

Mind full
Or Mindful?

By Nour Hamdan

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.

- **Maya Angelou**

Note to reader

If you struggle with constant negative thoughts, stress, doubt, or even find it difficult to reach your goals, then this book is for you. This book will help unwind and understand the effects your mentality has on your life.

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Stuck in Doubt

Doubt

I am not good enough because unlike my friends I cannot accomplish simple tasks.

I am not good enough because I cannot reach my goals.

I know I cannot reach my goals because I have already tried and failed.

I just am not capable of reaching my goals and I will always stay the same.

I will not study for my math test because I failed last time even though I tried my best - clearly my best is not good enough and I will fail again.

I wish I were as smart as my friends, but I am not, and won't ever be.

I wish I could live a healthier lifestyle, but I just can't.

Why can't I be smart like my friends?

Why can't I be healthy and happy like these social media influencers?

Why am I not good enough?

Negative mentality

Those thoughts were depressing, right? It appears the person thinking those thoughts **believed** that they were good enough. They filled their head with so many doubtful thoughts and convinced themselves that they couldn't change or reach their goals. Do you ever feel like you're not good enough, or that you can't accomplish your goals?

Let's be honest, worrying is something that we all do! Although negative thinking is constantly persuading yourself and worrying about these negative thoughts. If you constantly have pessimistic thoughts; then you may be struggling with a negative mentality. A negative mentality is when you keep thinking negatively about yourself and your surroundings. The truth is you can do it, whatever you're doubting yourself about! Yes, you can reach your fitness goals, pass your math test, get a scholarship, and reach whatever goals you have; the only thing stopping you is your mind. (["What Is Negative Thinking? How It Destroys Your Mental Health | HealthyPlace"](#))



- mindfood.com

"You cannot have a positive life and a negative mind" -Joyce Meyer

Identifying a negative mentality

Specific patterns or beliefs are what characterizes negative attitudes such as seeing the worst in others, expecting negative outcomes, and blame.

Seeing the worst in people

If we always think negatively about other people and see the worst in them, we will always predict failure when being and working with them. This will change our behavior and attitude towards them which will make us forget the point and role of why we are with them. This could have a negative impact on the relationship and circumstance between you and that person.

Expecting negative outcomes

Expecting negative outcomes all the time will change your attitude towards yourself, making you believe that you aren't good enough and that you will never succeed. If you always predict failure, then this may make you avoid some challenges. These challenges may have had a positive impact on your life, although you wouldn't know that until you face them.

Blame

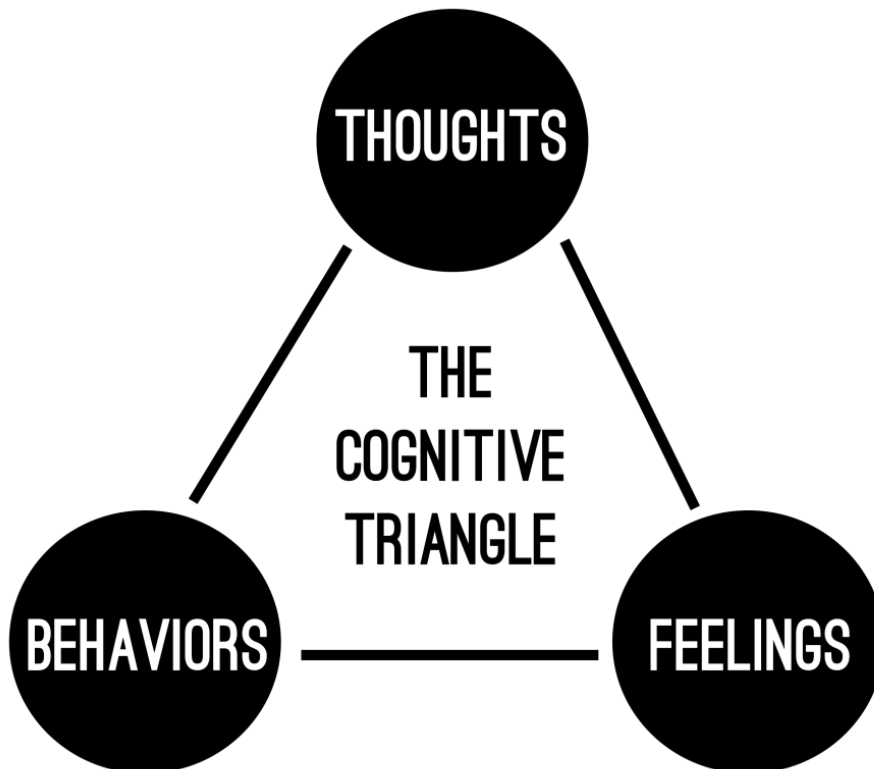
We sometimes don't realize that we put the blame on other things and people, even though something is our responsibility. We do this to make ourselves feel better, so we don't have to take responsibility for our actions. Sometimes this can negatively impact our lives, as we do not realize the effects it has on relationships and the decisions that we make. (["Don't Let a Negative Attitude Ruin Your Life"](#))

As you can see, having a negative mindset can cause you to always expect the worst in people, yourself, and your future. Many people don't express enough the importance of having a more positive attitude and the impact it has on their lives.

You are what you
think

The Cognitive Triangle

Now that we have identified the problem, we need to understand how our thoughts work. What are our thoughts? The information that our brain takes and sends to our mind. Our mind determines what information is important and makes it our mental focus. If we constantly think negatively about our ourselves and surrounding, we **will** start believing these negative thoughts. For example, if you constantly think that you will never improve at something, you will eventually believe that and never try to improve. Although if you believe in yourself and repeatedly say that you can do anything you put your mind too, then you will put the effort to improve.

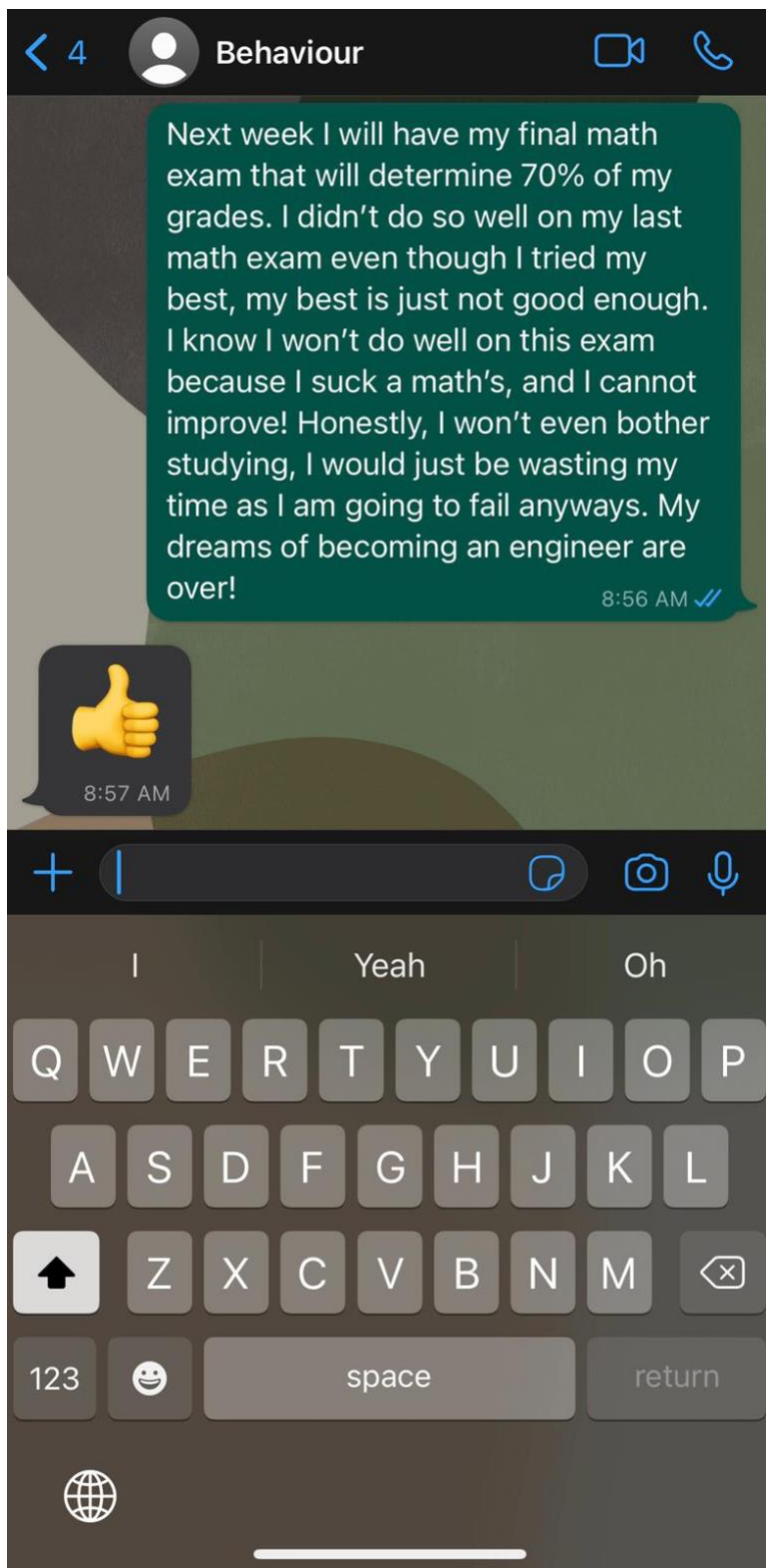


This is the cognitive triangle; it shows the cycle of how our thoughts impact our feelings which has an impact on our behaviors

Our thoughts can positively or negatively affect our feelings, although what do feelings have to do with our behavior? Feelings are indicated from our experiences and thoughts, and this affects our behavior. Your behavior is an **action** based on your feelings and thoughts. For example, let's say someone constantly spends their time on social media, to the point where they start seeing all of society's standards on how you should look like to be considered 'pretty'. ("How Do My Thoughts Impact My Life?")

This experience can affect how the person feels and thinks about themselves. The more the person spends their time thinking and focusing on these beauty standards, the more they believe that they are not good enough. This is where behavior comes in, as the person may start trying to fit into these beauty standards. This can be restricted themselves from eating or having an unhealthy diet and sometimes this can even lead to mental illnesses like depression and anxiety. Although if you think more positively about yourself and surround yourself with positive experiences, this could affect your mental and physical health in a good way.



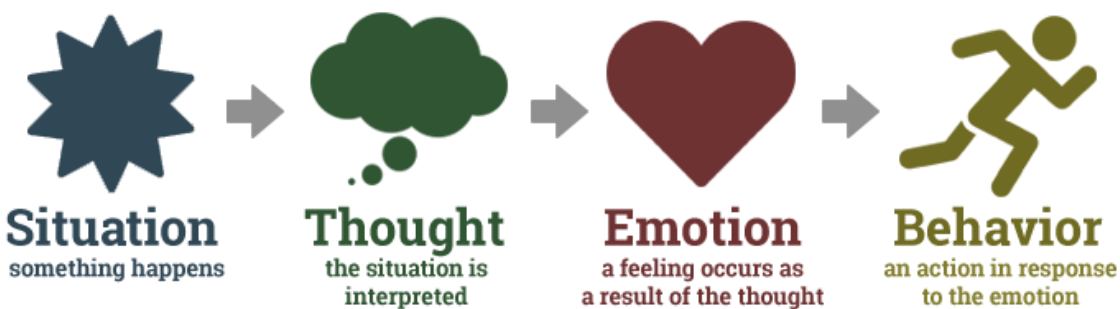


Having negative thoughts and expecting negative outcomes is as if you were sending a text message to your behavior. Our behavior is just an action indicated by our thoughts and feelings. If we think negatively, we will act negatively.

To the left is an image of how we behave. This image shows a conversation between someone's thoughts and behavior. These negative thoughts were sent to their behavior, and their behavior had no other choice but to agree. This is a visual representation of how our feelings and thoughts affects our behavior. If you constantly think negatively and expect bad outcomes, then that's exactly what will happen. This person was convinced that they would fail again and didn't even give themselves a chance to try. The problem is their mindset, **your mind can be your friend or your worst enemy**

Environment

A person's behavior is usually affected by their environment, whether they are surrounded by a positive or negative environment. Our surroundings affect the way we think, which leads to our decision making/ behavior. That's why people say that friends really do affect our personalities. If we hang out with people who make irresponsible decisions, then with their help we persuade ourselves that it is ok to make the same decisions. Therefore, our environment plays a huge role in our thoughts and behaviors.



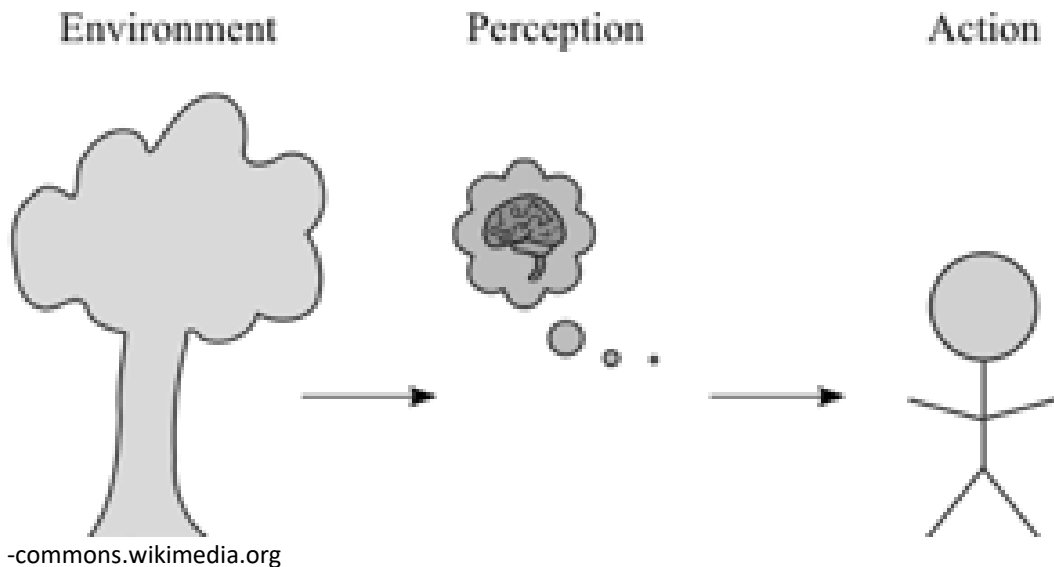
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This is the cognitive model; the situations we put ourselves (or our environment) also plays a role in the cognitive process.

Our environment includes social media, friends, family, teachers, society, etc. The environment in which we surround ourselves generates some of our beliefs and opinions of ourselves and our surroundings. If we surround ourselves in an unhealthy environment then this can make us think badly about ourselves, which could lead to negative behavior. Just as our environment can affect our mindset, our attitude can also impact other people's attitudes. For example, parents are like role models for their children, so naturally, a child can inherit a parent's attitude and behavior. A child can grow a negative mindset from a parent that is pessimistic or defeatist. Having a good attitude can be manifested in other people's behavior; People with a positive attitude are usually very productive and active and this can motivate others to be like them! (["Drivers of Behavior | Boundless Management"](#))

“The better you are at surrounding yourself with people of high potential, the greater your chance of success” – John C. Maxwell

Why do people suddenly decide that they want to change their lifestyles (diets, exercise, hobbies, etc.)? Many people think they want to change just to be healthier and happier. Not many people know this but what triggers them to change is wanting to be like others. When you see other people being happy with their healthy lifestyles and family, **this might affect your thoughts and feelings about yourself, making you believe if you do what they do you’ll be happier with yourself.** This could be a good thing as it may make you want to change for the better. Although this can also seriously affect your mental and physical health, making you change for the results (by unhealthy dieting, expecting fast results, and trying to find the fastest way to your goal). Once you realize that you can’t change that quickly, you may just think you’re not good enough and give up. This is an example of what many people struggle with when trying to reach their goals.



Something else that can affect the way we think is life experiences. We cannot control what we experience in life, although what we can control is how we handle these experiences. We have two choices, to think negatively about the situation or try to look at the situation in a brighter light. Like for example if you fail a test, you have the choice to just be sad about it and think that you are not good enough, or you can go through a more positive path and think of it as an opportunity to improve yourself.

Obviously, some life experiences are much harder and emotionally difficult than failing a test. It is still possible, however, to try your best to look at the situation through a more positive lens.

The connection between our mind and life

Even though our mental and physical health are two completely different things, your mentality plays a huge role in your physical health. Obviously, everyone is stressed at some point, although looking at unpleasant situations through a more positive lens can change your life. Having a positive mindset makes you think more clearly and be less stressed, therefore allowing you to make more confident and better decisions. For example, if you were to have a negative mindset you would say something like **'I failed this test because I am not good enough'**, and you would just give up (the more you repeat these negative thoughts the more you believe in them). Although if you repeatedly say something like **'I failed this test, but I am proud of myself for learning from my mistakes and I WILL do better next time'**, you will feel like you could accomplish anything you put your mind to!

Thinking positively will boost your productivity and increases your energy, which will help reduce your stress. Since it reduces stress, it helps you think more clearly as well as improves your focus. Having a positive mindset will encourage you to improve your mental and physical health as well as your lifestyle! If you have a healthy productive lifestyle, then you will more likely reach your goals. (“Don’t Let a Negative Attitude Ruin Your Life”) (WebMD Editorial Contributors) (“Positive Thinking in the Workplace: Benefits and Tips | Indeed.com”)



Healing

Fixed and Growth Mindsets

Now that we have identified and understand the effects and causes of a negative mentality, how can we have a more positive mentality? The first step is to shift from a fixed to a growth mindset, although what is the difference between these two mindsets? A fixed mindset makes you believe if you're not good at something, you will never be good at it. You would believe that you will always be the way you are and that you can never change or improve. A growth mindset is the complete opposite; it's knowing that if you're not good at something, you can still improve and that you will change. Can you guess which are the fixed and which are the growth mindsets from the examples below? (biglifejournal.com)

Example 1:

- "I don't want to learn something new because I don't want to make mistakes."
- "Everyone makes mistakes, and it is important to make mistakes in order to learn."

Example 2:

- "I tried dieting for three months, but I have not lost any weight, I just can't lose weight."
- "I tried dieting for three months, but I have not lost any weight, maybe I am doing something wrong, and I should look for ways to improve."

Example 3:

- "I wish I was naturally smart like my friends and get good grades."
- "No one is naturally smart, and everyone needs to put in the effort to get good grades. I can also get good grades!"

Activity

You should be able to clearly which statements above are examples of having a growth mindsets. We all have negative thoughts, and it is important to realize that you cannot have a completely positive mindset. Although it is possible to have a more positive mindset! For this activity you need to think about any negative thoughts you have had recently, then try and look for a more positive way you could have approached the situation (like the examples above). The real trick to changing from a fixed to a growth mindset is practice! So anytime you catch yourself saying something negative, try looking at it from a more positive perspective. Do this even if you feel like you're lying to yourself, just fake it till you make it!

How can you have a more positive mindset?

Step 1: Practice being grateful

Being grateful makes you realize everything you have and how blessed you are, and this allows you to think more positively. Even in bad situations, if you practice looking for the good things, you will develop a more positive mindset.

Activity

Think about three different reasons you are grateful, they can be the most random reasons. We all have many reasons to be grateful and it is important to realize that in order to live a more calm and happy life. Looking for different reasons to be grateful every day will help you grow your mindset even in hard situations. A great way to make this a habit is journaling, writing just one reason you are grateful every day is an easy task but will help you a lot in the future!

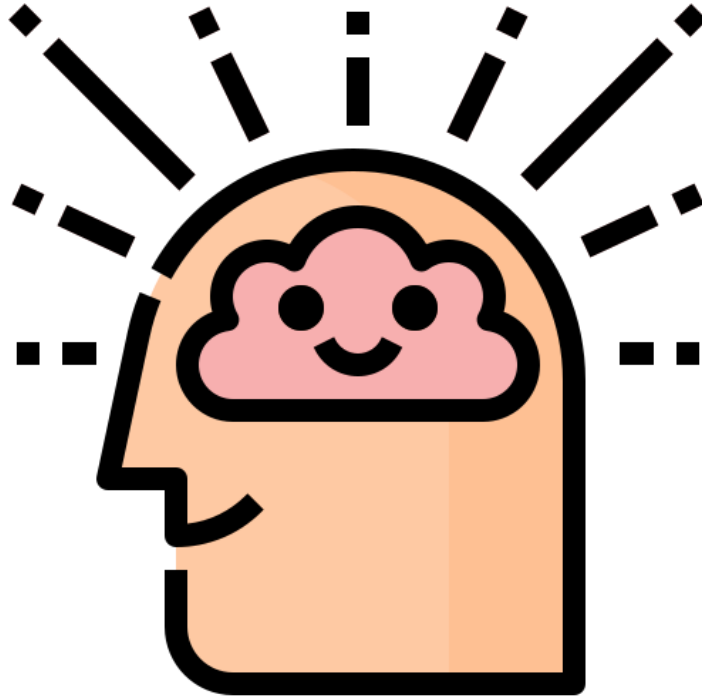
Prompts to think about when starting a journal

- Talk about something that made you smile today.
- Talk about something good that happened today.
- Talk about a good memory with a family member.
- Talk about a good memory with a friend.
- Talk about something you look forward to in the future.
- Talk about someone that inspires you.
- Talk about something new that you have learned.
- Talk about a fear you have overcome.
- Talk about a small personal win.
- Talk about something you are proud of.
- List different reasons why you are proud of yourself.
- Talk about what makes you unique.

Step 2: rethink the way you view the world

There is always something good in a bad situation, you just need to find it. You have the choice to either look at the bad of a situation or at the good. The only way to accomplish this is practice. The more you try to look for the good in things, the more used to it you'll get, then you will just start doing it naturally.

Remember if you can't think positively, **just fake it till you make it.** (“How to Stop Negative Self-Talk”)



-buzzsprout.com

Activity

An affirmation is giving yourself encouragement or emotional support, an affirmation can be something as simple as “I am smart”. For this activity you need to tell yourself a positive affirmation, it can be about anything! See how easy it is? Affirmations is a great way to build self-confidence and be more grateful. The best part is that it is easy! If you inherit affirmations into your daily routine, it would be a great way to shift to a growth mindset. You can start with just one affirmation a day, and then say more as the days move on! The practice of looking for the good in things is the first step to having a more positive mindset, the more you practice the more you will find yourself saying these affirmations unintentionally. Even if you do not believe in these affirmations keep saying them until you trick yourself into believing them, because remember our behavior is a reflection of our thoughts and feelings.

Step 3: Focus on yourself

You will have a more optimistic attitude if you concentrate on yourself because you will recognize that there is good in life. To focus on yourself, search for methods to improve your performance, learn new abilities, and be more effective in all aspects of life. You will need to focus on improving your mental and physical health. Although it is first important to improve your mental health as this is what affects your physical health.

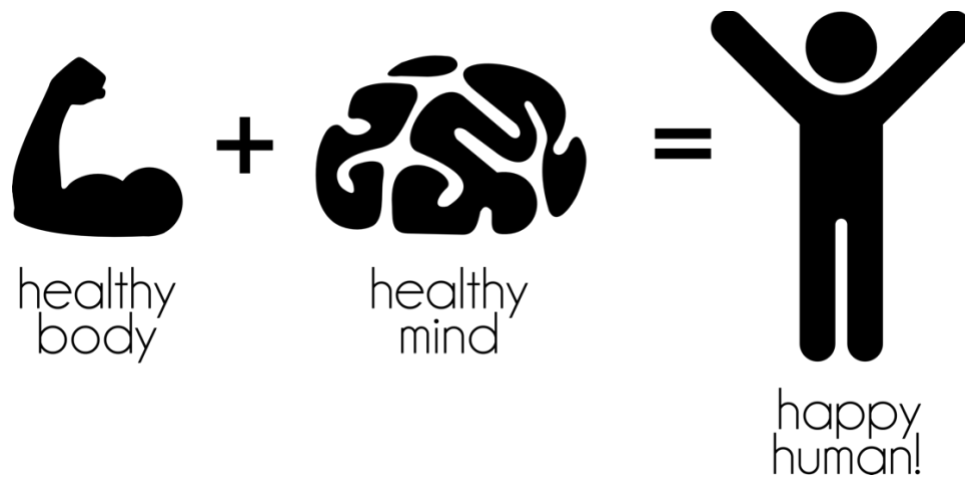
Activity

If you ever feel stressed or overwhelmed, try meditating. Meditation helps you clear your mind and relax. During meditation you focus on releasing your stress and focusing on the environment around you. The best part about it is that you can do it in just a few minutes! Headspace on Netflix and Apple Podcast are great platforms to use for meditation as they also explain to you how meditation can help you unwind your mind.

Step 4: Moving your body

Exercise is a great way to improve your mental health as it relieves stress, anxiety, and bad moods. Exercise is a great way to clear the mind and build a healthier

lifestyle. If you don't like exercising, try going on walks; walking is a great way to move your body and have a calm mind! (Sharma et al.)



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“A healthy mind breeds a healthy body and visa versa!” -Zig Ziglar

Step 5: Eat Healthy

Have you ever heard of the saying **“You are what you eat”**? Well, that doesn't just apply to physical health, what we eat also affects our mental health. Try and eat 80% healthy, **do not restrict yourself from any food**, as we are trying to make this a habit we enjoy, and we don't want it to feel like a task. Eating a healthy balanced diet (such as filling your diet with a variety of vegetables and nutrients) can improve your mood and overall wellbeing! Remember that eating healthy does not mean eating boring, there are a variety of different delicious foods on the internet that you can try making yourself! (“Diet and Mental Health”)



-elpais.com

Here is a visual representation of what a healthy balanced diet looks like

Step 6: Identify areas you need to change

It is important to look at why you are having these negative thoughts, these reoccurring negative thoughts may be a sign to change and try to improve.

Activity

Take a piece of paper and write down all your worries and negative thoughts. When you are done writing them, cross out the things you cannot control, and do something about the things you can. Some of our negative thoughts are just worries but others are a sign to change, this is a great way to differentiate between what's important and what isn't.

Step 7: Practice positive talk and check yourself

Occasionally during the day, pause and evaluate what you're thinking. If you see that you are constantly thinking negatively, try and find a way to have a more positive outlook on the situation. Sometimes we are stressed because we think negatively without realizing it, so it is important to evaluate your thinking throughout the day. It is good to take a step back from your day and think, you can do this by journaling and writing down your thoughts or just by going on a walk. The options are endless.

Activity

Observe the math questions below:

$$1+1=2$$

$$2+2=4$$

$$3+3=6$$

$$4+4=20$$

$$5+5=10$$

$$6+6=12$$

Does anything catch your eye?

$$1+1=2$$

$$2+2=4$$

$$3+3=6$$

$$4+4=20$$

$$5+5=10$$

$$6+6=12$$

As you may have realized one of the questions were answered wrong. Naturally the question that was wrong is something that catches our eye, and we tend to forget that the rest of the questions were right. We can apply this example in real life, sometimes we focus on the bad of a situation that we tend to forget to look at the good of the situation. This example proves that there is always something positive to think about!

Step 8: Surround yourself with a positive environment

Our environment has a big impact on our mentality, so if we surround ourselves with encouraging positive people. This will make it easier for us to have a positive mindset. Although surrounding ourselves with negative people will make it more difficult to have a positive outlook and growth mindset.

Activity

Download the app motivation, it sends you daily notification of positive quotes to keep your spirits up. This app is also customizable and can send you quotes from the topic of your liking. It is a great app to help you feel more motivated and happier throughout the day!

Step 9: Accept constructive criticism

People usually don't accept criticism as they would feel offended, but sometimes you need to accept it in order to grow. If someone points out an area of weakness you have, it could be a sign to focus on that area and improve. This does not mean don't stand up for yourself when someone offends you, but to look at things from their point of view. Think about constructive criticism as feedback! (Adler)



-personio.com

Step 10: Keep learning

There is always something to learn, if you have a fixed mindset, you will feel there is nothing worth learning, but with a growth mindset you would always seek different ways to learn. It could be anything from learning how to play a sport to learning how to cook, but never stop learning. Learning is a self-accomplishment we make that will always give us a reason to be proud of ourselves.



-aihr.com

Step 11: Focus on the process

If you focus on the end result, it will be difficult to keep going as you would be determined to get to your goal the fastest way possible. Once we realize that we don't see fast results, we tend to give up and feel as though we can't accomplish our goals. Focusing on the process means enjoying the process! If you enjoy the process then it would be easier to reach your goals, because you would be having fun and wouldn't be looking for shortcuts.

“Befuddlement is a healthy part of the learning process. When students approach a problem and don't know how to do it, they'll often decide they're no good at the subject. Brighter students, in particular, can have difficulty in this way—their breezing through high school leaves them no reason to think that being confused is normal and necessary. But **the learning process is all about working your way out of confusion.**” – Kenneth R. Leopold

And Now, Act

How to reach your goals

Motivation vs Discipline

We have all probably heard of the noun 'motivation', but what is the difference between motivation and discipline? Motivation is a sudden burst of energy to do something productive, although discipline is doing something you need to do, even though sometimes you don't want to. In order to reach your goals, you need discipline and not motivation! Yes, motivation may get you started but it will never keep you going because it will come and go. Although discipline is something that can always stay with you and help you get to your goal. You may have the sudden motivation to workout, although once that wears off you would need to rely on discipline to keep going. Always remember when you feel like something is difficult, that your motivation has probably just worn off; keep going because you're disciplined. Constantly repeating to yourself that you're disciplined will, in fact, make you disciplined, because our behavior is based on what we think. (Wojtowecz)

Activity

Brian Tracy is a Canadian-American motivational speaker, and he once said "Make a list of 10 things, 10 goals, that you'd like to accomplish in the next year or so. And ask, "If I could only accomplish one goal on this list, which one goal would have the greatest positive impact on my life? Write it down & make that the major purpose of your life". This activity can help you reach a goal by focusing on one thing you would like to accomplish. Writing down your goals on paper increases your chances of actually reaching the goal!

Remember:

If you ever feel like giving up, remember Thomas Edison's story. Thomas Edison failed to make the light bulb even after 9,999 attempts, however instead of accepting failure he tried again and created the greatest invention of all time. Although Edison didn't count those attempts as failures as he said "I have not failed. I've Just found 9,999 ways that won't work" Edison was disciplined even after many attempts and that's why he was able to reach his goal. So, remember that if he gave up after his 9999th try, then the light bulb would not have existed!

Mental Contrasting

To achieve a goal, you need to do something called 'mental contrasting'! Mental contrasting is imagining your goal and seeing what challenges you have to overcome in order to reach it. It is important to realize that you will need to act and go through a few challenges; If you accept that, only then will you be able to reach your goal. That's why it is also important to enjoy the process and not focus on the results. A great way to focus on the process and not the results is rewarding yourself! Rewarding yourself motivates you to finish all your tasks and makes you forget about the end results. (loss)

Different ways you can reward yourself

- Watch your favorite tv show
- Have a snack
- Cook a meal
- Go out with your friends
- Workout
- Meditate
- Take a nap
- Take a walk
- Read
- Listen to music

Maximizer vs Satisfier

Are you a maximizer or satisfier? A maximizer is a person wanting to do something perfectly otherwise they won't feel satisfied, a satisfier on the other hand, is someone who does something to their absolute best and even if it's not perfect they would be satisfied with the results. What do you think is better, being a maximizer or satisfier? It is important to be a satisfier to accomplish something, because if you always expect to be perfect then you will find it difficult to reach your goal. Being a maximiser may get you to your goal, but it will most likely make you give up because you would feel like you're not good enough. (Rubin)

It is important to fail and make mistakes in order to reach your goal

“When I was in tenth grade I decided to take an AP computer science class. I ended up failing the AP exam. But I would not accept failure, so I took the class and the test again the following year. Somehow, staying away from programming for nearly a year and then coming back to it made me realize how much I truly enjoyed it. I passed the test easily on the second try. If I had been too afraid of failure to take the computer science class the first time, and then a second time, I would certainly not be what I am today, a passionate and happy computer scientist” – Cassandra Gordon

Sometimes we accept failure because of the stress that comes with it, so it is important to take a break. Like Cassandra you can regrow your passion for something by just taking a break! Keeping your mind off of things for a while can help you refresh your memory and release your stress.

-(Oakley)

Remember

Whenever you want to change something in your life, you need to start off by changing your mind. Having a healthy growth mindset is the hardest part. Once you change your mindset, it will all get easier. Remember that you can't completely have a positive mindset and you will encounter negative thoughts, but it is important to try and review these thoughts from another perspective, even if you feel like you're lying to yourself!

Remember:

- 1) You behave based your thoughts and feelings, so if you think positively, you will take positive actions.
- 2) Your environment influences the ways you think, sometimes it's good to take a little break from social media because all you see is the fake reality of people's lives. Make sure you surround yourself with a positive environment!
- 3) Focus on the process and not the results. Focusing on the result makes it more difficult to reach your goals, because you would be looking for the fastest way possible to reach them. Focusing on the process allows you to enjoy the journey and makes it easier for you to get results.
- 4) A healthy mind needs a healthy body. Make sure to move your body daily and eat a healthy balanced diet
- 5) Be disciplined and don't accept failure. Think of failure as a good teacher that's trying to make you improve. Learn from your mistakes and remember you cannot accomplish anything without them.

Activity

Close this book and take a piece of paper, write down the different things that you have learned and how you will apply them into your new and improved future. Then take action!

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor who helped guide me through my research, personal project and making this book. I would also like to thank my friends and family, who inspired and motivated me to share my knowledge and research about psychology.

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