



ATTENTIONAL FITNESS TRAINING

Promoting Attentional Fitness: Demystifying Mindfulness

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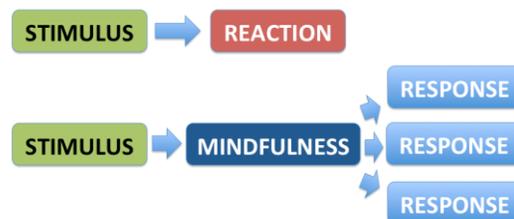
*“Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”*
~ Viktor Frankl

ATTENTIONAL FITNESS: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO MINDFULNESS

What is mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally.”

~ Jon Kabat-Zinn



What is attentional fitness?

Physical exercises strengthen the body. Mindfulness exercises develop the ability to focus, recharge, and regulate ourselves. We can use what we already know about physical fitness to help navigate the challenges of developing attentional fitness.

Intentionally foregrounding sensory perceptions—more often than never—develops attentional fitness. When it becomes habitual, it leads to savoring pleasant moments more, fighting with unpleasant moments less, and feeling more at home in the messiness of real life.

One piece of the overall wellbeing puzzle

- getting enough sleep
- moderate physical exercise
- **moderate attentional exercise**
- healthy eating habits
- addressing symptoms (medical, mental health) and age-related declines (vision, hearing, mobility)
- fostering social-emotional connections
- engaging in interests, hobbies, lifelong learning



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Attention exercises develop liberating attentional skills

- concentration
- discriminating palate for sensory perception
- emotional awareness
- self-regulation
- magnanimity (civility, empathy, kindness)

General resources related to attentional fitness

- Barrett, L. F. (2018). *How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1086487518>
- David, S. A. (2016). *Emotional agility: Get unstuck, embrace change, and thrive in work and life*. New York: Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1090332601>
- Hari, J. (2019). *Lost connections: Why you're depressed and how to find hope*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1031339761>
- Harris, A. (2019). *Conscious: A brief guide to the fundamental mystery of the mind*. New York: Harper. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1158908381>
- Kaufman, S. B. (2020). *Transcend: The new science of self-actualization*. New York: TarcherPerigee. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1138996358>
- Larson, D. (2016, October 18, 2016). Exercise your attention with mindfulness. *Attentional Fitness Training blog*. <http://www.athomeinyourlife.com/blog/exercise-your-attention>
- Langer, E. (2017, November 26). No, mindfulness is not a fad. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-langer-mindfulness-is-not-a-fad-20171126-story.html>
- Levitin, D. J. (2021). *Successful aging: A neuroscientist explores the power and potential of our lives*. Toronto: Allen Lane Canada. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1107321746>



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- Medina, J. (2018). *Brain rules for ageing well: 10 principles for staying vital, happy, and sharp*. Brunswick, Vic.: Scribe. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1016976229>
- Proffitt, D., & Baer, D. (2020). *Perception: How our bodies shape our minds*. New York: St. Martin's Press. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1151505743>
- Stillman, J. (2016, May 2). Want a brain that's seven years younger? Science says do this. *Inc.* www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/want-a-brain-that-s-7-years-younger-science-says-do-this.html
- Stulberg, B., & Magness, S. (2017). *Peak performance: Elevate your game, avoid burnout, and thrive with the new science of success*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Books. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/957022250>



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WALLS, WINDOWS, AND WAYFINDING

Myth: People think mindfulness means converting to a different belief system

Reality: Mindfulness is grounded in science and supports existing belief system

Books

- Annesley, M., Verni, K. A., & Dalziel, T. (2015). *Happiness the mindful way: A practical guide*. New York: DK Publishing. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/966499751>
- Goleman, D., & Davidson, R. J. (2018). *Altered traits: Science reveals how meditation changes your mind, brain, and body*. New York: Avery. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1078644025>
- Harris, D. (2019). *10% happier: How I tamed the voice in my head, reduced stress without losing my edge, and found self-help that actually works -- a true story*. New York: Dey St. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1097670553>
- Harris, D. (2018). *Meditation for fidgety skeptics: A 10% happier how-to book*. New York: Spiegel & Grau. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1084675203>
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2014). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1117863463>
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/911572400>
- Muscara, C. (2019). *Stop missing your life: How to be deeply present in an un-present world*. Boston, Massachusetts: Lifelong. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1131718140>

Podcasts

- 10 Percent Happier (www.tenpercent.com/podcast)
- The Art of Attention (www.wcbe.org/programs/art-attention)
- The Art of Noticing (<http://robwalker.net/noticing/>)
- Hidden Brain (www.npr.org/podcasts/510308/hidden-brain)
- The Mindful Minute (<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-mindful-minute/id1277683423>)
- Untangle (<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/untangle/id1073460738>)

Clark, S. (2020, April 14). The 21 best meditation podcasts to listen to in 2020. *Very Well Mind*. <https://www.verywellmind.com/best-meditation-podcasts-4771686>



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Myth: People think mindfulness is weird

Reality: Mindfulness is practical and supports living more fully

Books

- Cameron, L. (2018). *The mindful day: Practical ways to find focus, calm, and joy from morning to evening*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic.
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/992957945>
- Gunatillake, R. (2016). *Modern mindfulness: How to be more relaxed, focused, and kind while living*. Pan Macmillan. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1023292086>
- Langer, E. J. (2014). *Mindfulness*. Boston, MA: Da Capo Press.
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1151444117>
- Salter, M. (2017). *Mind your life: How mindfulness can build resilience and reveal your extraordinary*. Toronto: MegaSpace Press.
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/982389714>

Programs

- Palouse Mindfulness (free online version of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program: <https://palousemindfulness.com>)
- *Attentional Fitness: Awareness Modes Program*
Explore these guided mindful awareness exercises separately, together, and as starting points to longer exercise sessions. <http://bit.ly/AwarenessModes>

Exercises

- Larson, D. (2020, May 1). Experience mindfulness by hearing sounds. *10TV Mindful Moments*. <https://youtu.be/aNKGiZkGks8>, <https://www.10tv.com/mindfulmoment>
- Larson, D. (2016, April 18). Mindful awareness exercises for attentive listening. *Mindful Life, Mindful Work, Inc.* <http://bit.ly/MindfulAwarenessAttentiveListening>
- Larson, D. (2014, November 12). Walk to strengthen attention. *Attentional Fitness Training blog*. <http://www.athomeinyourlife.com/blog/walk-outside>
- Larson, D. (2014, July 30). Disrupt the default. *Attentional Fitness Training blog*. <http://www.athomeinyourlife.com/blog/disrupt-the-default>



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Myth: People is difficult

Reality: Mindfulness is challenging but doable

- Pause practice – notice any category of sensation (<http://bit.ly/DisruptYourStory>)
- Relaxation practice – notice restful sensations
- Task practice – track sensations during tasks usually done on autopilot
- Trigger practice – track real-time emotional reactions
- Timed-practice – notice any category of sensation for a set duration

Basic attentional fitness practice guidelines:

- Practice for more than zero seconds/minutes most days.
- Prioritize mindfulness practice over reading or thinking about it.
- Keep it to yourself.
- Don't police other's lack of mindfulness.

Books about cultivating habits

- Brewer, J., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2018). *The craving mind: From cigarettes to smartphones to love -- why we get hooked and how we can break bad habits*. New Haven: Yale University Press. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1035372973>
- Clear, J. (2018). *Atomic habits: An easy and proven way to build good habits and break bad ones*. New York: Avery. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1090565304>
- Duhigg, C. (2012). *The power of habit: Why we do what we do and how to change it*. New York: Random House. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/924481258>

Mindfulness apps

- **Waking Up** (subscription) wakingup.com
- **Insight Timer** (free, subscription) InsightTimer.com
- **Brightmind** (subscription) brightmind.com
- 10% Happier (subscription) 10percenthappier.com
- Calm (subscription) calm.com
- Headspace (subscription) headspace.com
- Craving to Quit, Eat Right Now, and Unwinding Anxiety (habit change programs) drjud.com



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PROMOTING ATTENTIONAL FITNESS IN LIBRARIES

- ***Practice yourself to experience the challenges and benefits***
 - When we start exploring mindfulness for ourselves, the benefits extend to others whether we explicitly encourage them to practice.
 - We also discover practical and paradoxical things that require direct experience rather than conceptual understanding.
 - The more we practice, the better we get at translating our experience to others and to helping them navigate the challenges of contemplative skill development.
- ***Encourage personalization and customization***
- ***Mindfulness isn't a replacement for other supports***
 - Blank, B. (2014). Public libraries add social workers and social programs. *The New Social Worker*. <https://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/practice/public-libraries-add-social-workers-and-social-programs/>
 - Broderick, P. (2019, May 1). How mindfulness can help teachers and students manage challenging situations. *KQED Mind/Shift*. <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/53306/how-mindfulness-can-help-teachers-and-students-manage-challenging-situations>
 - Lloyd, P. (2018). The public library as a protective factor. *Public Libraries Online*. <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2018/12/the-public-library-as-a-protective-factor/>
 - Shimalla, A. (2019, March 6). ACC library staff trained to identify trauma and offer help. *Flagpole Magazine*. <https://flagpole.com/news/news-features/2019/03/06/acc-library-staff-trained-to-identify-trauma-and-offer-help>
 - Schwartz, K. (2019, April 8). Nine ways to ensure your mindfulness teaching practice is trauma-informed. *KQED Mind/Shift*. <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/53228/nine-ways-to-ensure-your-mindfulness-teaching-practice-is-trauma-informed>



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- Sofer, O. (2018). *Say what you mean: A mindful approach to nonviolent communication*. Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications.
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1028607996>
- Harris, D. (Host). (2019, December 11). *Practicing mindful communication, Oren Sofer, 10% Happier*. [Audio podcast].
<https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/abc-news/10-happier/e/57683989>
- Harris, D. (Host). (2019, April 17). *Fighting depression with social connection, Johann Hari, 10% Happier*. [Audio podcast].
<https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/abc-news/10-happier/e/60097301>
- **Facilitate discussions about “sensing” rather than “making sense”**
 - Describe a time you felt really present
 - Describe a time you feel like your attention was somewhere else
 - What ways are some tasks that you do regularly that don’t require a lot of thinking? Could you sneak some mindful awareness into them?
- **Emphasize exploration of sensory perceptions rather than meditation**
 - Instead of getting bogged down in religion, philosophy, or ideology, emphasize the challenge of letting analysis and problem-solving eat up our entire attentional budget unless we decide to exercise our attention once in a while.
 - This can be part of discussions about forming better habits around technology use.
 - Price, C. (2017). *How to break up with your phone: The 30-day plan to take back your life*. New York: Ten Speed Press.
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1023486996>
 - Newport, C. (2013). *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World*. New York: Portfolio.
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1126252760>
 - Carr, N. G. (2010). *The shallows: How the internet is changing the way we think, read and remember*. London: Atlantic.
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/781388281>
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- Focusing on an exploration of sensory perceptions is a great way to introduce attentional fitness to children while keeping it fun.
 - Denos, J., & Goodale, E. B. (2019). *Here and now*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1076438632>
 - Garcia, G., & Pineda, M. (2020). *Find your calm: A mindful approach to relieve anxiety & grow your bravery*. Austin, Texas: Skinned Knee Publishing. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1159985563>
 - Garcia, G. (2019). *Listening to my body: A guide to helping kids understand the connection between their sensations (What the heck are those?) and Feelings so that they can get better at figuring out what they need*. Austin, Texas: Skinned Knee Publishing. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1148465793>
 - Garcia, G., & Tan, Y. H. (2019). *Listening with my heart: A story of kindness and self-compassion*. Austin, Texas: Skinned Knee Publishing. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1114305030>
 - Garcia, G., & Russell, C. (2018). *I can do hard things: Mindful affirmations for kids*. Austin, Texas: Skinned Knee Publishing. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1061502996>
 - Garcia, G., & Tan, Y. H. (2017). *Listening to my heart: A story of kindness and self-compassion*. Austin, Texas: Take Heart Press. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1029622639>
 - Nhin, M., & Stupar, J. (2020). *Anxious ninja*. Edmond, Oklahoma: Grow Grit Press. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1183471118>
- See also: Ninja Life Hacks Series: www.marynhin.com
- Snider, G. (2020). *What sound is morning?* San Francisco: Chronicle Books. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1110148915>
 - Snider, G. (2019). *What color is night?* San Francisco: Chronicle Books. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1152891201>



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- **Use news-related stress as an opportunity to explore information literacy**

- Brotherton, R. (2020). *Bad news: Why we fall for fake news*. New York: Bloomsbury Sigma. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1144769475>
- Caulfield, M. (2019, June 19). SIFT: The four moves. *Hapgood blog*. <https://hapgood.us/2019/06/19/sift-the-four-moves/>

The first move (STOP) is a great opportunity to investigate real-time emotional reactions that drive us to spread disinformation. Imagine the impact of disrupting our reflexive impulses to share something that pushes our buttons or seems to provide certainty in the midst of great uncertainty.

- Eurich, T. (2018). *Insight: The surprising truth about how others see us, how we see ourselves, and why the answers matter more than we think*. New York: Currency. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1002830830>
- Gladstone, B., Neufeld, J., Jones, R., & Jones, S. (2011). *The influencing machine: Brooke Gladstone on the media*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1176084120>
- Harris, S. (2020). *Making sense: Conversations on consciousness, morality, and the future of humanity*. New York: Ecco. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1148079474>
- Kucharski, A. (2020). *The rules of contagion: Why things spread - and why they stop*. London: Profile Books. <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1153352195>