

Anna Hans

HYGGGE

50 Secrets Of A Danish Happy Life



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Anna Hans

The Power of Positive Thinking

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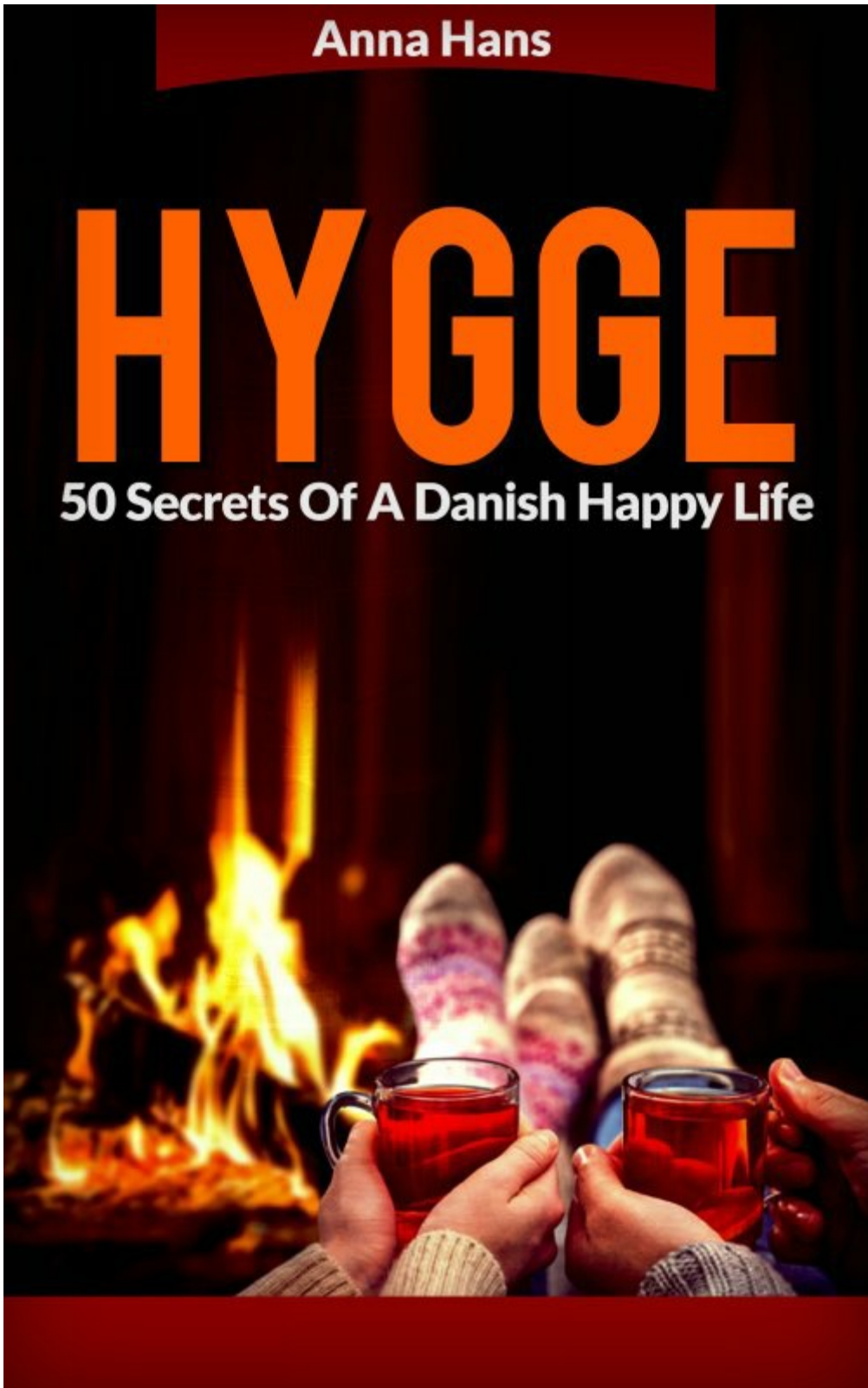
MINDFULNESS IN 21 DAYS

Zane Maxwell

Anna Hans

HYGGE

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by Anna Hans

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Introduction

Hygge. *Hue-guh*. The word itself is tricky. It's difficult to pronounce. It's also one of those words that you can't quite categorize. Is it an adjective, or a noun? Is it an emotion? A feeling you experience? Or is it more akin to something you practice, like meditation?

It's rather ironic that the word itself would be so nebulous when, in fact, the overall meaning behind Hygge is so simple to understand, so simple to *feel*, and so simple to *do*.

That's because Hygge is all about enjoying life's simple pleasures.

But in this fact-paced, complicated world, sometimes the more simple pleasures in life can allude us. This book is all about helping you reconnect with those pleasures, and in doing so cultivate a Hygge state of mind.

Why bother doing that, you ask? An awareness and appreciation for Hygge has made the Danish population—statistically speaking—the happiest people on earth by a wide margin. It can do the same for you.

Chapter 1 – Secrets to Give Yourself a More Hygge Mentality

Hygge is the recognition of a good moment as it's happening — no matter how mundane or ordinary. Hygge can refer to a certain cozy atmosphere in the room, a pleasant experience enjoyed with friends, or even an intangible feeling of contentedness from within.

A cozy café that serves an excellent latte can be a place of Hygge — especially when there's a winter storm billowing outside. But then, a soldier huddled in the trenches, bombshells blasting in the distance, can glean a sense of Hygge as he watches a beetle cross a leaf. How can Hygge exist in such drastically different scenarios?

It's because — yes — while certain settings may be more conducive to Hygge (as described in the next chapter), Hygge is so much more than your present surroundings. It's really more about how you choose to perceive those surroundings.

No matter where you are in life, no matter what you're doing, chances are that there's some Hygge going on within your immediate vicinity. You only need to open your eyes to see it.

Hygge Secret #1: Take the Good and Leave the Bad

As I write this chapter, I'm sitting in my backyard on a sunny afternoon in

early Autumn. The wind is blowing through the trees and the breeze feels lovely on my skin. A cricket 's chirping in the garden. A few leaves have fallen to the earth, and their tips flutter ever so gently where they 've landed in the grass.

All these sights, sounds, and sensations are Hygge. I experience a subdued form of pleasure just from observing and appreciating them for what they are.

And yet, at the same time, the sun is still too bright for my liking — even with sunglasses on — and a siren blaring in the distance sounds quite ugly. But why focus on these things? I can choose to filter them out. I can choose to take the good and leave the bad.

Hygge Secret #2: The Time is Always “ Now ” – Appreciate the Present

At the time of writing this — still here in my backyard — I have well over a dozen deadlines, priorities, and uncompleted tasks swirling around me in the ether.

But what good would dwelling on them do? I 've committed myself to the task I 'm doing now — everything else will have to wait. Living in the present is a pivotal element of Hygge.

Hygge Secret #3: Contrast Is Cozy

Have you ever noticed how a warm cup of coca is so much better with blizzard roaring in your window? Or how a moment of peace in quiet at the water cooler feels like such a relief in the midst of bustling office?

In both cases, a relatively simple pleasure is made more noticeable by the *contrast* happening around it.

By cultivating an awareness for the *contrasts* you experience, you will likewise increase your appreciation for minor pleasantries.

Hygge Secret #4: Tune into the Energy Around You

A crucial aspect of Hygge is the understanding that there 's *something* more to a room than the five senses alone can relay. Sometimes its defined by the people presently occupying the space.

A person in a terrible mood exudes a certain type of energy that 's quite tangible. A group of people in a terrible mood puts a black cloud over their entire building.

In other cases, the energy of a place is defined by its history. You can 't walk through the halls of an abandoned mental ward without picking up on the despair that 's wrought into the walls.

Just like how you can 't walk through the grounds of a historical University without picking up the sense of grandeur, ambition and pride that so many students have left behind over the years.

Wherever you find yourself in life, try to tune into the unseen atmosphere around you. By doing so, you will naturally find yourself drawn to Hygge locations.

Hygge Secret #5: Bear Witness to Your Life – Be an Active Observer

You are to notice that the less you focus on yourself, the easier it is to tune into the atmosphere around you. Strive to live outside yourself, rather than in your own head.

When someone's speaking, really listen to what they're telling you. Submerge yourself in their message. In other words, be an *active observer*. Focus as much of your attention into the external as you can.

Over time, it will become your natural *modus operandi*.

Hygge Secret #6: Listen to Your Body

That being said, there's certainly a time and a place to check in with yourself. Not to lose yourself in rumination, but to listen to your body.

Take a moment now to observe your own posture. Is your body really as comfortable as it can be? Or are you ignoring minor discomfort in your back, shoulders, or neck?

Or, is everything just fine? That's great too! Take a moment to appreciate it. Enjoy how your body has no gripes to share with you. Be grateful for the state that you are in.

On that note...

Hygge Secret #7: Make Gratitude Your Attitude

Hygge is all about gratitude: it's the foundation, the core, and the crux. Countless research studies show that grateful people are greatly more likely

to be happy individuals.

But don't wait for a sense of gratitude to come to you. Actively look for things to be grateful for throughout your day, and you will find that your overall sense of happiness begins to skyrocket.

Hygge Secret #8: Let Go of Your Expectations...

It's hard to be grateful when you're constantly setting yourself up for disappointment.

Yes, it's important to plan and set goals in life — that's how we get ahead. Still, the outcomes are never fully within in our control.

So instead of staking everything on the outcome, pour yourself into the *action*, and take what comes your way. Be *interested* in your ideal result, but not *attached* to it.

Hygge Secret #9: ...And Embrace the Unexpected

The cat knocks over a glass of wine and ruins the dinner you've just spent hours preparing. Is it really a disaster, a just funny occurrence that has subverted the way you pictured your evening unfolding?

Will you curse the day you took that troublesome feline in and stew over the event all night on an empty stomach...or will you concede defeat, get Chinese takeout, and discover a brand new dish you adore when the restaurant messes up your order?

The choice is literally yours. A serene outlook on life will carry you to heights you never could have imagined. Embrace the unexpected!

Hygge Secret #10: Be Open-Minded About Everything

A wise friend of mine had a saying when it came to highly-opinionated people: “ They ’ re the most miserable buggers you ’ ll meet. ” My experience would have me agree.

The Dutch are famous for their tolerance of other people ’ s religions, political views, and overall outlook on life. They ’ re also famous — as you well know by now — for their happiness.

Its certain that a correlation between the two exists.

You don ’ t have to agree with every person you meet on everything, but so what? Their stance doesn ’ t have to affect you either.

Many people from non-Western countries report that their shocked at how easily upset and off put Americans are by outlooks that don ’ t align with their own.

For your own happiness ’ s sake, don ’ t be one these people!

Hygge Secret #11: Don ’ t Be Afraid to Speak Out or Ask

Having read all of this, you might get the impression that Hygge is all about absolute passivity. Absolutely not!

Keeping a statement or request bottled up is one of the number one causes for undue stress. Speak your mind when you feel compelled to do so, and on that note...

Hygge Secret: #12: Trust Your Intuition

Gut instinct is definitely more than an old wives ' tale. Your subconscious mind is clued in to things your conscious mind can ' t fathom. When you get “ that feeling ” , trust it, and act on it.

Failing to do so can result — at the very least — in more undue stress and discomfort.

Hygge Secret #13: Find A Way to Blow Off Steam That Works for You

Regardless of how well you manage your life, stress is inevitable. Therefore, it ' s essential that you nail down a good way to blow off steam that suits your personality.

Some examples of Hygge de-stressing activities include:

- Gardening
- Drawing
- Painting
- Coloring (Adult coloring books are all the rage right now — arguably the biggest trend of 2016 next to Hygge)
- Writing

- Spending time with people you enjoy

More activities with a Hygge-inducing element are discussed in Chapter Four.

Hygge Secret #14: Keep it Low Energy! There ' s A Time for Hype and A Time for Hygge

Can you find the connecting thread running through the example Hygge activities listed in the previous secret? I ' ll give you a clue: notice how not one of them involves a screen.

(Unless you ' re writing on a computer, which we don ' t recommend for Hygge!)

As we ' ll learn in Chapter Three, screens in general have properties that make them rather anti-Hygge. But screens aside, the real connecting thread of these activities is that they ' re all involved, but not high energy.

Completely passive activities like watching TV or surfing the Internet aren ' t Hygge because they turn off your brain and take you out of the moment. Video games aren ' t Hygge because they ' re far too stimulating.

So instead, spend your recreational Hygge time doing something where you ' re actively involved, but at the same time isn ' t too demanding of your brainpower. You don ' t have to abandon TV or the web entirely of course, just recognize that these things don ' t bring you any closer to Hygge.

Chapter 2 – Secrets to Heighten the Hygge In Your Home

The concept of rearranging your environment to invoke a certain “energy” was not invented by the Hygge-hungry Dutch culture. In truth, this concept has been around for thousands of different years throughout hundreds of different cultures.

You’re probably already familiar with one such example — Feng Shi: the ancient Chinese art of balancing one’s surroundings in harmony with the universe. The art of Hygge décor is quite similar in many ways. Both strive to invoke an effortless atmosphere of peaceful positivity in your home.

Hygge Secret #15: Fire’s Light Relaxes Us at Night

Humans have evolved with (or perhaps we were designed with) a certain affinity for the light produced by fire. As such, we naturally find the light produced by a candle or fireplace very soothing.

In the evening, a few candles can add a touch of atmosphere to a room that’s very Hygge. Just don’t go trying to read by it — humans didn’t so much evolve with *that* kind of affinity.

Hygge Secret #16: Ambient Lighting is Good Too

You won’t find a Danish café caught dead with white, lifeless halogen lighting. Overhead lighting in general is too “corporate” as well.

Instead, low-hanging lamps that produce a dimmer — but less “glaring” — atmosphere is favored.

Try to structure your lighting so that it’s reflecting off surfaces to illuminate your space, rather than assaulting the room at large directly. This is often referred to as “ambient” style lighting.

Hygge Secret #17: Natural Lighting Is Best During the Day

During the day, the most Hygge kind of lighting is the light of Mother Nature’s yellow sun. When buying or moving into a new home, always give huge priorities to the window situation.

An abundant amount of sunlight in your waking life is absolutely critical to happiness.

If you won’t be changing spaces anytime soon, experiment with the windows that you do have. Maybe you can rearrange your layout to make the room with the best the lighting the place where you spend the most time during the day? Maybe you can ditch the blinds and go with curtains?

Many tourists are shocked by the Europeans lack of blinds in their home. Perhaps they simply value natural lighting more than their privacy?

Hygge Secret #18: Enclosures Can Be Cozy...

The Danish have a great love for nooks and crannies. You’ll find their cafes, bookstores, and coffee-shops crammed-packed with cozy corners for people

to enjoy.

That ' s because nooks trigger a feeling of comfort and security — two mental states within the sphere of Hygge. Maybe you have a corner in your home that could be repurposed into a comfortable enclosure?

Hygge Secret #19: ...But Open Space Also Has Its Place

That being said, too much enclosure can have a negative effect as well. There ' s definitely plenty of room for open spaces in a Hygge household.

Research shows that a minimalistic motif can be most conducive to relaxation and focus. Experiment with the dynamics across the areas of your dwelling. Places where you can expect more than one person to gather will benefit greatly from big open spaces.

Hygge Secret #20: A Sense for Scent

Candles are Hygge for more than just their lighting. A nice scented candle adds another sensory experience to appreciate.

Hygge Secret #21: Ambient Music is Soothing

Speaking of sensory experiences, sound is another avenue to maximize your Hygge.

Ambient sounds, in particular, is great. Music that ' s too upbeat can be sweep you away with it. Ambient music is low-key and directionless. It adds

to the atmosphere but it doesn't steal the show.

Hygge Secret #22: But Do Remember: Less Is More

When it comes to things like scented candles, background music, and even the amount of visual adornments to your home in general, always operate on a less-is-more basis. It's great to indulge the senses, but Hygge is all about restraint.

A sensory-rich room can be very Hygge — provided that it's not so rich it becomes overtly stimulating.

Hygge Secret #23: Bright Colors Are Bad, Alright?

On that note, bright colors are a big no-no when it comes to Hygge. Bright red is the worst offender by far, but vivid stoplight green can be almost as disruptive. Earth tones, cool colors, and autumn hues are ideal.

Hygge Secret #24: Plants Make Pleasant Company

Ferns make good roommates. A healthy potted plant adds a touch of atmosphere to your room that can't be matched. A window-sill planter with a variety of live herbs and spices is even better.

As we learned before, gardening in general is top tier Hygge. The act of routinely caring for your plants will add moments of pure, unrefined Hygge to your day, every day.

Hygge Secret #25: Surround Yourself with Good Memories

Nostalgia is most certainly a close cousin of Hygge, so keep objects that represent fond memories around the house and in plain sight. While Hygge is more about appreciating the *present* moment, what 's wrong with appreciating a moment where you appreciate the past?

As long as you aren ' t *living* in the past, there ' s nothing anti-Hygge about taking a few seconds out of your day to smile over the portrait of a loved one.

Less obvious tokens of the past — a teddy that ' s been in the family for years, a shell from a blissful childhood day at the beach — can even help to bolster the cozy-factor of your home on a deeply subconscious level.

Hygge Secret #26: Your Personal Touch Means a Lot

Some people go overboard in their pursuit of a Hygge-positive dwelling. I ' ve walked into friend ' s homes where you swear you were standing a Danish caf é that ' s been converted into a living room. The only problem?

It just doesn ' t jive with that individual ' s personal style! They look out of place in their own home, and you can tell they *feel* that way on some level too.

Don ' t lose yourself in your efforts to cozy up your home. If a more

practical, “ harder ” aesthetic suits you better, roll with it! It will feel more Hygge to you even if it doesn ’ t seem so “ cozy ” on the surface.

Hygge Secret #27: A Place for Work, A Place for Play, A Place to Unwind

Danish office buildings aren ’ t dripping with Hygge for a reason: some places aren ’ t meant for relaxation. The human brain has a tendency to categorize every setting for a certain purpose.

It says, “ this room is where I sleep. This room is where I go to have fun. This room is where I get sh*t done. ” As such, you don ’ t necessarily need to prioritize Hygge in say, an at-home office where you need to be alert and focused no your work.

In general, you don ’ t need a Hygge-smothered setting to operate in a Hygge-like fashion. We ’ ll elaborate more on the concept in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 – Secret Habits for Effortless Hygge in Your Day-to-Day Life

The whole concept of Hygge is kind of pointless if it 's something that you constantly have to force. Instead, adopting these simple lifestyle changes (at your own pace, of course) will introduce a natural sense of Hygge into your everyday experience.

Hygge Secret #28: Cut Down On Technology

The first recommendation on this list is probably the most difficult to implement — but also the most impactful.

We touched on this early but it bears repeating now: technology has two major problems as far as Hygge is concerned:

- Screens are just awful. They 're too bright, their blue light aspect (the spectrum of light that stimulates you) is too strong, and they stress out your eyes.
- The content that those screens deliver is too stimulating itself. Crowded inboxes, ever-developing news headlines, constant social media updates.... it 's just all *too much* for our brains to handle *all the time*.

Of course, your conscious mind is infatuated by the vast amounts of low-effort novelty that your smartphone can deliver on demand. But Hygge isn 't

about low-effort novelty that you consume like it ' s popcorn and instantly forget about. No, Hygge is something slow and deliberate.

So try your best to unplug, disconnect, and detach yourself from screens as much as possible for the next couple days. See how much different you feel. It ' s hard at first, but the payoff will hit you soon enough.

Hygge Secret #29: Structure Your Day with Wide Open Spaces

In this hustle-bustle world we all have priorities to actualize, tasks to attend to, and never-ending checklists to trim.

That being said, there ' s a way to work with Hygge on your side. To the best of your ability, structure your day with wide, open spaces in your schedule. Give yourself an hour to get something done that you ' re sure should only take half that long to finish.

Studies show that when you give your brain plenty of downtime it functions at a higher level throughout the day. You may be surprised to find that by demanding less of yourself, you actually accomplish much, much more than usual.

Hygge Secret #30: Nip Procrastination in The Bud

On that note, procrastination is an affront to all Hygge!

While Hygge is always within reach, even in the most dire and stressful of circumstances, our ultimate goal is to make it effortlessly accessible, right?

Well, with more pressing matters looming over your head, Hygge is more difficult to access and maintain.

Always try to get what you need done out of the way ahead of time if an evening of maximum Hygge is what you desire.

Hygge Secret #31: Set Aside Some Time for Hygge Day

On that note (again), make sure you prioritize some Hygge time in your day whenever possible. The Danish don't become the happiest people on Earth off Hygge by indulging in it intermittently.

They look forward to a full evening of serene Hygge-fueled unwinding nearly every day! Many like to kick off their day with Hygge as well. Do what you can, do what works for you.

Hygge Secret #32: Set Aside Some You-Time Throughout Your Day

Even while you're busy, make it a goal to steal a few minutes alone by yourself. Stretch your legs, breathe in some fresh air, and gather your thoughts. Re-anchor yourself in the moment by appreciating all the pleasantries that come with these three things.

These little windows of You Time really add up for your lifelong health and happiness.

Hygge Secret #33: Don't Get Caught Up in The Details

In the context of downtime getting caught up in "details" is what Hygge is all about.

Things like the texture of your favorite pen in your hand as you write, the trail of steam drifting up from a mug of hot cocoa, or the subtle scent of your loved one's favorite perfume or aftershave that's all too easy to forget — these things are wonderful experiences that cost nothing but a moment of your attention.

When it comes to details in the context of getting things done, however, it's a very different story. All too often, the details are much less important than we give them credit for.

Studies show that detail-oriented people tend to be less productive than big picture people on average. They also tend to be more stressed out.

Hygge Secret #34: Don't Lose Yourself in Your Routine

Speaking of big pictures, it's all too easy to lose yourself in “the big picture” of the world today. Our society favors people that can operate like clockwork, but that dependability comes with a downside.

Here's a simple trick to inject some more awareness into your day: you always put your shoes one shoe at a time, correct? You also always lead with one foot or the other.

For the following week, catch yourself as you're equipping your footwear and lead with the opposite foot that you usually use.

This one simple trick will set the tone for a more conscious, more present day.

Hygge Secret #35: Forgive Yourself for Your Mistakes

The burden of regret weighs down heavily on Hygge. Whenever you 're feeling down, spend some time with your thoughts and figure out why. In many cases, a bad mood is caused by some form of regret that you 're harboring.

Self-forgiveness is a topic that entire books thrice as long as this one have been written on. It 's a complex issue, but one that 's worth your attention. Talk to yourself about the regrets that you have (both in the long-term and the short-term) and make an effort to let them go.

Hygge Secret #36: (Immediately) Forgive Others for Their Mistakes

Forgiving ourselves is a messy affair that involves tangling with one 's ego, subconscious, and more. Forgiving someone else is a trivial task in comparison.

Just accept that they did whatever they did based on their life circumstances at the time, and move on. Letting go of spite is your brain 's natural inclination — it 's the path of least resistance.

Hygge Secret #37: Be Generous

On the opposite end of spite is generosity, and the old saying that you get back what you give is no mere myth. Generous people are more likely to be happier, healthier, and long-lived.

Generosity is, after all, an extension of personal gratitude towards the world in return for your present situation. And gratitude, of course, is the core of Hygge.

Hygge Secret #38: Be Humble

Generosity is squandered when it 's done for the wrong reasons. The same is true for *everything*.

Something done or said to merely serve your ego will never bring about the lasting, deep-set sense of contentedness associated with a Hygge mentality.

Hygge Secret #39: Show Appreciation

If you don ' t have much to give in the way of material possessions, give the gift of appreciation to another person instead. Express gratitude towards a cashier for their friendly demeanor.

Write a letter of thanks to a politician that actually followed through on their word. Little things like this make the entire world ' s atmosphere more Hygge.

Hygge Secret #40: Always Have Something to Look Forward To

The Danish relish their weekends like no other. They always have something on the horizon — however minor — to look forward to. By doing the same, you can tap into one of the most profound secrets of a Danish happy life.

The next set of secrets is all about just that.

Chapter 4 – Ten Secret Hygge “Get-Aways” You Can Try This Coming Weekend

An American ’ s perception of a “ vacation ” is rather warped in comparison to the European ideal. Danish folk tend to enjoy vacations on a much smaller — but much more frequent — scale.

Hygge Secret #41: Just Go for A Walk

That ’ s right, a simple walk in the park can feel like a vacation when approached with the right mindset. Don ’ t make it about the exercise, make it about the experience.

When you ’ re committed to enjoying the moment for what it is, you don ’ t even need a full day to glean a whole week-long cruise ’ s worth of relaxation out a good stroll through the woods.

Hygge Secret #42: ...Or, Make It a Picnic

Nothing says Hygge like a steaming thermos full of soup and a crisp slice of cheese on a balmy autumn day. Relaxing in the outdoors with some good friends over good food is a Hygge get-away waiting to happen.

Hygge Secret #43: Hit The Beach

A nice breeze on your face, the ambient sounds of the tide — the beach is top notch place to get your Hygge on. You don ’ t have to swim; you don ’ t even have to bring a book. All you need to do is take in the wonder that a big body

of water has to offer in unlimited supply.

Hygge Secret #44: Get A Massage

Probably the most expensive “ vacation ” on this list, and a half-hour appointment with a professional ought not to run you more than fifty dollars here in the states.

A good massage is a sensory-rich and relaxing experience like no other. If you have a loved one who ’ s keen — even better. The act of giving a massage can be just as Hygge as getting one.

Hygge Secret #45: Take a Warm Bath

You don ’ t even need to leave your home to enjoy some top notch Hygge these days. Run some water, light some candles, and just — you know — soak it all in.

Hygge Secret #46: Call Up a Friend

Call up a friend with no real agenda — just to chat. Relish the sound of their voice, their unique individual inflections that nobody else in the world shares exactly.

There ’ s an entire audial — and deeply personal — experience waiting for you on the other end of the line.

Hygge Secret #47: Make Conversation with A Stranger

On the other end of that spectrum, some of my most profound, most Hygge

moments in life have come from engaging a stranger in idle chatter.

Go to a place where impromptu conversations are welcome and talk to somebody new.

Hygge Secret #48: Do Some Chores Around the House

Yes, you read that correctly. When approached with a Hygge mentality, simple labor can be a deeply serene and positive experience. It 's almost like a state of active meditation. Try it out!

Hygge Secret #49: Do Something New and Simple

Cook a new dish that you 've never cooked before. Pick up a book that you never got around to reading. Go check out that store that you 've always wondered about.

A new experience doesn 't have to be exciting, mind-blowing, or in any way overtly stimulating. It can also be Hygge.

Hygge Secret #50: Do Absolutely Nothing at All

Take a good sit, and have a good inhale. Exhale. Forget about the world for a moment.

Listen to your body. Tune into your immediate surroundings. You don 't have to think. You don 't have to use your mind *all the time*. You can also just *be*. And to simply *be*, and be content in doing so...that too, is very Hygge.

Conclusion – The 51st Secret of A Danish Happy Life

In a word: patience. You can 't force yourself to experience Hygge in the moment, and you certainly can 't develop a Hygge state of mind overnight. Hygge takes time.

You can 't rush Hygge any more than you can (ultimately) cheat death. That 's just the way it is. And once you 've tuned into Hygge, you wouldn 't have it any other way.

Michael Dyer



The Power of Positive Thinking

**A Self-Help Guide on How to Overcome Negativity,
Adversity, Depression and Change Your Life**

The Power of Positive Thinking

A Self-Help Guide on How to
Overcome Negativity, Adversity,
Depression, and Change Your Life

by Michael Dyer

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Introduction

“ The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude. ” ~ Oprah Winfrey

The mind is one of the great mysteries of the universe. Neurosurgeons, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, artists, writers, painters, even businessmen study it for various reasons.

Whether they're assisting a patient heal, painting a portrait of a forlorn woman, crafting a sculpture of a man thinking, developing a character for a novel that tugs on the heartstrings, performing lifesaving surgery, or gaining a tactical advantage in a negotiation, we ultimately want to know why people do what they do, say what they say, and act the way they act.

What compels us?

What inspires us?

Most importantly, what defeats us and how can we overcome those setbacks?

Marcus Aurelius, the great ancient Roman emperor contemplated this very problem two thousand years ago. Today, we still argue over it. He put it most succinctly when he said, “You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.”

It is within ourselves to write our own destiny. That power has always resided within. What holds us back? What holds you back from achieving

your dreams? Setting out on the path that you know is true for your life?

Our inside voice is filled with self-doubt, and negative self-talk. We seem compelled, as a people, to talk ourselves out of doing things rather than encouraging our development.

The simple fact is it's easier to be negative than to be positive.

If you have a dream to start a business, your mind immediately fills with doubts. I've never written a business plan, I don't have money to invest in it, I don't have time to devote to it, who will I get to fund my idea?

These kinds of ideas take shape in our head and are difficult to remove. Before you know it, it could quickly spiral out of control, leading you to an unfortunate conclusion. Anger, resentment, anxiety, even depression loom on the horizon.

JAMES

Many years ago I knew a man. For anonymity purposes, we'll call him James. He was bright, articulate, graduated from a prestigious university whereupon he was offered a position at a law firm as an attorney. For years, James thrived. Until one day, things changed.

James grew up in a small household. His mother was a social worker, his father, a gifted engineer. James was scarred as a child by his mother. Over a career of seeing the worst aspects of families in our society, she was bitter and took her frustration out on James.

His life was a quest to please her. Hoping to aspire to more than what she'd seen over the course of working with abused children from dysfunctional

families. Little did she know, she was creating discord within her own home.

Despite his stunning academic achievements, his high salary, his multi-million dollar house, his mother's negativity stuck with him, burrowed in the deep recesses of his subconscious.

On the outside, James was a well-adjusted member of society.

Nobody suspected that inside, James was dying.

His nights were spent drinking himself into a stupor. When alcohol didn't cut it, his need to escape ascended to higher levels. He sought comfort and release in drugs. Cocaine being his preferred method. He was arrested twice. Jailed.

Released on bail from his father. Had three driving under the influence tickets. Then became involved with a questionable woman.

Every time I'd tried to talk to James about what was going on, he'd laugh it off. However, there were moments, glimpses here and there, when James was honest and knew he was in trouble. He'd say things like, "*Do you think God has it out for me?*" He blamed society. "*Cops should be out catching murderers, not drunk drivers.*" He questioned his worth. "*Why does this keep happening to me?*"

Despite three interventions and four stints in sober living facilities, James wouldn't stray from his addictions. They were the only way he wouldn't hear the negative self-talk that permeated his mind. It was a debilitating condition.

James had further to fall.

One night, the woman he'd been seeing had her daughter over to his house. Nobody knows for sure what happened except those three, but James was arrested for child molestation.

He was high and drunk at the time of the incident. Three years of court drama later, James was sentenced to ten years in prison for child molestation and endangerment.

Certainly an extreme case, but self-talk is powerful and can play a role in your life whether or not you choose to believe it.

CHRISSEY

Chrissy was a saleswoman. A darn good one too. She grew up upper middle class, had a self-described perfectly happy upbringing, and was college educated. In her early twenties, she fell in with a crowd of, as she put it, "*Deadheads.*"

She wore Grateful Dead or tie-dye t-shirts, ripped blue jeans, listened to them while she fell asleep, followed them on tours all over the country during the 1980s, and got high and drank with their followers. She did as little work as possible, and even moved to Brazil to flee her parents' lectures on her lifestyle, teaching English abroad.

She'd teach during the day, slip into a liquor shop at night and buy a huge bottle of wine, drinking it out of a paper bag while she walked home to her then boyfriend.

The pattern continued until she'd returned to the U.S. and became pregnant accidentally.

Talking to her today, when I asked what made her change to a clean, sober life, she instantly replied :

“I knew I was an addict. I think all addicts know they have addictive personalities. For some people it’s shopping, some its cars, food, pot, booze, cocaine, whatever it is, even video games.

An addict will always be an addict. The choice you face as an addict is what do you want to be addicted to? For me, I wanted to be addicted to my son. My life became his.” She shrugged then, eyes wistfully tearing up. “It’s been 8 years now since I’ve been sober.

I don’t put myself in a position where I know alcohol may be involved. It’s just not something I want to be around anymore. I volunteer for alcoholics’ anonymous call-in line once every other week and still attend A.A. meetings. It reminds me of who I was before, who I am now, and who I want to be tomorrow.

But, as I’ve aged, I’ve also realized that my son, who’s now 7 years old, is depending on me less and less. I’ve found healthier outlets for my addiction. I’ve taken up cooking because I had to learn how to cook to feed my son, but now I’m really good at it. And yoga.”

Chrissy and James were a lot alike. If they’d known each other in real life, I’m sure they would’ve been fast friends during their heyday. The difference is Chrissy made a choice to overcome her fears and focus on a positive, fulfilling life.

While James continued to bemoan himself all the way through his trial. He went so far as to blame his boss and co-workers for landing him in jail even though they had nothing to do with it.

Both of them had doubts and negative self-talk to lead them on a journey that ultimately would become the rest of their lives. What if you could change all that? What if the negative self-talk that infiltrates your mind could be reduced, or erased?

Is it possible?

It is.

Change is closer than you think.

The negative voice in your head can be questioned and ultimately, controlled.

Chapter 1- Changing Your Story

Many years ago I attended a workshop called Landmark Education. If you've never heard of it, Landmark is an intense, three or four day workshop, lasting from nine a.m. to ten in the evening every day.

Aside from the more spiritual aspects of the seminar, I'll discuss a more psychological perspective that literally changed my life and the way I think about situations.

COLORED LENSES

As a group, we tend to believe we're open minded, objective, willing to listen to the other person's perspective. It's the biggest lie. We see the world the way we want it to be. We want it to make sense to us. Our minds are defaulted to a logical order where we can place concepts, ideas, people, and their actions into baskets. It's a definitive, if limiting way to view life.

During conversation, we're constantly analyzing, scrutinizing, and evaluating our own dialogue and those of the people we're conversing with. It's a never-ending process of judgment.

For example, I was talking to a friend who's in his mid-thirties, let's call him Ron, about an incident at their place of employment. The company has no formal dress code. Ron was wearing khakis, and a colored, short sleeved collared shirt which was untucked, and dress shoes.

Not unlike anything any other employee had worn on a typical day at the

office. In the afternoon, Ron's superior approached him and chided him for wearing his shirt untucked and ended the conversation with, "you could clean up a little bit."

No other employee had received any chastisement and, to make matters worse and infuriated Ron, the very person who was lecturing him about unprofessionalism with untucked shirts was wearing a Tommy Bahama shirt, untucked.

Ron worked himself into a lather over this incident, resenting the fact that he was singled out. Additionally, he was galled that his superior had the tenacity to reprimand Ron when he was guilty of the same conduct.

What did Ron do to appease himself? He told himself a story to explain the situation in a way that made sense to him.

"You know my boss is older," he said to me, nodding. "Getting near seventy. It's a generational thing. My shirt is designed to be worn untucked even though it has the curves and his Tommy Bahama shirt has a straight hem." He shrugged then. "But those older guys don't know that. If it's a post 1980 fashion trend, forget about it."

CONTEXT

Ron's way of dealing with what had happened to him was not unusual. Whenever someone says something to us, whether positive or negative, our brains kick into overdrive. Overanalyzing every detail, nuance, and segment of the conversation.

How many times have you heard the phrase: It's not what you said, it's how

you said it.

This is because our brains ruminate on everything. That we'll run ourselves ragged going in circles with questions. What did he mean by that? What made him say that? Why'd he say that?

When the answers aren't provided to us, we make them up.

He said that because he's old.

She didn't respond to my text because she hates me.

He's not calling me back because he's with another woman.

Once again, without the answers, our brains have a tendency to fill in the blanks with a barrage of negativity. We write a story around what happened to justify the encounter. We want it – no we need it to make sense in our little worlds.

I'd run into Ron again a few weeks later at a barbeque and asked him how his relationship was going with his boss. He didn't even remember the shirt incident so I'd gently reminded him.

“Oh that? It's funny, he wasn't really criticizing my shirt that day. He was actually referring to my shirt the previous day. You see the day before I'd worn a dress shirt and forgot to tuck it in when I'd returned from the bathroom.

I also had a ketchup stain on it from lunch that I didn't notice. Turns out, he just wanted me to tuck in my dress shirt because it was so long, it seemed as though I was wearing a nightgown. He wasn't wrong.”

Here Ron was, agonizing for hours, maybe even days, over a two-minute conversation he'd had with his boss. It'd unnerved him so much that he'd

told me the story that evening over dinner. Probably stuck with him during the night, causing him to toss and turn and giving him a restless sleep.

The story Ron concocted to explain his superior's remand turned out to be entirely false.

How much time did he waste letting his doubts and fears crush him? What opportunities were lost during this period? What if that time could have been spent spending time with his family? His wife? His children? Working on his house, completing a passion project?

Instead, he'd had a beer, gone to bed angry, and woke up exhausted from a sleepless night.

Because of the story in his head.

STOP THE FALSE STORY

Nothing in this world is good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

- *William Shakespeare*

Emotions aren't something you're attacked with. They don't jump out of you from the shadows, lurking in the corner. Nobody has a gun to your head forcing you to feel a certain way. Nobody makes you mad just the same as nobody can force you to love them.

You are responsible for your own emotions.

You are responsible for being annoyed, afraid, or insulted.

Upon the story creation, there are only two possible outcomes: confront them head-on, or fall victim to them.

What does that mean?

It means that you can be a protagonist, mastering your emotions, or you can be antagonist and preyed upon by your own mind. Will you let your fears run wild? Imagining the worst possible scenarios? Or will you find an alternative, logical and rational explanation?

Ron created a story to explain the why, how, and what of his superior's actions.

And it was all wrong!

Because a story aren't the facts. They are our mind's way of explaining the gaps in our knowledge.

Ron felt attacked, singled out. He thought, "How am I supposed to judge my reprimand? Why am I the one who's being picked on?" He justified it by diminishing his superior and practiced a form of ageism. This made Ron feel better about himself.

We're always telling ourselves stories. It's so fast, most don't even notice they're doing it.

Someone cut me off on the road, he's a jerk!

Someone laughed at me, so I got angry because I don't like being made fun of.

I was fired at work because my boss hates me. Let's sue!

These are simple, every day examples of how often we tell stories to ourselves to explain encounters in our everyday life.

Perhaps the other driver didn't see you because you were in his blind spot.

What if the person laughing wasn't even laughing at you but remembering

something that made them chuckle?

What if you were fired not because your boss hates you, but because you were legitimately underperforming?

MASTER THE STORY

Stories can be mastered to stop the negative self-talk that so quickly consumes us. There are simple, and effective ways to counteract this process. I must warn you, it's difficult. It requires self-evaluation and eventually, self-realization.

Stories happen in the blink of an eye. Sometimes we're aware of them, other times, we're not until it's too late.

First, you must slow down.

That's right. Take a breath. A long inhale through the nose and an even longer exhale. Notice the way your body feels. Ask yourself if you're tense? Uptight? Flexing any of your muscles involuntarily?

Pay attention to your behavior. Are you fidgeting? Is your gaze bouncing off the walls? Is your foot tapping? Are you anxious? What words are you using in your speech? Are they short, angry sentences? A form of violence.

Or are you clamming up? Arms crossed over your chest in a huff of consternation? Silence is another form of protest, a form of aggression.

Once you've acknowledged your behavior, physically and from your speech and language being used, ask yourself, what emotions are causing this?

Do you feel hurt? Scared? Attacked? Put upon? Embarrassed? Ignored?

Next, analyze the stories that fuel these emotions. What are you telling yourself to justify the way you're acting and feeling?

And finally, question your story. What evidence do you have to support it? Find out the facts. Don't let your negative mind fill in those gaps! If you're talking to someone who's sparked a reaction in you, ask them to clarify what they meant when they said what they had.

It's not your job to interpret someone's body language – he scoffed so I know he doesn't value my opinion. He could've scoffed for a variety of reasons. You don't know for a fact why he behaved the way he did until you ask.

I know my boss hates me because he doesn't say hi to me every morning.

Clue: If you can see or hear something, is it a fact or a behavior?

Likely a behavior which you are attaching a story to so that you can explain it.

Clarity is greater than ambiguity. Verifiable objectivity trumps observation.

Chapter 2- Time Out

We are personable creatures. Our reality is based upon our senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell. Without those objective forms of experience, we don't know something for sure. Once we have those aspects from which to draw a conclusion, it becomes personal. For instance, it's more difficult to imagine something without having experienced it.

A vacation to Hawaii doesn't become real until you're there, standing on the shores of the Black Sand beach in Maui.

The promotion at work doesn't seem possible until you get the raise and see the money in your bank account.

Cancer doesn't hit home until someone you love is diagnosed with it.

When you find a tough situation is thrust upon you, you'll immediately dive into your story. And, as discussed in the previous chapter, we've covered some exercises to help create a new story.

However, here are some alternative methods used to combat the negative self-talk that rears its ugly head from time to time.

DETACH YOURSELF

Imagine that you weren't the one going through this. What if it was a friend? A colleague? A family member?

How would you counsel them? What would you say to alleviate their

fears and to bring them back to a rational, even logical way of looking at things? Hot headed tempers sprout up fast, burning deep within us. How would you calm your friend down?

Taking a third party, observer point-of-view detaches you from the personal connection you have with a situation. It's no longer happening to you. You'll be able to see it from another angle and think creatively about how to tackle the issue.

REFRAME

Many years ago my friend Andrew was involved in a car accident. Fortunately, nobody was injured and everyone was relatively safe with minor cuts and bruises. But it was a total wreck. The vehicle couldn't be salvaged.

"Oh no," I'd said. "Didn't you just buy that car last year?"

"Yup."

I could tell he was broken up. Nursing a beer in his hand, gaze cast towards the lawn. He wasn't having any fun at his daughter's birthday party. Instead, he was racking up the bills he'd have to pay and feared a lawsuit by the passenger's in the other vehicle.

"At least you get a new car," I'd said.

He paused. Mulling over my statement.

"Insurance does cover it," he let slip, twisting his mouth into a knot.

"Yeah. The only question is what are you going to buy now!" I said.

Suddenly a grin stretched across his face and he was talking about the

new vehicles he saw while he drove by the dealership the other day. He became so excited about the idea he wanted to hop on the internet and peruse cars that minute.

“My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes, most of which have never happened.”

- Mark Twain

Reframing is when we take a situation, usually misfortunate, and spin it to form a positive outcome. It's a process that's been used for decades. Because we're bombarded by negativity and terrifying possible scenarios that could happen to us, reframing becomes a valuable technique.

Anything that doesn't contribute positively to the situation must be discarded in favor of thoughts that do.

It's important to keep in mind our stories.

Events do not have any meaning.

We assign meaning and value to them as a result of our stories. What story do you want to ascribe to a life event? Something horrendous? Or, alternatively, something fabulous?

Every idea, thought, or belief you have comes attached with a frame.

James believed he was never good enough for his parents to accept him so he found solace in drugs.

Ron felt he was being picked on by his superior for a perfectly acceptable office attire.

Chrissy reframed her life to focus on her son.

Whatever your assumptions are become your frame of reference.

Reframing takes two steps: identify the negative thought and substitute it with a positive one.

SUBSTITUTING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Don't kid yourself. Identifying negative thoughts is a daunting task. It's filled with fright and peril. Often we don't want to be self-critical. It hurts. We feel raw, exposed, and vulnerable. Subject to injury.

But a whole world awaits if you can accomplish this. Step by step, little by little. Learn to know yourself, understand how you think, and what drives you to leap to those undesirable conclusions.

Once identified, how do we accomplish the task of substituting negativity for positivity?

1. Identify and replace harsh language.

Words matter. Thoughts matter. They have weight and value or else we wouldn't be hurt by them. The old adage of "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me" was a dangerous lie. If you're constantly telling yourself that you're worthless, you'll believe it.

Use softer language. Instead, say that you have weaknesses which could be worked on.

2. Find the best solution.

When Andrew had the wreck, his attention was devoted to the problems it caused. In lieu of directing your energies to the problems, cultivate your time in searching for a solution.

3. Discover a lesson.

There's a lesson in everything life has to offer. It's no one's job but yours to find it. Seek that and you'll find peace. Last year I'd met a friend who was laid off from work.

Instead of wallowing in her loss, she sought the freedom not having a job entailed. A year later, she's the proud owner of a Pilates studio and following her passion.

4. Question assumptions.

Most of our stories are derived from our preconceived notions about people, events, or situations. Stories wrapped up in more stories. Like discussed in the section entitled Mastering Your Story, we must always be vigilant and challenge our assumptions.

They don't lead to the truth. Discover reasons why you believe what you do. Chase the origination of those negative thoughts. Go where others won't dare to in their psyche.

Chapter 3- The Placebo Effect

Modern medicine is riddled with phenomenon. Stories of miraculous recoveries that befuddle both doctors and patients alike. Most of these are random acts of luck, some of the more devoted attribute inexplicable recoveries to God or another form of divine intervention. Yet there is a third component to these cases.

The Placebo Effect.

Doctors can be still up in the air about the true merit of the Placebo response, however, time after time, study after study, it has proven that it is a legitimate psychological phenomenon.

What is the Placebo Effect?

Put simply, the Placebo Effect is when patients are given a fake treatment, typically an inactive substance (like a sugar pill or injected with a saline solution) rather than real medicine. And, viola, seemingly through a miracle, the patient is cured of their illness.

How can this be?

The mind has cured them.

Psychology can be an all powerful tool for the sick and ill. Sometimes, when a patient wants to believe that a medicine cured them, even if it wasn't a legitimate treatment, the mind makes it so and produces physiological changes within the body that can be measured.

In short, the Placebo Effect is a self-fulfilling prophecy. You have a headache, a doctor gives you a sugar pill, and you feel as though it helped you, so therefore, because your brain wills it to be, your body adapts.

In 2014, the New England Journal of Medicine published a finding that a fake surgery can have the same effects as the real thing. The study was conducted by surgeons from Finland on those who'd suffered from a torn meniscus and required knee surgery.

One group was given the true surgery and the other, a fake surgery. The surgeons pretended to pass around surgical instruments in the operating room, made slight incisions to replicate the evidence of a surgery. For all intents and purposes, the patients who received the fake surgery never even knew they weren't operated on.

Months later the surgeons followed up with both groups, the ones who'd received the real surgery and those who'd received the fake.

Both groups reported an increase in agility and flexibility, decrease pain, and an overall successful surgery.

But how could this be if fully half of the patients never even had a surgery but were tricked?

The mind.

They wanted to believe the surgery worked and therefore it did.

Before the year 2000, most in the medical community thought the Placebo Effect was only useful when it came to pills or injections. Now, however, we know that the mind can have a bigger impact than we believed, extending into surgeries.

If your mind wants it to be so, it will produce the changes in your body to

make it so.

From the Doctor's Chair

Timothy Wilson, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia, wrote a book entitled Redirect: The Surprising New Science of Psychological Change.

In it, he postulates that stories create our reality. Negative self-talk pollutes and distorts our version of true events. Assigning false meanings and leading down dangerous corridors of self-doubt, pity, and self-righteous consternation.

During times of extreme frustration, lack of motivation, and depression, Mr. Wilson advocates the use of writing therapy. A type of process which utilizes the process and creativity of writing to lessen and delve into darker emotional territory.

First developed by social psychologist James Pennebaker, Ph.D., a psychologist from the University of Texas, Austin, writing therapy is a way to extrapolate feelings which we didn't know we had buried.

Initial studies had simple processes and rules. Write until the allotted time is up and don't worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Mr. Pennebaker was clear that the participants had to write about their darkest, deepest, most vulnerable feelings about a particularly traumatic incident which had occurred to them.

Two groups were formed: the emotional group and objective, or control, group. Rather than write about their feelings of trauma, the control group was instructed to write factually about their plans for the day. Expressly forbidding them to discuss topics of opinion, emotion, or feelings.

Though the study lasted only four days in the 1980s, it spawned over two hundred subsequent studies because they'd found that the group who wrote about their emotions related to trauma had significantly fewer visits to the doctors than in the past.

In Timothy Wilson's book, he advises that those who experience such negativity in their life, who's natural predisposition is to bombard themselves with negative self-talk, causing them anxiety, depression, and anger, to try this exercise.

Grab a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. For fifteen minutes before bed, begin writing about what's troubling you. It sounds simple but isn't. Often we're unwilling to truly get to the heart of the matter, preferring superficial answers to our dilemmas. Never probing further.

Being real hurts. Being raw, open, and exposed leaves us feeling vulnerable. Even if we're only admitting fragility to ourselves. We're the last to admit we need help. We want to be proud, we want to be strong. Impervious to pain. This isn't reality.

As an exercise, this is incredibly beneficial. Mr. Wilson says that in the beginning, you might be writing in a jumble, an incoherent stream of consciousness. Leaping from one random subject to the next without rhyme, reason, consistency, or logic behind it. This isn't unusual. It's natural. He actually says that those who start this way typically receive the biggest benefits from the exercise.

It's something that can be done before bed, during lunch, after dinner, or on a coffee break at work. You can also use a computer, laptop, or any other device where you can type quickly, without editing or hitting the wrong keys.

After four days have elapsed most find a new narrative to the event in question. A new meaning, a new way of looking at the situation. This perspective shift allows you to stop ruminating on it, twisting and turning your way into a downward spiral of negativity. The gnawing feeling that claws in your gut, that makes it hard to breath, which weighs you down night after night will have lightened.

The Way Forward

Every one of us has a story to tell. Every one of us has known someone who's view of life has led them down a dark path. Whether that is drugs, alcohol, partying, financial irresponsibility, or other forms of reckless behavior, our minds have the ultimate control over our fate. It is up to us to determine how we live our lives, what story we write for ourselves, what our future holds.

Wallowing over the tragedies that befall us, whether real or perceived, leads us nowhere. Stewing on events that seem to be out of our control, fanatical about every last detail of what someone said, how they said it, what their body language was, what their facial expression conveyed, neither propels us in a positive, forward-thinking direction nor helps us achieve peace.

Vigilance is the answer.

I'm reminded of a quote from Mahatma Gandhi:

*“Your beliefs become your thoughts,
Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions,
Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values,
Your values become your destiny.”*

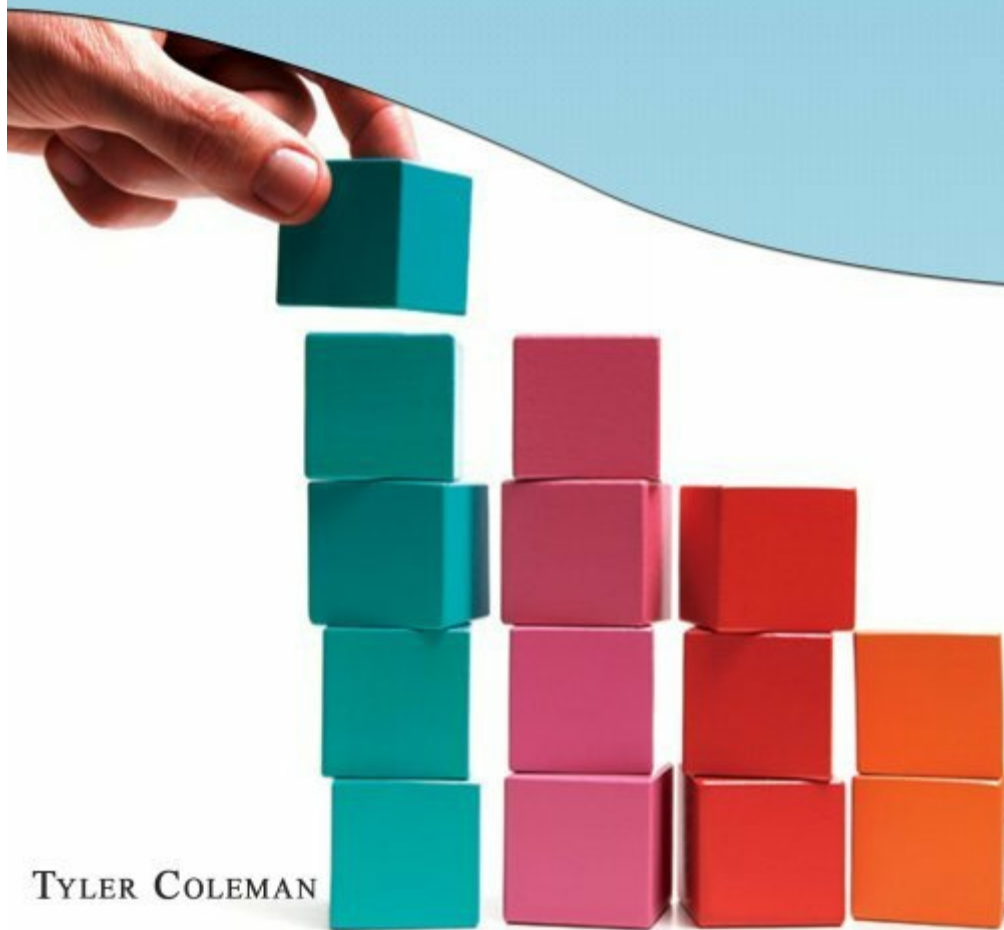
What we allow in our minds is what we allow escape our lips. We constantly say things we regret later. Usually these things are said in the heat of the moment, when we're fuming mad, ready to reign hellfire down upon the world. And we're upset because we're hurt, betrayed, or judged. When attacked, we return the volley tenfold.

None of those actions are the answer. During those crucial moments, tense conversations, heated exchanges, fights, and arguments, that is the clearest time for vigilance. Combat the negative self-talk which is likely to surface. Be on guard for it.

Use the techniques in this book to counteract our natural tendencies before they consume us. We are good, born in the light, if we choose to be. Choose that path.

HABIT STACKING PROJECT

7 STEPS TO BUILD EASY, EFFECTIVE AND EVERLASTING HABITS



TYLER COLEMAN

Habit Stacking Project

7 Steps To Build Easy, Effective and Everlasting Habits

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Introduction

Most people would agree that they do not have time to indulge in things they want to do because their time is tied up with things they have to do. This is true for a lot of people, but there are ways to change this.

Many of us go through our days following routines, these routines are the way we divide our time to make sure we get to everything we need to do. These routines probably began as new responsibilities were added to our lives, and we adopted these routines out of necessity.

The good news is ... we don't have to follow these routines out of necessity, there are ways to do both, what we want and what we need to do.

Habit stacking has been around for a while now and it is not about to go anywhere anytime soon, because when something really works, it sticks around. Habits are not always bad, although we tend to equate habits with bad behavior, they are also associated with positive behaviors.

Flipping the switch and acquiring beneficial habits is a pretty easy thing to do; if you know a bit about “ habits ” and human behavior.

You will be shocked at how simple it is to foster positive habits and you don't have to spend time eliminating any of your bad habits either. As you progress through the 7 steps to habit stacking, your negative habits will begin to give way to your positive habits.

Sometimes focusing on what is going right will produce a better outcome than focusing on what is wrong.

Habit stacking is something you already do and you probably don't even realize it because you don't recognize it as habit stacking. If you always wash the dishes after you eat and then relax with a cup of coffee, you are guilty of habit stacking. There are too many stacks to list them all in one book, but you get the idea.

As you read through the book and tackle the 7 steps, you will be amazed at how easy it is to change your habits/routine to suit your goals. Everyone has goals, of course getting from point A to point B is always a matter of personal preference.

Making choices that compliment your goals and make the trip from point A to B easier and more enjoyable is what this book is all about.

Sometimes it's not about how much you can do, but the quality of what you do that matters most. Filling our days with routines and tasks that take but never give, can really take a toll on our well-being.

Creating new habits that give back, even if it is just 10 minutes of relaxing or taking a walk, can create a cycle of changes, or a stack of habits that will really change life for the better.

Chapter 1 – Behavioral Psychology and Habits

Behavioral psychology is where all of this habit stacking first came about. Behavioral psychology is the study of how our minds and behaviors connect. Researchers in the field of behavioral psychology study why people behave the way they do and this research is concerned with identifying patterns in actions and behaviors.

Researchers from Oxford University discovered something amazing in 2007; newborn babies have more neurons than the average adult, 41% more to be exact. This new realization led to more research and study into how we learn and the importance of neurons in that learning process.

A large number of neurons are used when we begin learning; these neurons allow us to learn lots of different things. As we begin to narrow down our learning and start to develop specific skills and ignore other skills, the number of neurons changes.

Neurons strengthen connections in the brain, they group together to strengthen connections we use most often and they disappear from connections we do not use.

Babies are learning everything, they need lots of neurons to make the connections for social interaction so they can interact with the world around them and this requires a large number of neurons. As they begin to develop skills and ignore others, the number of neurons change. Waste not want not.

This research can tell us a lot about habits. Habits are actions and behaviors we engage in regularly. Anything we do regularly is strengthened with stronger and stronger neuron connections, the actions/behaviors we don't engage in don't require any connections.

You change the neuron connections in your brain when you develop habits. This is called synaptic pruning.

The brain creates a network of neurons to support your daily habits; these networks become stronger the more we repeat these habits. Tapping into this built in ability will help you change current habits and create new ones.

Once you begin to repeat the new habits, the brain redirects neurons to strengthen the new connections and depletes the neuron network used to strengthen old habits.

Replacing old with new becomes easier and easier the more you repeat the activity.

What is a Habit and Why Are They Hard to Change?

We have already covered neuron involvement in habit creation, but there is more to the puzzle than the strength of neuron networks. Changing a habit is much harder than stacking a new one into existing habits.

Change requires an understanding of how habits are formed, and behavioral psychology explains this rather neatly.

Habits are actions or behaviors that follow three simple rules; Reminder, Routine, and Reward. The reminder triggers the routine and the routine delivers a reward.

When your alarm clock goes off in the morning it Reminds you to begin a routine, the routine is preparing yourself for the day, the reward can be money from your job, or any other benefit you gain from getting out of bed and preparing for the day.

The reminder can be anything that triggers you to perform a routine that results in a reward.

Changing habits is harder than adding new ones because you already strengthened the neuron network, the Reminder will always exist and the routine will result in a reward.

Adding to this provides a quick reward if you can make the habit stick, but changing the habit is hard because it takes time for a brand new habit to strengthen the network and it takes repetition over time to recognize the new reminder, perform the new routine, and receive a new reward.

It is actually more rewarding for us to fall back on old habits and get that quick reward.

Why does Habit Stacking Work?

Habit stacking works because you are adding new habits by attaching them to habits that already have strong neuron connections and proven rewards.

Even though you are creating an entirely new habit, attaching it to an old habit using

habit stacking will help the habit stick.

The Reminder for the habit stack remains the same but it now reminds you to

perform an additional routine while still performing the old routine, the old reward is still there but another reward is added to it, it does not replace the old reward.

One of the easiest ways to build new habits is to stack them. Habit stacking is all about stacking new habits onto old habits that already have strong neuron connections in the brain.

Habit stacking helps you create strong new habits by plugging them into the network that already exists.

Here are a few examples of habit stacking:

- After I eat my lunch I will spend two minutes meditating
- Before I have my morning coffee I will make the bed

These two examples show how you can plug in new habits by attaching them to existing habits. Lunch is an existing habit, by adding the statement, I will spend two minutes meditating, you are creating a new habit that is triggered by an old one!

Pretty easy stuff, but it does require a bit of commitment on your part. You must actually engage in the action/behavior if you want it to stick.

Now you have some background on how the brain uses neurons to support habits. This information is about all you need to understand the concept of habit stacking.

You can create any new habit you want and help it take hold by stacking it on

top of old habits.

You can even string a few of them together to get maximum results with minimal effort. It is easier to strengthen existing connections than it is to create brand new ones.

Chapter 2 – 7 Steps to for Creating Positive Habits

Using the precepts of behavioral psychology as a guide, these 7 steps will take you from wanting to make a change to creating new positive habits. These steps will provide the ground work for positive change and making it stick.

Before you actually create your own habit stacking project using these steps, it is important to understand the psychology behind why change is not always permanent.

In chapter 1 we took a look at why habits are hard to change. There is another side to the coin, sometimes it is easy to get started with a change but difficult to follow through.

Creating a habit is done in stages and according to research by the European Journal of Psychology, it takes at least 66 days before changes become automatic, and it can take up to 200 or more days before those changes become habits.

There are solid reasons why it takes so long for new behaviors to become habits. Remember, creating new habits is different from stacking habits. Creating new habits takes time and a good perspective on why many attempts to create new habits eventually fail.

We have all made new year's resolutions and ended up watching those resolutions go up in smoke. Why is this information important? Because if

you have a realistic understanding of how and why, you won't feel defeated when weeks turn into months; it is all about keeping you motivated.

Motivation is a key factor in why actions and behavioral changes fail. This list of reasons why changes fail will help you see the reality of what you are about to do, and how to stay away from misconceptions that can undermine your motivation.

- We like to do as much as we can all at once to effect change and more/bigger is always better
- Big changes take time and become overwhelming, this leads to frustration and failure
- Focusing on the reward/outcome more than the actual change itself
- We don't think small wins are worth as much as big ones, small changes are not as attractive as conquering large changes so we always go for the big change

These misconceptions mean that close to 81% of all changes will fail. This news sounds like a motivation killer but it is not. Motivation will only lead to failure if it is unrealistic.

If you motivate yourself with the promise of a big reward for big change, that motivation will wane when the change and reward takes too long to happen.

Motivation itself is not static, it does not stay the same from the beginning to the end of changing a habit; it doesn't even stay the same from the beginning to the end of a single day.

Motivation ebbs like a tide, one moment it is high, the next it is almost non-

existent. This brings us to the first of the 7 steps for creating positive habits.

1. Motivation – Motivation fails quickly when results are not seen fast enough. Your motivation should not be about making a huge change and reaping the rewards quickly.

You motivation should focus on change itself, any change is positive movement in the right direction. Motivation should be about moving forward, even if you do so in tiny increments.

2. Start Very Small – Small changes are easier to make and easier to maintain. The longer you maintain a change, no matter how small that change is, the more likely it is to stick and become a habit.
3. Break Big Changes into Smaller Ones – If you begin and realize your change is too big to handle, break it down into smaller changes and conquer the smaller ones until you have conquered the big one.
4. Increase Slowly – If you find that you are making a small change with ease, resist the urge to leap forward. Go slow and steady.
5. Don't Increase if You Cannot Maintain – If you are having trouble keeping up with the small changes you have made do not increase at all until you can maintain your small changes.

6. Mistakes Happen Don't Give Up – Mistakes and slip ups happen, life happens, get back on track as quickly as you can. Do not let setbacks turn into failures, they are only setbacks and they do not have to ruin all the work you have put into your change.
7. Keep Track of Your Victories No Matter How Small – Pat yourself on the back for every victory. Each month you stay the course is another month closer to creating those positive habits you are working toward. As long as you don't give up, change will happen, no matter how long it takes.

These 7 steps may not seem like much but they are. Each step will keep you moving forward and forward is always positive.

Each step can help you maintain motivation, and each step will help you overcome any pitfalls you encounter. Moving forward is the key to success.

As you read about habit stacking apply these principles as you work toward those positive changes. If you stay focused and do not give up, you will achieve the changes you are after.

Habit stacking will make it easy for you to add changes, and these steps will help you maintain them.

The more familiar you become with habit stacking and the changes it helps you create, you will begin to realize how important these steps are. There will be times when you won't want to do it, life will get in the way, and you will slip up; these 7 steps will help you see that slip up for what it is...just a

bump in the road.

These steps will not change how you think or give you super powers, they will just keep you focused on the reality of what you are doing.

Sometimes we get caught up in events that happened during the day and we have to deal. Just because your life gets a little out of control now and then does not mean you have to give up on what something you want.

If you want to quit smoking, don't give up on that desire, keep making small changes and working your way toward the ultimate goal. Each time you reach for a piece of nicotine gum you gain a victory.

If you want to get a better job and you need another degree to do it, start taking online classes. It doesn't matter how long it takes you to get that new degree, keep your focus on each victory; every course you pass brings you closer to your goal. Eventually you will have that degree and that new job because you didn't give up.

No system is perfect and this system is meant to help you get where you are going. It is not a formula for success, it is a formula for revealing your potential.

As your behavior and actions change, you will change too; your self-esteem will grow and so will your confidence.

Chapter 3 – A Simple Mini-Habit Stacking Project

Mini habits are short, simple additions to your existing routine. The concept behind mini habit stacking is to use the existing connections in your brain to help you make new short simple habits.

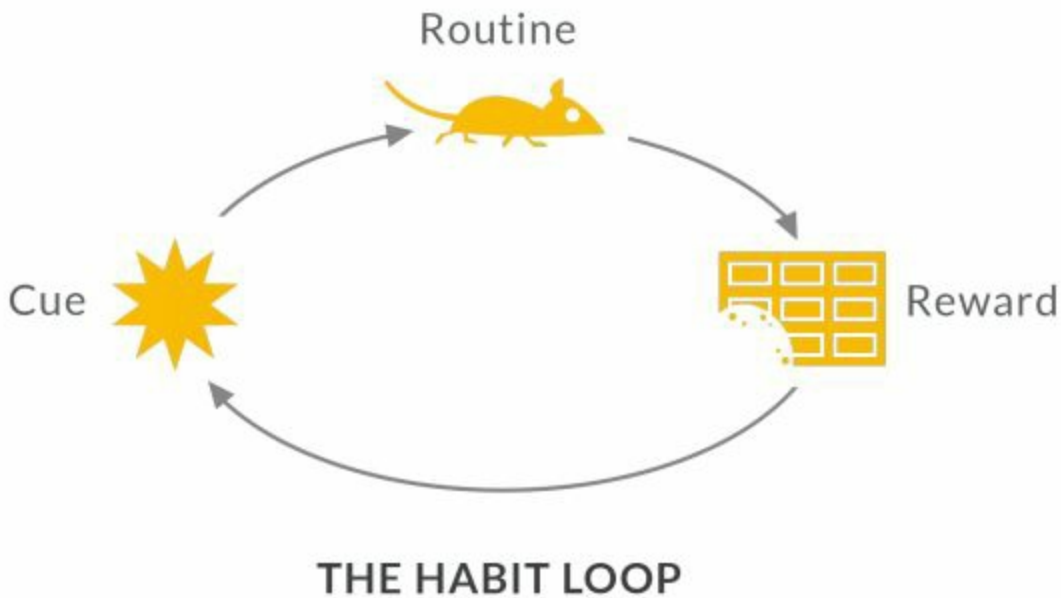
Starting with simple mini habit stacking projects will also produce new connections that will strengthen each time you decide to stack a habit.

Small, simple additions are easier to stick to when you first add them. It takes time to add big additions because there are many reasons you may not be able to engage in the action or behavior.

Each time you don't perform the action or behavior, the longer it will take to stack the new habit.

In order to stack new habits and make them stick, you need to repeat the action or behavior. Small and simple changes and additions will work best when you first start to create new habits.

Small, steady, steps in the right direction will build up those networks of neurons and soon you will be amazed at how much you have changed your daily routine.



The first step in this mini habit stacking project is to come up with two new additions you would like to make to your daily routine. Remember, they will be small at first and simple to add; they should not require a lot of preparation or a big change to your existing routine.

Think about things you would like to do every day, for instance, you may want to add stretching to your morning routine, or learn some Italian before your trip to Italy. Both of these can be part of your simple mini habit stacking project.

Here is an example of how a simple mini habit stacking project works:

- Make a list of all the activities and behaviors in your daily routine
- Make a list of additions you would like to make to your daily routine
- Choose two additions from your list and find a good place to stack

them in your daily routine

- You decide to add stretching to your morning routine, and learning Italian to your afternoon routine
- Tell yourself – I am going to do stretches for two minutes before I have my morning coffee
- Tell yourself – I am going to listen to my Italian language CD for two minutes after I eat my lunch
- Your existing routine in the morning will now include two minutes of stretching before you have your coffee, and your afternoon routine will now include two minutes of language CD's after you eat your lunch

Even though it is tempting to add more time for your new additions you have to resist. The point is to add these new actions and behaviors to the habits you already have; making them longer leaves more room for other things to creep in and ruin your new habits.

Everyone can carve out two, two minute intervals during their day, even busy people can stick to two minutes twice a day.

Each time you successfully stack the new mini habit, the stronger that habit will become. Soon they will be a part of your daily routine and you won't

find yourself thinking about them.

You will just do them as part of your day, once this happens, you can begin to change how long you will do each new mini habit.

Remember, stick to the two-minute time frame and do not add more than two new mini habits. Once you have conquered this mini habit stacking project, you will be ready to add more time or more habits.

The important part is to learn how to strengthen those neuron connections. Moving on to bigger and better will happen but there is no reason to force it.

Forcing longer time commitments or too many new habits will just confuse the entire process. For instance: If you are late for work, two minutes will not make much of a difference; but if you are trying to add 5 or more minutes, you will have to let it go so you can get to work.

Short time intervals ensure that you will be able follow through on your new mini habits.

Mini Habit Stacking and Bad Habits

A simple mini habit stacking project can also help you break bad habits. If you smoke, you can try simple mini habit stacking to break the hold that bad habit has on your time, actions, and behaviors.

You don't need to quit smoking when you begin this project, it is about making small changes that will become habits; and eventually these new habits will help you quit.

Mini habit stacking is best for this because the habits that accompany smoking, or trigger smoking are small/mini habits such as, lighting up while you drink coffee, smoking before you get in the car, having a cigarette while waiting for the bus. These types of habit connections are perfect for inserting mini habits

Make a list of the habits that accompany the smoking habit or any bad habit you want to change. For instance, if you light up a smoke every time you have a cup of coffee, you can add a new habit between the coffee and the cigarette so that drinking coffee becomes a reminder for performing a new routine.

This extra habit will weaken the original connection/reminder between coffee and smoking.

Don't tell yourself you are quitting, and don't think about not smoking; put the emphasis on the new habit you are going to do when you have a cup of coffee. You are breaking the connection between smoking and drinking coffee; that is all you are doing when you first begin this project.

Maybe you can add a habit like, *while I have my coffee I will check my messages*, or, *when I have my coffee I will play solitaire on my phone*.

Whatever you decide to do when you have coffee, make sure you enjoy it, you want the new behavior to have a clear reward; checking messages has a clear reward, you find out what others want to tell you.

You want this habit to replace smoking while drinking coffee, it is not meant to replace smoking completely so there is no stress when you first begin.

Once you have added this new habit and you don't smoke with coffee, it is time to stack another mini habit. Scrutinize your day, and find another strong habit that is stacked with smoking.

Maybe you always light up as soon as you leave work. Now you will stack a mini habit between leaving work and lighting up. Once this new habit is stacked between leaving work and smoking, move on to another habit stack and add another mini habit.

Now that you have weakened the habit stacks that accompany your smoking, it will be easier to start a program to quit. The reason this will make it easier for you to follow a quitting program is because you will be dealing only with the smoking habit, not the stacked habits and reminders that accompany your smoking.

This mini stacking project can work for many bad habits as well as creating good ones. As you weaken old connections and strengthen new ones, changing the bad ones become easier.

Any habit is hard to break, good and bad, and the more habits you have stacked with your bad habits, the more reminders that bad habit has!

Chapter 4 – Creating a Lifestyle Habit Stacking Project

Now that you know how to make changes and maintain them using the 7 steps and mini habit stacking principles, you can begin to make changes to your life style as well as your daily routine.

Your daily routine includes all of the mini habits you have added, and now it ' s time to create a personal habit stacking project that will help you overhaul your life style.

Make a list of lifestyle changes you would like to make. Include everything you want to do no matter how overwhelming they may seem.

Now make a list of daily habits you already have, including the ones you added using mini habit stacking. Next to the items in your daily habits list, add the lifestyle changes that mesh with the habits already in your list.

For instance: If you have already used mini habit stacking to add stretches to your morning routine, taking the stairs after lunch to your afternoon routine, and meditating to your evening routine, and one of the lifestyle changes you have listed is to lose weight; you can put lose weight next to your morning stretches, next to taking the stairs after lunch, and next to meditating in the evening.

Once you have your lifestyle/daily routine list complete, it ' s time to figure

out how you can begin making those lifestyle changes using the mini habits you have already added.

These new changes will be small too, but they will have the potential to change your lifestyle when they become daily habits.

Let ' s focus on the lose weight; add small changes to each routine you have already made changes to.

Your new daily routine may end up looking something like this:

- I do morning stretches before having my morning coffee, and *take a short walk before taking my shower*
- *I walk to the park to eat my lunch*, then take the stairs instead of the elevator when I return to work after lunch
- *I take a short walk after dinner*, then I meditate for a few minutes before I turn in for the evening

This list is not yours, of course your list will have your habits and changes listed, it is meant to give you an idea of what you are trying to accomplish with your lifestyle habit stacking project.

This list shows how small changes can become changes to your lifestyle and help you create positive habits that will help you attain your goal.

Losing weight does not have to be done within a given time limit. Actually the reality is, if you stay slow and steady, you will lose weight.

When you add changes to your routine that involve moving more, your weight will go down; slowly, but it will go down and it will be more of a permanent weight loss.

Losing weight is only one example of a lifestyle change and the addition of a bit more physical movement is only one way to make a positive change. You may also want to change the way you eat; creating a healthy diet one food at a time will be easier to maintain than changing everything you eat at once.

For instance:

- I do morning stretches before having my coffee and *I include some healthy grains in my breakfast*
- *I eat a health bar instead of cookies for lunch* then I take the stairs instead of the elevator when I return to work from lunch
- *Instead of a snack after dinner, I relax in a warm bath,* then I meditate before turning in

There are a multitude of ways you can use small changes to make big changes in your lifestyle.

If you were to make these small changes, your lifestyle would be healthier all around, and you wouldn't need to work out like mad at the gym until you give up either.

Small, steady, stacks can create awesome lifestyle habits that will deliver

what you want and those changes will be permanent if you follow the steps and learn to stack those habits.

Try using the 7 steps for creating positive habits, and habit stacking to make permanent changes to your life. Keep it simple, try out different habit stacking until you hit on the ones that are perfect for you.

There is no reason to rush or demand immediate change; slow and steady really does win the race because you will learn to pace yourself and recognize the new positive changes as they happen.

You can make as many lists and stacks as you want until you learn what works for you. Everyone is different, it may take some trial and error before you find your perfect fit.

Don't give up, just keep trying out new stacks until you can maintain, and once you maintain, you can add more; the combinations are endless, and so is your potential!

Make your objectives S.M.A.R.T.

The acronym S.M.A.R.T. implies Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-sensitive.

Specific:

Objectives are no spot to waffle. They are no spot to be dubious. Equivocal objectives produce vague results. Deficient objectives produce inadequate

fates.

Quantifiable:

Continuously set objectives that are quantifiable. I would say "specifically quantifiable" to consider our guideline of being specific.

Achievable:

One of the impeding things that many individuals benefit—with aims—is setting objectives that are high to the point that they are unattainable.

Realistic:

The root expression of realistic is "real." An objective must be something that we can sensibly make "real" or a "reality" in our lives. There are some objectives that are just not realistic.

You must have the capacity to say, regardless of the possibility that it is a hugely stretching objective, that yes, in fact, it is totally realistic—that you could make it.

Time:

Each objective ought to have a timeframe attached to it. One of the effective parts of an extraordinary objective is that it has an end—a time in which you are shooting to achieve it.

As time passes by, you chip away at it since you would prefer not to get behind, and you work constantly on the grounds that you need to meet the due date.

You might even need to separate a major objective into different parts of estimation and timeframes—that is OK.

Set littler objectives and work them out time permitting. A S.M.A.R.T. objective has a timeline.

Conclusion

When you started this book you knew you wanted to make positive changes in your life. You knew you wanted to look better, feel better, work better, or just be happier. Now you have some new information and skills to help you make real changes instead of setting yourself up for disappointment.

Each new stack of habits you have created have changed your life for the better. It is amazing how much time you can squeeze out of a day if you don't overload every moment.

Many times it is just a matter of realizing lots of small changes equal big changes when they are all stacked together.

Your entire day is a series of reminders, routines, and rewards, and now you have the tools you need to create the reminders and routines that provide you with the rewards you really want.

As you create new habits and make lifestyle changes you will realize that once they are maintained long enough, you can create new ones. Habits are just behaviors and actions that help us get from point A to B, they are nothing more and nothing less.

Don't worry about failure, just keep moving forward and you will eventually have the life you want and deserve.

MINIMALISM

A Practical Guide On How To Live A Meaningful Life With Less



Emma Rose

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by Emma Rose

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Introduction

Living in a modern world is hectic. We have work. We have family. We have football practice. We have business meetings. We have a lot of living to do. It doesn't end when we get home. We still have chores. Kids still need to be fed. Animals to be loved on. A floor to sweep. Laundry to wash and fold. Life is busy.

Sometimes it can be completely impossible to unwind at night. Our minds keep going. Telling us that we have an email to write. Milk to buy. We simply have so much going on that we don't stop and take a hard look at what it is in our life. It seems like we shouldn't have anything to worry about.

You don't spend your days shopping so therefore we must really need everything that is around us. Is that really the case?

What if we can change our entire mental wellbeing by simply changing the things that we own. This is a worldwide problem. There are a ton of solutions. Like storage bins, shelving, and other space savers. However, are they really solutions? Or are they just part of the bigger problem? This is something to look at. After all, if we are going to store it, do we really need it?

Now let's go one step further. How do we know whether or not we really need something? There are all kinds of really cool inventions that we see on

television or online. We see that our friends have it, therefore it must be useful. It can make our lives better. It can help us feel better. Is that really the case?

Perhaps we have a shelf full of cute little figures. We spend time dusting each one for a while. We adjust them when we walk by. We make sure that they are sitting just so. Eventually, they become part of the background. They sit there covered in dust. We keep them because they used to make us smile. Do you really need them?

For all of us, we take time to do spring cleaning. A lot of us even do regular wardrobe checks to make sure that we are donating things we don't want. For the most part, we consider ourselves neat and tidy. Yet we look around and see clutter. Do you really need that yearbook? What do you do with it?

Do you understand what minimalism really is? Why don't we start there? You need to understand what it is. You need to understand the changes it can make in your life. Until you do, you will never be able to reach your goal of living an minimalism lifestyle. ,mv

Chapter 1 – What is Minimalism?

Simply stated, minimalism is about spending less, owning less, and stressing less so that you can appreciate the things that you do have. It is about prioritizing. You need to know what you have and why you have it. Have you ever pulled out a box and found something that you forgot that you had?

That ' s a good sign that you could truly benefit from taking the steps to live a minimalism lifestyle.

This does not mean that you should just start throwing things away. In fact, that is the opposite of minimalism. It is wasteful and can lead you to feel like you are punishing yourself. The first thing your friends and family are going to do if you just start throwing everything away is get your head checked.

The goal is to get more time, money, and space. You are going to accomplish this by freeing yourself of all that is weighing you down.

Think of this. Imagine being in an empty walk in closet. When you first walk in the place seems massive. You instinctively start mapping it out in your head. You decide you want your shoes here, your shelves here, you think about the beauty behind it. Then you start building the shelves.

The space seems more confined, but you can happily imagine the way you want it to be. You look around the closet and decide it looks wonderful. Then you start moving your stuff into it. Your shoes first. Then your clothes. It is really looking snug now. Soon you are looking around and wondering if maybe your spouse would mind putting their stuff in the smaller closet down

the hall.

That massive space is now not really big enough. Did the size of the space change? Did the ability to store things differently add more space? What really changed? It was your thinking. It was your mental outlook on that closet.

In reality, life is like that. We think we are doing all we can. We feel stressed and stretched thin. We are that closet. As long as we don't over crowd on lives with so much stuff that it feels as though it is closing in around us, we feel free and full of possibilities. The minute we begin to overwhelm ourselves with belongings we begin to confine ourselves and set limits for ourselves.

What is minimalism?

It is freeing your body, mind, and soul from the clutter of everyday life so that you can focus on what is most important for you. It is empowering yourself. It is forgiving yourself. It is letting go of everything that you don't need anymore, which sometimes includes memories that certain items bring back.

How can you move on to a future filled with memories if you are holding on to the past and the memories that it holds?

What does it take to live minimally?

It takes dedication to free yourself. It takes honestly looking at your entire life so that you can see what is holding you back. You have to be brutally honest sometimes. Which means you have to stop making excuses. It means that you

have to take a look in the mirror and change what you don ' t like.

It isn ' t an easy process, at times it is something you may want to back out of, but the rewards are huge. The rewards are having more time for family, living with financial freedom, and less stress. There is nothing else in life that can bring this kind of happiness. Even people who have financial freedom complain that they have too much stress. Money doesn ' t buy happiness.

Who can live a minimalistic lifestyle?

Anyone, Everyone, can live a minimalistic lifestyle. If you can take a deep hard look at your life and what you have in it, you can achieve minimalism. If you know what steps to take, you can achieve minimalism.

So just take some time and decide that you are ready to make real changes, and then start with the very first step.

The very first thing you have to do is decide. Then you need to get your family on board. You cannot begin taking things out of the house until you can get your family involved. It doesn ' t matter how much that you get rid of, if your family is just bringing more stuff into the house.

This may mean that you have to ask grandparents not to buy excessive amounts of toys or unneeded clothing. It may mean that you have to put your foot down more than you are used to doing.

Chapter 2 – Teaching Your Kids Less Is More

Have you ever been walking through the store behind a kid that was asking for everything? One of those ones that has to touch everything on every shelf while whining and begging for it? Or maybe you have been subjected to the screaming child and the desperate parent that is trying desperately to bribe that child to be quiet with everything they can think of from toys to candy.

Maybe, you were that frustrated and desperate parent. Maybe you were embarrassed and at a loss about what to do. Minimalism can help. It isn't going to solve all your parenting problems. It is not a sure fix. However, it can help you to learn how to handle those in store melt downs. For new parents, this may even help you from ever experiencing one.

For New Parents

Our first thought as a parent, even before we are gazing into those beautiful eyes, is to buy them everything that they could ever need or want. We want to be prepared for everything that could come our way. So we buy things. We buy things we know that we will need, like cribs and car seats.

We buy things that we may need because they are cute, like toys and storage bins. As they get older we continue to go overboard. We get excited when they sit up so we get them chairs, bouncers, and walkers. Soon your house looks like you have multiple babies, and there is only one.

This is the beginning. Soon they have so many toys that they don't even play with. They have drawers of clothes that they wear once and then

outgrow. We have already started them out in a world of excess.

As they become toddlers, we misread their cues. We know we have to run errands and they are tired, but we push them anyway. Then there you are standing in the store with a very fussy toddler and you are handing him toys, candy, anything that will buy you a few more minutes to get what you need. We have taught them that buying stuff equals happiness.

When they get old enough to realize that, they use it to their advantage. The easiest way to keep it from happening is to never let it start. Plan your days simply. They matter. Let them know that they matter by not pushing them. It may mean a little inconvenience from time to time, but it is well worth it in the end.

For Older Children

It can be really hard to take an older child to the store when they ask for everything. Even if you have a large budget, it can be tiresome. The easiest way to teach them that they cannot have everything is to not let them have it. This is one of those easier said than done type situations.

However, start telling them as soon as you make your list that you are only getting what is on your list, and then stick to it. You can get them involved by letting them help you make the list. Teach them the difference between what is a need and what is a want while making your list.

For example, have them look in the fridge and tell them what you are out of. Milk is a need but cookies are a want. When you get to the store, only get

what is on the list. Even if there is something you need, if it is not on the list do not get it. When they ask for something, ask them if it is on the list. If they say no, then tell them no. Eventually, they will understand we don ' t need it then we don ' t buy it.

As for those meltdowns, leave the store. Leave your full basket where it is, and go to your car. They continue to have a fit, go home.

If they calm down, resume shopping. Now, you get home and don ' t have what they wanted to eat, explain to them that you couldn ' t finish shopping because they wouldn ' t cooperate.

They will soon understand that shopping is a necessity. It takes time and patience. In the long run, they will understand.

For Teens and Young Adults

When a child has grown up getting everything they need bought for them, it can be difficult for them to understand what they really need and what they want. Try giving them an allowance. Tell them that you will provide the basics and anything else they will need to get themselves.

They will learn what they really have to have and what they want. It will teach them not to be wasteful. It will also prepare them to take on their own responsibilities.

As soon as a teen gets a job, they should have some responsibilities. If they are driving, they should be able to pay their gas. They should help with their insurance. This is if they are working.

One parent that I know taught her child the hard way how expensive gas could get. Being the only one of her friends that drove, she was often asked to

drive her friends around. She was constantly asking for more gas money.

At first, her parents thought it was something that had to do, because she had to get to school. After a while, it was just too expensive. So her parents would take her car and fill it up on Sunday night. When the gas was gone, that was it until next Sunday. She would have to ride the bus. At first the daughter was riding the bus two or three days a week because she would run all her gas out.

There were several occasions that she had to sit at home on the weekends because she had no gas. Eventually, she learned to make her friends chip in for gas. It didn ' t take long until she wasn ' t riding the bus anymore. Sometimes we just have to learn the hard way.

Chapter 3 – Getting Your Significant Other on Board

The hardest part is not our children. In fact, once they realized that you mean to enforce the new rules, they begin to respect them. They don't have access to their own money, in most cases, so it is a little simpler for them.

Our spouses, however, may have a hard time with parting with their treasured possessions. In reality, they may think that we are crazy. How do you change their mind? You don't.

Honesty

Sit down and talk to them. Tell them how you are feeling. Tell them why you want to clear the clutter. This may help them to understand your reasoning and respect your decision. When they see the changes that go along with that decision, they may themselves feel overwhelmed.

It may seem that you are getting rid of things that hold importance. Be honest when they ask about what you are getting rid of and why. Don't try to sneak things out of the house. Don't try to remove anything that does not belong solely to you.

The most important difference you can make is to not bring in more things. They will notice that you aren't spending as much money long before they notice that the home seems larger.

They will notice the cushion in the bank account before they notice that you

are allowing them to hang their clothes in your closet.

Be an example

Even if your significant other is shopping from sun up to sun down, don't nag. Don't pressure. Try to come to agreement, like setting a spending allowance. Open a separate account, if you need to.

Regardless of what is coming into the house, do your best to get remove the clutter that is already there. Once your family sees the space beginning to transform, they will be more likely to join in.

Be a leader and you will have followers. Create peace and there will be.

The best thing to do is to start in one space. Not only will it give everyone a chance to see what you are doing, but it will show you progress. That progress becomes addictive. It is freeing and energizing. It is inspiring for you and everyone watching you.

If you are the protesting spouse

There are spouses out there that, rather than explain themselves, will hand their significant other this book and say here I want to do this. The only advice that will make any sense is, what will it hurt? You will find that you have more space, probably more money, and definitely a happier mate.

Try it for yourself. Pick a closet. Pick a box. Clean it out. Get rid of everything in it that you haven't seen in ages.

Get rid of everything that you outgrew. You will be amazed out how empowering it is. How good you feel is contagious. It is life changing.

If you feel like you are stuck in the same routine or need to change your life, just do it. Start by changing the space around you.

Chapter 4 – Clearing Your Home

There is no way that you are going to be able to get rid of year ' s and year ' s worth of clutter in just a few hours. People will tell you that it is possible, but that is one of those dreams that people want to hold on to. You will find books that will tell you to do it as fast as possible.

To keep the momentum going. Sure, there are benefits in doing it that way. It would be the way to go if it was just you. However, if you have a family, that is going to mean stepping on the toes of all the people in your house. You want this too last. You have to do it the right way.

Pick a Beginning Point

Think about this. Where do you come in and relax after a hard day? Do you have a favorite spot? Start right there. Sit in your spot and look around. What do you see? Are there piles of bills? Do you have dirty dishes in sight? Clear it out. Get rid of anything that you haven ' t touched in more than three months.

This means that shelf of Knick knacks or the fire place mantle. If you spend more time thinking about the fact you need to dust it then actually caring for it, let it go. There is no reason to keep anything that doesn ' t bring you happiness.

Paperwork

There are some papers that you are going to have to keep. Tax forms, birth records, or mortgage papers keep in a safe. Buy an expandable folder. In it

keep current bills. When the new bill comes in, throw the old one out.

Better yet, go paperless. Most places will send you an E-bill. These will keep paperwork from piling up. As a rule, if it is there more than three days, throw it out.

Paperwork includes your child ' s artwork. Get a file folder. Put it all in there. At the end of the six weeks, have your child pick their favorites and put it into a scrapbook. Everything else goes to the recycle bin. This is a huge part of any parent ' s closet.

Clothing

Before you decide what to get rid of, gather everything together. Once you have it in one place, you may be really surprised at how much you truly have. It will be easier to get rid of things once you see how much you have.

Put outfits together. Get rid of anything that doesn ' t have a match. Then get rid of things you know you that you don ' t like on you. Get rid of the whole set. After that, get rid of things that you keep just in case.

This can be that party dress that is in the back of your closet. Don ' t keep anything just because someone else bought it for you. If you aren ' t in love with it, just don ' t keep it. Donate it. Give it to a friend, but don ' t leave it in your house.

Books, movies, cds

We live in a digital age. We have Netflix, Amazon, and Kindle. There is nothing that we can't watch at the touch of a button. There is no reason to keep things that you don't use regularly. Invest in the digital version. This simple task will dramatically clean up your family room.

Once again, you can donate these items. A children's center, a hospital, or even a doctor's office may be very glad to get these donations.

Toys

Toys are so hard to get rid of. It seems that they don't want to play with anything until you have it ready to donate. Then for every one thing you put into the box, they pull out five. Your family room looks like a yard sale.

So frustrating. So, get them involved. Tell them that they can only keep what will fit in one toy box. Or allow them to keep only one collection. For smaller children, send them to a family member's house. Chances are that they won't even notice most of the stuff is gone.

Look at your baby stuff. Do you really need a jumper and a walker? Do you really need a bouncer and a rocker? Think about how much space you can clear out if you just get rid of one or the other. They usually have a favorite. Keep that one and pass the other one on. Same with clothes. Keep a few favorite outfits and donate the rest.

Donations

Here is the thing about donating. You have to actually do it. You cannot say oh I am going to donate this, that, and the other and then put it in your garage

for the next year. You have to actually load it up and drop it off.

Otherwise you aren't getting rid of anything. You just moved the clutter to another location in your house. Be vigilant about passing things on. If you let it set more than a week, designate someone else to do it for you.

Chapter 5 – Family Heirlooms and Keepsakes

This is the tricky part of minimalism. You have to be honest with yourself about why you are keeping things. Yes, it really neat to have your great aunts wedding dress. However, if it is sitting in your attic, it is probably getting ruined. Year books, newspaper articles, and other medias can teach about how life once was, but not if it is in the box in the back of your closet.

If you have things that you truly do value and keep close to your heart, showcase them. Give them a prominent place in your home. Make them a focal point. This makes others feel their importance. It will lighten your day.

Other things that hold memories, like your old football jersey, don ' t hold any real value. You just like to hold it up and relive your glory days. Why not take a picture of them and place them in a scrapbook?

Then you can look at them anytime you want to without having to dig through boxes. Do not keep things just because they once meant something to you. Only keep things that will keep you moving forward and not holding you to your past.

Wedding dresses can be donated to children ' s hospitals. They can be turned in to tiny dresses for those babies that didn ' t make it. It is usually a huge blessing for those families to get something so special in the hardest time of their life.

You can also have it turned into keepsake. Take a picture of it, create a shadow box, or just put it in your scrapbook.

As for high school yearbooks, donate them to the library or even the school they came from.

Then you will have the chance to look through it whenever you would like. It also opens the door for other families to take a look at them.

Before you decide that you can't keep something, try to give it to a family member. They may feel like they need to hold on to them for a while. Just let them know that you can't hold on to it forever.

You don't want the box sitting in your entrance way waiting to be picked up. Offer to ship it, drop it off, or take to a mutual friend. Give them a date that it absolutely has to be picked up by and stick by it. The point is to get rid of clutter, not gather to one location.

Chapter 6 – Benefits Of Minimalism

The biggest benefit of minimalism isn't the space you reclaim, although it is a great one. It isn't the money you save from not shopping. It is the time that you get back. Downsizing used to come with a huge stigma. People would talk behind your back. They would wonder if you lost your job, if maybe your marriage was on the rocks. However, modern times have changed that perception.

People are moving to tiny houses. They are giving up their huge houses full of rooms that contains stuff they don't need. They are giving up their yards that take weekends to care for. Why are they doing that?

Sometimes it isn't about the money you save. It is about the time that you save. Instead of spending all Saturday shopping, you realize you don't need that stuff. You can run to get groceries in less than an hour. Instead of cleaning, you have time to focus on family. When you stop trying to contain the clutter, you are free.

Homework

So here is what you should do, before you do anything else. Write down all the things in life that frustrate you. Is your commute to work too far? Are you tired of that mound of laundry? Do you need more sleep? Write it all down. Don't sugar coat it. Be honest with yourself.

Now look over that list. Down-sizing can lower your overhead. You may be able to afford to take that lesser paying job just down the street. Having less

clothes means that you have less to wash.

Take a look at that laundry, did every single piece actually get worn or did it not fit right so it got lumped in together? Are you stressing out, is that what is keeping you awake?

When you start lowering your overhead, freeing up your space, and taking a look at what is really important, your stress will begin to melt away.

Some things you really cannot change, but others are well within your reach. It is up to you to figure out which is changeable and what isn't.

So, what is the biggest benefit of minimalism? Happiness. Having less stuff means having less stress. Confidence is knowing that no matter how big the project is, you can finish it. This is something that you can do. You can teach your family. You can live with less stuff. All you need to do is take that one step to start the journey of the reset of your life.

Conclusion

This is your life. You cannot take things with you when you leave it. We live in a world that tells us what we need. They can make anything look like we cannot live without it. It is up to you to decide that you can't live with it. Everyone wants to be remembered by what they left behind.

Do you want those memories to be all about the houseful of things that your family fought over, stressed over, and had to throw out? Of course not.

By taking on a minimalism lifestyle, you only pass on what is really important to you. You teach your children how to live life fully, without having to own everything that looks so cool. You show your child what really matters is the memories that you make.

Do you really want to make a difference in this world? Put down your material possessions. Stop trying to get more. Start giving more. Give your time. Volunteer at a soup kitchen.

Go to a nursing home and read to someone or play a puzzle with someone. Volunteer at a children's home and play with children. Hold babies. Make your life matter.

These are options because you will find yourself shopping less. You will find yourself cleaning less. When you own less, you find who you are more. You begin to find financial freedom. You find freedom from the things that are tying you down. Don't lose focus on what is really important.

Look at your list when you have been living a minimalistic lifestyle for six months and then again in a year. You will easily find that you have achieved the goal of freeing yourself from those things. You will wonder what took you so long to begin that road. Your life is what you make it.

Break free from that clutter. Break free from all that holds you down. Start now by taking an inventory of your life. Write it all down, you are likely to be surprised by how owning too much has really held you back.





MINDFULNESS IN 21 DAYS

A MODERN PRACTICE WITH ANCIENT ROOTS TO BE PRESENT EVERY MOMENT

Zane Maxwell

MINDFULNESS IN 21 DAYS

A modern practice with ancient roots
to be present every moment

Fast and everyday mindfulness tricks to reduce stress, build self-awareness
and focus

by Zane Maxwell

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Introduction

21 days – is the right amount of time to create a habit!

Mindfulness as a practice refers to the conscious intention to be present in every moment of your life. Without requiring any particular beliefs or traditions, mindfulness is simply a way to notice thoughts, physical sensations, sights, sounds, smells, and reactions.

As human beings, we are wired to continuously scan our thoughts and our environment for worries or threats.

Through the use of mindfulness, we can shift from this routine to a consciousness in which we are observing our perceptions rather than merely reacting to them.

This altered way of thinking and interacting with our environment may seem simple, yet it's a radical shift that can have powerful consequences.

Mindfulness helps us become more fully aware of our internal and external experiences. This can have a significant impact on our ability to:

- Relax physically
- Increase our self-awareness
- Maintain our emotional balance
- Regulate our behavior
- Minimize our self-criticism

- Decrease our stress

- Improve our relationships

Mindfulness is a learnable skill. Shifting attention from the past or the future to the present moment is usually cultivated through the practice of mindfulness meditation.

Practicing mindfulness can help us recognize the typical and habitual patterns our thoughts follow, and to respond in new and less reactive ways.

It encourages us to be sensitive to each moment, and to be open and receptive to our actual experience rather than our interpretation of that experience.

Chapter 1 - The Purpose Of Mindfulness

There are several purposes of mindfulness and these purposes serve as reasons why attaining this psychological state is important. Here are the basic but essential purposes of mindfulness and how they can benefit a person's life.

To improve concentration

Being mindful is being able to focus and concentrate and when you are able to focus and concentrate, you are able to do all your activities, projects, etc. well and achieve great results.

Mindfulness is aimed to achieve an improvement in your focus and concentration since it encourages a person to live in the present and to the reality displayed in front of you. For instance, if there is work to do and some projects, if you are mindful, you are able to concentrate on your projects and work because you focus on what you have to do at the moment.

To obtain wisdom easily

Mindfulness is also aimed at achieving wisdom and knowledge without obstacles. For instance, if you are inside a class or a seminar, you will not be able to absorb all the knowledge and the wisdom imparted by the instructor or the speaker if you are absent minded and you do not focus on what is being discussed.

However, if you are mindful, wisdom and knowledge can easily penetrate to your mind and this could benefit your work, your studies, and your overall life in a positive way.

To relieve physical stress and prevent health issues

Mindfulness helps you eradicate stress from your life. The world is full of stress-triggers but since mindfulness encourages you and helps you think of the present reality, stress can be reduced and relieved. Now, stress is one of the main causes of several diseases like high blood pressure, etc.

When you are mindful, you eliminate stress and when you eliminate stress, you are also able to prevent serious health issues from arising, thereby keeping you healthy physically.

To eliminate worries

Mindfulness is aimed at eliminating worries in your daily life. Worry is one great factor that can cause stress and jeopardize your health not only physically, but mentally.

However, if you are mindful or if you know how to practice mindfulness, you are usually trained to focus on the present things and to view things as they are and without judgment.

Since you won't have to think of other things from the past or future, there is nothing to worry about, so you can give your body a good rest, peace to your mind and happiness to your soul.

To eliminate depression and other mental disorders

Mindfulness is said to be a mental state of focus and concentration as well as awareness of the present realities. Since it deals mainly with the mind, it is also aimed at eliminating mental disorders such as depression, anxiety disorders, etc.

For instance, if you are depressed over something, ignoring that mental state could give worst results like nervous breakdowns.

But since mindfulness encourages meditation and freeing the mind from worries that lead to depression, these mental disorders can successfully be eliminated allowing you to live a happier life.

To banish communication gaps

Communication gaps are usually the main causes of misunderstandings, etc. but mindfulness is a state that is aimed to bridge these gaps. Mindfulness can do this because it is the state of paying attention.

Naturally, when you focus and pay attention to the person talking, whether it is your boss, your wife, your parents, etc. you will be able to understand what he or she is saying.

Therefore, if it is a task you are supposed to do, you can perform it exactly how your boss wants it or how your parents want it, leading to harmonious relationships.

To drive out relationship problems

While communication gaps can cause misunderstandings, misunderstanding is the main culprits of broken and strained relationships; whether with your boss, wife, parents, friends.

The state of being mindful can prevent problems and fix broken relationships because mindfulness not only encourages attentiveness and total awareness but also encourages viewing things as they are without passing judgment.

This means you are able to absorb the circumstances and understand them.

When you understand situations and circumstances despite their negative nature, you avoid misunderstanding and fights with your boss, wife, friends, parents, etc. leading to the avoidance of relationship strains and problems.

To be non-judgmental

It is actually human nature to be judgmental and to put meaning on everything around them. Whether it is an object, a situation or happening, people would usually judge and usually they judge the past and the even the future of that certain situation.

However, mindfulness is aimed to focus on the present moment as it encourages the viewing of things as they are and not digging up the past and predicting the future and so, people are trained to be non-judgmental but accept and absorb everything without passing judgment.

To get a hold of yourself or your sanity

Many people who experience depression as well as other psychological problems usually are not able to maintain their sanity and get a hold of their emotions that's why they usually give up and break down. Reality will always have some things that could make a person depressed and worry too much but being mindful can help a person keep his or her sanity despite all the stressors and depression-triggers.

This is because mindfulness is aimed to focus only on what is happening now, at present and not about future happenings. It is aimed to let you live one day at a time, solving problems for the day and not to worry about problems that have not arrived yet.

With this, you are able to prevent a surge of problems that that can trigger too much depression allowing you to live and think well despite the not-so-good things happening around you.

To live a happy and contented life

Mindfulness is also aimed for people to achieve a happy and contented life. Nobody wants to be lonely and live a life of misery and discontentment but if you are practicing mindfulness in your daily life, you live for the present and this can train you to be contented with your life and what you have now as well as be happy since you can banish negative vibes and stressors that can disrupt your way of life.

Chapter 2 - Awakening Awareness

Here are effective practices that can aid you achieve mindfulness within 21 days.

MINDFULNESS OF BREATH

The average person breathes around 28,000 times a day – that makes over 10 million breaths a year. You are breathing all the time, even when sleeping, yet how often do you think about this amazing life-sustaining process? For most people the answer is ‘not very often’.

Unless attention is drawn to our breathing, either by someone suggesting to us to think about it or by noticing something wrong (such as being short of breath or experiencing a pain when breathing), then it simply happens automatically.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with this; this is how it is designed to happen. The conscious mind has enough to deal with without having to constantly remember to breathe in and out.

Morning Meditation – ‘Mindfulness of Breath’

Sitting or lying comfortably, eyes closed or open, just gently focus your attention on your breathing. Just notice each breath as it happens. You might notice how the air feels as it flows through your nostrils travelling into your lungs or you may notice how your chest rises and falls and your abdomen expands and contracts.

Simply observe each breath as it happens, whether you focus on the rise and

fall of your chest or abdomen, or on the sensation of your breath at the nostrils.

Just notice, observe, what your breathing feels like. Do not make any inferences, judgments or conclusions, just observe. As you engage in this exercise you may find that your mind wanders, caught by thoughts or by noises in the room, or bodily sensations.

Or you might wander to thoughts of the past or the future, maybe even what you did yesterday or things you have to do later, after your practice.

When you notice your mind wandering in any of these ways, know that this is okay; simply notice the distraction but gently bring your attention back to the breath. No judgment, no comment, just gently guiding your awareness back to your breath.

It is almost like your awareness is an inflatable beach ball, gently riding the waves of your breaths, however they ebb and flow. And if you can, for the very last part of your practice, maybe just allow yourself to let go of all remaining awareness.

All sounds, thoughts, feelings, even your breath, let it all sink down into one deep, peaceful state of being. Feel complete, whole, experiencing that sense of 'oneness' of self.

MINDFULNESS OF SIGHT

Sight is one of the senses we are most dependent on and relate to our experience of the world through. However, what we 'see' and what we perceive visually are very different and it is a much more complex process (or set of processes) than we often realise.

Our eyes are vital for this process, with a lens in each eyeball helping to focus images onto the retina at the back of the eye. The retina is covered with special light sensitive cells – 'cones' which allow us to see color and 'rods', which allow us to see light/dark, shape and movement. The information received by these cells is sent via the optic nerve to the brain.

The most dramatic example of the difference between seeing and visual

perception is the fact that the images sent from the eyes to the brain are actually upside down.

It is our brain that turns them the right way up and also combines the images from both eyes to create a three-dimensional image, creating the perception of depth.

Cognitive psychology often explores in great depth how our visual perception is more than just what we see, but effectively how we see it. Our experience of visual awareness is often influenced by the brain 'filling in gaps' or making inferences or assumptions from the information received.

For example, if you see someone with their back to you facing a window, you might say that you SEE them looking out of the window.

But what do you actually SEE?

Without seeing the person's eyes, all you have really seen is the person FACING the window. You have therefore inferred, even imagined, that their eyes are open, when in fact it is just as likely they are closed.

You SAW a person facing a window, but you PERCEIVED a person looking out of a window.

Sight – There Is A Lot To Take In!

The example above is just one illustration of how we have evolved, quite usefully, to have an intuition based on experience and the patterns we observe in terms of what we are seeing.

In general, more often than not, a person facing a window is looking out of it, so it is useful to make that instant visual judgment. Bombarded with new visual information all day long, it is helpful to keep our minds free to process it by 'taking for granted' things that we are used to seeing, however, as you can see with the inferential error explored above, there is a potential to miss out on things that we could benefit from seeing.

Today, we are going to explore the sense of sight mindfully, an opportunity to literally look at yourself and the world around you in a new way. People often find this a particularly rewarding and profound experience of the 21 days.

Morning Meditation

Sitting comfortably, either outside or where you have access to a view outside, take a moment to focus on an object or aspect of the natural world. An example could be a plant, a tree, a flower, an insect or animal or even just the clouds in the sky.

As you look at what you have chosen, do not do anything other than notice and observe it, almost like you are seeing it for the very first time. Explore visually every aspect and detail of this natural thing: its color, shape, perceived texture, sense of weight, any movement but also its purpose, its possibilities, its place in the world in this very moment.

Engage in a playful spirit of curiosity, maybe feeling that child-like sense of wonder, and letting yourself become consumed by the presence and infinite possibilities of this chosen object of your attention.

As you notice, calmly observing, you may feel a growing connection so simply enjoy the feeling of just looking, observing and being.

MINDFULNESS OF SOUND

Our sense of sound is engaged constantly throughout our waking day, allowing us to communicate via language and providing important information about our environment, such as the distance and direction of sounds we hear.

Vibrations captured by the ‘cup’ of the outer ear travel to the tympanic membrane and then onto the inner ear (or ‘cochlea’), which translates them into sound messages sent to the brain via the auditory nerve.

As with sight, there is a difference between the information we receive and how we perceive it. On a basic level, there is a difference between hearing and listening the former being more passive and the latter a more active process.

For example, you might hear the ‘noise’ of a radio in the background, but not be listening to exactly what song or discussion it consists of. If you are

listening to the song, you may be listening to the music without catching the lyrics. Once again, our brain filters out and allows our attention to be selective.

The ability to tune in to what we want to listen to and tune out those things that we do not is highly valuable. For example, there may be lots of people talking in a busy room, but you are able to focus on, listen to and comprehend the person you are talking to (providing the background sounds are not too loud or too distracting).

However, it also often means that we are missing out on exploring a large part of the 'soundscape' of our daily lives.

This is especially true of the sounds we hear regularly or those things we often listen to. Again, we start to take them for granted and form a habit of listening in the same way each time we hear something familiar.

This is especially true of music where a particular genre, artist or song can take us back to a fond memory of the past or alter our emotions. This is of course enjoyable in itself, but overlooks the potential to practice mindful awareness in the present when listening to music.

Morning Meditation

For this exercise you will need a piece of music to listen to: ideally one that you have not heard before, yet perhaps interests or intrigues you somehow.

Many people enjoy this exercise using headphones and either sitting or lying comfortably with their eyes closed, in order to fully focus on the sounds being heard. As you listen to the song, focus all of your attention on the different sounds you can hear, layers of complexity and intricacy.

If your mind wanders to thoughts about the artist, genre or different instruments you hear, gently guide your awareness back to what is being played or sung.

As a test, it is possible to focus your hearing on certain types of sound within the composition: "now I am listening to the lead violin", "now I am listening to the accompanying woodwinds..." Or with modern music, you can listen to

the different layers or rhythms placed on top of each other (the bass, the lead vocalist, the backing track, etc).

When you do this, you are in control of what your brain filters, rather than it happening automatically. You are truly listening.

As your awareness becomes focused on the sound of the music you can let it resonate with your being.

MINDFULNESS OF TASTE

Our sense of taste comes from combined information that we receive both from the taste buds (or papillae) on the surface of our tongue.

In terms of taste, the tongue can only detect four distinct flavors – sweet, sour, salty and bitter. However, these four flavors can be present and interact in an almost infinite number of taste combinations.

The tongue also allows us to explore and understand both the texture and temperature of the things that we put in our mouth.

Tasting is naturally most associated with eating and drinking, and it is here that we have all had experiences of different levels of mindfulness in relation to these activities.

For example, anyone who has an issue with snacking too much (often on unhealthy foods) will know that it is easy to eat a packet of crisps or a chocolate bar without paying much attention.

One minute the snack is in your hand, next minute, all gone! I have had weight loss clients who say they then feel almost cheated because they did not get to enjoy the first crisps or chocolate bar, so feel justified in having another.

A lot of my work with helping people lose and control their weight involves this shift from unconscious or autopilot eating to mindful eating.

When one thinks of very mindful eating and drinking, good examples are wine tasting, tea tasting, or indeed any form of food or drink connoisseurship. A connoisseur is essentially someone practicing a highly mindful awareness of the experience they are engaging in.

In the case of wine or tea tasting, this mindfulness is evident in the multi-sensory appreciation of the drink: noticing its color, its texture, sniffing its aroma, savoring its taste slowly in different parts of the mouth.

The connoisseur is really there in the moment when tasting the drink. When we gulp down our food or drinks in haste, aside from the digestive ill effects that can arise, we are missing out on the benefits of experiencing mindfulness of taste.

By exploring this type of mindfulness many experience new enjoyment and appreciation of what they eat and drink plus find it easier to control their diet, separating eating from emotions.

Morning Meditation

For this exercise you will need a couple of grapes, berries, raisins or, for those chocoholics amongst us, a couple of squares of chocolate.

Sitting comfortably, place two of your selected snacks in front of you, ideally on a white plate or napkin. Take a deep breath and just let your vision focus on, using grapes in this example, one of the two grapes.

What does it look like? Notice its size, texture, its surface and color. Maybe there are different colors. Perhaps it looks softer in some parts than others. Ponder for a moment of its story, where it came from, where in the world it may have grown on a vine, and its journey to be here now in front of you.

Now direct your attention to the other grape, notice it again in the same way, but compare too – is it smaller or larger, shaped differently, does it look juicier?

Now it is time to make a choice, select one of the grapes and slowly pick it up with your thumb and forefinger. How does it feel, is the texture different to the touch than it appeared by sight?

If you squeeze very gently can you get a sense of the moisture of the fruit inside? You can also see it much closer now, are there other colors and surface shades that you can see under closer examination?

You might already have a sense of anticipation at this point, so now it is time to taste! Close your eyes and gently place the grape in your mouth. Don't bite yet, just let it roll around your mouth. Perhaps there is already a taste hinted at. Explore its shape and texture with your tongue.

Do this for a few moments and then your reward comes: bite into the grape! Feel that explosive release of the grape juice, the sweet flavor, but also the different textures that your tongue and mouth can now explore – the soft, succulent moistness of the fruit.

Notice how the intensity of the flavor changes as you chew, how different flavors and levels of sweetness may ebb and flow. Then, as you swallow, what flavor is left, does it stay or fade and at what rate?

When ready open your eyes, reflect on mindfully tasting that grape and repeat the process again with the second one.

If you have time you can repeat this exercise again in the evening. If you like chocolate then it can be a wonderful way to sensually experience its unique taste and the sensations it brings.

Chapter 3 - Early Morning Workouts

Many people believe that doing a workout first thing in the morning before their day starts, helps them to build their confidence for the whole day. The fact is there are many benefits to an early morning workout.

Don't be surprised, if initially you find this extremely difficult. You likely will not want to crawl out of bed to do a workout; however, over time, this too will become a positive habit. Besides, once you enjoy the many benefits of an early morning workout, you will actually look forward to it.

Of course, your workout offers many health benefits. No matter if you are trying to lose weight, get in shape, or just stay fit, doing your workout right away in the morning, before you start your day will improve your physical health, but it will also improve your emotional health.

The Benefits of Working Out

- Reduce anxiety, and ease stress - A 15-minute bike ride won't take care of all of your life's troubles, but when you exercise regularly, it will help to reduce your anxiety, anger, frustration, and stress.
- Exercise can work as a distraction to your worries. You can find some quiet time and break out of your negative thought cycle that feeds depression, anxiety, and other emotional issues.
- Lift your mood and relieve depression - Exercise releases endorphins, which are powerful chemicals in your brain that make you feel good and energize your spirits.

- In fact, experts have found that exercise can be as effective at treating mild to moderate depression as antidepressant medication, but without the side-effects of prescription drugs. Maintaining an exercise schedule can stop a relapse from occurring.

- Increase your self-esteem - Regular exercise is an investment in your mind, body, and soul. Once it becomes habit it promotes your sense of worthiness it makes you feel stronger, energetic and more powerful. You will feel better about your appearance, and have a sense of achievement, just by meeting small exercise goals.

- Sharpen your brainpower - The same endorphins that make you feel healthier ,also, aid you focus and feel mentally sharp. Exercise even stimulates the growth of new brain cells and it slows down, even prevents decline related to age.

- Improve your sleep - Short bursts of exercise in the morning can help you to regulate your sleep patterns. If you are going to exercise at night, it should be yoga or gentle stretching.

- Boost your energy – When you increase your heart rate several times a week it will increase your energy.

- Allow you to cope better - When you are faced with mental/emotional challenges in your life, exercise is a healthy tool to help you cope, rather than re- sorting to drugs, alcohol, or other negative behaviors that are more likely to make your symptoms worse.

Regular exercise can help to boost your immune system and reduce the impact stress has on you.

- You will look better—When you do not like the way that you look, regardless of the reason, you are going to have issues with your body image

and that is going to translate to having a low self-esteem.

When you exercise, you are able to take control of the way that you look and can get it to change. You will feel better; because you will be more toned and become healthier. This only is going to boost your confidence, because you are going to feel so great about your new body.

- You will be stronger—Working out is going to make you physically stronger.

When you see that you are able to do things that were once impossible, it is going to make you feel like you are on top of the world and that you can conquer anything that you put your mind to. You will have your workout done, before most people have even opened both eyes.

Try to do a mix of cardio and strength training so that you are giving your body the best work out each time, but you should also make sure that you are doing something that you enjoy.

If you enjoy the activity, you are more likely to crawl out of bed early, whereas, if you don't like what you are doing or you find it is boring, you are going to quit getting up to do your workout.

A good mixture of activities during the week is best because it can help prevent boredom, and it will ensure that you are working all of your body. It will also reduce the risk of injury, since you are not going to be overworking any body part.

It can also help to prevent the body from becoming too used to the activity and not getting the same kind of results in the long run.

Make sure that before you get started on your morning workout routine that you spend some time stretching. There are a lot of great stretches that you can use and they are going to help you to reduce injuries and from occurring.

It is a common mistake to just jump into the routine right away and will not worry about stretching either before or after the workout, even though both of these are important.

Take just a few minutes when you begin and when you are done, to stretch to ensure your muscles are properly warmed up and cooled down. The last thing you want to do is hurt yourself, which is not only going to prevent you from working out, it can negatively affect the rest of your day.

As you can see, you'll receive tons of great benefits when you begin to workout. While you can do this at any time of the day that works the best for you, the morning workout offers something special.

Not only do you get the satisfaction of having your workout out of the way before your day even begins, you will enjoy the endorphin rush in the brain, leaving you feeling happier and more satisfied with your life, while building your confidence and self esteem.

Yoga Poses That Will Build Confidence and Inner Strength

Confident people give off a warm, magnetic energy that makes people feel really comfortable around them. Confidence is believing in your abilities, trusting in your decisions, and being okay with your limitations.

Yoga can help! Just going to a yoga class can boost your self-esteem and self-confidence. It sends a positive message to your heart and mind that shows you care about yourself. This alone can elevate your opinion of yourself.

As you start to build your physical strength and work your way into more challenging poses, you feel stronger on the inside, and as balancing poses become easier the more you practice, it shows you are capable of changing and growing.

- Forearm Plank - This is an amazing pose to build strength in the core. It ignites your fire centre, so you will probably feel the heat on a physical level after just a couple of breaths. It is activating your solar plexus chakra, which is the energy centre that relates to your determination, will power and self

esteem.

- Warrior Pose - When you combine balance with your core and leg strength, you have the makings for awesomeness! The power of this pose is sure to boost your self esteem.

- Half Moon Pose - This pose can be challenging if you have a mind full of selfdoubt, but it can also quickly help to build self-confidence.

Chapter 4 -Healthy Eating

Once you are up and ready to start your day, it is time to enjoy eating a healthy breakfast. Many people don't give a healthy breakfast the credit it deserves. Many think that it's okay to skip breakfast, because they are on a diet or simply don't like to eat breakfast. This is simply not true.

The best thing for your confidence is to make sure you eat a good breakfast. That said eating any breakfast is better than not eating breakfast at all. You have a lot of choices when it comes to breakfast foods.

Try to get a combination that includes protein, fiber, and carbs, because these will give you some extra energy for the morning, it will help you to be able to concentrate for the rest of the day, and it will prevent overeating later on.

Think of it this way, how much confidence are you going to have at that next meeting if you are worried that everyone is able to hear your stomach grumbling? Take the time to eat a healthy breakfast and see what a difference it makes.

What Should You Eat? Are you stuck on what you should eat in the morning to get the best results for your confidence? Here are some options to help:

- Oatmeal - You can never go wrong with a bowl of oatmeal. It can help you to feel full, while at the same time providing you with some great fiber to clean out the system. Oatmeal can also lower your cholesterol levels, and provide you with some other nutrients such as potassium, folate, and omega'3s.

Try to eat oatmeal on a regular basis. Make sure that you choose the oatmeal that doesn't have sugar or fruit added, if you want to get the healthiest results.

- Greek yogurt - It is tangy and creamy, and it has all of the protein and calcium to help you feel your very best. You can add in some fruit to get a bit of flavor you are sure to love.

- Grapefruit - This is a good food to eat if you are trying to lose weight. When it works your confidence is going to soar. There have been studies done that show eating half a grapefruit before your meals can help to fill you up while burning those extra calories in no time for the best results.

- Eggs - While they have gotten a bit of a bad reputation due to their fat content and cholesterol, these are still the best option for getting protein, vitamin D, and so much more. Eat one or two eggs a day to get the full benefits. Add in some vegetables and cheese to get a whole meal.

- Berries - Nothing is better to wake up in the morning to a breakfast that includes some berries, which are full of all the nutrition that you need in order to stay healthy and happy. Try to have a mixture of berries each day in order to get the best benefits.

Some people find that making a nice smoothie with the berries and Greek yogurt is the best way to wake up in the morning and to get all of your important food groups.

- Coffee - Yes, coffee has also gotten a bad reputation, but there have been some more recent studies that show caffeine can help with the prevention of various diseases, such as prostate cancer and diabetes.

Of course, you should not go crazy and drink coffee all day long. It is best to limit yourself to one or two cups of coffee. Make your own coffee at home to avoid the extra sugar that comes from getting coffee from your favorite coffee shop.

- Tea - If you are not a big coffee person, consider drinking tea. All teas are great because they offer you antioxidants, although green tea is often considered the best, because it increases your metabolism and can help you to lose more weight.

Plus, tea is more hydrating than coffee and has more nutrients. It also contains some of the caffeine that you need, to enjoy the benefits listed

above.

- Cranberry juice - This is a good alternative to orange juice if you get tired of having it every day. This juice is good for limiting bad bacterial growth and it can fight off any urinary tract infections you may be dealing with as well as other issues.

Just stick with a small serving through so you are not taking on too much when it comes to sugar.

- Bread - Stick with the whole wheat kind so that you are getting the most out of your meal. Despite some diets telling you to stay away from carbs, some carbs are very important, but you do need to pick wisely to get the best results.

- Opt for some English muffins or whole wheat toast to get the nutrients and fiber that your body needs. Of course, you should avoid jam, jelly and butter because they contain sugars you don't need.

- Meat - You need plenty of protein in the morning to get your day started. Try to have some lean meats on your breakfast plate, which will encourage the healthy muscles.

Eating a healthy breakfast is the best way to ensure that your stomach is full and happy, and provide you with nutrients that you need. Your healthy breakfast will help to boost your confidence.

Conclusion

Happiness and satisfaction are basic objectives of an individual; a life that is free from worries. On the other hand, worry-triggers can't be avoided making people to give up on life or see their life as worthless. Living in the present, though, can aid you live for today.

Keep in mind that even if you worry about tomorrow, you will never discern what will turn out when tomorrow comes.

Live your life one day at a time. This is possible if you practice mindfulness solutions and practices that will help you effectively achieve them in 21 days. Mindfulness not only gives peace of mind, banish stress and attain success, but it also keeps you out of trouble with your relationships.

So, follow the mindfulness tricks and practices by heart, attain mindfulness and learn to be grateful for life at present.



SELF-DISCIPLINE WORKBOOK

**Develop Discipline
And Achieve Your Life Goals**



JASON THOMPSON AND EMMA JONES

Self-Discipline Workbook

Develop Discipline And Achieve Your Life Goals

by Jason THOMPSON and Emma JONES

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How Developing Self – Discipline and Willpower Can Transform Your Life Forever

“The only discipline that lasts is self-discipline, Bum Phillips”

What is Self-Discipline and Willpower?

Self-Discipline is the ability to make yourself do things that should be done and is the companion of willpower.

Willpower is the ability to control unnecessary and harmful impulses, overcome procrastination and is the gateway to the achievement of your goals.

Both are skills that you can develop through practice and exercise and gives you the power to stick to your decisions and follow them through.

How Self-Discipline and Willpower will change your life?

Once you develop self-discipline and willpower as a skill, philosophy and a way of living you will persevere with your decisions and plans until you accomplish them.

It will change your life forever by empowering you to overcome obstacles, addictions, procrastination and laziness and following through with whatever you do and want.

Who can develop Self-Discipline and Willpower?

Self-Discipline is a muscle that can be trained by anyone, anytime, anywhere.

The more you use it the stronger it grows.

There is no shortcut, no magic pills or luck to success, instead it is a path where you develop daily habits, set goals and action plans, connect with others, reflect on your mistakes, monitor progress and celebrate victories.

How to use Self-Discipline Workbook

*“Your beliefs become your thoughts,
Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions,
Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values,
Your values become your destiny.”*

— Mahatma Gandhi

Self Discipline and Willpower are the most important predictors of success in life.

This Workbook is designed to help you achieve results you want in three stages:

1. Self-Discovery: Who am I?
2. Direction and Focus: Define and Decide what you want to achieve
3. Develop Daily Self-Discipline: Set goals and action plans, develop positive habits, connect and build relationships, learn from mistakes and Never Give Up

All three stages require self-reflection, focus and commitment to complete daily exercises until you achieve what you want. It is not the task which is important is the person that you become in the process of completing the task.

By blending practical wisdom with the power of daily practice of self discipline you will rediscover the greatest human strength: stamina to persevere in whatever you do.

The choice is yours and only yours, what will it be?

Self-Discovery: Who am I?

To succeed, this means first you must know what you want.

What are your interests, hobbies, passions? What do you love to do so much that you lose track of time?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

When you define your personal values, you discover what is truly important to you.

What are your deepest values? What do you stand for?

List 5 values that are important to you

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Dependable	Innovative	Inspiring	Respectful
Reliable	Creative	Athletic	Honor

Committed	Humorous	Fit	Nurturing
Loyal	Fun-loving	Courageous	Loving
Open-minded	Adventurous	Intelligence	Passionate
Consistent	Motivated	Educate	Economy
Curiosity	Positive	Teamwork	Respected
Efficient	Optimistic	Self-actualization	Honest

What makes you smile? (people, events, projects)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What are five things you're most proud of?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What would you regret if you would die today?

1.
2.
3.

4.
5.

What is stopping you to achieve greatness?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What is something that you really want to achieve? What do you want to create in your life?

Dream Goal #1
Dream Goal #2
Dream Goal #3
Dream Goal #4
Dream Goal #5
Dream Goal #6
Dream Goal #7
Dream Goal #8
Dream Goal #9
Dream Goal #10

Direction and Focus

Write your Dream Goal #1:

SMART Goal formula gives you a clear direction in life and helps you connect your daily actions to a greater purpose.

S - specific

M - measurable

A - attainable

R - relevant

T - timely

E.g. If you want to have more money you can reframe “I want to increase my monthly income by \$ 3,000 by July 10”.

Using SMART Goal formula, redefine your Dream Goal #1

SMART Dream Goal #1:

Setting Priorities: ‘What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important’

How to be More Productive and Eliminate Time Wasting Activities Using “Eisenhower Matrix” Not Urgent and Not Important Quadrants

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Crying baby Kitchen fire Some calls 1	Exercise Vacation Planning 2
Not Important	Interruptions Distractions Other calls 3	Trivia Busy work Time wasters 4

Important but not urgent: successful people even if they have the most demanding jobs in the world schedule the "important but not urgent" tasks into their day.

Using Eisenhower Matrix: What do you need to focus on to achieve your SMART Dream Goal #1? What is “Important but not urgent” and requires tacking action?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Who will help you achieve this goal? Identify people or groups who will help you reach your SMART Goal #1

Name 1.
Name 2.
Name 3.
Name 4.
Name 5.

How would you know that you have achieved your SMART Dream Goal #1? Get a clear mental picture of your goal (visualize)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What will happen if you don't achieve your SMART Dream Goal #1? What does this mean to you?

1.
2.
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4.
5.

Develop Daily Self-Discipline

SMART Dream Goal #1:

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Date:

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What is your daily motivation practice?

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Cultivate Gratitude: A five-minute a day gratitude journal can increase your long-term well-being and improves your health, relationships, emotions, personality and career.

What am I grateful for having in my life today?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Action: What do I have to do today for my SMART Dream Goal#1 to come true?

1.
2.

3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

People/habits/tools: Who and what will help me achieve my SMART Dream Goal#1?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What can I do today to be at service for others? Bring joy and happiness into your life by giving and offering your help to others

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Y/N **Did I achieve my daily Goals?**
If not, why?

1.
2.
3.

Lessons: What do I need to maintain and what do I need to change for

achieving my SMART Dream Goal#1? What did I learn today that I can apply tomorrow?

1.
2.
3.

Did today matter? Make each day count and get closer to your SMART Dream Goal#1

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Celebrate your achievements. List all of things that indicate your progress toward your SMART Dream Goal #1 and all the small successes you had today.

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People/habits/tools: Who and what will help me achieve my SMART Dream Goal#1?

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What can I do today to be at service for others? Bring joy and happiness into your life by giving and offering your help to others

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Develop Daily Self-Discipline

SMART Dream Goal #2:

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People/habits/tools: Who and what will help me achieve my SMART Dream Goal#2?

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What can I do today to be at service for others? Bring joy and happiness into your life by giving and offering your help to others

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