

a teen's guide to mindfulness

Worksheets included!

START DOING
NOTHING

Written by **Emma J. Benson**

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why you should read this book

I have good news and bad news:

The bad news is the human brain can **seriously suck**. We constantly judge ourselves and others, and no one really knows why we started thinking this way. Our brains use labels to create a false sense of self that then dictates everything we do. We thrive on drama and chaos and end up creating our own drama and chaos.

But there is good news! You have the power to regain control of your mind. You have the power to be free from stress and worry, whenever you want! If part of you knows this already, you are well on your way to being able to do this. If you think this all sounds either 'woo woo' or 'crazy'... then **you are exactly who needs to be reading this book**. To be honest, when I first started learning about this power we have, I thought it was crazy too.

In reality, the crazy thing isn't learning that we can control our minds; what's really crazy is that the majority of the human race doesn't realize they are being controlled by their own minds. This book is going to help you realize how powerful you are and show you how you can use your mind for incredible things, instead of being in a constant state of stress and anxiety.



The human brain is an extremely powerful instrument, and while we do understand some aspects of how it works, there is infinitely more that we don't yet know and understand (and may never be able to).

So... why should you care about this?

Let's face it; life is stressful! That's probably not going to change any time soon. When you're in your teens, it often feels like it gets worse before it gets better. It can feel overwhelming, because there are so many things in life that are completely out of our control. But one thing we can control is **how we react and adapt** to those stressful emotions and situations that are outside of our control.

More and more studies are showing that when people start practicing mindfulness at a young age, they learn how to recognize the signs that they are becoming stressed and how to regulate their emotions. When you start learning these simple concepts and skills at a young age, it sets you up for success later on in life. Your mind becomes more resilient to stress and anxiety which helps to develop healthier coping skills and emotional wellbeing.

Just like any habit, the more you practice the easier it gets - so why not start right. this. second? And it all starts with...

nothing.

Seriously... **NOTHING.**

Human beings feel like they have to always be **doing** something - anything. Learning or improving a skill, cleaning, working... we are constantly looking for something to **do**.

Instead of trying really hard to **do** (insert anything here), I want you to focus on **being**, not **doing**.

what are your hands doing right now?



allow them to relax.

Your feet and legs?

Is there any tension or fidgeting going on in your body?

Notice it, and allow your body to rest. To just **be**.

If you've never done something like this before, it can feel silly or straight up stupid. But trust the process. The better you understand what's going on internally the better you can handle your external environment.

As you read this book, your mind is almost guaranteed to wander. If and when this happens, simply notice it and bring your attention back to what you are reading (even if you do it 100 times). This is one of the first steps to mindfulness and it's an extremely important one.

When asked to sit and do nothing, do you find it difficult?
How long do you think you could do nothing and feel comfortable? Describe what the process feels like for you:

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How comfortable are you with sitting still and doing nothing (mind and body)? 10 being it feels effortless and natural, 1 being extremely uncomfortable or unable to do it at all:



What do you find most challenging about simply **being** - doing nothing, rather than doing something specific?

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How often do you find yourself paying attention to the thoughts you are having? Do you have any recurring thought patterns? Write any notes on the lines below

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How would you rate your average level of happiness?
10 - almost always very happy. 1 - almost never happy.



Are there any external factors that you believe have a serious and/or recurring impact on your mood/emotions?

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If the act of sitting and doing absolutely nothing - not thinking about the Netflix series you're bingeing, not worrying about all of the homework you have, not thinking about what you could've/should've said in that conversation 2 years ago, not fidgeting or feeling restless... - if you are comfortable when you are not doing or thinking anything, you are in a very small **minority**.

By definition, mindfulness is the act of observing your own thoughts, without judgement. But, mindfulness is more often used as term for a bunch of practices that help people **pay attention on purpose** to what they are doing, while they're doing it. It's about being fully present in each moment. Not worrying about something before it happens, or replaying something from the past over and over and over in your head.

If you have ever had a conversation with someone and it felt like they were REALLY hearing what you were saying, they were fully present in that moment. When you watch TV, are you also on your phone or some other device? A lot people do this. Do you ever find yourself thinking about what you're going to say next in a conversation, rather than listening to what the person you're talking to is saying? If you do, again, you're like most people!

Like many things, just because a lot of people do it doesn't make it healthy, or the right thing to do. Ultimately, you and only you has the power to choose how you think.

Basically, mindfulness is a word that describes a bunch of things that are really hard for almost every single person. Which brings us back to the title of this chapter: **why should you read this book?**

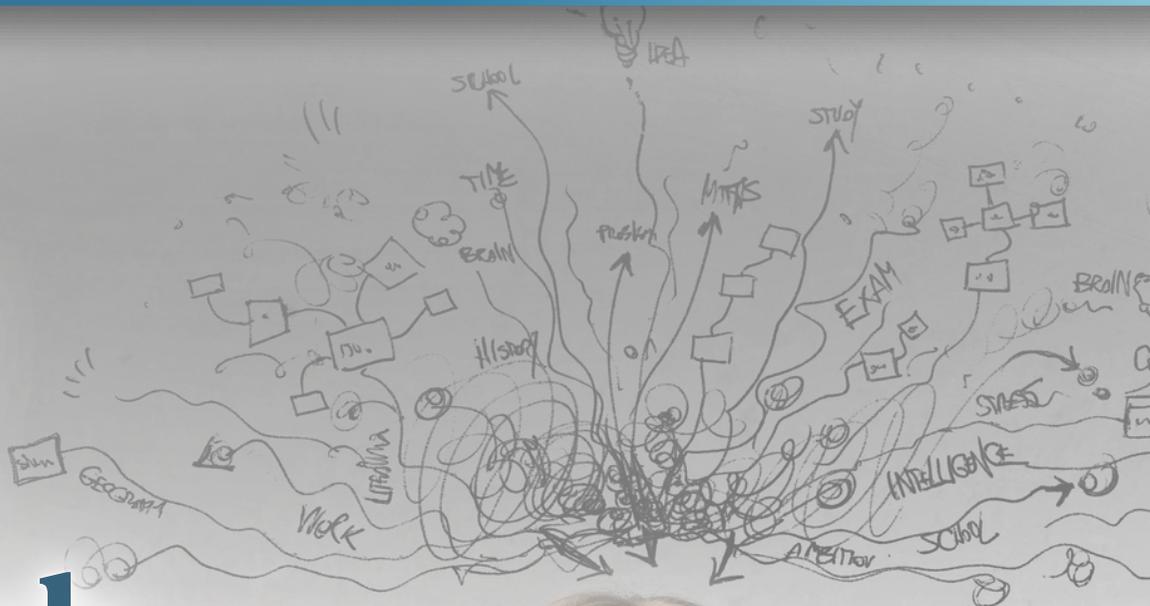
You should read this book because learning how to get better at being fully in each moment is one of the single best things you can do. If you put in the work of starting to do more 'nothing' each day, it can help you in every aspect of your life. You will feel happier, healthier and calmer. Don't believe me? Keep reading anyways, you've made it this far! Or have you...? Have you dozed off already? Are you just going through the motions of reading... but your mind is somewhere else? If you aren't really taking in the words you're reading, then you won't even notice if I write something insane like ain't no thing like a chicken wing.

Now that I have your attention, I have a favor to ask: If you do one thing today, let it be to fully and completely pay attention to the words in this book. If you read something and immediately think "no way, that's stupid." or "I've tried that before, I can't do it" or "I could be doing literally anything else right now", notice those thoughts, but don't do anything else with them. Picture any of those thoughts as a boring YouTube ad; let it run its course, and focus your attention back on what you're reading. Sometimes it can be helpful to reread certain sentences (or pages) if you don't feel like you really took it all in. So promise yourself (and me) that you'll do your best to take all this information in, okay?

Perfect. Let's dive in. And if you don't know why there is a picture of a chicken here, you need to reread this page.



**you
can
watch
your
thoughts**



did you know that you can watch your thoughts?

You're probably thinking either "of course, I knew that" or "...what do you mean *watch* my thoughts?"

A few years ago I stumbled upon a very simple, but powerful quote;

"You can observe a lot just by watching."

- Yogi Berra

Many people know Yogi Berra as the baseball player and coach, but he was also a Zen Master. So what did he mean?

Humans have the ability to watch their own thought process, and this creates a separation between you and your thoughts. You may have done this without realizing it. Have you ever thought something negative about someone and realized the thought was a bit much? Have you ever noticed that your mind sometimes narrates what is going on around you? Have you ever remembered a random detail or fact from your past and been impressed you could remember it? These are all examples of thought observation.

Unfortunately, humans have a bad habit of believing what they think is the same thing as who they are. Trust me when I tell you, that's just not true!

When we become aware of our thoughts, we are able to see patterns and habits we can change if we want to. Try to take a few moments each day to just check in with your brain and see what's going on in there. Any time you are able to watch your thoughts, it automatically separates you from them. This is the very first step you have to take in order to begin to control your own mind; you need to really understand that **YOU ARE NOT YOUR MIND**. In fact, it is arguably more accurate to say you and your mind are two separate beings. So if you are not your mind, who/what is it?

The thoughts you have (you **HAVE** them, not **ARE** them), are a result of a LOT of external things, like:

- where you were born
- the way you were raised
- the culture and traditions where you live
- the amount (or lack) of traumas you've experienced
- the media/technology
- basically any person, place or thing you've encountered may have shaped the way you process your thoughts.

Imagine this: right before you were born, your parents decided to move to a completely random country and raise you there instead. Do you think you would be the exact same person as you are now? Would you speak the same language? Or what if you had 5 more siblings than you do now; would that have impacted how you grew up, and how you process the world around you? Chances are, there are a bunch of things that could and would be very different than who you are today, if a few details of your past had been different.

The only constant, no matter where **you** were born, how many siblings **you** had, **your** early childhood experience, etc., is

YOU.

There are certain aspects about **you** as a human that would be the same, no matter what is going on around you. On the other hand, there are a ton of processes in the human brain that can easily change based on so many things, like physical/emotional stress, trauma, healthy or unhealthy social dynamics, to name a few.

Think about the phrase "**I changed my mind**" - you say 'my mind' because it is something you **have**, not something you **are**. I know, I know... I KNOW! It can sound super confusing or maybe way too simple to be true. Maybe you think it sounds straight up crazy. But try and sit with the idea for a minute and see if there is any part of you that starts to go "hm... that kind of, sort of makes sense".

You are able to watch your thoughts because you are separate from them. If you and your mind were one, you would not have the inner dialogue that we have as humans. You would not be **AWARE** that you were thinking if you and your thoughts were the same. Actually, you wouldn't need to think any thoughts at all if they were a part of you, because you would just know them.

The awareness of this separation is **SERIOUSLY** important. Why? Because it is far easier to reason with and control your thoughts when you are watching them, not wrapped up in them.

Are there any thought patterns you have that you've recognized (or are starting to recognize) may be unhelpful, inaccurate or just straight up #fakenews? Write them below:

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What do you think led to you having these thought patterns? Are you overly hard on yourself? Are there people around you that you feel have had something to do with these thoughts? Did a specific experience trigger this thought pattern to start? Take a few minutes to reflect on how you think, and why you think that way.

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there is only

NOW

~~NEXT WEEK~~



The only thing that we are ever actually experience is the present moment. Right NOW. Yesterday did exist, but only when it was Now. Tomorrow will exist, but when it does, it will be Now. It is always right Now.... and Now.... and Now.... you get the picture.

It may be easier to think about the actual word exist. For something to exist, it has to be happening right now. Otherwise, it did exist but no longer exists. Yesterday existed. Tomorrow will soon exist. We only ever exist in each new present moment. You may be wondering why I'm going on and on about it being Now. It's because it is one of the most important things in this entire world to fully understand.

Why? Because the only time we really have any control over is NOW. The only time that we are able to actually experience is Now. We can plan for the future... but when we plan, we do it Now. And the future will only actually happen when it is Now.

Deep... right?

But seriously, coming to this realization could be one of the most important discoveries you ever make in your life, and I will tell you why.

Most people live way too much of their lives dwelling on the past or completely preoccupied with the future... meaning they're missing out on what's going on right in front of them. Depression usually involved deep negative emotions about the past, whereas anxiety is usually more future based. .Whether you are dwelling on the past or worrying about the future, it doesn't actually change or help anything.



It could be regretting past decisions, reliving traumas, having a ‘shoulda, coulda, woulda’ mentality. Constantly thinking about all the things you could change about the past is completely useless. No matter how many seconds, minutes, weeks, even years you dwell on the past, it will never actually change what happened.

The same goes for worrying about the future; worrying about something before it happens doesn’t have any impact on the thing that is going to (or not going to) happen.

Imagine you are stressing about an upcoming test or exam. How much stress/worry do you have to go through for it to have an impact on your grade? If you worry about the test long enough, will you score a perfect 100%. I can assure you, it doesn’t work that way. It is not the worrying about a test that affects your grade, it is your preparedness. So what can you do right now? Study as much as you need to, trust and take care of yourself. When you are cool, calm and collected, you don’t make careless mistakes. You remember things easier, and your body is not operating in ‘fight or flight’ when it doesn’t need to be.

As a wise man once said, “there is a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.” That man was Morpheus... from the Matrix. And he could not be more right. Another great way to describe it is ‘easier said than done’.

Now, this book would be pretty useless if I just told you things that suck about the human brain, so I am going to offer you some better alternatives to try and put into practice.

The reason it's so important to understand that the only time we can control is right NOW, is because we can use the present moment to learn from the past and plan for the future. You can't change something that has already happened, but you can absolutely learn from it and make changes in your (present) life to ensure you don't repeat those past mistakes.

I call this **Present Action**, and it's very simple. Maybe not at first, but it becomes easier every time you do it.

I used to be a chronic overthinker, worrier, constantly overanalyzing every potential horrible outcome to any situation I would encounter.

It's taken practice, but now every time I catch myself starting down an unhealthy thought pattern, I ask myself "**is there any right now to either fix this or make it better?**" If there is something I can do RIGHT NOW, I'll do it. If there is nothing I can do, if it is out of my control in the present moment, I choose not to get caught up worrying about it. There may come a time in the near future where I can do something, but if I know there is nothing I can do right now I choose to let it go. Why would I waste a single moment worrying about something when I know that the worry doesn't help what I'm worrying about?

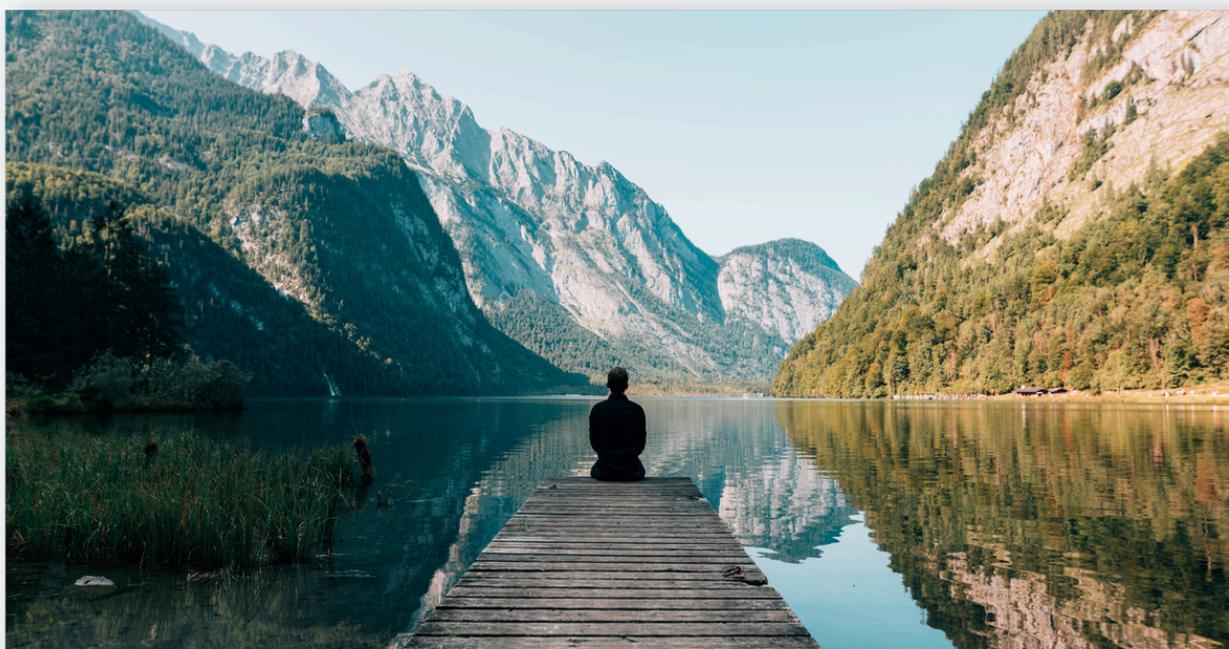
The key is to try and catch a negative thought pattern as quickly as possible, before it has a chance to spiral out of control. The second you notice or realize you've been dozing off, day dreaming, overanalyzing, etc., it immediately puts the thought process on hold. Try to start doing this as much as you can - just notice how you're thinking and what you're thinking. Then, before you continue the thoughts, do this quick exercise. It can be done anytime and anywhere (you can do it right now!):

Stop what you are doing, look around you and notice:

3 things you can see (remember: 'three' rhymes with 'see')

2 things you can touch (remember: 'two' and 'touch' both start with 't')

1 thing you can hear (... you'll have to just remember this one)





Practicing this is the quickest and easiest way to snap yourself back into the present moment. You begin to focus more on what you're doing and feeling **WHILE YOU ARE DOING AND FEELING IT**. Not lost in thought about something that happened yesterday, or worrying about what you have to do later. After you've created this separation between you and the negative thought pattern, it is much easier to snap out of it.

We are learning more every day that practicing mindfulness can have a powerful positive impact on both our mental and physical health. Studies have shown that mindfulness meditation can reduce stress and improve our mood, help us focus and sleep better, boost our immune system, and even increase the size of certain brain regions associated with memory, sense of self, empathy, and stress response. Aside from those awesome benefits, it also means you will enjoy and appreciate every experience so much more.

Some other benefits of learning to be more present is you will be able to communicate to people much more easily. If you're debating or arguing with someone, you'll be able to get your point across better. You'll hear what the person is saying and respond more accurately. You will be far less likely to say something out of anger that you will regret later on. It's way too easy to get caught up in busy schedules, the news we see and hear, and the things we have to do each day. But ironically, the more you worry about them, the less able you are to get through it all! If you can take a step back and observe the thoughts as soon as they happen, you can decide if you want to keep on thinking them.

How often do you think you are fully in the present moment each day? Are there any external triggers you can point to that cause your mind to go on overdrive?

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Now that you've written out some of your potential triggers, use the space below to write about things you can do instead of spiraling into worry, regret, or overthinking?

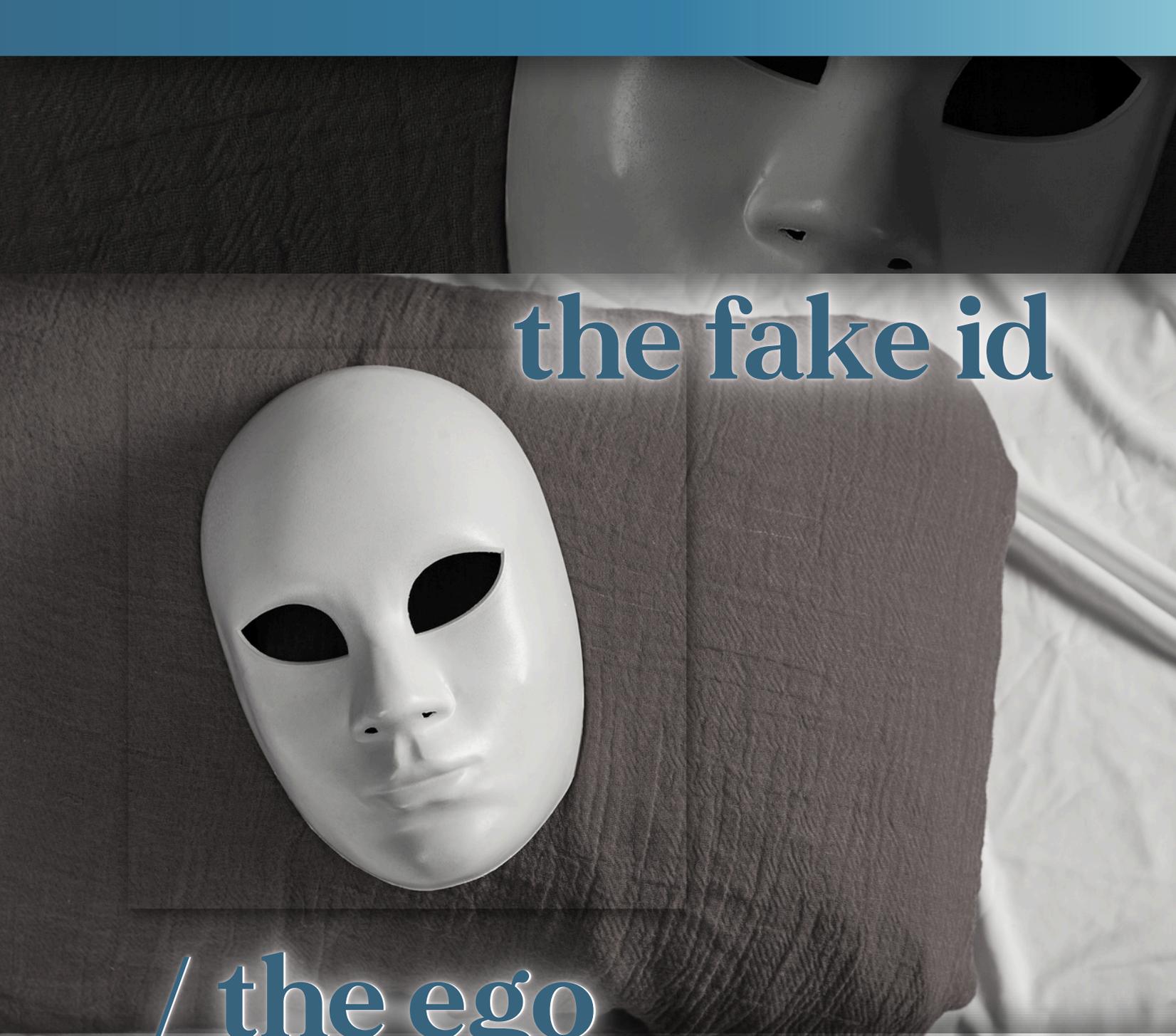
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the fake id

/ the ego



Describe yourself in 3 words:

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What are your 3 best qualities/traits?

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What are 3 qualities/traits about yourself that you don't like?

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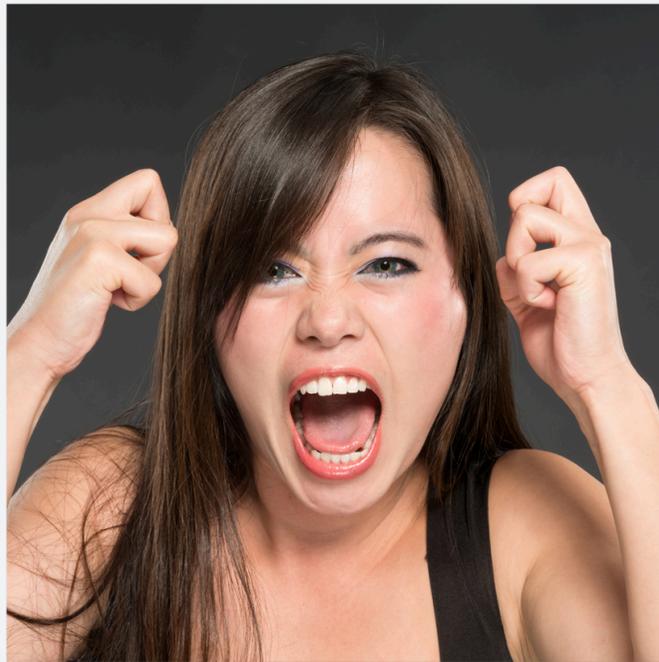
Do you the people you hang out with share similar traits do you, or do you find yourself being drawn to people with opposing or different qualities and traits?

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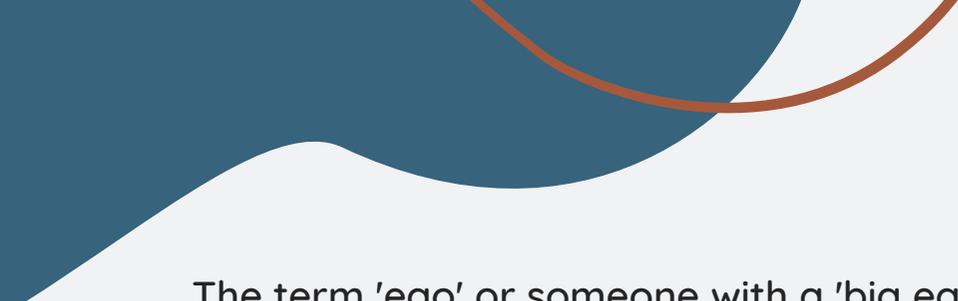
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remember when I said, 'the human brain can really suck'?

That is the understatement of the century. Think about it: every man-made disaster, every war, every crime... started with a thought. Think about bullying, or harassment of any kind. You don't end up in a situation where you are doing something awful without some kind of reason. It usually is not a valid reason, but your brain has a sneaky way of convincing you that it is in the moment.



But it's not all doom and gloom because every amazing invention, heart warming story, incredible achievement also started with a thought. The good, the bad and the ugly. Knowing this can help you choose to focus more on the good, than everything else.



The term 'ego' or someone with a 'big ego' usually describes someone who is 'full of themselves'. They always think they're the star of the show, that the world revolves around them.

In psychology, the term is used a bit differently. The ego is the part of your mind that develops a sense of self. This sense of self is your personal identity. It's the way you describe yourself when asked 'who are you?'. As I mentioned earlier, this is really a surface level description of who you are, as it could have and would have been different based on your experiences and the environment where you grew up. One of the main purposes of the ego is to distinguish yourself from others. Some think the ego is a bad thing, but it's not inherently good or bad. It's a necessary part of the human experience. However, when the ego becomes too big or too small, it can cause problems.

BUT, I have more good news; mindfulness can help to keep the ego in check. When practiced regularly, it can teach you how to pay attention to your thoughts and feelings without identifying with them. In doing so you can learn to avoid getting lost in your thoughts and emotions by gaining distance/separation from them. You are no longer an actor in a story that plays out in your head — you are simply an observer watching this story unfold.

Mindfulness also teaches you how to practice patience and compassion for yourself and others - even those who may disagree with you or oppose your beliefs or actions. This helps keep the ego in check; it teaches you not to take things personally and not to become attached to any particular outcome or result.

Have you ever had thoughts like these:

- If I have to get up early tomorrow, it's going to ruin my whole day.
- I forgot to do my homework, and now I'm going to fail.
- My friends don't like me, so I must be a loser.
- I can't believe how fat I look in this picture!

You can thank your ego for that. Personally, I like to call my ego my 'fake ID'. It's a false sense of self, based on how we think we should look/feel/act.

The word ego originally comes from the Latin word for "I," and it's what causes us to feel separate from others and insecure about ourselves. It's also what gets us into trouble on social media. Think about it: If you post something online that makes you look bad or makes other people think badly of you, and if you care about those opinion, it can lead to an ego meltdown. And, it can happen in a matter of seconds.

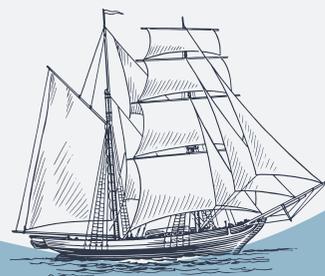
Mindfulness can help you become more aware of these thought patterns. It can help you identify and manage the ways in which your ego operates, and how your ego is getting in the way of being happy. If you can catch the thought before it turns into a full on thought spiral, you are saving your mind and body a TON of stress.

The ego may mean well (it probably doesn't) but it can be quite destructive when it gets out of hand. It wants to keep your identity, image, pride as safe as possible. Using an example from the page before; if you are constantly worrying about what other people think, or convinced that no one likes you... your energy is going to be totally negative. If you interact with people while having that negative energy, it probably isn't going to be a good thing for that relationship! So not only is the ego creating or seriously exaggerating an experience, it can actually make it more likely for the unwanted outcome to happen. It helps to create the reality that you are trying to avoid, or worried about happening.

Another important thing that mindfulness teaches us is that we should pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them – without believing that there's a "right" or "wrong" way to think or feel. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

Just to clarify though, mindfulness doesn't mean you should never focus on and experience negative emotions. It's incredibly important to let any emotions that come up in your body run their course. What you should never do, is criticize yourself for feeling that way. Don't bottle up emotions or pretend that they're not there. When you process your thoughts and feelings with intention and without judgement, the outcome will always be healthier.

Feel all the feels, and then let them pass.



Sometimes when we are really wrapped up with this false sense of self, we begin to identify with past traumas or even an illness, (physical or mental). You may say 'I am disabled', when the more accurate description would be 'I have a disability'. You are not a disability, the disability is something you have. Many people identify with a mental illnesses; 'I am depressed.' 'I am an extremely anxious person'. The kinder (and more accurate) way to say it is "I struggle with severe anxiety and depression". Again, that separation between you and your mind is key. You are not the depression, it's something that you struggle with.

Plus, every single new moment gives you a chance to focus your energy in a better direction. One of my all time favorite sayings is:

where your focus goes your energy flows

This is could not be more true.

Imagine you're walking home and step in a puddle... and you are wearing socks. Gross. You have a choice; you can spend the rest of the walk home focusing on how gross it feels to have water squishing around in your shoes, being hard on yourself for not seeing the puddle, and it's going to be a pretty negative walk.

Or, you can accept the fact that your feet are wet, (focusing on them wont help them dry faster) and get on with your walk as you normally would.

The physical reality is the exact same in both of these scenarios. The difference is your mindset, where you're choosing to focus your energy. If you choose the first option, you'll get home still angry and you bring that energy with you into any interactions you have. Other people can perceive that negativity, and will not enjoy that experience with you. Energy is 'contagious', good and bad. If you haven't spent the entire walk home hating yourself for one tiny mistake, you'll get home in a good mood, and are more likely to have positive interactions.

Only you get to decide which option you pick.



Take a look back at the words you wrote on the worksheet at the beginning of this chapter. Do you believe these qualities are accurate for describing who you are? Why?

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Which of these traits do you feel are a part of who you are, and which ones do you think are a result of your external environment?

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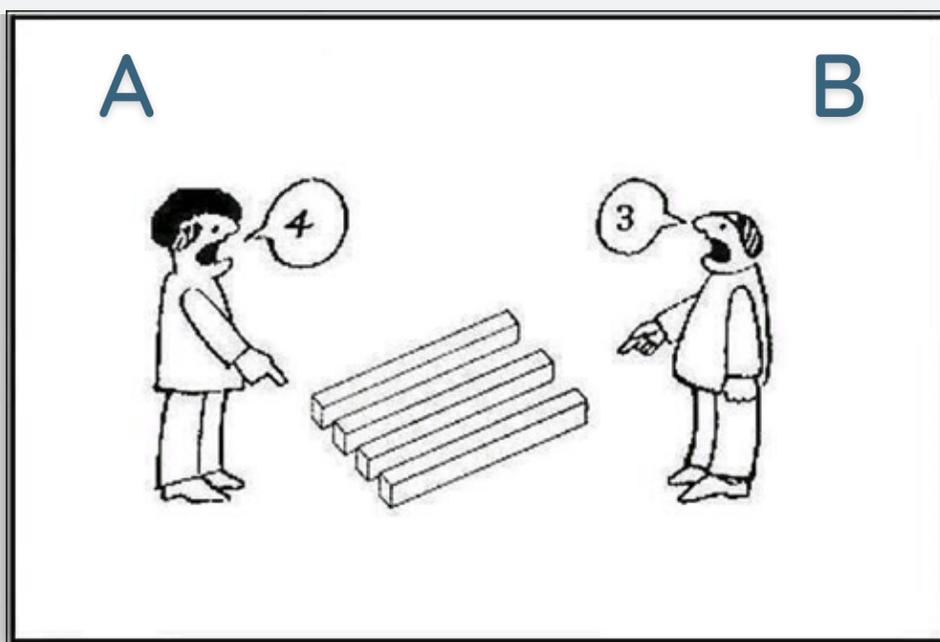


shifting

perspective

"if you change the way you look at things, the things you look at **change**"

If you were person 'A' in the picture below, you would be staring at 4 sticks. If you were person 'B', you would be sure that there were in fact, only 3. Both people would be 100% sure of what they are seeing, and they would both be correct, even though they have completely different answers. It's the perfect example that showcases how the world appears a little bit differently to each unique person, all based on their own perspective.



Learning how to be flexible with your perspective can be an extremely helpful tool. Being able to see a situation through someone else's eyes can be transformative for all of your relationships.

If person 'A' simply walked around the sticks to see the situation from the other side, they would immediately understand why person 'B' thought there were only 3 sticks. Even if you feel 100% sure of something, it doesn't hurt to look at it from a different perspective. You may not have all of the 'pieces to the puzzle'.

Shifting your perspective when faced with a problem or stressful situation can also be extremely helpful. For example: you are taking Drivers ED and have almost completed it. All you have left to finish is your final driving test, and you find yourself extremely nervous. Or maybe you are feeling anxious and you have an 'I just can't wait to get it over with' mindset*.

This example shows how complex the mind can be; spending your present moment thinking about wanting a future moment to be in your past. It's also the perfect example of how if you focus too much on the outcome, you miss the journey completely.

If you spend all your time thinking about what's next, then you're letting life pass you by. If your mind is stuck in the past, then you're also missing out on what is actually happening right now. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't plan for the future or learn from the past, but we don't need to get lost in those moments. Instead of living completely in your head and missing out on what is actually happening, shift your perspective and try to get as much enjoyment out of every step of the journey.

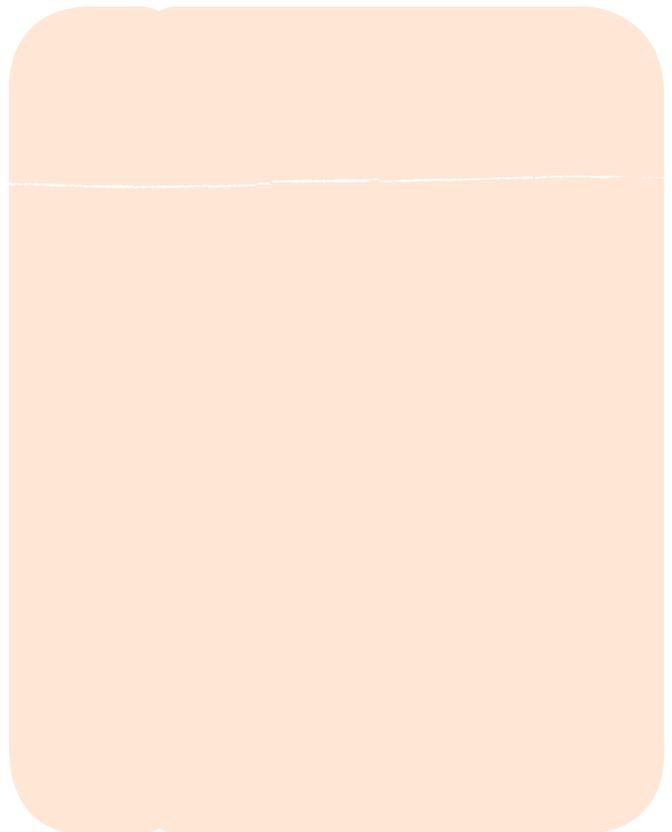
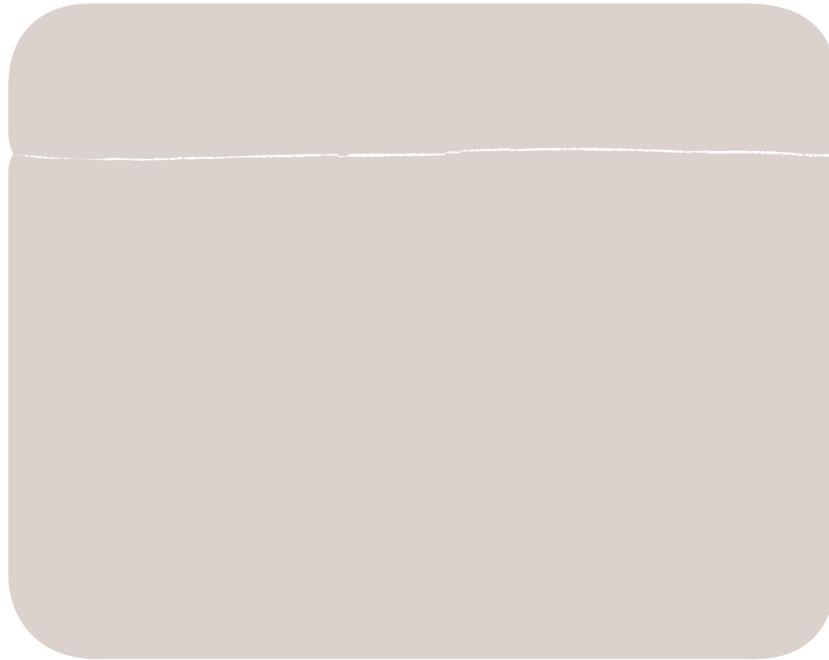
Instead of being nervous for your driving test (or whatever situation you find yourself in), take a step out of your mind and assess your present situation. Do you feel you have prepared enough to feel ready for the test? If not, are there things you can be doing right now that will help you feel more prepared? If yes, take Present Action and do those things.

If you realize that you actually have prepared yourself as much as you can, shift your perspective from being nervous about whether or not you are going to pass, to being excited about this next chapter in your life. Because remember, the actual act of being nervous will not help you pass. If anything, it can distract you and take the focus away from the actual task at hand. This can cause you to make mistakes that you otherwise wouldn't. Taking a step back from being nervous and remembering how useless it is will give you a chance to rethink whether or not being nervous is something you want to be doing **right now**. Excitement and anxiety are very similar emotions. Excitement just has a positive spin on it, whereas anxiety is typically negative.

Hey listen, even if you don't believe me... if you think it sounds to simple to be true, give it a try! Even if you can only stop yourself from spiraling into worry for a few moments, that's a few extra moments of peace. And the next time you try it, you may get a few more.

If you find yourself completely stumped about how to handle a situation, imagine you have a friend coming to you with that same dilemma - what advice would you give them?

Pick three things that you worry about/regret/overanalyze most. Write one in each box, and use the remaining space in that box to write out the advice you would give a best friend or family member, if they came to you with these stresses.



Shifting perspective sometimes involves moving your focus from being preoccupied in your mind to fully present in your body.

A great way to do this is by doing a **body scan**.

Start with your feet; are you wearing socks, shoes are you barefoot? Press them into the ground and focus on how it feels. Do you feel any tension or pain? If you do, reach down and hold them or practice a little self massage.

Then, move up to your ankles and legs. Any pain or tension there? You can also incorporate gratitude into this exercise (more on that in another chapter). As you focus on each body part, think about one thing you are grateful that it allows you to do. They don't have to be sappy or anything super epic. It could be "I am grateful for my stomach not feeling sick after I ate that ice cream earlier". Or it can be more 'deep' - like being grateful that you have two working feet that allow you to effortlessly move around.

Continue up your body and repeat this process. Take your time with shifting your focus higher and higher in your body until you reach the top of your head. Then, evaluate the state of your mind - do you feel calmer than you did before? Are you overanalyzing something? Being hard on yourself?

Take a few deep breaths and remember that you are in control. You have the thoughts, the thoughts don't have you. You can learn to get better at letting go of the small stuff, because you have realized it's just not worth the time.



health

Eat less junk and more whole foods, like fruits and vegetables. You don't need to completely eliminate any foods, but don't eat an entire pint of ice cream or a family sized bag of chips. Do one thing a day that gets your heart beat racing. Drink more water. **That's it.**

If you do these things for 21 days your mental, physical and emotional health will improve. The healthier you eat and the more you exercise, the better you will feel. The more you see the results of your efforts, the easier it will be to continue that lifestyle.

Don't believe me? Try it.

No need to complicate something just because it seems too good to be true.



A close-up photograph of a woman with her hands clasped in a prayer-like gesture. She is wearing a white, ribbed tank top. The background is softly blurred, showing some green foliage. The text '#grateful' is overlaid in a dark blue, serif font. The bottom of the image features decorative wavy bands in blue, orange, and brown.

#grateful



Everyone has different things in their life that they're grateful for. There are things that you may not expect to be grateful for, but once you think about it, you realize how important they truly are.

For example, I'm grateful for my friends and family, as well as the experiences I've had. I'm also extremely grateful for my pets — especially my dog!

It sounds just about as cheesy as it gets, but practicing gratitude is an extremely beneficial habit to get into. A big part of mindfulness is paying attention to what's going on around us and paying closer attention to the things we're grateful for.

Some people like to keep a journal and write down what they're thankful for each day. This can help you keep track of all the good things in your life and give you a positive outlook on life. And just FYI, it doesn't have to be something epic for you to be grateful for it. It could be a favorite pen you use, or the feeling of your pillow when you first lay down at night. It's all about what that person/place/thing means to you.

Unfortunately, sometimes you don't realize how much you appreciate something until you lose it. The perfect example is breathing effortlessly through your nose. It's something we all do every day and never think of it. But when you're sick and your nose is stuffed... you find yourself longing for something as simple as clear nostrils. Try to make a point of practicing gratitude for the things you have **right now**.

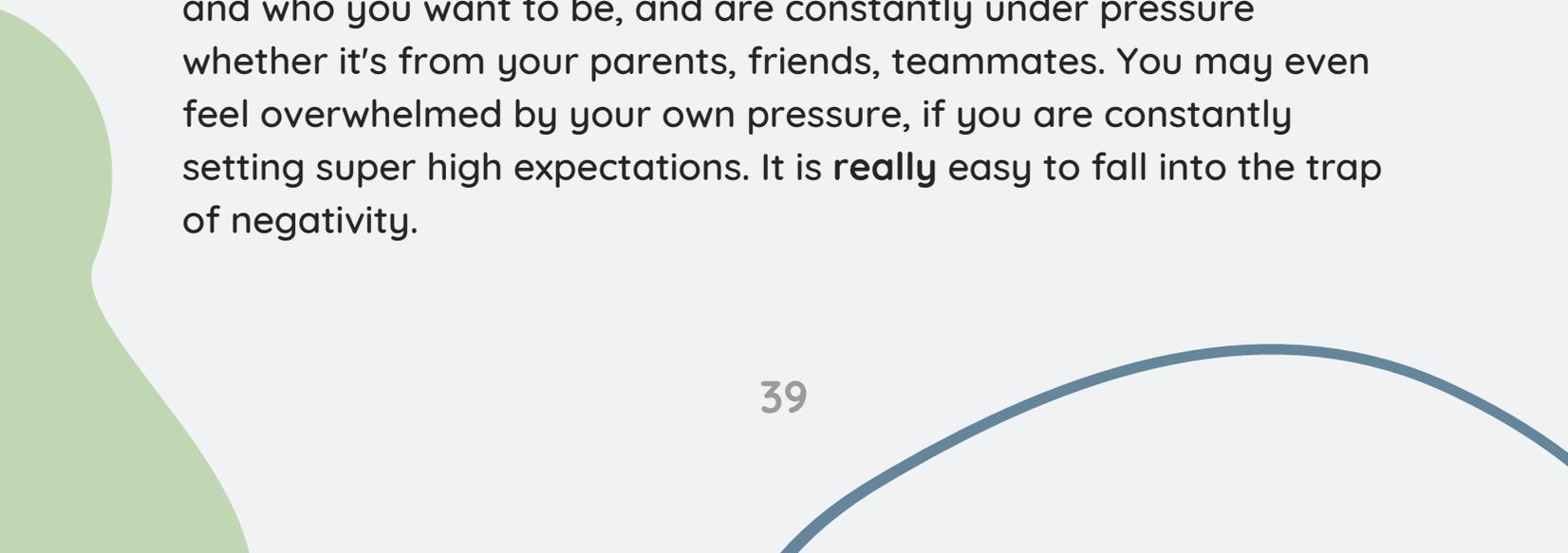


Apart from being a great addition to any daily routine, there is actual science behind the fact that practicing gratitude has positive benefits to your body and mind. People who practice gratitude tend to be happier and more satisfied with their lives, have stronger immune systems and lower blood pressure, sleep better and have more energy, are more compassionate and empathetic, experience less depression and stress, and feel less lonely.

It also is an easy and excellent way to snap out of a state of stress or depression. Gratitude acts as an antidote to negative emotions. It's hard (if not impossible) to stay in a negative mindset when you are focusing on something that means a lot to you.

Here's the catch; you can't just say "oh I am just so grateful for my dog". I mean you can say that, but really practicing gratitude is deeper than that. You have to take those words and try to feel whatever the feeling is that you are grateful for. If it is something you can touch that is within reach, place your hand on it while you think about how grateful you are. This is an awesome practice to start because it incorporates being present in the moment with focusing on something that brings you joy.

Being a teenager can really suck. You're figuring out who you are and who you want to be, and are constantly under pressure whether it's from your parents, friends, teammates. You may even feel overwhelmed by your own pressure, if you are constantly setting super high expectations. It is **really** easy to fall into the trap of negativity.



Taking a few minutes every day to count your blessings can help you focus on the positive things in your life, rather than the negative. It's easy to become upset about the things that are going wrong or could go wrong, and gratitude can help balance out that negativity.

To practice gratitude, set aside some time every day to think about what you are grateful for. Many people find it helpful to keep a journal to write down these things every day. Then you can look back on them when you're feeling stressed or upset. It will help to ground you and put things in perspective.

Mindful listening is another way to practice gratitude. When someone is talking to you, pay attention to what they're saying and listen carefully. Again, don't be thinking about what you're going to say next or what else is going on around you — just focus on the person who is speaking and give them your full attention. Isn't that the kind of attention you would want when speaking to someone else? If you practice mindful listening, people will notice and it will make them feel appreciated because they know that they have your full attention.



When you think about the things you are grateful for, what are the very first 3 things that come to mind? Write them here:

.....

.....

.....

Now it's time to get creative. Name 3 more things you are grateful for that you think are unique or unusual? Dig deep for this one.

.....

.....

.....

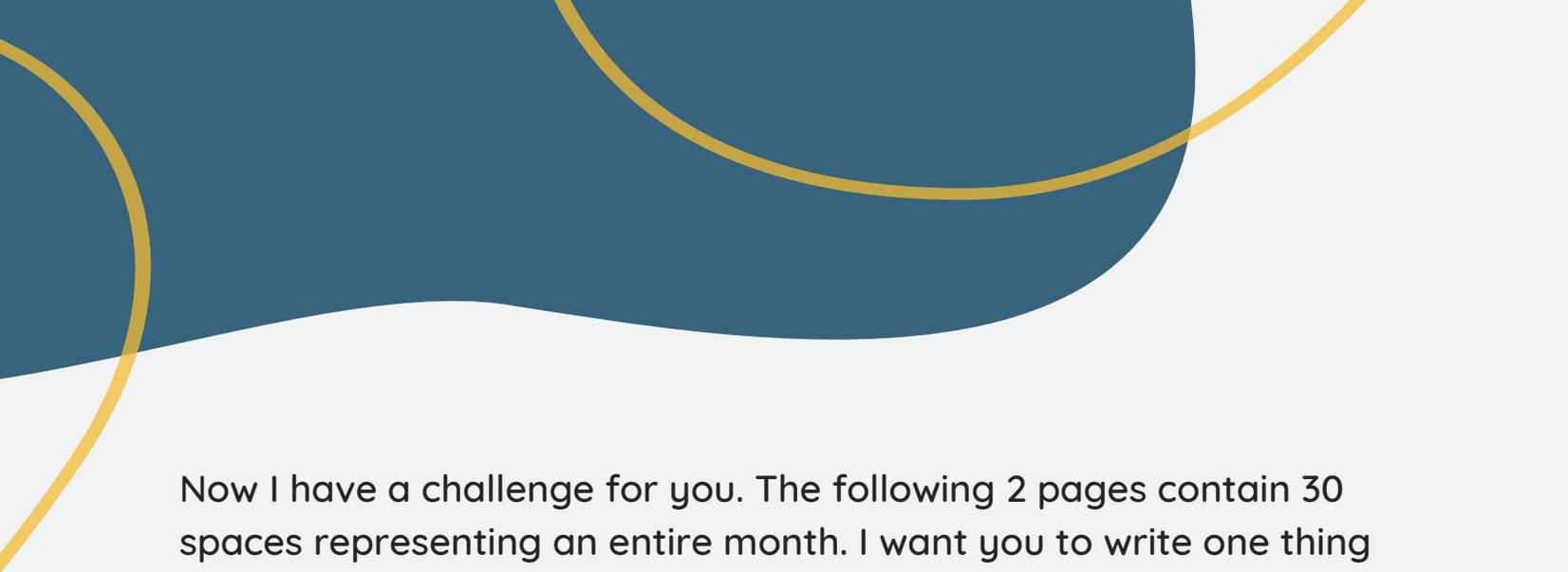
Use the space below to write WHY you are grateful for these things:

.....

.....

.....

.....



Now I have a challenge for you. The following 2 pages contain 30 spaces representing an entire month. I want you to write one thing each day that you are grateful for. They can be big or small, but try your best not to repeat any items.

This will take less than 30 seconds each day, so what do you have to lose?

BUT REMEMBER

Don't just write words down on the paper. As you write the things you are grateful for, really feel them. If you get really hardcore with your gratitude practice, you may experience goosebumps, you may smile without realizing it, you may even feel your temperature increase. When you focus on things that mean something to you on a deep level, you can literally **feel** it. Do this for 30 days, and if you're up to it, print out 12 and keep going for a year! You can store the pages somewhere safe and read through them at the end of each year. If

a month of gratitude

this month:

01.

02.

03.

04.

05.

06.

07.

08.

09.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

.....

start doing nothing



There is a reason I chose to have this as the last chapter, and it is very important. Before I could tell you why you need to start doing Nothing each day, you needed to first understand that you are not your mind. To understand that you are the one who is in control, no matter how your ego may try and trick you to think otherwise. You needed to understand that the only thing you have any chance to control is the present moment. You needed to understand that concept first, and practice it before you try to do Nothing. In fact, it's unlikely that you will be able to do Nothing successfully until you've fully let go of the connection to your brain. Instead, you will find a lot of discomfort within the Nothingness.

**Human beings have been conditioned to find
comfort in chaos and discomfort in stillness.**

If you try to do Nothing and you are still consumed by your thoughts, it will not be the experience that it should be. Your brain may start to think negative things in an attempt to ruin the progress you are making. It usually shows up as thoughts of doubt like 'there's no way I can stop thinking' or 'this is pointless, stupid, dumb' or just straight up impossible. But I'll tell you right now, all you need to do to be successful at it, is deciding to be successful. Our words and intentions are powerful, so when you observe your thoughts take note of the tone and intent. Sometimes switching a few simple words in the way we describe or perceive something can make a huge difference.

It is important to rephrase the way we talk to ourselves and define ourselves. It may seem trivial, but if you can make that small change you will see much more positive results. You then regain control of your life, and can continue to write your story without the burden of your past. When you identify with an illness or past trauma, you bring it with you everywhere. The same goes for addiction when you say 'I am an addict'. If you start to rephrase that to 'I'm struggling with an addiction' then it is no longer inescapable. Our words are very powerful, and your outside reality will always be a reflection of your inner reality.

So, how do you do **Nothing**?

Doing Nothing can be done anywhere at any time. You can close your eyes, but it isn't necessary. The only thing you are allowed to do while doing Nothing is breathe and observe. To begin, focus on your breathing. As you continue to breathe, focus on slowing your breathing a bit more than usual. If thoughts start to come into your mind, observe them as if they are clouds and, without judgment, allow them to float away. Alternatively you can try to say something like 'no thanks', 'not now' or 'stop' to the thoughts in your head. Sometimes that is enough to halt a thought in its tracks. If you find yourself thinking a lot, try to direct your attention to your body. If you are sitting, focus on the feeling of your feet. Are you wearing socks or shoes? Draw your attention to how they feel. Are you barefoot? Feel the ground beneath you.

Anytime you shift your focus to your body, it automatically draws attention away from your mind. You can do this by focusing on any of your senses. Kind of like that exercise I mentioned at the beginning of this book (if you dozed off that quick, go start all over again!!)

Take note of something you can see, hear, feel, smell and taste. Make sure when you do this, you do so without judgement or labels. If you take notice of a flower here is an example of how a thought can spiral out of control:

That's a pretty flower.
I wonder what it's called...
I don't know anything about flowers.
I'm so stupid.
No one ever buys me flowers.
Not even my boyfriend.
He probably hates me.
No one loves me.



Here is an example of how that thought could go instead:



That's a pretty flower.

Another great way to slow your thoughts, to do Nothing, is to focus on any moments of ultimate stillness. This is hard to find, and is usually a very fleeting moment, but drawing attention to it can be enough to quiet your mind. There is a moment of absolute stillness you can observe any time you want. It is the few moments between when you have finished exhaling but you haven't started to inhale again (or vice versa). There is no need to try and extend this moment, simply begin to observe it. Begin to feel the stillness, to feel the peace that exists within that stillness. IT SOUNDS CHEESY, I GET IT! But start doing it even once a day and you'll see that a few seconds of absolute stillness and peace can change your life. The key is making a promise to yourself that you'll give it a solid try. You shouldn't start to even go on this 'cheesy' journey until you are dedicated to putting in a bit of work. But remember, it's not actually work; it's literally nothing.

Seriously, who can't spare a few seconds of each day to just existing?! Being, not doing. It's a zero risk only reward situation.

You may not know or believe it yet, but you are worth the effort.



when in doubt, just **breath**

Breathing is arguably the most simple practice you can do with the greatest positive outcome. The breath is always available to us. We can use it to calm down when we feel frustrated, angry or upset, or to energize us when we feel tired or down. Proper deep breathing can even help you cope better with physical pain.

Here's a super simple breathing exercise you can do any time:

Find a comfortable position in which your body feels supported, whether sitting in a chair or on the floor. You want to be in an alert sitting position, either with eyes open or closed.

Rest your hands on your belly. Take a moment to notice how your belly rises as you breathe in and falls as you breathe out. Try not to change anything about your breathing; just notice it as it happens naturally. If you have trouble resting your attention on the breath, count each time you breathe in and out "1." Continue counting until you reach 10; then start again at 1.

There is also a technique called 4-7-8 Breathing. This is also known as "relaxing breath," and is often used as a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system. To do it, inhale quietly through your nose to the count of four, hold your breath to the count of seven, then exhale through your mouth to the count of eight — making a "whoosh" sound as you do so.

Have you ever stopped doing and instead tried **being**?



Adults say it's just a phase.
Your parents may tell you "be
patient, you'll outgrow this."

The entire school wants to
make you believe that what
you can feel doesn't even
exist. Being a teenager is hard!

This book will help you regain
control of your thought patterns
and emotions, and learn how
mindfulness is the hero no one knew
we needed. Stress less. Enjoy more.
And start right **NOW**.



Emma J. Benson