



20

Daily exercises and reflections to support your mental well-being



VISE

MENTAL FITNESS



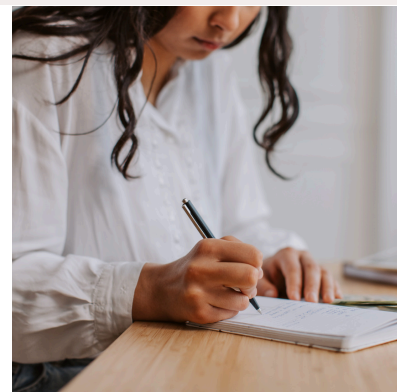
INTRODUCING YOUR MENTAL FITNESS TOOLKIT



The great thing about mental fitness is that it requires no equipment and you don't need to leave your house. All you need is a few minutes set aside for clear thinking and a plan for what to think about. This toolkit contains 20 exercises which can be done in any order and you can opt to write down your thoughts or simply work through them in your mind.

01 Mindfulness exercises for times of low stress

FEELING GREAT? You may think that you don't need to worry about well-being when you feel great but this is perfect opportunity to begin incorporating daily, mindful self-care exercises into your routine and start to build up those mental muscles.



02 Exercises for managing time and workload

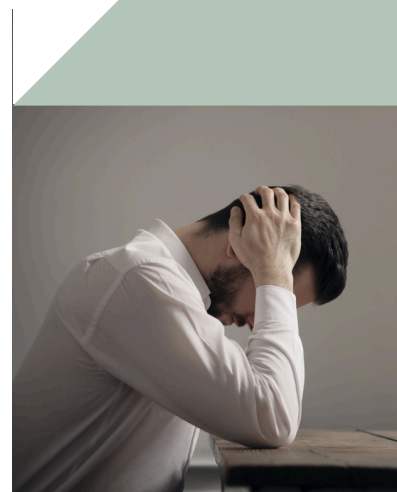
FEELING OVERLOADED? As you settle into your role/project the demands will inevitably increase and signs of stress are likely to creep in. It is vital to spot the signs of stress early so you can adopt well-being strategies that help you to keep on top of your work and life responsibilities.

03 Exercises for regaining control

FEELING OVERWHELMED? When stress levels start to spiral out-of-control, well-being can feel like an insurmountable hurdle. Now is the time to slow down and prioritise your self-care. This isn't selfish - it benefits your loved ones and your organisation too.

04 Exercise for beating burnout

FEELING OVER IT? Burnout happens when stress & pressure mount and the endless effort to fight it becomes too exhausting physically, mentally & emotionally. Without the energy and motivation needed to make changes, there are real risks to your long term health.



05 Exercises to get ahead of stress

FEELING INSPIRED? Mental fitness, just like physical fitness, is an ongoing process. There is no end point and our levels of fitness can fluctuate daily. These exercises offer an opportunity to better anticipate what lies ahead and help you to stay on top of things.





Mindfulness exercises for times of low stress



FEELING GREAT?

Starting a new job/project/qualification is exciting and whilst stress is present, **it feels energising** and you're ready to take it on! You may think that you don't need to worry about well-being when you feel great but this is in fact the **perfect opportunity** to begin incorporating daily, mindful self-care exercises into your routine and begin to **build up those mental muscles**.



**#1 Breathing exercise -
To help calm and reset.**

Conscious breathing means **becoming aware of your breath** as it moves in and out of your body. Doing so allows the body to **let go of any stress** we are experiencing in that particular moment.

Notice the temperature of your breath as you inhale through your nose for a count of 4 - hold this breath for a count of 4 then exhale slowly and fully over a count of 8. Repeat.

If we don't consciously **capture the more positive aspects of our day** then very quickly these get lost and we can feel out of balance. Spend a few moments at the end of the day scanning back through to find those times where you felt good, you were working well and contributing positively to your team. Ask yourself, which qualities did I show today that I would like to show more of? Who benefited from spending time with me? **Which moments would I choose to repeat?**



**#2 Self-congratulations - To
capture positive moments**




Did you know... stress is a cycle?

Stress is one of the oldest most primitive bodily responses and it's sole function is survival. Understanding **what's going on inside your brain and body** can help you to stay on top of stress and recover quicker from stressful events.

Our early ancestors were hunters and every time they sensed a threat they would respond by releasing the hormones needed to 'fight' the threat, run away from it or hide until the threat was over. This happened instinctively with no conscious thought. Once the threat had passed, the body detected it was safe and **released anti-stress hormones to reset the body.**

In the modern world we constantly trigger our stress response but very rarely do we stop to recognise we are safe and so don't complete the stress cycle





**#3 Complete the stress cycle -
To keep on top of rising stress**

Using our body acts as a physical message to our brain that the threat is over. Anytime you recognise signs of stress in your system, **take a physical action** or move body positions in some way. You could **stretch** up tall, **squeeze** a fist, **shake** your body, **jump** up and down and/or take a long deep breath.

Instead of trying to eliminate unhealthy behaviours altogether (which can stressful!) try asking yourself, **what will I do more of?** What will I do less of?

Can you find one consistent daily practice that increases your **mindful self-care**?

Here are some suggestions - the internet is also a rich source of ideas:



**#4 More of - Less of - to make
self-care a daily habit**

Pick one thing to focus on and make it your challenge to do this every day for the next week.

- Get 7-9 hours of quality restful sleep.
- Use a mindfulness/meditation app
- Spend time with family and friends relaxeing
- Spend time in nature
- Be active for at least 30 minutes daily.
- Plan a movie night
- Make sure your environment is clutter-free



Exercises for managing time & workload



FEELING OVERLOADED?

As you settle into your role/project the **demands will inevitably increase** and signs of stress are likely to creep in. It is vital to **spot the signs of stress early** so you can adopt well-being strategies that help you to **keep on top of your work** and life responsibilities.



#5 Stressors versus stress - to respond quicker to signs of stress

“I am stressed”

This is a powerful, all encompassing statement but what does being stressed really mean for you? Switch to saying **“I am experiencing stress”** will help you to recognise that the physical and emotional signs of stress are separate to the things causing the stress.

This means it is possible to work on decreasing the symptoms of stress (eg loss of appetite, headaches, poor concentration) even in circumstances when you are unable to tackle the cause of the stress (eg a looming deadline, tough client).

Thinking about times when you experience high stress, can you identify:

- Likely causes and triggers?
- Thoughts and feelings that dominate?
- Signs in your body?
- Impact on performance at work and communication?





Categorising your responsibilities allows you to **quickly decide what to prioritise.**

Which tasks/relationships cannot be dropped or the consequences will be permanent? These represent your **glass balls.**

Which things will keep going for a while under their own momentum when left on their own? These represent your **bouncy balls.**

Which things will stop when dropped but stay as they are and can be picked up at any stage? These represent your **bean bags.**



#6 Glass Balls & Bouncy Balls - To prioritise tasks/people most important

Having a clear understanding of your **wider life purpose** helps you to stay motivated and direct your efforts towards the right goals. Why do you do what you do? Who in your world is it all for?

To help consider these questions, **reflect** on the following and notice the themes that emerge.

- 3 things you do that make other people's lives better
- 3 things you loved to do as a kid 'just for fun'
- 3 things you would teach young children given an opportunity
- 3 skills you bring to your workplace
- 3 qualities your friends love about you



#7 Why & Who - To boost motivation and resilience

Some aspects of your job/role make you feel fantastic whilst others sap your energy.

Categorising your workload in two ways can help to **balance your time** and **sustain your energy.** First, distinguish between tasks that drain/charge your energy. Next, distinguish between tasks that have a high/low impact on the wider goal.

What changes could you make to increase time spent doing high impact, charging activities? What changes would help you minimise time spent on low impact draining activities?



#8 Chargers & Drainers - to boost productivity



Exercises for regaining control



FEELING OVERWHELMED?

When stress levels start to spiral out-of-control and you are **constantly in a high-stress state**, well-being can feel like an insurmountable hurdle. Now is the time to slow down and **prioritise your self-care**. This **isn't selfish** - taking time to make positive changes now will not only benefit you, but also your loved ones and your organisation too.



#9 Micro-moments - to recharge your energy in real time

Feeling like you don't have enough time is a major contributor to feelings of overwhelm. The good news is that **it only takes a minute** or two to make a significant impact on how you feel!

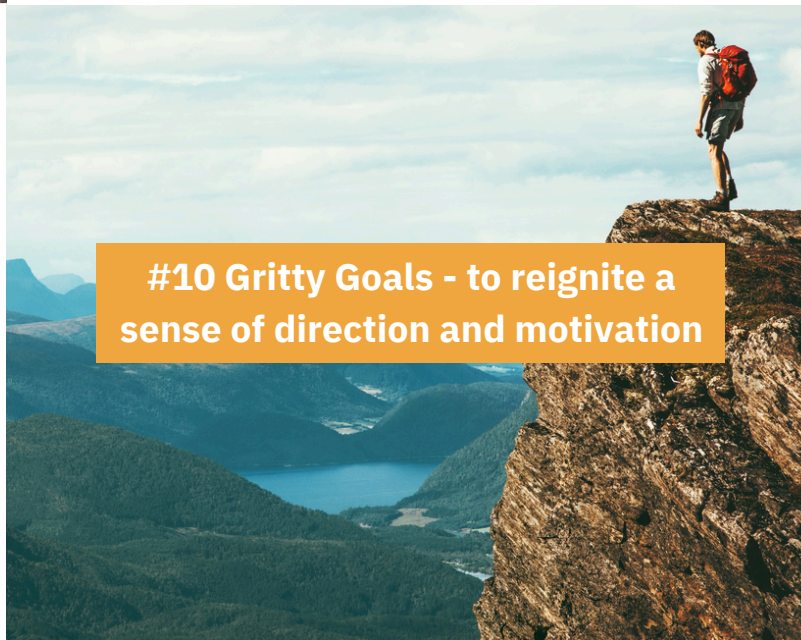
Taking micro-moment breaks frequently allows you to **'get out of your head'** and circuit break the continuous stream of thinking that we all do.

A micro-moment break is 10-30 seconds of focussed attention on something other than our thoughts - a mental reset. You could try wiggling your toes, focussing on the temperature of your breath or listening for faraway sounds.

What's **ONE thing you have always wanted** to do but haven't done yet? This could be a professional goal or a personal goal

Once you have identified a gritty goal - **something that would take real guts** and determination to achieve - break it down.

What 3 steps would lead to this one gritty goal? Take one chunk and break it into 3 further steps. Choose one action you could take today that would contribute to this goal.



#10 Gritty Goals - to reignite a sense of direction and motivation



#11 Saying No to Say a bigger Yes - to increase headspace, time and energy

When there are **competing priorities** and multiple things we want/need to be doing it's really important to know how and when to say NO. When we say NO we are often left with **residual guilt or frustration**. To address this it is important to focus your attention on the Bigger YES that you are freeing up the headspace, time and energy for.

Next time you find yourself in a situation of **knowing you need to say NO** to something or someone, take a moment and ask yourself, **what is the Bigger YES** that my NO now is in service of?

You have **100% control of you** - your thoughts, feelings, words and actions.

You have **0% control over anybody else** - their thoughts, feelings, words and actions.




#12 Choice & control - to set healthy boundaries

Being clear about what is within your circle of control helps you to decide what you will and won't think/feel/say/do.

List out things you control v things you don't control. Consider where your focus is during times of stress and overwhelm - **are you worrying about things beyond your control?**

Where you notice yourself worrying about things beyond your control, take a moment to ask, "what are the parts of this that are within my control?" and start there.

A man in a white shirt and blue tie is shown from the chest up. His head is obscured by a large, billowing cloud of white smoke or steam, with small flames visible at the top edges. The background is dark and moody. A large, semi-transparent blue diamond shape is overlaid on the image, framing the text.

Exercises for beating burnout



FEELING OVER-IT?

Burnout happens when stress & pressure mount up and you don't have the coping resources to manage. It becomes an **endless effort to fight your way** which is exhausting physically, mentally & emotionally.



Eventually you find yourself feeling **detached from what matters most** to you (e.g. job, family etc) and without the energy and motivation needed to make changes, you simply continue going with the flow...

...eventually mistakes happen and you deliver poor performance in your role - without successes, **confidence plummets**.

These exercises are aimed at breaking this viscous cycle.

Who are the people that you could call at 3am no matter what and know they would answer? It is usually the same people who you would be there to do the same with...and just knowing that you have that relationship acts as a **powerful reassurance** at times.


Build a team of cheerleaders - **people who you trust** who can support, encourage, motivate and advise. The only important thing is that you must invite them to play the role and set some boundaries.



13 Enroll your cheerleaders - to establish a support network



How often do you pause to reflect on **what is going well** for you? Regardless of your circumstances and current challenges, there are always simple things that are good and offer an opportunity to connect with feelings of gratitude.



#14 Practice gratitude - to boost self-esteem and happiness


Regularly practising **gratitude** has **physical health benefits** such as improvement in quality of sleep.

Make a list of **things you are thankful for**. Keep the list by your bed and try to add one new thing each night. These don't need to be big things - in fact the smaller the better!

It is difficult to imagine our life differently when we are in a state of doubt and frustration. We need to be in a **state of wonder** and curiosity to enable new solutions and ideas to emerge.

To activate creativity, think back to a place you have visited that filled you with a **sense of awe**. Bring this place to life in your mind - add details from all your senses - what do you see? Hear? Feel? Smell? Immerse yourself in these images and let your mind process them.


Now ask yourself, **what does life look like** one year from today if you make positive changes?



#16 Celebrate small wins - to boost confidence and motivation

Recognising little accomplishments plays an important role in **sustaining momentum** towards larger goals. Try noting 3 small wins each day - this could be as simple as getting up on your first alarm or drinking enough water

Any accomplishment, no matter how small releases **dopamine** which boosts mood and motivation. When we establish a habit of acknowledging small successes, we incrementally **build confidence and optimism** - two important ingredients for those big goals!



Exercises to get ahead of stress



FEELING INSPIRED?

Mental fitness, just like physical fitness, is an ongoing process. There is no end point and our **levels of fitness can fluctuate** year-by-year, day-by-day, even hour-by-hour.

These exercises offer an opportunity to better **anticipate what lies ahead** and help you to stay on top of things.



At first they may be tricky but the more you practice the easier they become and eventually these simple thinking processes will become automatic and kick in to **stop stress in its tracks**.

Drivers naturally scan their dashboard before departing to quickly check fuel levels and warning lights, possibly preventing a break down. Can we do this with our mind?

Check your fuel - have you got the physical and mental **energy you need** to get through?
Pressure check - what are the sources of pressure today? Lights & Indicators - any recognisable **early signs** of stress/anxiety?

Spotted a red flag? **What action will you take?**



#17 Mental dashboard - to anticipate the obstacles that lie ahead



Did you know...


Humans think anywhere between 6000 and 60,000 distinct spontaneous thoughts each day!
And 95% of our thoughts are not helpful!

WOW!!!

You cannot control which thought pops in to your consciousness but you do get to decide how long it stays there and what you do next.

It's also natural to look into the world and judge others' circumstances/characteristics as better than your own and wish things were different.

But if the perfect person/life really existed, would you want to be them after all? Being perfect would come at an extreme cost to your relationships with others. The impact of perfection would be catastrophic as others would almost certainly not want to be with you as they would feel less-than perfect in your presence.



18 Catch them quick! To let go of unwanted thoughts

Purposefully lay down in a quiet room for 2-3mins and simply **observe what thoughts** pop into your mind. Label each thought as useful or not useful and then imagine letting that thought go.

Once you get the hang of this simple technique, you can use it on the go. Any time you notice a negative or unwanted thought creep into your awareness, pause to acknowledge it, label the thought as unwanted and **imagine letting it go**.

A **Mind SNAP!** Is a simple strategy you can use to 'switch off' the sympathetic nervous system and **'switch on' the parasympathetic** nervous system whenever you experience rising stress levels.

STOP - at the first sign of stress

NOTICE - label the feeling and what is going on

ACTIVATE - the parasympathetic nervous system by taking 3 deep breaths

PLAN - decide on one small action you can take to help yourself in that moment.



19 The Mind SNAP! To handle stress in real time

Instead of seeing people as a whole, can you **soften the impact** comparisons and wishful thinking by purposefully acknowledging the individual parts that you admire and wish for?

In that way you start to build up a 'bits n pieces' image of your ideal person and life which can **feel aspirational and motivational** rather than disheartening.

No one person has it all but **everyone has something desirable to offer**. What parts of you and your life are others looking at wishfully?



#20 Bits 'n' pieces - to maintain realistic appraisal of others



If you are serious about wanting to build mental strength and make positive changes to your life then let's take this workout to the next level!

Book a FREE session with me, Jacqueline & together we will explore your mental fitness goals and start your journey towards a stronger, happier and healthier you.

ABOUT

When introducing myself it comes naturally to put “a Mum of two” at the top of the list because my kids are well and truly at the heart of who I am and what I do. Like most parents they stole a good chunk of my identity when they popped into the world and I have been steadily piecing myself back together ever since.

Away from the kids I have built a career centred around supporting others to succeed beyond their expectations, drawing on my training in Occupational Psychology and experience as a performance and leadership coach.

I am a practitioner of Positive Intelligence and trained as an Imagery Coach and 8 Tensions Existential Coach - if you are serious about sharpening your mental skills and setting yourself up for success at a higher level then let's discuss how coaching may work for you.

You can learn about my credentials and work history via <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelineweeks>

And you can learn more about me as a person by picking up the phone or dropping me an email - I love to hear from new people and will always have time for a chat.

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