.

That doesn't mean that if you exercise high self-discipline that you need to sacrifice every pleasure in your lifetime. You need to learn to play hard and work hard in establishing your priorities and to exercise judgment. Should you learn to have self-discipline you'll realize confidence and your self-esteem enhances because you have more control on your company activities and life.

A way of raising your self-discipline would be to have a fanatical focus on the goals you want to accomplish and what you must do in order to achieve them. Identify those areas of your daily life that are currently stagnating due to inactivity and make a commitment now to develop self-discipline in those regions. Replicating an action or behavior on a regular basis until it becomes embedded in your profile develops habits.

It may take a lot of willpower to do what you've got to do. But remember that self-discipline becomes easier exercises. You have the power to restrain your thoughts and direct them to perform your bidding. Make a bid to

improve your self-discipline by controlling yourself that your behavior would abruptly change if, while you were having a heated debate with a member of their household, the doorbell rang.

You would then be able to control yourself and save yourself just from embarrassment. Because you wanted to do so. Deliberately, believe the form of ideas that you want, and you will develop into a person of self-control.

Avoid procrastination at all costs rather than delay until tomorrow what you can do now. It is a huge waste of energy and can result in failure. One sure way to develop self-discipline would be to connect with people that are self-disciplined and exhibit self-control that is higher. Remember, like attracts like. You need to surround yourself with the right type of people and their attributes that are favorable will be contagious. Bear in mind, you have the power within you. You're powerful enough to get the best of yourself.

So, make the critical decision today to take control of your destiny and yourself by developing your self-control and self-discipline. Pursuing self-discipline requires a certain amount of discomfort in the beginning if you are actively working towards it. Nobody said that the road would be easy, but it is absolutely necessary if you want to change your life. You cannot give up and allow your life to remain the same if you don't want to put in the effort. If you don't give up and give in, you will reach your goal.

### The Road to Greatness

The Road to Greatness is filled with people who have mastered the art of self-discipline. Whether you want to do mediocre or amazing things with your life, it is necessary to harness self-control in every way possible. The more tactics that you are able to apply to your life, the further in life you can go.

As a human being, you are only limited by your own mind and expectations for yourself. If you think you can, you will; but if you do not believe in yourself, you won't. Do not let anyone convince you to settle for less than the best. In addition, never convince yourself to settle when you know that you want more in life. It is essential to train yourself to be more self-disciplined so that you can see the results in a reality that you dream about in the corners of your mind.

# **COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY:**

**Retrain Your Brain. Master and Train  
for Happiness. 7 Simple Strategies to  
Free Yourself from Anxiety,  
Depression, Panic Attacks, Stress, and  
Intrusive Thoughts**

# Introduction

Cognitive behavioral therapy is not something that you try on yourself. It's just not going to happen. You have to work with a trained therapist or counselor. While you do the heavy lifting as far as your personal beliefs and your responses to the outside world go, you need expert guidance. You need somebody who knows what they're doing and who knows how to instruct you. They must have been around the block a few times so they know what to anticipate.

This is a one common misconception about cognitive behavioral therapy or CBT for short. A lot of people think that if they just read a book on CBT, they will know the ins and outs of this alternative therapy system, and they can pretty much treat themselves.

There's more to recovery through CBT than just buying a book and learning techniques. You have to actually put them to use. This is the difficult part. You have to keep using these techniques no matter how inconvenient they might be. You have to keep practicing them no matter how busy you get.

Given these logistical considerations, it's no surprise that a lot of people think that you need specially trained counselors or psychiatrists to go through a CBT program. Most of the time, the most valuable thing these professionals bring to the table is that they give you a formal structure for CBT. You can do it yourself once a professional has provided you with a formal structure – you just have to give yourself the time and the space, and you need to commit to doing CBT consistently.

It's very hard to get out from under your mental habits if you are trying to do CBT alone. You need to be under the proper guidance of an experienced therapist who not only understands how it works and how its principles can be tweaked to apply to your personal situation, but who also knows how to measure success.

You have to understand that this is a results-based therapy. You don't just undergo CBT because you're just trying to "feel better." Who knows what that means? It's too subjective.

When you working with a trained cognitive behavioral therapist, you are made aware of how your interpretations of the things happening in your life

impact your feelings, your interpretation of reality and ultimately, your behavior.

The main goal of cognitive behavioral therapy is not just to feel good or feel at peace. Medication can do that. Being with the right people can do that.

Instead, CBT aims for something higher. It seeks to teach you how to effectively interpret life in such a way that you remain positive, empowered and in control. In other words, with the proper guidance, CBT can help you handle your life in a very different way.

People normally seek cognitive behavioral therapy if they feel that their life is spiraling out of their control. They feel that they're stuck. It's as if they're watching a movie of their life, and they can't do anything about it except sit back and let things happen.

When properly implemented, cognitive behavioral therapy enables you to reclaim your personal power over your life. Believe it or not, everything that happens in your life is ultimately your responsibility.

A lot of people try to run away from this truth. In fact, to a lot of people, this is quite inconvenient and uncomfortable.

Unfortunately, regardless of how we feel, the truth is still the truth. We are always in control of how we respond to the world and this response is never neutral. It always has an impact on what we feel and, ultimately, what we do.

Cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on how people make sense of their world in terms of their interpretation. This is the foundation of cognitive behavioral therapy.

When you change the interpretation, you change how people emotionally respond to things, and this can lead to a profound impact on how they behave.

For example, somebody who is suffering from low self-esteem usually looks at a situation from a perspective of doubt. They don't think they're good enough. They don't think they're good-looking enough. They don't think people will like them. They don't think they will belong, so on and so forth.

Since this is how they interpret the signals people and situations give them, it is no surprise that they tend to miss out on opportunities or avoid social settings. They doubt themselves so much. They feel that people will not like them. They feel uncomfortable.

This is not just happening in their heads because when somebody has such low self-esteem and they're doubting themselves all the time, it can have physical effects. You can feel like you're about to throw up. You feel like you're shaking. You want to curl up into a ball and assume the fetal position.

Unfortunately, people with low self-esteem think that this is natural. They've responded to the world this way for so long they think that it's part of them. Some even say it's just who they are. It's part of their personality. No, it's not.

Cognitive behavioral therapy goes to the root of the problem. The root of the problem is not that you feel that you're ugly or that you assume you are going to screw things up the moment you are given any kind of responsibility.

Instead, it goes straight to the real issue – your low self-esteem. Why is that? Why do you automatically feel that people are not going to like you? Why do you automatically fear social settings or any kind of opportunity you have to learn? How are you looking at your situation? Are there any alternative interpretations?

A crucial part of CBT is the identification of negative thought patterns. Patients have to be clear about their thought process.

CBT doesn't assume that there's something wrong with you. Instead, you are first walked through the process of clearly describing how you view yourself, how you interpret reality and how you find yourself in certain situations.

There's no right or wrong answer here. The focus is objective truth. In other words, it's all about accuracy.

The next step is to look at the thought patterns involved and understand that this is just one possible train of thought.

For example, say you go into a bar. You see a very attractive member of the opposite sex turn around, look at you and laugh. If you have low self-

esteem, you will automatically assume that person is laughing at you. Are there alternative interpretations?

A CBT therapist will step you through the alternatives and help you process that memory in such a way that it doesn't lead to negative thoughts and, ultimately, negative actions.

Maybe in that memory there was somebody cracking a joke behind you or making faces. Perhaps that good-looking person was looking at that person behind you. It doesn't have to be about you.

As long as the alternative interpretations are supported by facts, the CBT therapist can help you come up with a healthier approach to processing social information so you get out from under your social phobia.

Speaking of phobias, CBT is quite effective in this field. Take the case of an individual with dental phobia. This person is deathly afraid of visiting the dentist. We're not just talking about root canals here. We're talking about just regular cleaning.

A CBT practitioner would ask this person about their past experiences of going to the dentist. The patient would then go through story after story until they get to the traumatic incident that led to an unhealthy association of the dentist with pain. It may have happened when the patient was five years old.

The therapist would then work with the patient to cut that mental connection between the dentist and pain. In other words, they help the person realize that what happened in the past can stay in the past. Just because they had a traumatic experience that one time doesn't necessarily mean that all people going to dentists suffer the same experience. They may just have been unlucky that day.

Often, the further we are from the memory, the more we blow it out of proportion. We exaggerate. It may turn out that when the patient was a kid, they just experienced slight pain, but as they got older, they remember the pain as something far worse.

An expert cognitive behavioral therapist can help patients go through this process successfully.

## **The History of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

CBT was formulated about forty years ago to help treat people suffering from depression. As the years went by, a lot of the techniques and steps developed in CBT to handle depression have been applied to a larger set of mental and emotional disorders.

CBT has gone on to treat borderline personality disorder, bipolar disorder, anger issues, alcohol and drug abuse, childhood depression, spousal or marital conflict, insomnia, eating disorders, fear of the dentist, all sorts of social phobias as well as generalized anxiety. That is a long list, and it's easy to see why cognitive behavioral therapy has expanded quite a bit because there is a tremendous amount of science as well as success stories behind it.

The world of psychology and psychiatry has actually developed on two tracks. There's always been a "talk therapy" component to treating mental, emotional and personality disorders. However, fairly recently, more and more practitioners have been leaning on hardwired or biological treatments involving a range of chemical compounds.

This all became really popular when the popular antidepressant Prozac entered the global mental health scene. At that point, a lot of people were thinking that depression was just another illness, kind of like the flu. When you have a head cold, you take a pill. When you're depressed, you take a pill.

This led to a massive explosion in prescriptions for anti-anxiety and anti-depression medication. In fact, if you study the top ten most-prescribed medications in the United States, antidepressants and anti-anxiety medication will always make the list.

This has raised a lot of alarms due to the fact that these chemicals have a tremendous impact on the patients' brain chemistry. Without proper supervision and with prolonged use, they can have long-term effects on patients' mental functions.

This is why there's been a renewed and intensified interest in more natural approaches to personality, emotional and psychological issues. Cognitive behavioral therapy can work with antidepressant, anti-anxiety and other medications.

However, patients would be better off if they used a completely chemical-free approach. The person often credited as the pioneer of cognitive

behavioral therapy is Dr. Aaron T. Beck.

Dr. Beck focused most of his research on the study of depression. In particular, he wanted to see the connection between depression and the cognition or the ability of depressed people to perceive their reality. He noticed that there was quite a link between depression and people's cognitive thinking.

Prior to Dr. Beck, the common idea was that depression happens and it leads to negative thinking. Dr. Beck reversed the process. He said that if the cognitive state of the individual patient is positive, then depression can be overcome. It can go the other way, rather than simply assuming that if a person is depressed, then it leads to negative thinking, and there's really not much people can do about it.

This was a breakthrough because it led to the core premise of cognitive behavioral therapy which involves taking control of how you think. It may seem like your depressed mental state is automatic. It may seem like you really don't have much control over it, but by taking control of your ability to interpret what things mean in your life, you can arrest that negative emotional slide to sadness, melancholy and ultimately, depression.

Dr. Aaron T. Beck's pioneering work laid the foundation for cognitive behavioral therapy which has grown in leaps and bounds and is now applied to a lot of dysfunctions and disorders.

# Chapter 1: Identifying the Problem

## Step 1: Identifying the Problem

### What Are Automatic Thoughts?

Automatic thoughts are a central aspect of the CBT theory. Automatic thoughts are those that come into our minds quickly, without effort. They are short and related to the specific situation at hand. They occur during or right after the situation, as an “instinctive” response. They don’t include reflection or careful logic but usually seem quite reasonable. Some are perfectly logical; others are known as “dysfunctional automatic thoughts.”

If you feel that another thought better connects to the problem, you can focus on that instead. Or if you feel that the issue underlying that particular automatic thought is not as important as other issues, you can set it aside and focus on other thoughts that had a stronger impact on your mood. When evaluating a series of automatic thoughts, assess how intense the feelings they stimulated were, and choose the thoughts that had the biggest impact.

Often, these types of dysfunctional thoughts result from cognitive distortions, or “thought traps,” which are essentially mistakes we make in the thinking process. Automatic thoughts tend to fall into a few categories of cognitive distortions. Identifying the general patterns can be helpful in changing the thoughts that are a part of that pattern. It may be helpful to write down some of your automatic thoughts and then look for patterns. Below, we list some common types of cognitive distortions.

### What Are Intrusive Thoughts?

Intrusive thoughts are another type of common but upsetting thought. Our brains generate many thoughts and ideas over the course of a day. Some feel completely normal, productive, and helpful, and we view them as reflective of who we are. Some thoughts may strike us as odd or confusing but are easily dismissed and don’t cause much distress. We can also experience thoughts that seem bad, scary, or sickening—things that don’t fit with who we are or that make us feel terrible, yet are hard to get rid of. These are known as intrusive thoughts.

Intrusive thoughts are thoughts, ideas, or impulses that are unwanted and upsetting but continue to occur. They are difficult to stop or control, which often makes them more distressing. They may interrupt activities and thought processes and cause feelings of doubt, shame, guilt, confusion, fear, and anxiety. Intrusive thoughts are common symptoms of anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and post-traumatic stress disorder, but they can occur independently as well.

There are several types of intrusive thoughts, which may be treated in different ways. Obsessional intrusions usually relate to something that a person finds upsetting, disgusting, or repugnant, such as violence, taboo sexual acts, or his or her religious beliefs. These are often addressed within an OCD framework. Worry intrusions are anxious thoughts about future events or threats. Usually, dealing with anxiety through a range of CBT techniques will help reduce the frequency and severity of worry intrusions. Trauma-related intrusions are sudden recollections of past traumatic events. Addressing the feelings around these events with a therapist may help.

Trauma-related intrusions are sudden recollections of past traumatic events. Addressing the feelings around this event with a therapist may help.

Examples of Intrusive Thoughts:

Unwanted sexual thoughts involving a family member, child, or animal (obsessional intrusion)

Unwanted sexual thoughts involving a coworker whom you are not attracted to (obsessional intrusion)

Thoughts of committing a crime or violent act that you know you would never do, such as killing your spouse or harming your baby (obsessional intrusion)

Fear that you won't be able to stop yourself from saying something inappropriate in public (obsessional intrusion)

Worries that you no longer believe in your religion, briefly thought something forbidden, or performed a ritual incorrectly (obsessional intrusion)

Repeated, intensely felt doubts about your ability to perform on an upcoming exam you have studied for (worry intrusion)

Recurrent, distressing thoughts about contracting a rare disease and dying (worry intrusion)

Repeated thoughts about a humiliating event that happened in childhood (trauma-related intrusion)

Unwanted, upsetting recollections of a violent event you experienced as an adult (trauma-related)

These are just some of the many forms that intrusive thoughts can take. Many people are surprised to realize that others have experienced similar types of intrusive thoughts. Knowing this can be reassuring and help you reach a better understanding of intrusive thoughts as a common phenomenon, not a uniquely personal illness or failing.

Almost everyone has intrusive thoughts, but people respond to them in different ways. The key difference between people who do not struggle with their intrusive thoughts and those who do is not that the former do not have them, though they may experience them less frequently or intensely, but that they are able to dismiss upsetting, unwanted thoughts as meaningless. Those who struggle with obsessive thoughts tend to attach great significance to the thoughts and conclude that they really do believe or feel those things or really will commit those acts. They begin to build a narrative around the thoughts, with implications about their own character, behavior, and future actions.

The most important thing to understand about intrusive thoughts is that just having a certain thought or image does not mean it is true. Having an intrusive thought about an unacceptable violent or sexual action doesn't mean you actually want to or will commit the act. If you are religious, having a distressing blasphemous thought doesn't mean you truly believe it. Experiencing recurrent anxious thoughts about a future event does not mean that those fears are well founded or that the bad outcome is likely to occur.

Steven Phillipson, PHD, is a true expert in the field. He reminds his patients that they are not “mentally ill”. Instead, they simply have an anxiety disorder. He also prefers to call intrusive thoughts “creative associations.” This attitude encourages patients to embrace their experience of these common, if sometimes disturbing, thoughts. Find out more by searching “Dr. Phillipson OCD” in YouTube.

If intrusive thoughts are causing you distress, include them in the description of your problem.

## Chapter 2. Routine To Train Your Mind

Everyone has gone through a terrible phase during which they endured depression. When depression comes knocking, it seeks to expose you and make you vulnerable, break you, and you are left feeling as though the weight of the world has been placed upon your shoulders. Your brain might be entangled in a vicious fight, but don't reach for the antidepressants. You have a much better chance at rewiring your brain through CBT.

The following are some of the CBT techniques aimed at modifying your brain into positivity:

### 1. Set achievable goals

Before you get started on your therapy, you want first to identify what you seek to get out of it. The last time you were depressed, you knew too well what could end your depression. Ideally, this ought to be one of your goals. To avoid disappointments, you want to ensure that your goals are reachable. If you set unattainable goals, you will only be setting yourself up for more failure, which might throw you into an even worse state of depression. When setting a goal, you should implore the help of your therapist because they have a finer understanding of the potential that different kinds of people wield, as well as the nature of various challenges.

### 2. Reward yourself

The perfect way of motivating yourself to keep going is to reward yourself every time you reach a milestone. When you set a long-term goal, you should make a point of breaking it down into smaller milestones. For instance, if the cause of your depression is due to the fact that you have no life partner, your mid-term or long-term goal should be getting a life partner, but your milestones should be along the lines of talking to a new person every day. Ensure that you talk to someone new every day. This increases your prospects of landing the most suitable life partner. Every time you reach this milestone, you might want to reward yourself for work well done.

### 3. Be good at spotting negativity at its onset

The more adept you are at noticing negativity creep up on you, the more you will take self-preserving decisions. Let's say that your depression is enhanced by your alcoholism, which is in part fueled by your associations. When you see a person who takes you into a bar and buys you a beer, you might want to literally run away from them. Whenever you identify an agent of negativity, you should want to distance yourself from them. However, this doesn't give you a free pass to become a weirdo. In as much as you want to preserve yourself, you also have to consider what's at stake.

#### 4. Be accountable

Being accountable is the truest sign of maturity. Let's say you are depressed because of your gambling behavior. You seem to have been stuck in a negative cycle of throwing your money into sports betting, taking loans from friends and banks, and then throwing more money into sports betting. So, betting has become this big black hole where your every penny drowns. You'll become depressed, and rightly so. But think about it. When you're accountable for something – for instance, your family – you won't spend your money that recklessly. You will have some respect for your family, and other people that hold you responsible.

#### 5. Listen to music

It is an open secret that listening to music has a great effect on our moods. Whenever you find yourself battling depressive thoughts, all you have to do is put on some music. The brain is extremely receptive of music, and it allows you to take on the mood expressed in the music. For instance, if you listen to a happy song, your moods will be instantly elevated. In this age of the internet, there's a surplus of great music to listen to. Remember that striking a balance is vital – don't lose yourself, lest it becomes an addiction, an escape from reality.

#### 6. Join a group

Whatever you are facing now, whatever brings you gloomy thoughts, and depresses your spirit, is not unique to you. There are millions of other people battling the same problems. And guess what? They are every bit as

interested in overcoming their limitations just as you. You can contact friends and make phone calls to various offices to find out about groups that cater to people of your kind. Additionally, you can join online groups and become united with people from around the world who share in your troubles. Seeing other people from diverse backgrounds in the same boat as you not only give you hope for change, but it also allows you to become vulnerable. For instance, if your addictions are the source of your depression, you can share your story with your group members, make it a learning opportunity, and be open to learning from them too.

#### 7. Focus on positive experiences

The most potent fuel for depression is a negative attitude. And if you have a negative mindset, nothing in this world would cure your problem. This is simply because every event or situation is two-sided. There's the good side and the bad. Negative people always choose the bad, whereas positive people choose the good. It doesn't matter if you're ruined financially, if you have lost your career to malicious people, or if you've ever lost a loved one. There's always a positive angle to every situation.

#### 8. Consume the right media

It's amazing that when people talk about the advances in technology and especially digital media, they focus on the negative effects. It's true that most people on the internet are watching pornography, but the internet has also brought close to us amazing content of positivity. There are eBooks, websites, and YouTube channels that cater to promoting positivity. Instead of replenishing your positivity just once and moving on with your life, you want to graduate this into a habit. Form a daily habit of checking up on YouTube positivity channels and reading positivity blogs and eBooks.

## Chapter 3. Master and Train Happiness

These neuroscientific methods can help you foster a happier brain.

**Music** - Listening to music from the happiest periods of your life can transport you mentally back to places you have listened to it before. Bringing about a positive mental state.

**Smile** - Bringing about a positive mental state. Smile when your brain is overloaded with information. It looks for biofeedback to figure out a response outsmart your brain by grinning just as happiness makes you smile. Smiling can actually make you happy.

**Goals** - When you are feeling unhappy or overwhelmed, try to think about your long-term goals. This may release dopamine and give your brain a sense of control.

**Sleep** - Depression may hinder your ability to sleep but it works both ways. Having bad sleep can lead to depression. Improve your sleep by exposing yourself to bright sunlight during the day and dim the light at night.

**Walk** - Exercising and exposing yourself to sunlight can improve the serotonin and sleep systems. Taking a walk preferably with a friend or someone you enjoy spending time every morning is an easy way to kick start an upward spiral and engage in positive social behaviors.

How to Keep Your Brain Cells Active:

- Get crafty. Creative time keeps existing neurons from dying and promotes the growth of new ones.
- Learn something new. Novelty builds new neural pathways. Think new game, new language or new field of study.
- Move your body. Physical activity may improve how your neurons work and reduce risk of dementia.

## Neural Growth

In the beginning we have the stem cells they are undifferentiated and that precursor cells to daughter cells these then divide, differentiate, develop, and migrate to their final destinations and become neurons or glia (shortened term for neuroglia). Another term for glia is glial cells.

For a growing neuron, there are several parts: axon, soma, dendrites, and growth cone. The growing axon helps guide or it helps direct to find the target for the embryonic neuron it does this by influencing the molecules on axon growth or route through the following:

- Attracting
- Supporting
- Deflecting
- Inhibiting

These molecules can be found in the membrane of the glia or embryonic neurons. It can also be found in the extracellular fluid as what we call neurotrophic factors. Considering these influencing molecules that are attracting, supporting, deflecting, and inhibiting the growing neuron or the growing axon is going off and sort off going in sort of a random fashion but eventually it is finding its way to the target. When it gets to the target it will form a synapse. Once it has formed a synapse, it gets activated. It is early activation before maturation and helps term in the final function of the embryonic neuron. That is one of the important things to remember - it is activated early on. In short, it is activated before maturation.

Neural growth occurs during all three trimesters and continues into infancy and as obviously and fairly widely known, drugs and alcohol are a must to be avoided especially at this point as it can have permanent lasting damage on the fetal end and its developing nervous system. It is highly important to be cautious and stay away from things like viruses, malnutrition, radiation, etc. - those are some of the factors that can cause permanent harm and damage to developing or fetal nervous system.

On a quick note: once axons have been projected, up to fifty to seventy percent of axons die.

Neuroscientists are still perplexed with why our body does this, after all the tedious process and it ends up with a big part of the neurons dying in the process. At the moment, it is still a scientific mystery.

Once the growth is done, after maturation the basic shape and the structure is set; at this point the synaptic contacts are still being created and destroyed.

During the regeneration stage, in the peripheral nervous system and we have a neuron. The part of the neuron which is not part of or connected to the cell body is going to degenerate. The tip where the degenerated part used to be, will get a growth cone. Therefore, the axon is able to regrow back down to the target organ or tissue or muscle. The growth cone happens at about one millimeter per day which is slow. To put this into perspective: let's say your ring finger on your right hand got an apparent damaged neuron up to your shoulder and as a result you have lost a bit of sensation, it might take more than two years before that afferent neurons to completely regenerate and heal.

In more recent research, scientists are discovering more about how the decrease in the production of serotonin by neurons can lead to depression in some people - chemical imbalance. There has been a confusion if adults grow new nerve cells, surprisingly adults have the ability to grow new nerve cells. This phenomenon is called neurogenesis.

The human brain of an adult has the ability to regenerate nerve cells. In terms of neurogenesis, an interesting salient section of the brain is the hippocampus. It is the structure of gray matter that is found in the brain's core. This part is paramount for discovery, information retention, mood, and emotion.

However, what the scientists have discovered is that the hippocampus is one of the areas of the adult human brain, wherein neo neurons can regenerate.

If given a chance and we put an incision through the hippocampus and narrow in, scientists were able to confirm newborn neuron in and adult mouse brain.

It has been estimated that adults can produce up to seven hundred neo neurons everyday within in hippocampus region. It might seem not as much in comparison to the countless neurons we already have. However, by the moment we reach the age of fifty, the human body will have to exchange all the existing neurons that were present since the day we were born, with the neurons our body has created during our adult period.

These new neurons are so substantial because of their capacity. We are aware that neurons are critical for acquiring new information and data-retention. At a lab setting, it was discovered that if the human adult brain is blocked its ability to generate neo neurons within the hippocampus region, then it is blocked its selected data-retention capabilities. This is unexpectedly recent and accurate for spatial recognition – one's ability to circumvent his way around the city in a logical way. Neurons are also essential for the caliber of the data-retention ability and could have been indispensable to the addition of time to our data-retention ability. Neurons also helps in discerning highly related memories; for instance – how do you find your car parked in the same parking building every single day in a similar location but in a somewhat ajar position.

There have been new findings on the relationship between the science of neurogenesis and clinical depression. When tested within the non-human model of depression involving animals, scientists observed a significant decrease of neurogenesis, it was given a low number of antidepressants and then there was a significant amount of increase of the neurons that are newly-born has been found and eventually diminish the symptoms and signs of depression. Building an undeniable connection between neurogenesis and clinical depression. Furthermore, when scientists simply stalled neurogenesis, then it basically blocks the potency of the antidepressant.

This sometimes happens with cancer survivors. Though they have survived and surpassed cancer, the reason being the cancer medication had halted

neo neurons from getting regenerated, there is a high probability that cancer patients also suffers from depression. It requires a good amount of time to regenerate neo neurons to arrive at its usual functions.

Scientists believe that neurogenesis is our best chance if we aim to pursue the improvement of the formation our data-retention or mood for long term or even hinder the deterioration that is linked with old age or that is induced by stress.

Can we control stress? The answer is yes.

- Learning – Yes, it helps with neurogenesis
- Stress – No (does not help with neurogenesis)
- Sleep deprivation - No (does not help with neurogenesis)
- Sex - Yes, it helps with neurogenesis \*However it is still all a balance.
- Running- Yes, it helps with neurogenesis

The rate of our body's neurogenesis will gradually decelerate as the number of our age increases; however, it is still taking place.

In terms of running as a physical activity. Well, one of the studies conducted from Salk Institute showed how the habitat and surrounding has an ability to affect the creation of neo neurons. There, they compared an area of the hippocampus of a lab rat, it did not have any wheel or means of physical activity in it's with the hippocampus of a lab rat that was housed with a treadmill-like device in its enclosure.

The difference in the newborn neurons-to-be, there was an enormous amount of boost with the black dots that corresponds to the future neo neurons. Therefore, the state of being active has a direct influence on neurogenesis.

Your food intake has a direct reaction on the creation of neo neurons present in the hippocampus.

- Regulate calorie intake of anywhere between twenty to thirty percent
- Fasting intermittently, allowing enough time to pass between meals
- Flavonoid intake, which is mostly found in dark chocolates
- Fish enriched with omega 3

Food that yields negative impact

- diet rich in high saturated fat
- ethanol (intake of alcohol)

Asian demographics who are delighted with food that has rich textures, it has been shown that soft food or food that does not require a lot of chewing may hinder neurogenesis. This data needs to be examined at the cellular level. It was created and formulated using non-human models. This type of diet has been provided to human volunteers of the study. Scientists found out that the dietary behavior can definitely regulate or restrain data-retention capability and mood in the similar capacity as it regulates neurogenesis. For example; calorie constraint can enhance data-retention capability, whereas diet that is rich in fat can aggravate the signs of clinical depression. If we assess the impact of our dietary behavior towards; mental health, on data-retention capability, and frame of mind – it is arbitrated by the generation of neo neurons in the hippocampus region. It is imperative to keep in mind; it is not simply about what we consume and digest but also consider the consistency of the surface of the food when it is consumed and the quantity or amount of it is ingested.

Neuroscientists still is required to better comprehend the purpose and duty of the neo neurons, is there a way that its life expectancy and the rate it is regenerating can be managed or controlled.

It is imperative that science finds a way to conserve and preserve the neurogenesis of the people who have endured and surpass cancer.

# **Chapter 4. Strategies to Eliminate Problems**

## **10 CBT Instantly Calming Techniques to Change Your Thoughts**

There are several tools and techniques currently used in cognitive behavioral therapy in both the therapy context and in daily life. These techniques are evidence-based methods applied to change feelings, thoughts, and behavior and improve the overall life functioning of humanity. The most common tools and techniques of effective CBT practices are outlined below.

### **Journaling**

This technique is applied in gathering the moods and thoughts about someone. A journal technique includes a recording of the time of thought or mood, the source of the feeling or thought, the intensity, how the individual reacted to the thought, among other factors. This technique can help in the identification of thought patterns and tendencies of emotions, describe how they occur, and how to cope, change, or adapt with them.

### **Unraveling Cognitive Distortions**

This CBT technique can be applied with or without the support of a therapist. To unravel the cognitive distortions, one must be aware of the distortions they commonly suffer. This also involves identifying and challenging harmful thoughts that frequently affect someone. The thoughts, which are known as cognitive distortions, are ways that the mind convinces one of something that is not true in the actual sense. Such thoughts always reinforce negative thinking and emotions.

### **Cognitive Restructuring**

After recognizing and understanding the distortions that you hold, you can start to explore how the distortions took root and how you came about believing in them. When you eventually identify a belief that is harmful or destructive, you can start to challenge it. For instance, if you believe that you must earn a lot of money in order to be respected, but you get laid off from your high-paying job, you will start feeling bad about yourself. Rather

than accepting this faulty belief, restructuring can help you think about what truly makes someone “respectable.”

### **Exposure and Response Prevention**

This CBT technique is typically effective for individuals that are experiencing the symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). This technique can be utilized through exposing oneself to whatever it is that always elicits a recognized compulsive behavior, but ensuring that you refrain from engaging in the behavior. You can always combine this technique with journaling, or apply journaling in understanding how this tool can make you feel.

### **Interceptive Exposure**

This CBT technique is commonly used to treat anxiety and panic attacks. It involves the exposure of someone to the feared bodily sensations with the aim of eliciting the response. Interoceptive Exposure is intended to help people who suffer from panic symptoms that make them uncomfortable.

### **Re-scripting and Playing the Script until the End**

Re-scripting, and playing the script until the end, is ways that you can work through anxiety by taking control over the anxious thoughts that you are experiencing within your mind. Often, people find themselves experiencing anxious thoughts and struggling to find ways to work through them. Rather than facing the thoughts and letting them play out, they avoid the thoughts and aggressively try to push them away out of their minds so that they can avoid experiencing such tremendous amounts of anxiety. The problem with pushing away or becoming afraid of your thoughts is that you are giving the thoughts more energy and attention than they need. As a result, they grow larger and feel even scarier, and you find yourself experiencing even more anxiety as a result.

If you allow your thoughts to happen naturally and you take a portion of control back, you allow yourself to step away from the anxious experience and instead regain control over your unwanted experience. This can help you begin to experience freedom from your anxiety in a far more positive manner. Using this strategy, you can not only put an end to your anxiety, but you can also put an end to the anxiety that you have about having anxiety,

which is often caused by being too afraid to go through the motions of anxiety again.

Actually, engaging in these practices requires you to do two things. For re-scripting, you want to take your time and identify what your thoughts are and why they are not serving you. Then, you want to start telling your story differently. Re-scripting helps you change the course of your thoughts by changing the way your emotions are being felt and observed by your conscious mind. As a result, your emotions may go from feeling overwhelming and scary to feeling reasonable and understood. The more you can lead to you feeling reasonable and understanding, the more you are going to be able to help yourself to improve your response to anxiety.

When you play the script until the end, you can engage in re-scripting at the same time. However, the goal here is also to understand how scary your thoughts actually are by allowing them to play all the way out until the end. Often, we get hung up on the scary part of thought, which results in us continually feeling as though there is nothing we can do to feel better. If, however, we can recognize that we are getting hung up on these scary parts of the thoughts and we allow ourselves to keep thinking the thought through, then we can see that the thought itself is not entirely scary. You do this by asking yourself, “and then what?” until you reach a point in your reality where the scary or anxiety-inducing experience would no longer be such a big deal.

For example, let’s say you are scared of public speaking because you are afraid that you will stumble over your words, and people will look at you funny. If you keep getting hung up on this part of the experience, then you might grow incredibly afraid of public speaking to the point that you want to cancel your public speaking engagement. If, however, you instead begin to ask yourself “and then what?” you can start to become aware of what might happen if you were to stumble on your words, and people looked at you funny. Perhaps you would acknowledge that you would keep speaking, and then you would finish the speech and be done. Or, maybe you would acknowledge that you feel embarrassed, take a breath, and keep going. Whatever the script looks like for you, keep seeing it through until you are at the end so that you are more likely to get to the point where you recognize that no matter what happens, it’s not the end of the world.

## **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Progressive muscle relaxation, sometimes called PMR, is a type of treatment that aligns with meditation and relaxation in one and actually supports people in bringing peace into their body. For people who are experiencing anxiety, PMR can help you release the tension and tightness that you are carrying within your body so that you can begin to feel more at peace. This gives your body the biofeedback of “I’m okay,” which leads to your anxiety gradually reducing until the point where it is no longer existent.

You can engage in PMR by essentially focusing on one area of your body at a time and instructing that area of your body to relax. To engage in proper PMR, you want to focus on starting at either your feet or your head, and you want to instruct every major muscle group on the way to your head or your feet to relax. The more you can do this, the more you are going to find yourself experiencing freedom from the tightness and anxiety that you are carrying within your body.

PMR can be done anytime you are experiencing nerves or a busy mind, and it can also be done as a part of a habitual routine to help you release daily stress and anxiety, which is especially important if you are experiencing a generalized anxiety disorder. You can easily engage in PMR on your own, or you can follow a recorded meditation that guides you through PMR if you would like some assistance in navigating this particular relaxation method.

## **Relaxed Breathing**

Relaxed breathing can help you literally breathe peace into your body by taking back control over your automatic responses and relaxing through them. When you are anxious, your body will immediately begin to tense up, and your breath will grow more shallow. You might even find yourself holding your breath if you are feeling particularly anxious, which can lead to even more challenging experiences. If you can take back control over your breath, you can begin to breathe in a deeper, calmer, and more relaxed manner that encourages your entire body to relax as deeply as possible.

Your relaxed breathing can be done on your own or following meditation or guided experience on the internet. These days, many devices like your phone or your smart watch also have breathing apps built-in that can help

you intentionally slow down your breath and bring calm back into your body. Following these tools can be extremely helpful in dissipating your anxiety and taking back control, especially if you find yourself experiencing constant and chronic anxiety. Often, seeing the app on your phone or smart watch can actually trigger calmness, too, because you become so used to that particular tool being used to help slow your breath and calm you down.

If you want to do relaxed breathing on your own, you can simply remember an easy breathing rhythm and then intentionally practice that breathing rhythm for one entire minute, or until you begin to calm down, whichever comes last. A great and easy-to-remember breathing rhythm you can use when you are feeling anxious is to breathe in for five seconds, hold it for six seconds, and exhale for seven seconds. These numbers are simple to remember, and this rhythm will help you calm yourself down and begin to experience more peace within your body, mind, and emotions relatively quickly.

### **Talking to a Loved One**

Your anxiety may be your own, but that does not mean that you have to face it alone. For many people, especially those who are facing intense or overwhelming anxiety, having the help of a loved one can be extremely supportive in enabling them to overcome their anxious experiences. You might find that the more you can surround yourself with the support and warmth of loved ones in your life, the more you are going to be able to heal yourself from having troubling anxiety. The reason behind this is that many people succumb to the stigma that anxiety is in any way bad or negative, and so they find themselves experiencing shame and guilt around their anxiety. As a result, they end up holding back and keeping their anxiety to themselves, which can lead to them having even more anxiety.

Suffering alone is not helpful, and it can also lead to you having even more challenging experiences. If, however, you take the time to identify who you can talk to that will be able to respect you and help you and you take the time to work toward actually reaching out to them when you are feeling anxious, you will find yourself feeling far more supported. This way, you no longer feel as though you have to go through anxiety alone, and both you and your support can help you begin to overcome your anxious experiences.

## **Physical Exercise**

When you get anxious, your body produces a large amount of cortisol and adrenaline. Both of these are meant to stimulate enough energy for you to be able to engage in “fight or flight” as needed so that you can safely remove yourself from the situation that you have perceived to be dangerous. If you are not making use of this influx of energy, you will find yourself experiencing a sense of discomfort in your life because this energy can begin to become overwhelming. Rather than being adequately used, it becomes pent up, and you find yourself feeling worse and worse.

If you take the time to engage in physical exercise on a regular basis, it is going to do two things. First, it is going to help you move through that built up energy so that it does not sit there nagging at you and making you feel worse. If you are feeling incredibly anxious, rather than engaging in fight or flight, you can engage in some light cardio or even a more calming form of exercises like yoga or tai chi. Engaging in these types of exercises will help you immediately relieve yourself of the energy that you have built up within you as a result of your anxiety.

Aside from helping you relieve yourself from an immediate bout of anxiety, physical exercise is also going to support you with balancing your hormones and supporting your overall sense of wellbeing. People who exercise on a more regular basis find themselves feeling far more resilient to things like stress and overwhelm, which can be helpful in supporting you with navigating troubling and unwanted experiences with anxiety. This way, you are more likely to feel healthier and more at peace in between bouts of anxiety, and you are more likely to bounce back from your bouts of anxiety with greater ease.

## **Self-Monitoring DAY by DAY**

Avoiding situations that bring you harm is great. But in real life, we both know that that is not always realistic. Life throws plenty of bad situations at you and you can't avoid them all. Therefore, it is essential to develop healthy coping skills for when you do encounter these situations.

Situations that stir up mental illness symptoms can be everyday situations that other, healthier people find to be no big deal. But for you, they can feel catastrophic. They can lead you to relapse in your symptoms, after working so hard to overcome those symptoms with CBT. Learning to cope in

harmful everyday situations is essential to keep yourself from falling into despair.

## Anxiety

Many everyday situations that are nothing to healthy people can trigger severe anxiety in some. For instance, a huge crowd at an airport can be stressful for anyone, but it can be disastrous for you if you have agoraphobia or social anxiety. But what if you have to fly for work or to visit a sick relative? You have to be a part of that airport crowd, whether you like it or not. The situation is not ideal for you but you can use various techniques to cope with your anxiety.

The best technique is relaxation. Focus on your breathing. Breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth. By focusing on your breathing, you take your mind off of the stress that surrounds it.

Progressive muscle relaxation also is helpful in anxiety-provoking situations. Firstly, start with the muscles in your scalp. Force yourself to relax those muscles. Next move to your forehead muscles; keep roving your mind over your body, forcing the relaxation of each of your muscle groups. The relaxation will calm you and the intense mental focus required to perform this exercise will take your mind off of your stress.

Some people find tapping to be soothing. You can repeat a mantra to yourself such as, "I will survive this. This is really not so bad" as you tap different parts of your body. The physical action of tapping paired with the repeated affirmation can help trick your mind into believing what you are saying to yourself.

Sometimes anxiety can impair your ability to focus on anything. In that case, it is essential to pick a spot on the wall and focus on it intently. Do not chase any other thoughts that enter your head. That spot on the wall is your refuge. Use it to take your mind off of the craziness raging around you and within you.

## Chapter 5. Identifying Problems and Setting Goals

In CBT, one of the first things you must do is to identify the underlying problem which triggers the negative and unwanted behavior. This is a crucial part of the therapy as it gives you an area to focus all your effort on. It also gives you purpose while you learn how to manage your feelings of anxiety and depression.

It is important to understand that people are not exactly alike, even if they have been diagnosed with the same disorder. This makes it very important that every CBT session is tailored to meet the unique needs of the individual. There is no blanket rule that will apply in every situation. For that reason, in order to identify the underlying cause for the negative behavior, you must first get a clear picture of how those negative thoughts fit into the entire picture of life.

In the initial visit with the therapist, you will probably be asked a series of questions. One of the first things you and the therapist will work on together is establishing goals. The therapist may not come right out and ask, "What are your goals?" or, "What do you want?" but instead may ask something less obvious, a question that will compel you to think deeply about your answer. For example, they may ask you what your reason is for seeking therapy, or why you feel you need help.

The reason for this is that we are rarely honest with ourselves. The first answer that comes to mind doesn't even address or identify the true nature of our problems. The real answers are often buried deep inside of us, and without some serious inward analysis of ourselves, the true answers may never actually come to the fore.

You could answer this question with the obvious. Many might respond with, "My wife told me to come," or, "I need help," but those answers don't really explain the real reason why you came. Chances are, if your wife told you to come, it is most likely because you are demonstrating certain

behaviors she finds disturbing. This is a good reason for you to sit down and seriously consider why you're seeking out a therapist as that could be the first step in helping you get down to the root of your problem.

How to identify negative thought patterns when they present themselves

Chances are, even after the initial session, you may not have gotten to the core of your problem, but you will begin to think a little differently about identifying it. Whatever your problem is, you've gotten pretty good at covering it up, or you overcame it at some point. You also need to identify those tactics you used to handle your behavior, and the odds are high that if you look underneath these strong points you put forward every day, you'll find the root of your problem.

In this period of retrospection, it's important to take an honest view of your life and where you're heading. Look closely at how your anxiety and depression are affecting your behavior. Again, you have to start looking below the surface to reveal these behaviors, which may be obvious to other people, but it may not be so apparent to you. Your negative behavior may appear in different areas of your life.

Relationships

Some may be struggling with a difficult marriage. However, the underlying problem is not necessarily the marriage but in behaviors demonstrated in the marriage. If you're depressed, that may present itself as being very irritable, distant, or uninterested. Whether you're talking about a marriage, parent/child relationship, or a friendship, these kinds of behaviors over an extended period of time can really cause damage to a strong bond.

Anxiety also is not easily identified in your relationship. Without knowing how it is affecting you, it can be very difficult to see. Neither anxiety nor depression have clear signs that say, "I'm anxious or stressed," or, "This is me being depressed." They are hidden emotions that appear in a myriad of ways that affect your behavior.

You may have lost someone many years ago, friends moved away, lost some jobs, or trust was broken. These things do not have to be recent, as they can be experiences buried deep in your subconscious. However, since they were never addressed, these experiences are resurfacing to damage your present life.

### Career

How you behave at work can reveal many things about yourself. Whether you're a work-at-home mom, or you're a corporate executive, if you have unidentified anxiety and depression, your relationships at work are going to suffer. Are you happy with your work? Do you wake up eager to get started, or do you feel like it is nothing but a tiresome chore, and you feel too unmotivated to perform your tasks?

Some people feel as if they are overworked, others may feel bored, and others may feel unfulfilled. Often, issues with money come up when thinking about work. You may thoroughly enjoy your work but are not satisfied because the money is not enough, or you may be working on a job that you hate because it pays the money you need. Understanding these things will help you identify the underlying problem hidden beneath the surface.

### Spirituality

There is a big difference between having spirituality and having a religion. Many people feel this is the same and struggle with the inner self as a result. Religion is the belief of certain tenets, or teachings, whereas spirituality is what gives your life purpose.

How are you meeting that spiritual need? Most people find it by connecting to something more powerful than themselves, such as a 'supreme being of the universe.' Other people fulfill it through humanitarian efforts. If your spiritual self is not being fulfilled, it can leave you with a feeling of emptiness that no amount of money, relationship, or status in life can fill. Our personal sense of identity is closely connected to this, so it is well worth contemplating where we are in respect to our spirituality.

### Physical well-being

Our physical health can also have an impact on our behavior. When we are not strong and healthy, it can have a deep impact on our emotions and mental state of mind. Even if we are relatively strong but are not physically active, it can have a strong negative impact on us. If you are dealing with chronic health problems, or you're just too busy to maintain your physical health, it could be the trigger to many of your negative behaviors.

### Drugs and alcohol

Any kind of mood-altering substances can greatly affect your thought processes. If you find that you need to infuse yourself regularly with drugs, alcohol, or any other substance to get through the day, it could be a sign of depression or anxiety. Try to think if any of your family or friends pointed out that you might have a problem. Do you come home every day needing a drink? While you may not be an 'alcoholic,' as some may think, your depression or anxiety may have led you to develop a dependence on these substances in order to cope with the daily stress of life.

### Food

Many people are stress eaters. They eat because they are stressed, unhappy, or bored. How does eating make you feel? Other people may have other fears that may be evident in their relationship with food. A poor self-image could cause you to not eat for fear of gaining too much weight. A poor self-image could also cause you to overeat, as you see it as comfort food, the only thing you have that makes you feel good.

### Rest

The body is a highly efficient machine, but it can't run indefinitely. Like all machines, it needs to be refueled, and it needs to rest. If you're not getting enough rest every day or sleeping too much, this can cause problems. Some people naturally wake up the moment the sun rises, while others have to put up a struggle just to wake up. Others may fall asleep quickly but wake up in the middle of the night and cannot fall back to sleep again.

What keeps you from getting your rest? Noisy dogs in the neighborhood, loud music, traffic, children, snoring, health problems, or worry? Many of

these things could be perfectly normal, while others could be a sign of anxiety or depression.

## Recreation

Everyone needs downtime from the rigors of daily life. If we have become so busy that we have no time to unwind or enjoy life, our mental state can suffer. Our brains and our bodies need to recharge to stay balanced. Many people who work second jobs to take care of their financial responsibilities or are constantly moving from sunrise to sunset so they can manage the necessary things in life, will eventually suffer from anxiety or depression.

If you have no free time or can't find time to slow down and relax, eventually, it will take its toll on you. Even if you have free time, but you can't let your mind relax, you are always thinking of the next task you've got to do, and you can't enjoy your break, this could be a trigger that is causing your negative behavior.

Hopefully, these points have made you look deeper into yourself and your behavior to help you identify the underlying triggers behind your negative behavior. After this type of contemplation, your mind is probably spinning in different directions. Now is the time to set some goals that will help you get your life back on track.

## Setting goals

As you went through the list, you probably saw signs of anxiety and depression in your behavior that you had never noticed before. So, you now have a clearer picture of the things you'd like to change.

It is difficult to set goals when you don't know yourself or what your real problem is, but once you've gone through these points, you'll have a clear and honest picture of who you really are and, hopefully, a good idea of how you'd like to change. So, what is it about you that needs to be adjusted so that your behavioral patterns can become more positive?

When it comes to developing your goals, use these points to help you. Don't just think about what you'd like to do. Our behavior can only change when our thinking changes. So, think in terms of how you want to adjust your life and how you feel about different things.

While the words of those close to you may weigh on your mind, you must think in terms of what you want to achieve. This is your life, and the goals must be yours. If you are reflecting someone else's wants and desires, you'll quickly lose interest, and before long, you'll give up.

The goals you set will be the basis for each session you have, and it will also serve as the foundation for a plan that will help you change your thought processes and behavior. Throughout the rest of this program, you will refer to your goal list several times a week, make adjustments, and as long as you follow through, you will see modest changes take effect very quickly.

### How to replace poor coping strategies with more effective ones

There are many things that can cause depression and anxiety.

Circumstances that are beyond our control can take away our feeling of autonomy, that feeling that we are not in control and that we don't have the freedom to make our own choices. There are three things that we must have in our lives to give us satisfaction: autonomy, connections, and abilities. When these things are prominent in our lives, we are happier and have a greater sense of fulfillment. When they are absent, negative feelings begin to appear. We feel ashamed though we've done nothing wrong, we feel depressed, and if we don't have those connections our psychological mind craves, loneliness sets in.

Many who seek out CBT often complain about similar feelings. They are usually in high-stress situations, they do not feel recognized or appreciated for the things they do, and are often isolated from those people they truly want in their lives. When that happens, their energy levels begin to drop, and the mental, emotional, and spiritual side of them starts to starve. This is the point when changing behavior is crucial to healing the whole person. It's time to focus on the positive behavior needed in order to set things right.

You might be wondering if these negative behaviors are triggered by our thoughts. Why exactly do we even need to focus on behavior in therapy? This is a logical question and certainly deserves discussion. First, getting people to do things they enjoy is far simpler than getting them to change

their viewpoints. For example, getting people to stay within the speed limit is a lot easier than getting them to believe that there is a legitimate reason for the law. Many will comply with the law to avoid getting a ticket, but that doesn't necessarily mean they believe it is justified.

Another important fact to consider is that it instantly addresses those innate needs we all have. By making small adjustments in behavior, such as getting people to do things they thoroughly enjoy, we can get the brain to produce endorphins and trigger an antidepressant effect.

Besides all of that, it can work on our inner thoughts and help dispel some of the negative thinking that our minds are stuck in. This aspect of therapy is referred to as 'behavioral activation' and focuses on changing your actions to do something more positive.

At this point, you've simply identified that you feel anxious and depressed. You may not know exactly what makes you feel this way, but it is really unimportant. The key component here is that you have to start doing things that give you enjoyment and pull yourself out of the rut you're in.

The reason for this is because there could be a thousand things buried deep in your psyche that could trigger depression, but it's your response to this negative feeling that is causing the behavior. It is normal for a depressed person to isolate themselves, almost as if they were punishing themselves for feeling emotions. They don't speak to their friends or family, they stop doing the things they enjoy, and they fail to find purpose in anything that they do.

For that reason, you are the only person who is capable of creating this plan of action. Take your time with this as it must be based on the things that you think are the most important to you and will give you that sense of purpose, value, and worthiness.

### Short-term vs. long-term rewards

Even though doing things we enjoy is easier, for someone who is dealing with anxiety and depression, it can be quite a challenge. It is pretty simple to write down on a piece of paper that you want to spend more time with family and friends, but it is another thing to break the negative cycle you're in.

To accomplish this, you need to look at both the short-term and the long-term rewards. Most will reach out for the short-term rewards because they get immediate satisfaction. For example, you receive an invitation to go to the movies with friends. Your immediate reaction is to take advantage of the short-term rewards and hibernate in your home instead. You can watch your favorite TV show on Netflix and just chill out. You might be thinking, “It’s too much of a bother to get dressed and go out. I could stay home and just watch some TV. I have food in my fridge.”

In this scenario, you feel very comfortable in your little cocoon, and you don’t want to deal with the stress involved with leaving it. It is your safe place, and you are content with putting yourself there. However, if your goals are set to open up and let more people into your life, you’ll change your behavior and join your friends for dinner and a movie. After all, you do enjoy movies and spending time with your friends.

If you choose short-term rewards, you’ll feel good for an evening, perhaps even a day, but it wouldn’t get you any closer to your goals. You’ll feel even worse because you knew you really wanted to go out with your friends anyway. So, how do we learn how to choose long-term goals over the short-term ones? There are some basic strategies we can try:

- Go back to your list of goals you created and choose which ones you value the most.
- Create a list of activities that support those values.
- Make a plan to incorporate those activities into your routine. It could look something like this: “I value living in a beautiful home.”
- Clean my living room so I’ll feel comfortable having people over.
- Get my decorating kit and add some color to my house.

You may reach a point where you actually complete the positive activities you have on your list, but there should never be a point where you actually meet your values 100%. Values will always have something that you need to work on, whereas activities are the actions that you do to satisfy your values. It's a good idea to create a list of those things that you consider to be important in your life. Again, for everyone it is different, so when you create this list, think only of the things that you think are important and make you feel good.

# Chapter 6. The Behavioral Side of CBT

## Behavioral Activation

Thus far, we've focused on the cognitive aspects of cognitive behavioral therapy. Behavioral changes are the other essential part of cognitive behavioral therapy. One strategy is known as behavioral activation, which aims to increase participation in pleasurable activities and events that improve mood. Especially for depression, avoidance of activities can worsen the condition by deepening isolation and reinforcing negative beliefs. This leads to increased avoidance in a vicious cycle. Behavioral activation can help break it.

For depression and other conditions, increasing activity can improve mood in multiple ways. First, it addresses avoidance coping mechanisms that deepen depression, anxiety, and phobias. Second, it can increase feelings of self-confidence, usefulness, and meaning by helping you engage in meaningful activities. Finally, by encouraging physical activity, it can bring about some of the physiological changes that improve mood. Surprisingly, engaging in these types of activities can improve mood even when you don't want to do them. To quote the Talmud, "One who seeks to improve, the way is opened for him."

Behavioral activation can include a wide range of activities, like exercising, meeting with friends, attending a club, and going to cultural or sporting events, as well as some essential life tasks like taking care of the home or doing taxes. Less pleasant activities like doing taxes or cleaning are important to improving mood through creating a sense of accomplishment and overcoming avoidance. For pleasant activities, behavioral activation can include a mixture of old and new.

Keep in mind that behavioral activation is different for anxiety and depression. For those suffering from low mood, avoidance of situations might be done out of a lack of energy or a belief that the person will not enjoy it. Thus, simply going to an event can improve mood by creating a feeling of accomplishment, even if the person did not like it and especially if he or she does enjoy it. For people with anxiety, avoidance may be due to fear of some aspect of the situation. In this case, behavioral activation can focus on physical activity and pleasant, meaningful activities that help

reduce stress, while anxiety-inducing situations can be addressed with gradual exposure and a variety of other relaxation techniques.

The first step is identifying activities to include in your behavioral-activation plan. Focus first on pleasant activities. Think about hobbies and activities that you enjoyed in the past but stopped doing, things you do now but would like to do more of, and activities that you have never tried but think you would enjoy. You can also think about things that you would like to accomplish, rather than things that seem pleasant. Getting things done can be a powerful factor for mood improvement. Think about tasks that you need to do to improve your life, such as getting forms, bills, or paperwork in order, fixing things around the house, or making and going to appointments. Similarly, service activities like volunteering can help create a sense of usefulness and value to the community. The most important thing is finding activities that feel meaningful and important to you; otherwise you are unlikely to follow through.

Some possible ideas include:

- Spending time with friends or family or visiting neighbors
- Joining a club or group related to anything that interests you—language, film, politics, and so on
- Attending services at a place of worship
- Attending sporting events, concerts, or cultural events
- Getting a pet or playing with a friend’s pet
- Going out to eat at a restaurant
- Doing yoga, meditation, or relaxation activities
- Doing puzzles, crosswords, or other brain games
- Spending time outside walking, biking, hiking, fishing, or gardening
- Getting physical activity in an enjoyable way—at a gym, at fitness classes, or at home
- Joining a recreational sports team
- Volunteering for a charity, school, faith group, arts organization, or environmental cause

- Taking lessons—music, art, cooking, language, martial arts, community education classes, and so on
- Doing hobbies on your own—reading, art, knitting, singing, outdoors, crafts, cars, and so on
- Doing home-improvement projects
- Doing tasks like taxes, renewing a license, and so on that give you a sense of accomplishment

The second step is setting goals and creating a plan for how you will incorporate these activities into your schedule. Select one to three activities that you would like to incorporate. Keep it to a reasonable amount of time per week, such as one longer activity every other day or a short daily activity. You can increase activities in the future if you feel more energetic or find ones you particularly enjoy. Then, assess how much time the activity will take, and figure out where it will work best in your schedule. Set a date in the near future to start the activity, and do it!

For example, you might wish to spend more time in nature, something you know you will enjoy. You could also begin volunteering at a soup kitchen in the neighborhood, something you wanted to do in the past. You may remember there is a large park ten minutes or so from your home. You could then call and find out that the soup kitchen needs volunteers for a two-hour time slot on Saturday mornings. You could decide that the best time to walk in the park is on the way home from work, and set aside half an hour on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 5:00 to 5:30 to walk. You might then confirm a volunteering time from 9:00 to 11:00 on Saturdays and agree to start next week.

As you make your plan, list obstacles and how you will overcome them. For example, if you have to work late sometimes and will miss an after-work group activity or a chance to take a bike ride, is there another time in the day or week that you can go? If not, come up with other activities that work better. There could also be issues of bad weather, traffic, family responsibilities, or other problems, but don't let these derail your plan. In addition, come up with a list of facilitators, or things that will encourage you to complete the activity. Perhaps you can call a friend to walk with you, as knowing that someone is expecting you will increase your chances of completing the activity. Or maybe your employer offers a reward program

for physical activity. Maybe your spouse is especially supportive, and you can ask him or her to encourage you to attend a weekly club. Write down anything you think might be helpful.

Ancient wisdom comes in handy even here. While developing a sense of gratitude helps free us from a delusional ego, doing charity enhances our self-worth. All the major religions provide the required motivation for altruism. It is important to give away a part of what you earn to the less fortunate. Hinduism, for instance, places additional emphasis on doing your dharma, or duty, and care for others. Generosity is one of the pillars of the spiritual path, and the benefits of this attribute have been substantiated by scientific research. When done over a period of time, charity makes the giver feel good about himself or herself, building self-esteem.

## **Graded Exposure**

Another behavior-change strategy is called graded exposure, a way to learn how to face situations that make you feel stress or fear. This essentially means that you start with an activity that is relatively unstressful and become comfortable with it before building up to activities that are moderately stressful, and finally to ones that at first seemed highly stressful.

For example, let's say you're afraid of dogs, to the point where taking a walk in a city park is highly stressful. You would begin by making a list of activities related to dogs in order of how scary or anxiety-producing each one is, and then move down the list, allowing the anxiety to reduce by half before beginning the next activity. You might start by watching a documentary about dogs or viewing videos of friendly dogs online. Later you might go to a pet store and look at puppies. The following week you could ask to hold or play with a small puppy. Then you might call a friend with a calm, gentle dog and ask to spend some time with it in a controlled, relaxed situation. Over a period of weeks, you could call a friend with a more energetic dog, spend time watching dogs playing at a dog park, and finally, go to a dog park with a friend that owns a dog. You would repeat each of these activities several times per week, continuing the activity until anxiety peaked and receded, for as long as was needed to feel comfortable in the situation.

There are several important aspects of this process. First of all, it should be gradual. Choose a beginning activity that is relatively nonthreatening, and

slowly work up to scarier situations. It should be a challenging but not traumatic process. Secondly, it's important to give yourself plenty of time in each situation to allow the anxiety to dissipate, rather than removing yourself from the situation before anxiety peaks. In this vein, make sure you avoid any distractions. In many cases, breathing exercises and music are helpful ways to deal with anxiety. In this case, though, the goal is to fully face the experience so that you can experience the anxiety and realize that it will diminish with time. The activity also needs to be repeated often, about three to five times per week, for full effectiveness. You can take as long as you need on each step, but try to move on to the next step once anxiety or fear has decreased by at least half.

### **Addressing Maladaptive Coping Mechanisms**

Putting a stop to maladaptive coping mechanisms is another important behavioral dimension of CBT. As we've discussed, CBT encourages participation in activities that improve mood. Similarly, it discourages doing things that lead to lowered moods, either directly or indirectly. Sometimes people suffering from anxiety, depression, or other types of mental illness find coping mechanisms that make it easier to deal with the unpleasant feelings. Some coping mechanisms are fine and healthy; others are destructive. Some may also worsen anxiety or depression in the long term, even if they aren't directly harmful. For example, taking a brisk walk when you feel anxious could be a good coping mechanism. Avoiding situations that cause anxiety, such as giving presentations, may not harm you directly but will cause problems in the future by limiting your opportunities and worsening anxiety related to that situation. Drinking heavily when you feel anxious, on the other hand, is both directly and indirectly harmful and could lead to disastrous consequences.

Maladaptive coping mechanisms include:

- Drinking heavily or with the intention of dulling negative feelings
- Using illegal drugs
- Abusing prescription or over-the-counter medications
- Using other behaviors, such as sex or partying, to alter mood

- Mentally or emotionally disengaging from difficult situations
- Avoiding difficult situations
- Sleeping excessively
- Engaging in self-harm
- Having an eating disorder
- Engaging in excessive attention-seeking
- Being in denial
- Taking out anger, aggression, or frustration on people around you

In some cases, we keep doing behaviors that are harmful or that increase anxiety and depression in the long term because they provide some kind of short-term benefit. For example, drinking, drug use, or sex can provide some kind of escape for a person who is experiencing extreme stress in his or her life. Similarly, an eating disorder may provide a temporary sense of control for someone who feels that his or her life is out of control. It's important to think about what short-term benefits encourage you to continue these types of behaviors. Do they help you in some way or help you avoid something? Do they provide a rush or an escape? Do they get you attention or other things that feel good? Maladaptive behaviors like this are common, and having them doesn't mean you're a bad or weak person. Identifying these behaviors and why you do them helps you in two ways: it highlights the actions that need to be avoided and focuses you on the underlying problem that you need to address.

Stopping the use of maladaptive coping mechanisms can increase anxiety in the short term but ultimately helps reduce both anxious feelings and low mood. This is because continuing to avoid a stressful situation teaches your mind that avoidance equals reduced stress, and encourages you to be more afraid of it. If you face the situation, anxiety will peak but then decline as you realize that you are OK. The next time, the peak will be a little lower, and so on, until the situation feels manageable. However, if you avoid it each time, anxiety associated with the situation will remain high and even increase.

## Chapter 7. Mindfulness

We dive into mindfulness, the “third wave” in CBT alongside cognitive and behavioral practices. Mindfulness has emerged in the past few decades as a powerful way to maintain our equilibrium as we deal with difficult emotions.

Matt didn't know how much more of this he could take. For the past few nights he'd been working to transition his infant daughter to falling asleep in her crib rather than while being rocked, and it wasn't going as smoothly as he'd hoped.

“She should be asleep by now,” he thought to himself as his daughter continued to babble away. He had gone into her room once already to resettle her and thought she was close to drifting off when he left. But a minute later he heard her very awake-sounding voice through the baby monitor. A few minutes later her babbles turned to crying. Matt knew he'd have to settle her again.

He shook his head as he entered her room, hoping she couldn't sense his irritation. He looked forward to finally getting to watch his TV show in peace as he patted her back, rolling his eyes and gritting his teeth in the darkness.

### **What Is Mindfulness?**

If you pay attention to what your mind is doing, you'll notice two strong tendencies:

1. The mind focuses on things other than what is happening right now - Most of the time we're thinking about events that have already happened or that might happen in the future. Thus our well-being is often affected by things that have little to do with the moment in which we find ourselves.
2. The mind continually evaluates our reality as good or bad - It does so based on whether things are working out the way we want them to. We try to cling to circumstances we like and push away those we dislike.

These tendencies are part of what it means to be human. They can also cause us problems and needless suffering. Focusing on the future can lead to worry and anxiety, most often about things that will never happen. Ruminating on events from the past can lead to distress and regret about things that are no longer in our control.

In the process, we miss the once-in-a-lifetime experience that each moment offers. We don't really take in the people around us, the natural beauty of our surroundings, or the sights, sounds, and other sensations that are here right now.

Our constant and automatic effort to judge things as either for us or against us also creates unnecessary pain. We often end up resisting things we don't like, even when such resistance is futile. A perfect example is raging against the weather—no amount of cursing the rain will make it stop, and we'll only frustrate ourselves in the process.

The practice of mindfulness offers an antidote to both of these habits.

## **Presence**

Mindfulness is as simple as bringing our awareness to the present. That's it - If you're walking the dog, pay attention to that experience - If you're having lunch, focus on having lunch. If you're arguing with your partner or embracing afterward, be fully in that experience.

Sometimes when we learn what mindfulness is we say, "I already know that I'm walking the dog. I know I'm having lunch. How is that supposed to be helpful?" But mindfulness is more than knowing that we're doing something. It's about going deeper, intentionally cultivating a connection with our experience. We don't just walk the dog—we notice the color of the sky, the feel of the ground under our feet, the sounds our dog makes, and the periodic pulls on the leash. It's opening our awareness to elements of our experience that we normally miss.

At the same time, a mindful approach doesn't require that we do anything in addition to what we're engaging in. If we're running, we're running. If we're driving, we're driving. People sometimes protest that being mindful in certain situations would be distracting, even dangerous. In fact, the opposite is true—we're safer and less distracted when our attention is fixed on what we're doing.

Simply being present in our lives accomplishes two things at once. First, it allows us to get more out of what's happening, so we don't sleepwalk through our lives. We can discover the richness in our reality, even in the most mundane activities. Second, when we're present, we're not ruminating about the past or fearing the future, which is a big part of why mindfulness practice reduces anxiety and depression.

So much of our unhappiness arises from things that have nothing to do with what's real in this moment. For example, I was walking home from the train one evening and started thinking about my children's health. Before I knew it, I was imagining a tragic scenario in which one of them was gravely sick, and I began to feel anxious and downcast as though it were already happening. When I caught myself and came back to the present, I noticed what was real: the lengthening light, the birds flying, the green grass, and blue sky. My kids were healthy as far as I knew. I didn't have to live in my tragic fantasy. It was hard not to smile with that realization as I headed home to see them.

## **Acceptance**

The second core feature of mindful awareness is acceptance, which means opening to our experience as it unfolds.

After a couple miserable nights, Matt realized he needed a new perspective on his daughter's bedtime. The next night he decided to try a different approach—what if he let the night play out however it was going to? It's not like his resistance made things better: it was making him frustrated toward his baby every night. He resolved to do his best to help her fall asleep, and to release his fierce attachment to controlling exactly when that happened.

The first time his daughter began to cry, Matt took a calming breath before going into her room. Instead of telling himself, "I hate this," or, "This is ridiculous," he thought, "This is what's happening right now." Then he took stock of what that statement actually meant: He was standing by the crib of his baby girl, whom he loved more than words. He was patting her tiny back, which was the size of his hand. He could hear her breathing begin to slow. He realized how in that moment he had no real complaint about anything. He wasn't cold, hungry, thirsty, or in danger. His daughter was

healthy. She just wasn't asleep yet. Maybe things were exactly as they ought to be.

Matt's example reveals important corollaries of mindful acceptance. First, it doesn't mean we stop having preferences for how things go. Of course, Matt still wanted his baby to fall asleep quickly and easily, and wanted to have more of the evening to himself to unwind. Accepting meant holding those preferences more lightly, and not assuming his daughter was doing something wrong by not being asleep when he wanted her to be.

Accordingly, Matt didn't throw in the towel and stop following the bedtime routine he and his wife had agreed on to transition their baby to falling asleep on her own in her crib. He stuck to his plan, offering predictability and consistency while recognizing that he couldn't control his daughter's sleep.

When we stop fighting against the way things are, we relieve an enormous portion of our stress. Earlier in my career I had a very difficult supervisor, and I often found myself tied up in my thoughts as I tried to make sense of how unreasonable she was. Finally, I reached a point of accepting that she could just be difficult, period. My acceptance didn't change her behavior, but it did free me from acting as if she were doing something surprising. She was simply being true to form.

A crucial part of acceptance is that it lets us respond appropriately to the facts in front of us. My acceptance of my boss's temperament made it clear to me that I needed to find work elsewhere, which underscores the distinction between acceptance and apathy.

## **Benefits of Mindfulness**

Training in mindfulness helps with a wide range of conditions. A partial list includes anxiety, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), chronic pain, depression, eating disorders, excessive anger, insomnia, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), relationship difficulties, smoking cessation, and stress. Many treatment programs have been developed that integrate mindfulness practices into CBT. One of the first was mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) for depression, developed by psychologists Zindel Segal, John Teasdale, and Mark Williams. These developers reasoned that the tools of mindfulness were well suited to remedy some of the factors that contribute to depression. For example, practicing paying

attention to one's internal experience could strengthen one's ability to detect early warning signs of depression, like unrealistic negative automatic thoughts.

MBCT includes elements of traditional CBT for depression and integrates training in mindfulness to protect against relapse. Much of the training focuses on using mindful awareness to notice problematic thoughts. It also emphasizes learning a different relationship with our thoughts. We can learn to recognize them as simply thoughts rather than something we need to react to.

Multiple studies have shown that MBCT achieves this aim. For example, a study by Teasdale, Segal, Williams, and their colleagues found that among individuals with recurrent depression, MBCT reduced the risk for relapse by nearly half versus the comparison group that received treatments other than MBCT (e.g., antidepressant medication, other types of psychotherapy).

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), developed by Steven Hayes, has also received strong research support for treating several conditions like depression, anxiety, and chronic pain. As the name suggests, it emphasizes acceptance of our experience in the service of committing to action that supports our values. Closely related to ACT is Acceptance-Based Behavioral Therapy, designed by Susan Orsillo and Lizabeth Roemer to treat generalized anxiety disorder. And the best-tested treatment for borderline personality disorder—a debilitating and difficult-to-treat condition—includes a strong mindfulness component to address the difficulty handling the strong emotion that is part of this diagnosis. Mindfulness clearly has beneficial effects on many psychological issues. How does this approach lead to improvements?

## **How Mindfulness Helps**

There are several ways in which mindfulness practice produces its benefits: Greater awareness of our thoughts and emotions - When we practice paying attention more and opening to our reality, we begin to know ourselves better. We give ourselves the space required to recognize how we're thinking and feeling and, because we accept reality as it is, we don't deny our own experience.

Better control of our emotions - Greater awareness of our internal experiences helps us interrupt unhelpful trains of thought like rumination

and resentment. Adopting a present focus also tends to be calming, which can loosen the grip of runaway emotions.

A different relationship with our thoughts - Our minds are continuously generating thoughts. As we allow these thoughts to come and go during mindfulness practice, we start to give less weight to them. We learn that they are simply ideas created by our minds, and not necessarily a reflection of anything meaningful.

Decreased reactivity - As our relationship with our thoughts evolves, we become less prone to habitual reactions, which are often not in our best interest. Mindfulness can provide a pause before we act on our initial impulse, giving us enough time to choose a response that fits our goals and values.

## **How Can We Practice Mindfulness?**

Like any habit, being more mindful takes practice. There are two major categories of mindfulness practice: activities designed specifically to engage mindful awareness and bringing mindfulness to our ordinary life activities.

### **Formal Mindfulness Practices**

The most common formal mindfulness technique is sitting meditation. It involves choosing something to focus on for a set amount of time and opening to the experience as it unfolds moment by moment. The most common target of focus is our breath, which is always with us and always happening in the present. Inevitably our attention will drift to other times and places, or we'll start engaging in judgments of how we're doing or whether we like meditating. The practice is simply to return to our intended focus once we realize we've lost it. This focus on coming back to our present moment, without criticizing our minds for wandering, is the essence of meditation.

Other common types of meditation can entail a focus on bodily sensations (body scan meditation), ambient sounds, or wishes of health and contentment toward ourselves and others (loving-kindness meditation).

Formal practices also include more active exercises like yoga and tai chi. In yoga, for example, we can pay attention to the physical sensations of the poses, including the breath that's synchronized with our movement. We can

also practice acceptance of the discomfort we sometimes feel in challenging postures, which can lead to either staying in the pose and breathing with the discomfort or changing our position if necessary. Awareness and acceptance promote choice.

## Loving-Kindness

### How to Start Meditating

The idea of meditation is simple, but the practice of it typically is not easy. When we sit down to meditate, the mind often decides it has other things to do. Common reactions when we start to meditate include:

- Feeling a bit bored
- Feeling frustrated
- Wanting to stop
- Suddenly remembering things you've been meaning to do
- Having countless thoughts clamoring for your attention

None of these experiences means you're doing something wrong or can't meditate, so stick with it. It can help to keep the following things in mind for your meditation practice:

You're not bad at meditating - We'll lose our focus again and again while we meditate. If you think you're bad at it, think again—meditation is simply re-finding our focus as many times as we lose it. We don't have to buy into the self-critical thoughts that intrude into our meditation sessions.

The goal is not to “become good at meditating” - It's easy to bring the habit of judging to our mindfulness practice, which can make meditation both punishing and disappointing. The point of meditation is simply to focus on the present and to let go of judgments.

Let go of attachment to a specific outcome - You probably have expectations of what meditation will be like—having a clear and settled mind, for example—and could strive to make the experience match what you expect. But in reality, we never know what we'll experience during meditation. We can practice opening to whatever happens in a particular session.

There are many ways to meditate. Here's a simple plan to get started:

- 1 Practice meditation when you're able to stay awake and alert.
  - 2 Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, and remove possible distractions like your phone.
  - 3 Choose a comfortable seat on the floor, in a chair, or anywhere else. If you sit on the floor, you can raise your hips with a blanket or a yoga block if that's more comfortable.
  - 4 Close your eyes if you wish, or keep them open and fixed on the floor a few feet in front of you.
  - 5 Practice with or without a recording; set a timer if you do it without. Five minutes is a good starting point. Keep the timer out of sight.
  - 6 Begin to notice the sensations of breathing, paying attention to them for the full length of your inhalation and exhalation.
  - 7 Bring your attention back to the breath each time you realize your mind has wandered.
  - 8 There are many apps and free online meditations available if you prefer a guided meditation. Aura and Insight Timer, for example, are free meditation apps available for iOS and Android systems.
- Finally, as with anything else, maintain a light touch. Meditation practice is for you, so beware of making it yet another chore to cross off your list.

## Chapter 8. Procrastination

One of the significant effects of social anxiety is that it causes one to fail in deliberating on duties and transfer them to a later day. In other words, procrastination becomes the order of the day. However, it is worth noting that with procrastination, the expectations are never met. The fear, as well as the sensation of being anxious sets in. In other words, the victim starts feeling as if they are a failure in the collective and loses focus. More time is wasted as they try to recollect themselves up. More fear sets in and the victim may end up being restless. Improper management of time is the primary cause of procrastination. In other words, the lack of planning causes individuals to keep working over the same issues and forget about others. For instance, scholars may spend more time with the subjects they like and forget about the others. In other words, they may end up forgetting that all the items will be examined in the long run. The sensations bring more fear and restless.

In most cases, the realization that all the aspects will be tested in the long run causes most of the scholars to be anxious about the result. In most cases, the tensing moment tends to escalate when there is no time left to deliberate on all issues. The fear of failure then worsens the situation. In most cases, when the scholars realize that they haven't done all that is supposed to be done, the feeling of loss of hope and expectations of failure sets in. They start figuring about the failure they are about to experience. In other words, they start thinking of what society expects from them. The feeling of anxiety sets in, and they may not be able to deliberate on issues effectively.

Social anxiety may affect the way people lead their lives. In other words, the perception or rather the sensations that people have over someone tend to change the way one relates to society. For instance, if society expects excellence in terms of academics from you, you have to work hard and meet all their expectations. In such cases, there is a sensation of fear or rather the feeling of anxiety that sets in. One starts to fear what society will judge their actions or results.

In most cases, the victim becomes restless and quickly loses focus over issues at hand. They may start desiring to meet the expectations of their

peers as well as the rest of society and in the long run, lose their purpose. The aspect creates some sense of irresponsibility that acts as a significant cause of failure and total loss when one is having extreme anxiety over anything.

Our thoughts are interconnected with our feelings and behaviors. The way we think affects both how we feel and act. The first step toward recovering from negativity is identifying various negative thinking patterns. When you take note of your negative thoughts, you get a better understanding of your mind and emotions and are in a much better position to develop positive thoughts.

Some types of negative thoughts include, I'm so stupid, I'm so foolish, and, I'm unlucky.

If you find it difficult to be introspective and admit to your negative thoughts, you should ask a trusted friend or family member to keep track of your negative ways of thought.

#### Find Out the Causes of Your Negative Thought Patterns

The next challenge is to identify the sources of your negative thoughts. For instance, if one of your negative thoughts is, I'm ugly, no one likes me! try to understand the action or event that triggered this thought. Being good at identifying the causes of our negative thoughts calls us to be introspective. Maybe the source of your negative thought is your childhood abuse. If a close family member told you that you are not beautiful, you might have taken it to heart, and have been since looking for evidence to support your flawed belief. A member of the opposite sex might look at you with a frown – for other reasons of course – but you will still deduct from their facial expression that they find you ugly.

#### Highlight Unhelpful Thought Patterns

It is one thing having negative thought patterns, and it is another having unhelpful thought patterns. These are also known as core beliefs. The unhelpful thought patterns are ingrained into a person's psyche. Unhelpful thought patterns tend to be divorced from reality. For instance, if you have been telling yourself, "I'm stupid," for long enough, it will cease being just a negative thought and graduate into a core belief. This will lead you to

automatically shunning opportunities and people that you consider too smart for you.

### List down the Consequences of Your Negative Thoughts

To be more involved in actively changing your negative thought patterns, you have to identify the consequences that you suffer. For instance, if your negative thought, I'm foolish causes you to detach yourself from your peers or stops you from going for the opportunities that you deserve, take note of these consequences so that you may increase your resolve to change your situation. At one point, you will have had enough and decide that you want to change. You may also list down past negative experiences and consequences that occurred as a result of negative thinking patterns.

### Keep a Record of Your Thoughts

Using a worksheet, track the number of negative thoughts that you experience on a daily or weekly basis. Also, note down the ideas that support a thought and the ideas that do not support a thought. For instance, if one of your negative thoughts is, I'm a loser, ideas that do not support this negative thought include, "I'm a great person", "I have a sharp mind", and "I don't need everyone to like me!" Try to determine the days during which you experience low cases of negative thought patterns and the days when the negativity shoots through the roof.

### Avoid Negative Language

Create a list of negative words that you use often. For instance, "can't" and "won't", and make a conscious decision of using more balanced words like "sometimes" or "most of the time". When you have a negative way of thinking, it affects even the language you use. But you must make a conscious effort to alter this situation. By developing a language that promotes positivity, you will be sending a message to your brain to challenge its negative thinking patterns.

### Explore the Connection between Your Emotions and Negative Thoughts

Whenever you experience a negative emotion, start by questioning the thought behind it. For instance, if you get anxious or depressed, go back to

the thought that you just had. You will find that the thought was depressive in nature. For instance, you might have wondered why you have taken so long to achieve success or why you haven't settled, or you might have just thought that you're not good enough. Always monitor your thoughts and take notice of the negative thoughts. When you catch a negative thought early enough, it is easy to amend it. For example, instead of thinking, I'm not good enough by means of a mantra, you want to think, I'm a great person!

### Choose Positive Explanations

No matter how your actions appear conventionally terrible, you can always rationalize them. For instance, if you had a child while you're still young, instead of looking at it as throwing your dreams away, look at it as bringing something new into the world. The same case applies to your thoughts. On the occasions that you experience negative thoughts, you want to find a positive or realistic explanation.

### List down the Things That You're Grateful For

When you are battling negative thoughts, it is quite easy to overlook the many positive things about your life. To shift your mindset from negativity into positivity, you have to list down the things that you are grateful for. Some of the things that you ought to be grateful for include family, lovers, pets, and home. Whenever you fall short of your expectations, think about what you already have, and close the door to negative thinking patterns.

### Practice Mindfulness

Instead of getting lost in the negative thoughts roaring in your mind, learn to shift your focus to the present. Pay direct attention to the things that you are doing at that moment, such as eating, drinking, and other daily activities.

### Seek Guidance and Support

Don't bury yourself in negative thinking patterns. If you have tried in vain to get rid of your unhelpful thoughts, don't feel shy to reach out to an authority for help. They understand your problem probably more than you ever will. Get close to people too. You'd be amazed at the number of kind-hearted people out there ready to help you if you choose to want their help.

## Chapter 9. Worry, Fear, and Anxiety

What's the objective of fear?

### **Fear**

It is this four-letter word that has such a great amount of control over our lives. We appear to have acknowledged it as a component of the human condition. Fear removes us from what we truly want, it makes us feel contemptible, it causes a feeling of frailty, however above all else it denies us of what our identity is intended to be. On fear as feelings, fear as sentiments, fear as tensions and fear as fears.

Anyway, the subject being the brain research on fear, it is fundamental to comprehend why fear occurs and what might be the helpful headings for fear. Fear could be portrayed as a general oblivious sentiment of repulsiveness or could be a progressively unpredictable feeling, for example, anxiety and externalized fear. Fear could likewise be fears which are industrious neurotic feelings of trepidation coordinated towards explicit articles and circumstances.

Fears could be of bugs or statures and these are misrepresented or extraordinary types of fear with extreme substantial responses, nearly verging on suspicious responses. Fear could therefore be uncovered as extreme feelings with real responses and can be shown as nervousness or fear, fear could likewise be a general inclination. So as to comprehend why fear happens, we recognize these sorts of fear:

Fear as Emotions - Fear when joined by substantial responses would connote forceful enthusiastic reaction to a circumstance or an item or occasion. Since the sentiment of fear is disguised, fear would normally start with an inclination or an abstract segment. This implies the individual would first 'feel' terrified of the circumstance and afterward respond to it. Such fear in which the individual is aware of the feeling and responds emphatically to it is commonly a passionate reaction and this kind of fear is therefore shown as a forceful feeling.

Fear as Feeling - Fear could anyway be basically shown as an abstract inclination, a feeling of uneasiness or oblivious view of a type of risk or danger that may not bring out solid substantial responses. Fear as an inclination is along these lines unwittingly discharged in dreams, slips of the tongue, failures of consideration and so forth.

Fear as Anxiety - Fear as an inclination could likewise be the emotional premise of stress such as when disguised and even unexplained nervousness has a general sentiment of fear. Anxiety subsequently starts with a fear; however, this could be to a great extent oblivious, disguised and increasingly summed up. Be that as it may, uneasiness has unmistakable real responses and that is the way nervousness varies from fear as an inclination.

Fear as Phobias - Fear as phobias consist of relentless neurotic enthusiastic reaction towards explicit items or occasions. The distinction among nervousness and fear is that fears are constantly externalized while anxiety is disguised, and fear again being externalized as a feeling or disguised as an inclination would be a part of both uneasiness and fears. Be that as it may, fears are not feelings but rather obsessive reactions comprising of fear as an unpredictable feeling and substantial response. Since fears are structures of feelings and solid responses, the responses are communicated in misrepresented structures in fears so people with fears would respond in extraordinary manners and could build up a condition of rage particularly because of the outrageous and wild real responses.

In restorative treatment of brain science, it will be important to comprehend the starting point of fear and this should be possible with neurological examinations and investigations of substantial responses and mental states. Fear as basic sentiments or complex passionate reactions ought to be distinguished in explicit circumstances and extensive fear could be examined in anxiety and worry.

## **Anxiety**

Anxiety is a psychological burden which conveys what happens in stress, peevishness, fear, or uneasiness. The psychological strain results either from a feeling of powerlessness to control one's situation or condition or

from a feeling of vulnerability about future or approaching occasions. Uneasiness is a characteristic passionate reaction of individuals trying to endure and live serenely. Anxiety is a steady token of mankind's shocking fragility and its articulate ineptitude to ace its own predetermination.

Not all anxiety is vindictive, yet rather only certain types of it. Analysts, both common and profound, for the most part accept that intermittent calm anxiety aids profitability and execution. Sharpness is upgraded, inspiration is invigorated, and fixation is increased. One's potential and capacity are subsequently more effectively bridled. Actually, genuine instructive and mingling repercussions may result when nervousness is missing, (for example, epitomizes solidified criminal conduct); or when stress is unreasonable, (for example, embodies touchy youngsters in a troublesome home).

The connection among pleasant and malicious anxiety is like that of stress and pain. A moderate measure of stress is basic to top performance and achievement. This reality is especially obvious with the competitor arranged to run a race or contend in a field occasion. In any case, the risk to happiness occurs when the development of stress is transfigured into trouble. This situation may develop with the business official who has demanding day by day quantities to fill and unwavering cut-off times to meet. Wastefulness and decay are the regular results. The result is the beginning of real obsessive unsettling influences.

### Physiological Anxiety

The experience of nervousness is normal and widespread. It's anything but a feeling confined to the poor or mistreated. Anxiety is a definite part of the human condition, for life on all of its levels, from the worldwide and influential to the family and individuals, and it is distinct with defenselessness, perplexity, and stress. Many may deny their own stress, or if nothing else its capacity (even to themselves) for several reasons, for instance, the desire to avoid embarrassment, the sentiment of pride, the fear of expulsion, the hazard and unease of vulnerability, and so forth; in any case, almost everybody encounters anxiety somewhat. Its occurrence is

upsetting and weakening. Its persistence is devastating. For whatever length of time daily living is described by battle, hardship, and suffering, the anxiety experience is a certainty.

## Types of anxiety

Anxiety can come in a wide range of forms relying upon what triggers our feelings of fear, stress, or anxiety. These three kinds of anxiety are frequently the most well-known sorts talked about in present day brain science study, yet there are likely several kinds of anxiety that don't fit so conveniently into these classifications (explicit fears, existential anxiety, passing anxiety, and so on.) Nevertheless, these are the kinds of anxiety I will mention in this post:

### Social Anxiety

Social anxiety is a fear or stress over social circumstances. We may feel awkward or maintain a strategic distance from conditions that include enormous gatherings of individuals (like school, work, open areas, high school reunions, and so forth.) Or we may even feel awkward or stay away from specific sorts of 1-on-1 connections (like prospective employee meet-ups, dating, associating with an outsider just because, or meeting a big name).

The vast majority feel some sort of anxiety in these circumstances, however it fluctuates enormously from individual to individual. A few people may feel increasingly good in meetings, while others feel progressively good during a 1-on-1 connection. Some people may feel increasingly good conversing with familiar faces, while others feel progressively good meeting somebody just because. It truly relies upon the individual.

### Execution Anxiety

In contrast to social anxiety, execution anxiety is a fear or stress over displays, for example, a student taking a last, the most important test at

school, or an artist performing in front of an audience, or a competitor playing at a major league game. We stress that we won't put forth a valiant effort, or that we will mess up or lose, and that anxiety can really inhibit us from performing to our best ability (or in any event, performing at all, for instance because of a lot of "stage fright").

Rather than concentrating on what we have to complete to succeed, we become progressively centered around every one of the ways things that may turn out badly. This can sometimes become an inevitable outcome. Our thoughts make us progressively awkward and unstable, and afterward those thoughts lead to activities that strengthen our past originations.

### Decision Anxiety

Decision anxiety is an anxiety established in vulnerability when deciding. In all actuality none of us can act or settle on a choice with full information of what the outcomes will be; the universe is simply excessively unpredictable, and our brains aren't prepared to completely understand it. Because of this, we regularly feel anxiety when settling on a critical choice in our life, since we don't have a clue whether we will settle on the most ideal decision. I'm certain that you've encountered these sorts of anxieties through your life to changing degrees. That is great. A ton of our uneasiness can be consistent and regular. Nonetheless, when it starts meddling with how we need to live our lives, at that point it can turn into an issue that we have to manage. The initial move toward managing this issue is recognizing a part of the potential reasons for our uneasiness, and at that point we can figure out what are the most ideal approaches to treat it.

### Understand your Anxiety

A few therapists for the most part portray anxiety as a dubious and backhanded inclination, having no specific source or major reason. This case can positively be tested. With anxiety there is regularly a cause impact relationship, however the cause might be covered up or misjudged. I suggest that the real reasons for uneasiness are generally connected with explicit dubious mental states. There are fundamentally three significant unstable mental states that determine fervent unsettling influences. The first

of these is blame. Blame by its very nature causes lots of stress. Blame is the feeling of individual bad behavior and being at risk for discipline. The blame might be false or real (non-existent or real, psychological or good). In either case, the intuitive experience and strain are comparative.

The second major questionable mental state which may produce anxiety is vanity. The individual experiencing vanity has a distraction with himself and with his own needs. It ought to be noticed that a typical attribute of this selfish perspective is outrage. Selfishness has two central measurements, to be specific, predominance (egotism) and mediocrity (deficiency). A better attitude forces an individual to obsessively take a stab at individual consideration and to verify the adulation and recognition of others.

## **Phobias**

The third major questionable mental state is fear. Not all fear is threatening. Natural fear is required for physical endurance. Bleak fear is vindictive and is described by a subjugated distraction with individual wellbeing and prosperity. An extreme worry over verifying (or keeping up) a praiseworthy open picture, a regarded notoriety, a high societal position, great health, family welfare, material belongings, and so on., may effectuate horrible fear.

These three significant unstable mental states- - blame, selfishness, fear - may might be situational or constant. If they are situational, at that point their term is transitory, whenever dealt with fittingly. If they are ceaseless, at that point proficient advising might be required so as to find and look at the causative elements.

### **Overcome phobias**

Self-help therapy and strategies can both be successful at treating a phobia. What's best for you relies upon the facts, for example, the seriousness of your phobia, your access to proficient therapy, and the amount of help you need. When in doubt, self-help is constantly worth the attempt. The more you can accomplish for yourself, the more in charge you'll feel—which goes far with regards to fears and worries. In any case, if your fear is

extreme to the point that it triggers fits of anxiety or wild anxiety, you might need to look for extra help.

Therapy for phobias has an extraordinary reputation. In light of the fact that it works incredibly well, however you will in general get results rapidly—once in a while in as a little as one to four sessions. In any case, support doesn't need to come in the presence of an expert therapist. Simply having somebody to hold your hand or remain close by as you face your feelings of fear can be very useful.

It's normal to need to keep away from the thing or circumstance you fear. In any case, with regards to vanquishing fears, confronting your feelings of trepidation is the key. While shirking may make you feel better for the time being, it keeps you from discovering that your fear may not be as alarming or overpowering as you might suspect. You never find the opportunity to figure out how to adapt to your feelings of trepidation and experience authority over the circumstance. Subsequently, the fear turns out to be progressively scarier and all the more overwhelming in your brain. The best method to defeat a fear is by steadily and over and over again submitting yourself to what you fear in a sheltered and controlled manner.

What was the most recent thought you had that caused your fear to increase?


Be honest with yourself. Was this coming from an emotional or rational thought?


In what way are you going to choose to reframe the thought into a rational one?

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This will not “fix” the issue, it will make it easier to understand and get a clearer perspective on what to do.

Realize that there is an appropriate time when you do need to conquer your fear, recall one of them from your own history here.


### Overcome Panic

The uplifting news about panic attacks, the abrupt flood of anxiety and overpowering apprehension that happens for no definite explanation, is that they typically just last around 10 minutes. The awful news: They can be probably the most alarming minutes of your life. Subsequently, people suffering with panic attacks begin to live in dreadful expectation of future assaults, which can exact a colossal physical and passionate toll. Yet, by creating adapting aptitudes, a great many people who have fits of anxiety can deal with their indications.

The overarching treatment is CBT.

Another branch of CBT, known as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), has likewise been discovered compelling in treating panic disorders. Therapist Steven Hayes created ACT to a limited extent as an approach to treat his very own panic disorder. This type of treatment utilizes acknowledgment and care strategies to change how you identify with your physical impressions of anxiety and tension itself. CBT is an unbelievably compelling treatment for emotional issues. Seventy to 90% of individuals who experience CBT will show signs of improvement.

A key part of CBT in treating panic is a technique called interoceptive exposure, where the individual purposely stands up to the undesirable physical vibes that are causing tension. Individuals become progressively sensitive to these sensations since they fear and avoid them, so confronting the sensations and discovering that they are not risky can bring down anxiety affectability.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are likewise frequently used to treat anxiety disorders and depression, with or without CBT. These medications can be viable, yet CBT has been seen as a more drawn out enduring treatment than SSRIs.

### Overcome Obsession

Being obsessed resembles having limited focus: you lose the capacity to see or think about anything outside the object of your obsession. Obsession turns out to be a part of your regular day to day existence, and can be identified with fear; this varies from habit, which makes somebody never feel fulfilled except if he is enjoying the object of their compulsion. Getting over an obsession is no straightforward assignment, yet once you figure out how to quit encouraging the obsession and occupy your energy with new individuals and interests, opportunity will be within reach.

Get Cognitive Behavior Therapy. This kind of treatment recognizes that there might be no real way to quit contemplating an obsession, yet attempts to weaken the ties between the obsessive thoughts and ordinary triggers. This makes it simpler to manage life and consider and get things done; the obsession turns into something somewhat simpler to manage. CBT can likewise be utilized to build up a word or activity that can "break" the obsessive idea and enable you to concentrate on something different.

### Physical Exercise and Anxiety

Therapists examine how exercise calms anxiety and recommend that a 10-minute walk might be similarly on a par with a 45-minute exercise. A few studies demonstrate that activity can work rapidly to raise a depressed mind-set in many individuals. Despite the fact the impacts might be brief, they exhibit that an energetic walk or other basic movement can convey a few hours of alleviation, like taking an ibuprofen for a headache.

Be invigorated! Proceed to plan something for eating up that excess.

Proceed to plan something to start discharging those endorphins, since it's those endorphins that are simply the common, delightful method for calming down; of simply bringing yourself down, loosening up, without depending on any outer upgrade, for example, liquor or medications.

When did you last do any type of exercise?

|

|

What do you enjoy doing that by default is a form of exercise?

|

Commit right now!

What?	
By when?	
What?	
By when?	
What?	
By when?	

# Chapter 10. Insomnia

## Insomnia

Insomnia is a sleep disorder that makes it difficult for a person to fall asleep or stay asleep and in some cases causes you to wake up early and be unable to fall back to sleep. Because of a lack of proper sleep, a person usually feels tired after waking up. Insomnia disorder is bad because it saps out your energy, affects your mood and health as well as your performance at work.

Enough sleep varies from one individual to the next, but the recommended sleep for adults is seven to eight hours of sleep each night. At a certain point in most adult's lives, a person may experience acute insomnia that can last for several days or weeks. However, there are people that suffer from prolonged periods of chronic insomnia. This type of insomnia may be associated with other conditions that need medical attention.

With simple daily habits, one can overcome insomnia and go back to enjoying healthy sleep patterns. How does a person know they are suffering from insomnia? Insomnia has various distinct symptoms. These may include:

- Finding it difficult to fall asleep during bedtime
- Losing sleep in the halfway through the night
- Getting up very early
- Feeling tired even after a night's sleep
- Feeling tired during the day and sleepy
- Being irritable, anxious and depressed
- Finding it hard to be attentive, focused on assignments or remembering
- Having a higher rate of mistakes and accidents
- Being constantly worried about sleep.

## **When should one see a doctor?**

If the lack of sleep is so severe that you find it hard to function in your day to day activities, seeing a doctor is advisable. The doctor should work with you to identify the cause of insomnia and come up with various treatment options. In case the doctor feels that you are suffering from a sleep disorder, he may recommend you see a sleep specialist.

### How age relates to insomnia

Insomnia can be directly related to one's age. The older a person gets, the more they experience insomnia. When a person gets older, they experience:

- Your sleep pattern changes – as a person ages, sleep becomes less. Slight noise or other changes in one's environment can cause a person to wake up frequently. Age causes the internal clock to advance, making one tired earlier at night and waking up even earlier. Regardless, it is healthy to have the same amount of sleep when older just like a younger person.
- Changes in what you do – if you are less active during the day may cause you to take an afternoon nap. This, in the end, will interfere with your sleep at night.
- Change in health – if a person experiences chronic pain from conditions like arthritis or back pains, they may have challenges sleeping. Other conditions like anxiety or depression, also interfere with sleep. Other medical issues may cause frequent urinating at night, such as bladder problems, diabetes among others. Restless leg syndrome and sleep apnea are also other conditions that interrupt sleep patterns.
- Prescription drugs – older people use more prescription medicines than younger people do. This increases the chance of developing chronic insomnia.

Insomnia can also affect children and teenagers, as well. However, most of the causes at this age is due to their irregular patterns in their sleep schedules. Lack of sleep can also be associated with some risks in specific individuals.

The risk of suffering from insomnia is greater if:

- The individual is a woman. Shifts in the hormones during the menstrual cycle or menopause play a significant role. When a woman is going through menopause, they experience hot flashes as well as night sweats that will interrupt sleep. Pregnant mothers also experience insomnia due to hormonal changes.
- If you are over the age of 60, then your chances of suffering from insomnia are high. As you age, you experience changes in health increasing the risk of insomnia.
- If you are experiencing a mental health disorder or a physical health condition, you are at a greater risk of developing insomnia.
- Stress is another condition that increases insomnia. When a person is undergoing stressful situations, they may suffer from temporary insomnia. However, prolonged periods of stress may also result in chronic insomnia in many individuals.
- Lack of regular schedule is another contributor to insomnia. A person that often travels across different time zones or works with various shifts is likely to experience insomnia.

### Insomnia Complications

Just like having a healthy diet is important, having healthy sleep patterns is also important, as well as regular physical exercise. Regardless of the reasons causing your lack of sleep, insomnia can physically and mentally affect you negatively. Individuals with insomnia have a lower quality of life as compared to individuals that enjoy good sleeping habits.

Various complications associated with insomnia include:

- Poor performance at work or school
- Decreased reaction time on the road that may result in higher risks of accidents
- Mental health disorders like anxiety, substance abuse, and depression
- Higher risk of long-term diseases such as heart diseases.

Practical strategies that will help you sleep better.

Developing good sleep habits can help prevent insomnia and cause a person to enjoy a sound sleep. Some practical things you can do to improve your sleep will include:

- Be consistent in your bed and wake time even during the weekends.
- Be active. Regular physical activity will aid in promoting good night sleep
- Check your medications if one of the side effects is lack of sleep. If so, speak to your doctor to switch the medicine
- Try and avoid day time naps, and if you feel you must, limit the duration.
- Limit or avoid entirely the use of nicotine, alcohol or caffeine
- Avoid taking huge meals before bedtime and taking of sugary beverages
- Don't use your bedroom as a work station or a place for entertainment. Use it only for the intended purpose.
- Come up with a bedtime ritual that is relaxing, like taking a warm shower, listening to soft music in low volume, or reading.

# Chapter 11. Keep Calm and Manage Excessive Anger

Anger usually occurs as a natural response to feeling attacked, frustrated, or even being humiliated. It is human nature to get angry. The fury, therefore, is not a bad feeling per se, because, at times, it can prove to be very useful. How is this even possible? Anger can open one's mind and help them identify their problems, which could drive one to get motivated to make a change, which could help in molding their lives.

When is Anger a Problem?

Anger, as we have just seen, is normal in life. The problem only comes in when one cannot manage their anger, and it causes harm to people around them or even themselves.

How does one notice when their anger is becoming harmful? When one starts expressing anger through unhelpful or destructive behavior, or even when one's mental and physical health starts deteriorating. That's when one knows that the situation is getting out of hand.

It is the way a person behaves that determines whether or not they have problems with their anger. If the way they act affects their life or relationships, then there is a problem, and they should think about getting some support or treatment.

What is Unhelpful Angry Behavior?

Anger may be familiar to everyone, but people usually express their rage in entirely different ways. How one behaves when they are angry depends on how much control they have over their feelings. People who have less control over their emotions tend to have some unhelpful angry behaviors. These are behaviors that cause damage to themselves or even damage to people or things around them. They include:

Inward Aggression

This is where one directs their anger towards themselves. Some of the behaviors here may include telling oneself that they hate themselves, denying themselves, or even cutting themselves off the world.

### Non-Violent or Passive Aggression

In this case, one does not direct their anger anywhere; rather, they stick with the feeling in them. Some of the behaviors here may include ignoring people, refusing to speak to people, refusing to do tasks, or even deliberately doing chores poorly or late. These types of behaviors are usually the worst ways to approach such situations. They may seem less destructive and harmful, but they do not relieve one of the heavy burdens that are causing them to be angry.

### Preparation

#### Weigh Your Options

In life, many things may be out of one's control. These things vary from the weather, the past, other people, intrusive thoughts, physical sensations, and one's own emotions. Despite all these, the power to choose is always disposable to any human. Even though one might not be able to control the weather, one can decide whether or not to wear heavy clothing. One can also choose how to respond to other people.

The first step, therefore, in dealing with anger is to recognize a choice.

## **Steps to Take in Managing Anger**

### 1. A "Should" Rule is Broken

Everybody has some rules and expectations for one's behavior, and also for other people's behavior. Some of these rules include, "I should be able to do this," "She should not treat me like this," and, "They should stay out of my way." Unfortunately, no one has control over someone else's actions. Therefore, these rules are always bound to be broken, and people may get in one's way. This can result in anger, guilt, and pressure.

It is, therefore, essential to the first break these “should” rules to fight this anger. The first step to make in breaking these rules is to accept the reality of life that someone usually has very little control over other people’s lives. The next step is for one to choose a direction based on one’s values. How does one know their values? One can identify their values by what angers them, frustrates them, or even enrages them. For example, let’s take the rule of “They should stay out of my way.” This rule may mean the values of communication, progress, or even cooperation. What do these values mean to someone? Does one have control over them?

Finally, one can act by their values. To help with this, here are two questions one should ask themselves:

- What does one want in the long run?
- What constructive steps can one take in that direction?

## 2. What Hurts?

The second step is to find the real cause of pain or fear after breaking the rules. These rules usually do not mean the same as one’s body. This is because some states of being can hurt one’s self-esteem more than others.

To understand this better, let’s take the example of Susan, who expects that no one should talk ill of her. Then suddenly John comes up to her and says all manner of things to her. This, therefore, makes Susan enraged. In such a scenario, Susan should ask herself what hurts her. The answer to this question will bring out a general belief about John and herself. She will think that “John is rude,” “She is powerless,” or even that “She is being made the victim.” All these thoughts may hurt her. What may even hurt her most is that she has no control over John’s behavior.

Once she has noted that she has no control, she may now consider seeing John’s words as a mere opinion rather than an insult. This will make her not see herself as a victim, but as a person just receiving a piece of someone else’s mind about herself.

## 3. Hot Thoughts.

After one has identified what really hurts them, it is now time to identify and, most importantly, replace the hot, anger-driven, and reactive thoughts with more level-headed, more relaxed, and reflective thoughts. Here are some fresh ideas that may be of importance to someone:

Hot thought: “How mean can he be!”

A cool thought: “He thinks he is so caring.”

Hot thought: “They are stupid!”

A cool thought: “They are just human.”

#### 4. Anger

All the above steps, as one may have noticed, relate to the thoughts. This is because one has first to tackle the ideas before now getting to the emotion. In this step, therefore, one is going to respond to the anger arousal itself. There are three ways that one can follow to respond to this emotion:

- One may indulge in relaxation. This relaxation can come in many forms, like enjoying some music, practicing some progressive muscle relaxation like yoga, and also visualization.
- One may also use that feeling to do some constructive work. When one is angry, there is usually a large amount of energy that one uses at that time. This is the reason that when angry, one can break down things that they would never break when calm. Imagine, therefore, how much that energy would do for someone if just directed to some constructive work.
- One may also try to redefine anger when one gets angry. What does this mean? Once a person is angry, one can try to remind themselves of how anger is a problem that fuels aggression and can cause harm to loved ones and even oneself.

#### 5. Moral Disengagement

In simple words, this step will help one examine the beliefs that turn anger into aggression. These beliefs usually act as mere excuses or justification for destructive acts. Some of these beliefs include “I don’t care,” “This is the only way I can get my point across,” or even “It is high time they

recognize me.” These beliefs need to be identified early enough and gotten rid of before they can con one into throwing one’s morals aside. One sure way of getting rid of them is by reminding oneself of the cost of such beliefs and the advantages of striving for understanding.

## 6. Aggression

In this step, one now needs to examine the behaviors that arise from aggression and try to fight them. Fighting these behaviors can be achieved if one calms down and puts themselves in the other person’s shoes. This will help one understand why the other person is acting in such a manner, what they may be feeling, or even what they may be thinking. This approach will help to:

- Decrease the anger for all parties involved.
- Increase the chance of having a reasonable conversation with the parties involved, and thus everybody is heard.

## 7. Outcome

The final step of this procedure is to reduce resentment towards others, and also guilt towards oneself.

Treating depression with cognitive behavioral therapy.

What is depression?

Depression is a feeling of severe despondency and dejection. In life, it is only natural for one to feel less than a hundred percent at times. This is like when one is battling with drug addiction or has relationship problems. However, this low feeling sometimes gets a hold of one’s life and won't go. This is what we call depression. Depression can make one feel lonely and hopeless.

If one has such feelings, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is here to restore one’s hope in life. This is because it can help one think more healthily, and also help in overcoming a particular addiction.

Before getting more in-depth with the advantages of CBT on a depressed person, let's first look at the different types of depression.

### Types of Depression

Depressions are of various kinds. They can either occur alone or concurrently with an addiction. The best thing, however, is that the following categories are treatable through using CBT.

### Major Depression

This disorder occurs when one feels depressed most of the time for most days of the week. Some of the symptoms associated with this disorder are:

- Weight loss or weight gain
- Being tired often
- Trouble getting sleep
- Thoughts of suicide
- Concentration problems
- Feeling restless or agitated

If you experience five or more of the above signs on most days for two weeks or longer, then they have this disorder.

### Persistent Depressive Disorder (PDD)

This type of depression usually lasts for two years or even longer. The symptoms associated with the disorder include:

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Fatigue
- Low self-esteem

### Bipolar Disorder

A person with such a disorder usually experiences mood episodes that range from extremes of high energy with an "up" mood to low periods.

### How CBT Helps with Negative Thoughts of Depression

The cognitive-behavioral therapy understands that when one has low moods, they tend to have negative thinking. This negative thinking usually brings cases of hopelessness, depression, and can also lead to a change in behavior.

CBT, therefore, works to help with the patterns of behavior that need to be changed. In short, it works to recalibrate the part of the brain that keeps a tight hold on happy thoughts.

### Five CBT Techniques to Counteract the Negative Thinking of Depression

There are several techniques that one can follow to help with fighting off negative thoughts. Before starting these steps, one should make sure that they are ready to undertake them and should keep track of themselves. Here are some of the steps:

#### Locate the Problem and Brainstorm for Solutions

The first step is to discover the cause of the problem. This step requires one to talk with one's inner self. Once the idea of what the problem might be dawning on you, write it down in simple words. Then write down a list of things that one can do to improve the problem.

#### Write Self-Statements to Counteract Negative Thoughts

Once the cause of the problem has been discovered, it is now time to identify the negative thoughts that seem to pop up in one's brain every time. Write self-statements to counteract each foul view. These self-statements are statements that are going to stuff up the negative thoughts. One should always recall all their self-statements and repeat them back to themselves every time a negative thought pops up. However, these self-statements should continually be refreshed because they can, at times, be too routine.

#### Find New Opportunities to Think Positive Thoughts

Michael is a person who always sees the negative part of people before noticing their bright side. These people, more often than not, usually get depressed quickly. To remedy this, they should always change their thinking and think positively. This, for example, in the case of Michael, can be like first noticing and appreciating how neat people are. This type of thinking can be tough to change. Here are some of the recommended ways that one can adjust to such thinking;

- Set one's phone to remind them to reframe their minds to something positive.
- Pairing up with someone who is working on this same technique. This will make one have positive thoughts, and also get to enjoy them with someone else.

### Finish Each Day by Visualizing Its Best Parts

After each day, one can write down the most exciting events of the day and try to remember them. Sharing such moments online can even help one form new associations, and also thinking ways that can prove to be very helpful.

### Learn to Accept Disappointment as a Normal Part of Life

In life, disappointment is bound to come one's way. How one deals or behaves after a disappointing event determines how fast one is going to move forward. Take, for example, John, who just lost a job interview. This is a thing that can happen to anyone. The way he responds to this situation will determine how fast he is going to move forward. If he starts getting the thoughts of "I am a failure," "The world is so unfair to me," or even "I will never succeed in life," then he is moving in the wrong direction. Later, he can write some things he has learned from the experience and things he can do to remedy it next time.

## **Chapter 12. Retrain Your Brain**

Retrain your brain towards Positivity. There is power in positivity that goes more than what meets the eye. You can indeed make a difference in your outlook when you look on the bright side of things. You will wake up in the morning on Monday thinking: "I can do this! I want to go to work today! It's going to be great!"

When you see that you can bring something good into this world, you will need to have a positive attitude and adjust your expectations. Think about it. Life is too short for you to go through it while complaining about every little detail. And we know that everyone likes to complain about the little things in life, such as a meal that is taking too long to be prepared in a restaurant, the noise that's happening during your coffee break or the temperature in your office. Although life is a bit of a downer sometimes, it does not always need to be like that. For this reason, we are going to look at how you can have a positive attitude and how it can change the way you approach new situations.

First, it is essential to realize that there are a lot of sources of difficulties and challenges in our lives. Nothing worth pursuing ever comes easily. It always takes hard work and dedication to accomplish even the most minute of tasks. And often, we cannot achieve our goals because we are discouraged under the weight of all the expectations that have been cast on our shoulders both by others and ourselves. In the midst of all of that, there is a need to pursue our goals and dreams. When we think about the end goal, then we know that we are always moving forward, one step closer to that milestone that will make a difference in our lives. Perhaps your goal is earning that extra \$5,000 per year or putting aside money for your next vacation or becoming healthier and having a more positive outlook and overcoming your depression. Sometimes, the more straightforward goals are better because they can lead us to pursue the more involved ones.

**Retrain Your Brain In Becoming More Positive. Practice Gratitude!**

So, you might ask, "Tina, how do you get this positive mindset that is supposed to change my life?" Well, I can say that it is a lot easier for you to achieve that than you may think. What I want you to do right now is write down ten things that you are thankful for on a piece of paper. Get out a pen and notepad, and jot down all of your thoughts. Give yourself about five

minutes to do this. You can see what influences your thoughts by getting a feel or what makes you thankful.

Gratitude is one of those powerful things. It helps you get out of the rut whenever you feel stuck. It makes you happier. It enables you to overcome the depressive blues. When you have a situation when you lose a job or have a catastrophic situation throw you a curveball, you may feel helpless and completely shattered from the damage that it has caused you. However, when you write down what you are thankful for, you will see how much blessed you are and have been given much in your life. The truth is, no one deserves this life. It is a gift - and a precious one at that. When you realize how much stuff has been handed to you, you should see that you have many people to thank for pulling you out of the gutter. Think of your parents, friends, financial situation (whether it's good or bad), community, job (not everyone has a good job these days), et cetera. Reflect on these blessings and take away the feelings of entitlement which you may be feeling about them. Realize that you get a lot more than what you deserve, and that is a gift of grace. Taking a moment to say thank you to someone who has made a difference in your life is an integral part of practicing gratitude. And, believe me, it will light up your whole day.

**Stop for a Minute and Write Down Ten Things You are Thankful for and Then Come Back to Me**

Once you have done that, you are on your way to becoming a more positive person. Remember a time when you were successful. In high school, you got an A on that English paper and ended up getting a good grade in the class. Or, in the university, you landed a premium internship for a consultancy firm that eventually led to a full-time job there. Perhaps you were able to overcome a severe disease that you got healed from miraculously. Be grateful and remember the times that went by and how you managed to get over many things. Think of how strong you are in surmounting any challenge that comes your way. Not everyone can fight as hard as you can. Having a mental illness can be hard. It can be so debilitating difficult to get out of bed in the morning. As soon as you have been able to overcome that difficulty, recognize it and celebrate it! It's the best way forward!

**Become a Positive Hero**

Having developed a positive mindset, you can now change the world. And one of the best ways to do so is to help others around you. That can alter your mood and feeling a lot more than anything. For example, when you help an elderly lady cross the street with her groceries, you do something special for someone else. That can boost your self-esteem and make you feel happy.

Helping is a form of therapy, which enables you to make a difference with others around you. It is very powerful. When you have a mindset of helpfulness and positivity, you can change a lot of things everywhere, as well as develop your mindset and attitude. For instance, if you smile at your reflection in the mirror and at others, you will find that you feel a lot better about yourself. It will allow you to feel much better about yourself. It allows you to enjoy that positive emotion.

This effect can be more powerful when you try laughing. Whether you crack a joke, watch a comedy on Netflix or laugh with your friends, laughter has been proven to be a great medicine to fight off the negative thoughts that may surround you. All of these things contribute to your positive feelings and enable you to feel excellent in the process. It is crucial to develop a mindset of playfulness, gladness, and thankfulness. This will make you a positive hero who can be a source of light amid the darkness of negativity in this world. As we have mentioned, there is much to be depressed about in this world; however, you can do your part to make the planet a better place by infusing your environment with positivity. That is going to change both your mindset and the world itself.

I am not going to lie to you; it is going to be hard to be positive at times. You might suffer a lot from the cares and worries of this life. Some days, you may wonder, "Why do I care? Why should I go to work today?" You may want to lay in bed all day and sleep because you cannot motivate yourself to keep going. But what if I were to tell you that it is possible to overcome your self-doubt by being a positive and more productive person? Indeed, it is possible.

## **Chapter 13. Panic Attacks, Stress, and Intrusive Thoughts**

In some instances, trying to manage the mental anguish and physical arousal brought on by anxiety and panic attacks may prove ineffective, and no matter what you try, you can still feel the imminence of an attack. In those instances, you can use the *AWARE* technique to overcome an anxiety or panic attack:

### **The *AWARE* Technique**

The *AWARE* technique is a five step process that teaches you how to respond to anxiety and panic attacks in a calming, productive way.

The five steps are:

1. **A:** Acknowledge and accept
2. **W:** Wait and watch (and if you feel capable, work)
3. **A:** Take some actions that make you more comfortable
4. **R:** Repeat the process and needed
5. **E:** End the process

Even though the process is very self-explanatory, we shall explain each step very briefly:

#### **“A” is for Acknowledge and accept**

Acknowledging your fear of an oncoming anxiety/panic attack is the first step to handling it correctly. This step is very important because in most cases, trying to distract yourself from the fact that you are feeling panicky is likely to send you over the edge. Acknowledge that you can feel an anxiety/panic attack coming on and that you are afraid but not in any danger—very important because thoughts of impending danger or doom are a symptom of anxiety/panic attacks.

Acknowledging and accepting go hand in hand. Accepting your present fear—of your panic—means instead of fighting the feeling, you can let it be, and remain strong in the knowledge that it shall pass.

When you accept an anxiety/panic attack, it becomes easier to see it as something you shall overcome in the same way a headache does not last. Accepting is very difficult for most people perhaps because a panic attack feels awful. Here is the thing though. While it feels awful, a panic attack will not kill you. This opens you up to accepting the symptoms for what they are instead of resisting them.

Acknowledging and accepting reminds you that even though the symptoms are strong, the worst they can do to you is make you fearful. An anxiety or panic attack is the worst that can happen, and if you are already experiencing it, you are already experiencing and living through the worst that can happen and if you ride it out, you will overcome.

### **“W” is for Wait, Watch, and maybe Work**

As the physical and mental symptoms of a panic or anxiety attack rock you to the core, just wait them out: do not react impulsively—perhaps by calling an ambulance—count to ten and just be.

Waiting for a while buys you the time you need to think about the best course of action instead of giving into the panic and seeking a way to feel, which makes things worse especially when escape is impossible. Waiting also helps you avoid jumping into action.

Even though you feel a strong urge to flee the situation or vacate the premises, delay the decision for a little bit at least until you regain your ability to think things through.

As you wait for a while, use this momentary pause in to watch the physical arousal and pain as they rise as well as how your body wants to respond to the symptoms almost instinctively. This would be a great time to breathe deeply, practice mindful awareness, whip out your journal, and write about what you are feeling and experiencing. The more you watch important aspects of a panic attack, over time, the easier it becomes to respond positively to it.

The work in W relates to maybe continuing to engage in an activity or task, which is especially important in an instance where you are in an active role.

## **“A” is for Actions**

There are specific actions you can take during a panic attack. For start, during an attack, your role is not to work towards its cessation. All panic attacks end irrespective of your reaction to them—whether you react positively or negatively.

During a panic attack, your role is modest: to make yourself as comfortable as possible as you ride it out. How do you do that? You can use deep breathing, which we talked about earlier, positive self-talk/affirmations, self-awareness, which allows you to connect and involve yourself with the present moment and task, relaxation techniques such as tensing and relaxing your body or going for a walk, etc. These constitute the actions you can take when you are experiencing a panic or anxiety attack.

## **“R” is for repeat**

At this point, if you practice everything detailed in letters A, W, and Am, you should start feeling better and the current panic attack may have subsided greatly. If that is the case, keep repeating the process until you are calm enough to make a sound decision.

Additionally, if another wave of panic hits you, start the process from the top and work your way down the ladder. Remember that a recurring panic attack is normal; in fact, it is normal to experience several cycles of panic. Remind yourself to work through the steps and keep at it as often as necessary.

## **“E” is for End**

The E in the AWARE process reminds you that no matter how devastating it feels, your panic attack has an end; after all, just as they have a start, all panic attacks have an end. It helps you remember that your job as you experience one is to make yourself as comfortable as possible while you wait out the end of the panic attack.

The AWARE technique is very effective at helping you ride the wave until your anxiety or panic attack ends. The more you teach yourself this strategy, the easier it shall become to deal with anxiety and panic attacks in a healthy and helpful manner.

## Action Step

The next time you are experiencing a panic and anxiety attack, acknowledge and accept what you are experiencing. Wait, watch, and maybe work. Take actions geared towards making you as comfortable as possible. Remember to repeat the steps especially when an anxiety or panic attacks is in waves, and always remember that no matter how awful they feel, all panic and anxiety attacks end.

In trying to overcome anxiety, there will be times when you will get bogged down by negative thoughts. There will be days when you will resort to calling yourself names like 'loser' or 'stupid' because you can't seem to cope.

Let's face it. It's hard to think positively 24/7. When we let anxiety take over, the world suddenly turns into a threatening place to live. You don't see it for what it is. You just let how it makes you feel control you, and this is where the real danger starts. It's when you allow your thoughts to hijack your reality that it suddenly becomes harder to cope with anxiety.

So how do you nip anxiety in the bud? By replacing all the negative thoughts with realistic thoughts. Realistic thinking simply means taking a step back and looking at the entire picture before you make any conclusions. It's when you take an unbiased look into the situation that you will realize that there's really nothing to be anxious about. If you want to know how to make realistic thinking work for you, here's a simple step by step guide to help you out.

### Step 1: Listen to yourself

You may not be aware of it, but oftentimes, it's what you say to yourself that starts the anxious feeling in you. So the next time you start to feel worried or stressed and you can't seem to understand where it's coming from, try taking a few minutes to listen to your self-talk. What exactly are you thinking? Are you often worried because you're scared that something bad will happen to you? Your thoughts can have a huge impact on how you live your life so it's important that you start paying attention to what exactly you're thinking, no matter how trivial it may seem.

## Step 2: Identify negative thoughts

Once you've made it a habit to listen to your self-talk, it will be easier for you to zone in on the negative thoughts. Try to identify the shifts or times when you begin to feel the anxiety. Are you worried that a specific situation will happen? If you are, then what are the worst case scenarios? Don't be afraid to wrestle with your negative thoughts. Write it all down so that you have something concrete to work with. Again, no matter how trivial it seems, if it's causing you to feel worried or stressed, you need to write it down.

## Step 3: Challenge those negative thoughts

Having a list of all the negative thoughts that bother you will help you deal with each one. You need to always remember that you are stronger than your thoughts. Just because you had a thought and it feels so real in your head doesn't make it your reality. It's still up to you to decide which thoughts you will act on. Oftentimes, your thoughts are just based on how you feel and not on hard fact. This is why you have the power to challenge your negative thoughts instead of just accepting it. Let's say you're about to go in for a very important interview and you start to feel anxious because in your head, you think you're only going to mess up. One effective way to challenge the negative thought is by asking yourself "What's the worst that could happen?" The worst thing that could happen is that you don't get the job. You will feel disappointed sure, but that doesn't mean that it's already the end of the world. It just means that there's something else out there for you.

## Step 4: Replace your negative thoughts with positive statements

As soon as you're able to break down your negative thoughts, the next step is to reinforce those with positive statements. Don't be your own harshest critic. If you can be kind to others, what's stopping you from being a little kinder to yourself? Instead of telling yourself over and over again that you'll just fail, boost your confidence with a firm "I can do it". If you've

allowed yourself to wallow in negativity for the longest time, now's your chance to challenge yourself to take the other perspective for a change.

### Step 5: Let it go

At the end of it all, just let it go. Stop holding on to whatever is causing you anxiety and stress, whether real or unreal. It may seem easier said than done, but all it takes is some getting used to. If anything else, do this for yourself and your own happiness. Remember, life is too short to be worrying about it all the time.

### Techniques for Self-Empowerment

Journaling can be a wonderful way to deal with your feelings. However, many teens and young adults don't have much spare time. Pick a journal, notebook app, or agenda, and every day, write three positive things about yourself. This can be difficult. They don't have to be big things. For example:

1. I wasn't rude to my mom today, even though she was super annoying.
2. My little toe is cute.
3. I raised my hand in my worst class today. Even if you don't get called on, give yourself credit for trying!

Listen to yourself and your body. Are you exhausted? Go to bed early. You'll feel better the next day. Are feeling sluggish? Go for a jog. Are you feeling lonely? Reach out to your friend or family member for a chat. Are you feeling overwhelmed and need time alone? Curl up with a book or have a Netflix marathon by yourself. Even though you should not hide from the world habitually, there is nothing wrong with saying no to something and spending time by yourself.

Take care of yourself. The way you present yourself to the world affects how people view you, and the way you feel affects how you present yourself. Personal hygiene is important. If you are on day three without a shower, are you likely to introduce yourself to that interesting new person at school? You don't need the latest fashions, but wear clothes that are clean and neat. Male or female, if you feel better when you wear makeup, take a little time each morning to put it on. However, if you don't like wearing

makeup, don't give in to peer pressure to do so. You wouldn't feel confident in it.

Do something to help others. Treating yourself well is great. Helping someone else will make you feel even better. If you love animals, volunteer at the ASPCA. If you love talking about history, volunteer at a nursing home. If you like food, volunteer at a soup kitchen. If you like to work with your hands, volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. There are many worthy organizations, you should be able to find a good fit, no matter where you live. However, you can also do smaller, day to day things. Offer to watch a sibling (for free) when your parents or guardian go out to dinner. Ask that lonely kid who sits alone at lunch to sit with you, but don't act like you are doing them a favor, actually mean it. Hold the door for an elderly person. Give up your seat on public transportation to a pregnant woman. Shovel the snow from your neighbor's sidewalk. Compliment someone. In fact, whenever you're in a social situation and don't know what to say, find something to compliment the person on. It can get the conversation flowing.

Go ahead and fake it. Positive self-esteem cannot be faked. Self-confidence can! It is all about your body language. Mimicking the physical signs of self-confidence can actually make you feel more self-confident.

## Positive affirmation

Positive affirmation is a technique to change your thoughts from negative to positive. These affirmations can often feel awkward and silly, but if you practice regularly, it becomes much more natural. It will help you to feel differently about yourself and improve your life. Basically, you select some goals based on the qualities you want to develop and nurture, what you want to accomplish, and focus on them.

Develop a routine. Pick a couple times a day when you can practice this technique. It can be while you're getting ready for the day or for bed, going for a run or walk, driving (as long as you are still paying attention to the road!) or when you're a passenger in a carpool, bus, etc. Whenever feels right for you. But this is different from meditation, you can multitask, as

long that the tasks are mostly physical, and allows you to mentally focus and relax.

Using your affirmations. Before you begin, write down your affirmations. You can use sticky notes and put them where you will see them, or if you want more privacy, use a journal or an app. Affirmations can be thought, spoken, sung, whatever feels right to you.

Sense associations can make affirmations more powerful. For example, use a certain color of a sticky note, pen, or text. With continued practice, you will come to associate that color with your affirmations. Scent can also be a powerful association. This is the sense that is most closely associated with memory in your brain. If you have a favorite perfume or cologne, smell that while you practice your affirmations. Wear this scent on your wrists when you're in situations you may need a self-esteem boost. Take a subtle whiff of your wrist when you need the boost.

Use emotion when practicing your affirmations. Don't use a monotone, even if you are just thinking them. Imbue your affirmations with the feelings you'll experience when you achieve them. Remember as you practice, it is WHEN, not if, you achieve your goal. You WILL get there!

Forgive yourself; don't judge yourself. If you skip your affirmations for a day, or even a week, that's OK. Don't criticize yourself. If you let negative thoughts enter while doing your affirmations, that's ok. Relax, dismiss them, and keep going. If you have trouble getting into the habit, start slow. Pick one affirmation, and one time a day, and build from there as you get more comfortable. Don't be embarrassed. Yes, it feels silly. But you are trying to improve your life and mindset, and that is admirable. Be proud of yourself for even trying.

### Examples of Affirmations

- I am confident!
- I like how I look!
- I am learning from my challenges!
- I am good enough!

- I am smart enough!
- I am brave!
- I'm not perfect, and that's fine with me!
- I am kind!
- I belong!
- I am honest!
- My differences make me special!
- I believe in myself!
- I matter!

### Setting goals

One of the best feelings in life are reaching goals. But to reach these goals, you first have to set them. Write them down. Make them as specific as possible. Look at them every day. Use the same app or journal you are using for your self-compliments and affirmations. While goals can be as far-reaching and long-term as you want, it is also important to set small short-term goals. When you reach these goals, you will feel empowered to move on to your bigger goals. If you're artistic (or not artistic but enjoy art anyway) make a dream board. This can be something physical that you hang in your room, or a private Pinterest board. Whatever feels most authentic for you.

## **Chapter 14. Automatic Negative Thoughts ( ANTs )**

Like I said, it is impossible to talk about cognitive behavioral therapy without mentioning negative thoughts. Automatic negative thoughts are the basis of anxiety, depression, addiction, phobia, and other mental health problems that leave people unhappy. You may refer to automatic negative thoughts as the thoughts that make up your belief system.

Your thoughts can either be positive or negative; this is a natural thing. However, automatic negative thoughts are different from normal negative thoughts. This is because your mind generates them subconsciously, without your permission. Most times, you also have no control over them.

Automatic negative thoughts have profound effects on emotions and behaviors, which is what CBT seeks to correct. The whole concept behind CBT is to replace existing negative thinking patterns with newer and more positive ones so as to change a person's behaviors.

When something happens, the brain automatically forms a negative thought in the subconscious. The thought then influences how you interpret the event that just took place. The interpretation you give to a situation, i.e. how you think about it, is what determines the emotional response that situation elicits. How you feel then determines how you react or behave due to the situation. It is really that simple.

There are so many ways in which automatic negative thoughts are generated, many of which you are probably not even aware of. The interesting thing I want you to know about this is that you usually have no idea what your mind is doing, just like everybody else.

Often, automatic negative thoughts become such a part of you that you no longer even know that there is a negative thinking pattern.

Research into automatic negative thoughts started in the 1960s. It was pioneered by Dr. Aaron Beck who tried to understand how negative thoughts impact depression. However, the concept of automatic negative thoughts has been made more popular by Dr. Daniel Amen in recent years.

According to Amen, when you have negative thoughts, the brain generates electrical and chemical signals which activate the limbic system. With time, as the automatic thoughts become too much, the limbic system becomes overwhelmed, causing a neural pathway to be established in the brain. When this occurs, you start to experience anxiety, depression, moodiness, and mild irritation.

Interestingly, negative thoughts can be pretty helpful sometimes, just like negative emotions. What do I mean by this? Well, when a distressing event takes place, the mind automatically puts certain things in place to prevent you from feeling hurt or heartbroken. From this angle, automatic negative thoughts are generated by your mind to protect you from perceived harm or to minimize the impact on you when it does happen.

However, the problem begins when the automatic negative thoughts become dominant in your mind, to the extent that they take over control of your feelings, behaviors, and life in general. So many stressors exist in life; they make it quite easy for anybody to slip into a cycle of anxiety and depression. Automatic negative thoughts help fuel this cycle so you remain trapped.

As I have already acknowledged, automatic negative thoughts can take different forms, with different people. To break negative thinking patterns, it is important to first identify and recognize them. This is one of the things that take place in CBT sessions. Your therapist helps you identify the particular thinking pattern responsible for your emotional and behavioral state.

Some of the patterns your therapist may identify include:

- All or nothing thinking: If you think in black or white, without leaving a gray area, this is referred to as “all or nothing thinking.” People with the “all or nothing” thinking pattern usually think in extreme absolutes, leaving themselves vulnerable to automatic negative thoughts.

There is usually no middle ground for an all or nothing thinker. They will think along the lines of, “Oh, there is no way I am passing this class since I failed my first test. It means I will also fail my examination.”

An all or nothing thinking pattern makes it difficult to see a possible silver lining or a gray area like, “If I failed my test, then I have to work harder so I can pass my examination and pass this class.”

- **Labeling:** This is a negative thinking pattern which is quite common. Labeling is when you tag yourself using names or terms that connote negativity. If you constantly refer to yourself with negative terms, your brain automatically accepts that as the truth and runs with it, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For example, saying something like “I’m a failure” makes your brain accept that you are a failure and you will automatically stop seeing yourself as anything but a failure. You begin to feel and act like a failure even though you aren’t one.

You have trained your body to respond to negative thoughts, names, and terms and you start to respond accordingly.

- **Emotional thinking:** This is a more common negative thinking pattern than most people realize, and it almost always disguises itself as the truth. It is thinking with your feelings.

You are unable to question this kind of thinking so you listen to it by default. It usually involves jumping to negative conclusions about a behavior, habit, or goal. You are basically using your emotions to interpret the state of reality.

- **Fortune telling:** You have a negative habit of predicting bad outcomes for yourself. Usually, this happens as a result of you being several steps ahead of your ambition in life. Unfortunately, you never believe anything positive can come out of a situation. You also don’t try to see positive perspectives.

A typical fortune teller will always think like, “I won’t get a job no matter how hard I try. So, what’s the point?” or “I will never make it, so what’s the point of graduating from school?”

- **Mind reading:** Also referred to as brain reading, this is basically you making assumptions about what you perceive to be people’s behaviors towards you or their opinions about you.

You always think you know what they are thinking about you and these thoughts are usually not positive. For instance, you may believe they hate you or they don’t want you to achieve anything in life.

An example of a mind reading statement is, “My colleagues at work hate me. They don’t want me to be promoted.” This kind of thinking pattern usually affects your social relationships because they influence how you feel and behave towards people.

People also interpret these negative thinking patterns in different negative ways. Instead of understanding that these thoughts are just thoughts, you interpret them as reality. The negative ways of interpreting things include:

- **Personalization:** This kind of interpretation is based on cognitive distortion usually caused by stress. It happens when you blame yourself for something that happens instead of understanding that things can’t always be under your control.

Personalization is when you apportion blame to yourself because you hit a bump on the road, instead of trying to figure out why you hit the bump. People who personalize always say something like, “Oh, this is all my fault,” without trying to understand where the problem is coming from.

This is a negative way of interpreting events that is quite irrational, illogical, and without basis. If you interpret things this way, chances are you will find yourself always internalizing your emotions and feelings even when they need to be expressed.

- **Overgeneralization:** I like to think that this is even worse than personalization because this way of thinking is bizarre. Overgeneralization has to do with the belief that something will happen again because it happened once, especially when this thing is negative.

If you have been in a situation you didn't like before and you start thinking that this situation will repeat itself, you are overgeneralizing. It is especially overgeneralization when you have no other proof or evidence to serve as the basis of your belief. You just believe it is so.

For example, if someone at work gets a plum project from the boss instead of you, you would overgeneralize by thinking, "That is just how I always lose out on everything, tough luck!"

- **Overthinking:** Have you ever thought about something and tried to look at all the thousand choices with regards to that thing so you can make the best decision? That is overthinking.

Overthinking is the habit of going over multiple choices in your mind in a bid to visualize the possible outcome of every single choice in a particular situation. People who overthink do so to avoid making mistakes or errors.

It is a way of attempting to achieve perfection. However, overthinking is not healthy because it is an attempt to control the uncontrollable. Unless the person is God, no one has the magic to know what will happen in the future.

Therefore, every choice we make in life is one with unknown possibilities. For instance, if you get a new job, you have no way of knowing how it will pan out.

Trying to analyze the situation in order to outline the possible outcomes takes away the joy in that thing. If you think so much about your new job, you will likely lose the happiness that comes from being employed and become too anxious/worried about the uncertainty that lies ahead.

- **Negative Rumination:** Self-reflection is normal, healthy, and necessary. However, it becomes negative when you do it over and over in a negative manner. Rumination is a negative way of thinking and interpreting reality.

It is the kind of thinking in which you get stuck in a mental spiral, thinking about the same thing over and over without stopping, or even making progress.

Negative rumination is an unhealthy way of thinking and interpreting because it makes you worried, anxious, and fearful. The more you think about the negative aspect of a situation, the more anxious you become.

A typical scenario of negative rumination: let's say your partner breaks up with you because she no longer has an interest in the relationship. Naturally, you would be heartbroken and sad. But, when you replace that heartbreak with worry, it becomes problematic.

You may start to imagine yourself being alone forever, without ever getting married or having kids or meeting anybody else who loves you. In this situation, you may even take your rumination up a notch.

You start to think of your friends getting married and never talking with you again because they now have their families to concentrate on. So, you end up lonely and you die in a cold, empty room with no one to attend to your corpse.

That is how far rumination can go. Rumination is a breeding ground for anxiety and depression. It makes you focus on how you feel, the reason for that feeling, and how you ended up in the situation that is making you feel bad.

At some point, you may completely disregard the fact that it was actually just you cooking up all those scenarios in your head simply because of your breakup. Before you know it, you actually start to see yourself as a loser

and you lose all motivation to even try to get your girlfriend back (if possible) or solve the problem you are faced with.

- **Cynical Hostility:** A profound distrust of others and unfounded hostility towards them because of that mistrust is what is known as cynical hostility. The interesting is that this mistrust usually originates from your thoughts and your thoughts alone.

Cynical hostility is a negative way of thinking and reacting angrily to people just because you have certain thoughts of them and you have interpreted these thoughts to be reality. It is a misguided and distorted interpretation of reality.

You tend to think of other people as threats, betrayers, or dangerous. When someone does something that should ordinarily be minor, you interpret it in the worst way possible. If the kids are playing and making a ruckus, you may think it is because they intentionally want to give you a migraine.

You may also think that someone at work is intentionally doing something to make you angry to the point where you lose your job. If you are on the road and a driver in front is driving really slowly, you might think the person is intentionally driving slow so they can delay you.

It goes on and on. If you meet someone at the mall and they act nice by trying to be your friend, you might believe it is because they have an ulterior motive. Cynical hostility makes you think the worst of everyone.

This kind of thinking and interpretation can ruin your relationships and affect your health adversely because your mind is never at rest. In fact, studies have revealed that cynical hostility is related to high blood pressure, heart disease, shorter telomeres, and other health conditions.

Negative thinking patterns and negative ways of interpreting events are what causes a distorted view of reality. This leads to anxiety, depression, anger disorders, addiction, and several other mental/physical health conditions.

When I talk about the different CBT intervention practices, I will talk more about automatic negative thoughts and how they are addressed in cognitive behavioral therapy sessions.

But right now, I want to talk about the effect our childhood and upbringing can have on the automaticity of negative thoughts, and also give you tips on how to start combatting automatic negative thoughts on your own.

Negative thoughts usually don't become automatic by accident. They become automatic after being ingrained in the mind a long time ago, i.e. childhood.

It's actually difficult to start having negative thoughts as an adult unless you have been building up to it from childhood.

## **Chapter 15. How to Take Control and Choose to Be Aware**

Did you know that by simply observing something, you change it? I know that sounds magical, but it's actually backed up by hard science. In physics, this is called the Heisenberg principle. By simply observing a phenomenon, you change the result.

This also applies to what's going on in your head and in your heart. By simply choosing to become aware, you are already starting the process of changing your behavior, the words that come out of your mouth and, most importantly, your emotional, instinctual responses. The best part to all of this is that you're not trying to reprogram consciously. You're not trying to step in there and move things around. You're not purposefully rearranging your mental furniture so to speak. You're not doing any of that. You're just simply allowing yourself to become aware. You're merely choosing to open your eyes to what's going on in your mind, in your heart, and in your logical processes. By observing, you start changing.

### **Observe Without Judging**

Try to observe how certain external triggers bring out specific emotional responses in you. Be aware of the connection. Look at what happens outside of you and trace it to your feelings. Keep focusing on this connection. The key here is to observe without judging. You're not saying to yourself, "This is bad. I shouldn't be doing that." No. You're just looking with curiosity at how certain things bring about particular feelings or specific mental connections. That is the extent of your job at this point in time. Just observe.

### **Be Your Mind's Most Avid Student**

By simply allowing ourselves to be merely an objective observer, kind of like a foreign exchange student who just got dropped into your mind to pay

attention and log what they witness, you will be able to see many things that you're normally blind to. The reason why you're blind to them is not because they don't exist, or that they're hard to see. Instead, you are so focused on judging them that you essentially deal with the stimuli in an unthinking way. You only need to see, for example, certain elements, and you automatically conclude that they mean something. You just take it from there. You run with it.

It's not much different from a hunter going to the forest and seeing a big tail with a bushy end and a lot of hair in the center. The hunter hears a growl. The hunter then puts all these factors together and starts heading the other direction at full speed. Why? The hunter organized all this information and came up with the judgment that there was a lion several yards ahead of them. If that hunter kept going in that direction, the lion might end up enjoying a two-legged lunch item.

We tend to do this and, generally, it works for us. For the most part, we're able to save a lot of valuable mental processing time by just simply looking at a tiny fraction of a larger phenomenon, assuming that it means something, and making decisions. The problem is if you want to overcome your negative narratives, you have to connect the dots directly. You have to override your habit of jumping to conclusions.

## **Connecting the Dots?**

Let's just get one thing out of the way. You're already connecting the dots. By and large this is the reason why you're having a tough time. This mental activity is the reason why you're having issues with depression, anxiety, worry, and limiting beliefs which undermine self-esteem and self-confidence. You are doing too much dot connecting.

Now, I'm going to ask you to be aware of how you normally connect the dots and see the gaps there. The reason why you feel that there are certain negative areas in your life is because at some level or other, you're connecting the dots in one specific way. Maybe it's time to reconnect the dots, coming up with new connections and fresh patterns.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all formula for this. You have to do it yourself based on your particular set of data. Everybody's triggers are different. Everybody's objective pieces of information are distinct. Still, we all do this. This is one of the few things we all have in common. The difference, however, is that fact that some connections are more productive than others.

You need to look at how you're constantly drawing conclusions from these stimuli based on your narratives. Pay attention to how this choice leads you to act a certain way. After becoming aware that this is going on, start reconnecting the dots. Do you think that you could have a better result if you connected your past experiences and personal narratives with triggers a different way?

## **See the Overall Pattern of Your Life**

The reason why automatic behaviors and seemingly self-regulating emotional states seem almost irresistible is because they are set patterns. We feel we can't escape them. However, keep in mind that you are living in a personal prison of which you yourself are the warden. You're the gatekeeper. You have the keys in your hand. The reason why you're staying in that fixed range of options is because you choose to.

Remember, you chose all these narratives at some level or other. It's like living in a prison, and you have the keys in your hand. You see the keys every single day. In fact, you see them so often that they seem like they're not there. But they're still there in your hand. You could always choose to go about doing things differently.

Your narratives, when woven together, form your lifestyle. We all have a distinct lifestyle—a distinct way of living. It is powered by our narratives.

Is the pattern clear yet? Your normal tendency to connect certain dots and leave particular dots unconnected will produce your lifestyle. Your lifestyle then produces your life. Understand how your personal narratives work

through this process. Get familiar with how they flow into each other. Finally, understand how they define you.

### The More Aware You Are, the More You Can Change Yourself

Like I said, the great news is that by simply being aware, you start changing things in your life. The longer you observe how you behave and how you interpret certain segments of reality to mean specific things, the more power you will have over your 'automatic' thoughts and actions. The more you understand which triggers unleash certain emotion states and how these lead to certain actions, the more you can change yourself.

Be aware that this is happening. Become aware that you're connecting certain dots. Be aware that you believe specific patterns are true and this defines your identity.

### Don't Take Things for Granted

Now, just as you can be looking at a particular phenomenon out in the natural world, it's easy to take certain things for granted. It's so comfortable to think that once you see exact things then it's easy to conclude specific truths.

On the flip side, if you feel that you don't see certain things, then it is okay not to conclude a certain truth. You should stop thinking in terms of shorthand, and instead choose to look at all the things that are playing out in these patterns with a fresh set of eyes. Allow yourself to question everything. Don't just go by assumption.

Don't take things for granted. Don't be fatalistic and assume that there's really not much you can do about the things going on in your life. Don't be dismissive either. Don't think that just because certain things are there, or they're not there, then they don't really mean that much. Instead, look at everything that is happening and see its value. Try to uncouple each

element in your assumptions or disconnect it from whatever it is normally attached to, and try to come up with new connections.

For example, if you are constantly triggered by memories of your father because you did not have a good relationship with him, don't automatically recoil at the memory of certain words or phrases from your father.

For instance, my friend Adam was always told by his dad that he was an idiot. Adam rebelled against his father by smoking a lot of weed when he was a teenager. In college, he ended up, doing a lot of drugs. After graduating, he simply chose to coast through life. He didn't have much drive. He didn't really apply himself.

I lost touch with Adam for several decades. Intrigued by CBT, he let me walk him through key memories and coping mechanisms he had. I was able to work with Adam to the point where he was able to take the emotional sting out of the memories he had about his father. When he remembers his father calling him an 'idiot' or saying he's 'good for nothing, he now has a different interpretation.

I worked with Adam to re-interpret that memory as his father challenging him to be better than what he was settling for. Because Adam was one of those "super genius" kids in junior high, he was always easily bored. When a teacher introduced a new concept, Adam figured it out backwards and forwards before the teacher could even fully explain it. That's how quick Adam's mind was. And accordingly, he got really bored easily. And he would always take the easy way out and do as little as possible to challenge himself.

Perhaps his father, when he told Adam, "You're an idiot," was saying that out of love, or out of frustration over the fact that this young person was capable of so much more but constantly contented himself with doing the very least. When we looked at that alternative meaning and we 're-connected' many of his other memories to his personal narratives, Adam's demeanor changed. All that anger and that free-floating frustration that he had with his father started to melt away.

After six months, I met up with Adam again, and he had launched a start-up Internet company that had just been funded a few million dollars. He said to me that our talks about his father had showed him that he could expect greater things from himself. Our conversations changed him, as well as his whole relationship with the concept of ambition and how he defined personal ambition.

It truly blew my mind that Adam had come up with this really amazing idea for a mobile app that is extremely exciting as far as personal productivity and commercial applications go. He had success in him all this time. Still, for the longest time, he chose to interpret his father's statements about him in such a way that it dragged him down, instead of pushing him upward and forward to his fullest potential.

This is what happens when we allow ourselves to avoid being fatalistic and dismissive when we're looking at the dots in our narratives. They may seem like they've been there for a long time. They may seem all too 'natural.' They may even seem logical. Regardless, there are always other interpretations. Never lose sight of these. Don't be dismissive. Don't think that just because your emotional roller coaster operates one way for so long, you're stuck with it.

## Conclusion

We primarily focused on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) as the underlying platform for solving problems in people's lives. Now, make a list of the most important problems or concerns you'd like to address. Note how often they occur, whether they are relatively minor or quite severe, and how they impact your life. Use the workbook in the appendix at the end. For example, someone may experience feelings of hopelessness. To address this, you could write down that these thoughts occur three to four days a week, that the thoughts are upsetting and intrusive but not so severe that you cannot continue most daily activities, and the impact is that the thoughts take away from your enjoyment of life and make you feel less positive about the future in general.

Depending on how quickly you have read through the content, you may still be experiencing fairly intense symptoms of your emotional struggles despite having read everything. It is important that you do not simply toss it aside and forget about it as you continue to face your daily struggles. Simply educating yourself on what needs to be done will not support you in healing. You will actually need to do the healing work. By remaining devoted and showing up for yourself every single day, you give yourself the attention that you need to truly embrace your healing journey with CBT.

It is important that you truly understand that self-healing does not mean isolating yourself from others. Isolating yourself is a common desire when you are experiencing something like anxiety or depression. However, doing so can impede your healing. Even on days where you do not feel like it, show up for yourself and attempt to make contact with at least one person per day who does not live with you. Doing so will support you in feeling a deeper sense of connection with those around you and will help you feel more attuned with the outside world.

You also need to make sure that you consistently practice your new mindfulness and CBT practices. Even though individuals who recover from psychological disorders using CBT are far less likely to relapse than those who are solely being treated with medicine, you will always be vulnerable to experiencing a relapse in your symptoms. Continuous self-monitoring and keeping yourself well-educated and equipped with the knowledge that

you need to combat potential relapses will support you in overcoming them before they become problematic. Even if they do become problematic again, it is no reason to be ashamed.

If you know of someone else who may benefit from CBT. The more that we can spread the message of healing and empower others to discover how they can heal themselves, the fewer people need to suffer from symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Hopefully, we have shown you that the negative outlook on life is merely a negative distortion of thought you can learn to surpass. To support you on your journey towards balanced positivity, we have included numerous exercises and introduced you to a number of techniques that support the mental recovery. You learned how to use the thought record, one of the most important tools to examine your mind and track your progress. By learning how to use the thought record, you will be able to rationally evaluate every stressful situation and challenge that life throws at you. With that in mind, you can use this technique to beat automatic thoughts, rumination, dysfunctional beliefs, and assumptions, as well as to cope with fear and sadness.

Remember to stay open about your thoughts and experiences as much as possible. Communicating with your therapist openly, using detailed descriptions gives them the best insight into your experiences and helps them identify wrong beliefs and assumptions that are guiding your life. You've learned that the most likely cause for you to feel the way you do isn't in the fact that there is something wrong with you, because there isn't, but in the negative core beliefs that have shaped your perception of life. We have explained the definition and examples of core beliefs, helping you to understand how and why the unconscious mechanisms that are guiding you might be dysfunctional. Furthermore, we explained how and why the negative core beliefs cause cognitive distortions, automatic, and intrusive thoughts that are bothering you the most. You now have guidance and instructions to stop nurturing these inadequate thinking patterns and shift towards positivity and clarity.

If your life has been affected by negative beliefs long enough, you may have learned how to use numerous avoidant, self-destructive behaviors. Without knowing it, you were relying on these behaviors to shelter yourself from fear. While avoiding stress might have worked for a while, you are

going to have to work past these crippling, self-destructive behaviors in order to grow and change. We introduced graded exposure and behavioral activation as simple but effective techniques for you to gradually and patiently conquer your fears and introduce more enjoyable, positive behaviors into daily life.