

Essential Guide to Mental Fitness

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A guide for mentally preparing you to expertly handle life's challenges.



MENTAL FITNESS

NOW



Welcome to Mental Fitness Now!

Are you happy with where you are in your life? Do you even know what you want for yourself? Are you waiting for something to happen in order to succeed? What if I told you that you have everything you need right now in order to live a more fulfilling life? No matter how high your aspirations are, you have the power to achieve them! We are incredible beings and our brains are equipped to create the most fabulous lives; we just need to learn how. Think of yourself as getting ready to embark on a journey towards a wonderful life. It's going to take some work, but the benefits will make it all worthwhile.

Hello, I'm Janette Moré, mental health counselor and life coach. I like to refer to myself as a Mental Fitness Trainer for I help clients to interpret their emotions so that they work to their favor. We have feelings for a reason and many times they help us to enjoy life. Other times, however, we want them to go away. In this guide, I will give you a glimpse of how you can use your emotions to your advantage. You will learn to take the good with the bad and to understand that those negative feelings are just telling you that something needs attention.



How would you describe your life? Do you feel like you're a victim of circumstances? Are you like a steel ball in a pinball machine that gets bounced around from bumper to bumper because someone else is in control of the flippers? If that metaphor resonates with you, you have given away control of your life. You are allowing things outside of you to dictate where you're headed. It's time to take charge! Get in the driver's seat and take on the role as the victor. Let's change the metaphor to visualizing yourself as a race car driver, who expertly maneuvers past life's obstacles. Wouldn't you rather be that person?

I thought so! Now, let's get started.



1. You Have the Power!

The first step in obtaining mental fitness is to believe that you have the power within yourself to create the life of your dreams. So, decide right now that you are not going to let anything hold you back. I mean anything; no matter how low you might get from time to time. You are going to make it happen! When you take responsibility for your life, you feel empowered. Think about how wonderful it will be when you don't have to depend upon anyone else for your success. It's all up to you. OK, maybe it sounds a bit daunting at this point, but you have to admit it would be awesome to be in control of your life. If it makes you feel any better; it gets easier over time and everyone on the road to success goes through this at some point.

As an example, if I say that I'm overweight and can't eat a healthy diet because my mother didn't teach me how to cook, who am I hurting? Just because your mother never taught you, doesn't mean you can't learn. So, take control of what you want and seek out what you need to succeed. If you are really serious about eating a healthier diet, find a way to get it done. You get no benefit from blaming anyone or thinking of yourself as a victim. Those thoughts rob you of priceless time and energy. And, for what? If you think about it; they just hold you back. Make a point to dismiss those thoughts completely and focus on taking action. You can do it!

Essentially, you have the choice to either sit around gaining weight and blaming your mother or to do something about it. Once you learn to eat better and drop a few pounds, how will you feel then? The same is true for just about everything else you want to accomplish. You are the master of how you think. Let's face it; who is the person who is really holding you back from getting where you want to be? If you sit around blaming your mother, what role are you playing? You are that steel pinball I mentioned earlier because someone else is in control of the direction of your life. When you take responsibility for your health, you directly influence the outcome and you take back control. Another great part about taking action is that you gain such a sense of satisfaction when you succeed. That good feeling helps to build your confidence and is what keeps you going. It will become a little easier each time as you take responsibility for other areas of your life.

Action Steps:

Think of something that you've been wanting to do, and have been putting off because you've been waiting for someone else to move forward. Do you really need that other person to be involved? What if you just did it yourself? Did your mood just shift when you thought about getting that thing accomplished? Even if you've never done it before, you can learn how. Start with something simple to begin gaining confidence in yourself. What would happen to your mood if you just got it done? You'd probably feel a sense of relief – right? And, maybe you'd decide that wasn't so bad after all. So, take the driver's seat (of your race car), believe in yourself and get started right now!



2. Focus on Your Goals

Do you know what you want out of life? What does your perfect future look like? If you don't know where you're headed, how do you know what to do next? If you don't set goals, you are passively reacting to every situation you encounter. Just as it's easy to get lost without a map or GPS, lacking goals will result in your drifting into jobs and lifestyles that may not be right for you. Wouldn't you rather make the decisions instead of allowing life to just happen? Once you've decided on your goal, break it down into smaller steps. You need several, easily achievable milestones that you can check off to help keep the momentum going. Think about the path you need to follow in order to get from where you are now to where you want to be.

Let's say you're going to start eating healthier. Your final goal can be to cook most of your own meals and to eat out only once a week. You want to also eat healthy snacks and to drop 15 pounds. If you decide to do all that, how long do you think this "new you" will last? Probably not very long. But, you're not alone; it is hard to make such a drastic change in your habits. So as not to become discouraged before you even get started, cut your goal down into smaller steps.

What can you do this week? You could prepare one meal for yourself. In order to do that, though, you will have to look through a few recipes. Maybe you could set your goals for this week to be that you will (1) find an easy recipe, (2) buy the ingredients and (3) cook dinner. That's it! Three easy steps and you can do them each week for the first month.

In expanding your goals, you could say that next month, you want to cook two meals a week and start keeping fresh fruit around the house to eat as snacks. You already have four new recipes from the previous month, so you can continue to find one additional recipe each week. Now, you have two things you can cook for dinner each week. If you add fresh fruit to your grocery list, you will have a healthy snack available that you can eat once a day.

Do you get the idea? There are a number of steps that will be required to reach your goal. By breaking it down and adding one more thing each week or each month, it makes the goal more bearable. Then, you can celebrate your successes! I have one word of caution when you do reward yourself: stay away from engaging in those poor behaviors you're trying to change. If you don't, you're essentially telling yourself that you would prefer to go back to the old habits and that could quickly derail all of your efforts. One way you can reward yourself is to call attention to the progress you've made and express your gratitude for being able to make those changes to your eating habits.

There will be times when you fail to meet some of your goals. Don't sweat it! Own up to what happened and make some adjustments so that you will be successful in the future. Learn from your mistakes. Make your changes and keep trudging forward. View these setbacks as "opportunities for learning."



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Action Steps:

Create a goal for yourself. Break it down into smaller steps and add one or two additional steps each week. Check your progress at the end of the week. After one month, assess your progress. Is it working? Do you need to make some changes? Keeping the original goal in mind, make the necessary adjustments and keep going for another week.

If you start to get off your plan, it may be that you are paying more attention to life's distractions. If you feel discouraged, acknowledge that it is normal to experience difficulties, and resolve to stick with it. Don't fall back into the pinball machine! Think "race car driver". Alter your plan to maneuver around the distractions and keep moving towards to your goal. It may also help to set smaller goals that are a little easier to achieve. You need successes, and this way, you will build momentum faster. With these easier wins, you will find it less difficult to create those lasting habits, which is the real goal.



3. Listen to Your Feelings

We have feelings for a reason. They serve a very important purpose. Our emotions are our guidance system; they tell us whether our life is on track. Would you ever cover up the instruments on the dashboard of your car? If you did, how would you know how fast you were going, how far you've traveled, whether you need gas or if the car is overheating? Your feelings give you valuable information as well. They warn you when something isn't quite right. They also help you enjoy life's wonderful experiences. Sometimes the negative feelings will outnumber the positive ones and you may be tempted to depress or indulge in unhealthy coping mechanisms to numb them out. But, just because you ignore your fuel gage doesn't mean that your car will never run out of gas!!

Once you have obtained good mental fitness, you will know how to deal with your feelings. You will be able to muster the courage to make those difficult decisions. You will also know that feelings are warnings that you may need to change the way you think. You may believe that you have always had trouble with your weight and may become discouraged if the weight doesn't fall off fast enough. Once you allow these thoughts to take over, you may feel a tinge of hopelessness.

When you are mentally fit, you know that it is important to acknowledge those negative feelings. You will learn to challenge your thought that you cannot lose weight easily. You will also learn to admit that you may have given up too easily in the past. You understand that your unrealistic expectations caused your feelings of hopelessness, so you adjust your expectations accordingly. You won't let any disappointing results get you down! Yes, you may still feel frustrated from time to time, but you will understand why and keep moving forward.

Action Steps:

The next time you have a negative feeling, write it down. It is important to acknowledge the emotions that you are feeling. Do not try to brush them away. Then, try to think logically as to where they are coming from. Were you being overly optimistic with your expectations? What thoughts are going on in your head that are contributing to these negative feelings? Write it all down.

This exercise will help you to identify the source of the negative feelings. Then, think about other ways you can respond to them. You may need to reduce your expectations or challenge any beliefs that are getting in your way. Then, choose behaviors that will move you closer to your goal. You'll find that it is much easier to manage your negative feelings once you think through the possible causes.



4. Focus on What Is Going Right

As human beings, we are often drawn to the things that aren't going so well and our focus tends to dwell on those negative events. When we do that, how do we feel? It brings our mood down – right? If you keep your attention on the unfortunate events in your life for too long, you can begin to move down a spiral of negativity or set yourself on the path for a panic attack. You start feeling sad or anxious and then it becomes increasingly difficult to shift your focus onto anything positive. When this happens, you are almost drawn towards gathering more and more negative information. It takes real attention to what you're doing to yourself in order to reverse that trend.

So, let's say that it's been a few months and you still haven't lost a measureable amount of weight. You're feeling discouraged again. Let's look at the big picture. You're cooking healthy dinners several times a week and have even been taking brisk walks most evenings. You are feeling a little better and have more energy. Those are positive things, but you're focused on that needle on the scale that just won't budge! What are you doing here? You're focusing on the negative. True, you haven't lost much weight, but look at all those positive changes that you have made to your life! Isn't that something to be proud of?

When you allow yourself to focus on the negative only, you're back in that pinball machine. Those negative thoughts will come racing back and then you are no longer in charge. If this happens, you can easily fall back into old eating habits and may not feel like cooking those healthy meals. You will have to remind yourself of the benefits you are achieving. You have to take over control of the car! It may be time to use some outside intervention and flood your brain with activities that help you to feel happier.

There are many things you can do to improve your mood for the short term. The first thing is to get into the habit of looking for the things that you have accomplished. Sometimes it takes a lot of searching and it may be the littlest thing, but the key is to look for it. Little by little, you will train yourself to look purposefully for the good in everything.

If that doesn't give you enough motivation to continue, you will have to purposely do things that help you to feel better. You can begin keeping a gratitude journal of the things you're grateful for every day. You can look through pictures from a happier time, watch silly cat videos or put on a playlist of upbeat music. You can even take a walk outside and enjoy the sunshine. Start a list of what I like to call mood-enhancing activities that work for you and make an effort to do those things when you're in that negative space. Once you begin feeling better, take the time to savor the moment.



You may believe that there is no harm in allowing yourself to dwell on what isn't going well, but remember: those unproductive thoughts take away precious time, mental space and energy that could be used elsewhere. If you utilize those limited resources on negative thoughts, it will take away from the positive ones. You cannot afford this! Use what energy you can muster to do some of your mood-enhancing activities. You will also notice that other people will find you to be a lot more fun to be around.

Action Steps:

Make a list of the activities that help to improve your mood and keep this list of mood-enhancing activities handy. Some ideas include taking a walk, playing with your dog, listening to upbeat music, meditating, dancing and many other things. When you're feeling good, take the time to recognize the things you're doing that have put you in that positive mood and add them to your list.

On those days when you're engulfed in negative emotions, pay attention to what you're thinking about. If you find yourself obsessing about things that went wrong, stop yourself and take a deep breath. Take a few minutes to think about what went right, no matter how small. To better improve your mood, engage in several of your mood-enhancing activities. Then, think of a few more things that went well and write them down. This will help to train your brain to pay a bit more attention to the positive.

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5. Develop Your Emotional Resiliency

As discussed in the previous section, there are a number of things we can do to elevate our mood. An important question is how can we keep that happy feeling all of the time? While it is virtually impossible to never feel sad, you can buffer your emotions so that the lows don't feel so low. I call this process developing emotional resiliency or building your emotional bank account.

You can make deposits into your emotional bank account by putting many of those feel-good activities together. For example, you can start your day by taking a 30-minute, brisk walk. This will help to give you a feeling of accomplishment and being outdoors will uplift your spirits. Before retiring for the night, you can look back on your day and write down the things you are especially grateful for. When you think positive thoughts, you also get a rush of good feelings. Another important component for emotional resiliency is to have good relationships with the significant people in your life. Take the time during your day to keep those relationships on a positive note and this will also give you much satisfaction.



There are several buckets in your emotional bank account and these are referred to as your basic needs. Everyone's needs are different, but they generally fall into distinct categories. You must include activities regularly that give you a sense of accomplishment, belonging, freedom and to have some fun. The better job you do at keeping these buckets full on a regular basis, the less likely those negative emotions will interfere with your progress. You may still feel discouraged that the pounds are not dropping off fast enough, but you won't start on that downward spiral of negative thinking. You'll accept that things aren't moving as quickly as you'd like, but you'll know that you are headed in the right direction.

Action Steps:

These action steps are outside of your original goals, but are imperative to keep you functioning at your best. Keep your emotional bank account in mind when you make decisions. Be mindful of opportunities to regularly engage in activities that give you a sense of accomplishment, like working at a job you enjoy or following a creative outlet. Develop a support group of friends and family members with whom you communicate frequently and can share ideas. Address relationships that you feel are holding you back. Lastly, but certainly not least, don't forget to have fun!



Parting Thoughts

I hope this brief guide has given you an idea of how you can begin to achieve mental fitness. If you follow the steps outlined here, it won't be long before you will begin to feel happier and motivated to create a more fulfilling future. Once you begin to experience the benefits from having good mental fitness, you'll wonder how you survived all of these years! This is just the beginning and it only gets better from here!!

The intent for this brief guide is to give you a process to deal with your negative emotions. It is not meant to help you through every possible problem you may have. In those situations, it is best to seek individualized, professional help. What I want you to take away is that you have the power within you to tackle just about any problem that comes your way. You may have waited a bit too long to do something about the problem, but it's still conquerable.

If you enjoyed this brief guide, please tell your friends and have them get their own copy by requesting one at www.MentalFitnessNow.com. If you or a loved one desire assistance beyond what was offered in this eBook, please contact me at Jan@MentalFitnessNow.com to schedule a free 30-minute consultation and we can work out a plan together. It's never too late to make an investment in your happiness!

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