

# PERSONAL *TRANSFORMATION*

## MASTERY



- Master your brain
- Overcome fear
- Build confidence
- Get motivated

- Know your life purpose
- Develop a healthier you
- Build good habits
- Get focused

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**GUIDE 10:**  
CLEAR THE MIND

Your entire experience and quality of life hinges on your ability to clear and control the mind.

Many of us believe that our happiness is dependent on outside factors and on what happens to us. This however is not true. Rather, our happiness depends on the way we *react* to what happens to us. And the same goes for every other aspect of our experience too: your stress levels are a result of the way you react to events, and your ability to be productive depend on your reactions too.

Don't believe me? To prove it, let's imagine that you're in a caravan and it's hanging over the edge of a cliff. If you move too much then it's going to topple over the edge into a ravine.

If you are aware of this situation, then in all likelihood you will be riddled with fear. Your heartrate will increase, your blood vessels will dilate, your muscles will contract and you will start breathing quickly. You'll sweat and your mind will be all over the place.

But now let's imagine that you're in the very *same* situation but you *believe* that you can fly. In that case, you'll probably sit happily reading and not worry all too much about your precarious position!

As you can see here, your belief about the situation and about the events is what is in control of not just your mood – but your very

physiology. And guess which person is more likely to survive this situation without letting the caravan fall?

Now don't get this twisted: I am not here to tell you that holding completely deluded beliefs is the way forward! And nor should you convince yourself you can fly.

But this is merely a demonstration of the power of the mind and of your beliefs. Now if you imagine yourself in another more realistic setting you can see how your beliefs can change the way you react.

Let's say you're standing up on stage and you're about to give a speech in front of lots of people.

Some of us don't believe we can fly. Some of us think that we're going to say the wrong thing, that we're going to stutter and that people are going to laugh at us! We thus begin to panic and guess what? Our blood vessels dilate, our muscles contract and our heartrate goes up. Our mind begins to race which makes us *more likely* to make mistakes and our throat becomes dry and hoarse. The irony is that the speech is much more likely to go wrong simply because we're worried that it might!

And now imagine the same scenario but where you believe it's going to go well, or where you just aren't bothered about what

other people might think. This kind of calm mindfulness is going to help you to act as though there isn't even an audience there!

Again, it is your reaction to the event that is going to keep stress at bay.

And it's not just these acutely stressful situations that can benefit from mindfulness and calmness either. Imagine for example that you come home from work and you can't stop thinking about the last thing your boss/client/colleague said to you. Then you wonder if you sent that important last email...

How present are you going to be when you get home? How much are your family likely to enjoy spending time with you?

Imagine that you are on a great holiday but all you can think about is whether or not you left the oven on at home. How much do you think you'll enjoy the incredible views of mountains going past your window?

Imagine that you're in the gym and your mind is thinking about the computer game you were playing last night, or X Factor. Do you really think that you're going to be capable of exerting maximum force in that workout?

# INTRODUCING CBT

Our aim is to help you to take back control over your mind and in doing this, you're also going to be taking back control over your emotions and your feelings.

The end result is that you're going to be able to become completely present in any given moment and completely 'mindful', thereby abandoning unhelpful concerns, stressors and emotions.

There's a school of psychology that can help us to do this called CBT. CBT stands for 'Cognitive Behavioral Therapy' and it's all about taking control of your thoughts. What's more, is CBT actually starts out using a form of mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness meditation means that you are meditating in such a way as to become more aware of your own thoughts and feelings. In other forms of meditation – such as transcendental meditation – ask the user to try and completely clear their mind, often by focussing on a single point in space, or perhaps a sound or a word (this is called a 'mantra' and it is why we imagine Buddhist monks to hum as they meditate!). The difference with mindfulness is that you aren't trying to eradicate your thoughts but rather you are trying to simply 'watch them' as they float past you. The idea is that you are becoming aware of the kinds of things you normally think but you aren't engaging with them and you aren't

letting them affect you. The description is often that you should watch them pass by 'like clouds in the sky'.

Do this for a while and then write down the content of some of those thoughts. Look at the things you stress about and worry about on a regular basis and reflect on them in an objective, disconnected manner – nonjudgmentally.

## **Cognitive Restructuring**

The CBT professional would next instruct you to begin breaking down and analysing those thoughts. Some of these will be things that you are going to worrying about and stressing about and which are going to stop you from enjoying yourself in the moment.

You're going to practice dismissing them but to help, you're also going to disassemble them using restructuring techniques.

One example of this is called 'thought challenging' which is going to teach you to challenge the validity of your worries or your distractions.

For example, let's say that you're worried you didn't send an email at work. Thought challenging is going to help you overcome this. First, you ask yourself if there's anything you can do about it. If not, then what is the good in worrying? In fact, it is more

important that you relax and enjoy yourself so that you can be fresh and well to handle the challenges tomorrow.

Next, you ask how much it really matters. What is the worst case scenario? Everyone makes mistakes and in all likelihood, your boss isn't going to be furious – they'll be understanding.

Does some small part of you think that you're going to get fired? Then just remind yourself that this is incredibly hard for any business to do legally and it would be worse for them than it would be for you.

And after all, if your workplace would fire you so readily, would you really want to be there anyway?

Are you worried that people will be mad at you? You made a mistake! So what? And since when do you need to be best friends with your work colleagues?

This *is* the logical and reasonable reaction to this concern and once you can learn to deconstruct your worries this way, it will allow you to simply forget them and go back to enjoying whatever you're doing – or remaining calm when you're under pressure.

# HOW TO USE THE BODY SCAN MEDITATION

Generally meditating is one of the most important ways to promote mindfulness, calm and self-control.

In his book *Tools of Titans*, Tim Ferriss looks at the habits and routines of the world's most successful people. What he finds is that they have a lot of things in common and one of the *most prevalent* of these commonalities is that they all meditate!

Everyone from Arnold Schwarzenegger, to Tony Robbins, to Elon Musk describe meditation as being a key tool that helped them achieve everything they did.

When you meditate, you learn a method to forget your worries and to simply let your mind 'be'. More importantly though, you develop greater concentration and greater focus which prevents your mind from getting into an anxious mess to begin with!

So how do you begin meditation?

One useful strategy is to start with the body scan technique. To get started, sit somewhere comfortable with your legs crossed and your hands on your knees. Keep your back straight, your chin up and forward and your eyes closed – but make sure you aren't in a position where you can fall asleep!



Now you're going to simply 'scan' your body by focussing on each part one at a time and then making a note of how it feels and relaxing it. Before that though, you begin with your senses. Listen carefully to the world around you. You'll find that there are sounds that you have completely blocked out until now and you'll notice birds tweeting, cars honking, children playing and wind howling.

Feel the temperature of your skin, notice if you're on a slight gradient and even look at the light as it dances through your eyelids.

Okay, now focus on the top of your head and start to take your attention downward to your cheeks, jaw and then neck and shoulders. Stop at each point and make a note of how it feels: are you carrying any tension? Are you feeling any pain? Release tension in the muscle and then keep moving.

Eventually, you'll reach the very bottom of your body. At which point you can begin to concentrate on your breathing for a while. Breathing should be 'belly breathing', which begins with the gut expanding and then fills the lungs all the way up. Breathing steadily and rhythmically will slow the heartrate via the parasympathetic nervous system and put you in an even calmer state. Finally, bring your attention to just below the navel and hold it there. This is your center of gravity and concentrating here will ground you.

Throughout this process, you might notice your thoughts start to drift from time to time. If this happens, don't let it concern you. It is normal and not the end of the world – just quietly dismiss those thoughts and then return to the focus.

Finally, repeat the steps in reverse order and bring yourself back around. That was a body scan meditation!

This is a powerful tool because it is forcing your to direct your attention and to ignore the outside thoughts. More importantly, it is engaging you with your own body, physicality and surroundings. And when you do this, your sensations become richer and more vivid.

Eventually, if you keep practicing this skill, you should get to the point where you can begin to become more mindful and more present at will – even while moving and engaging in other tasks. That means just taking a moment to actually *look* at the world around you. Pausing to see what you can hear. And fixing your posture. It means not getting so caught up in your own thoughts that you let life pass you by, or that you live in a constant state of stress and anxiety.

Once you can do this, then you will find that nothing can stir you in quiet the same way unless you want it to. You can always just enjoy being in the moment and forget the past and the future for a time. You can enjoy living and taste the amazing taste of that

chocolate biscuit while that email sits there in your outbox completely unsent.

This is the key to happiness: you can *choose* to react positively instead of negatively. You can choose to view things as a challenge or an amusing hiccup instead of a serious threat. But it is also the key to unlocking your full potential so you perform better and achieve more!