



5

tips to grow your *Mental* fitness

Written by:

Christina Foxwell | Global CEO & Founder | Ignite Purpose
Performance Coach, Leader, Author, Speaker & Imperfectly Human

Mental Fitness

Mental Fitness is your ability to navigate and respond to life's challenges with a positive mindset.

This year we researched how people are feeling across the world, our focus was burnout, stress, and exhaustion; here is what we found:

69% of participants said they felt more tired more frequently

48% of participants said they felt exhausted when having to help others

53% of participants felt they were working harder and accomplishing less

59% of participants felt felt more overwhelmed than they used to

48% of participants felt their enthusiasm for their work was low

52% of participants said they were more impatient than they used to be

This Guide

A while ago, I realised that being able to respond to my world positively was the key to my happiness. However, I was so tired and overwhelmed that I couldn't seem to get out of the spiral that kept me trapped. I came across Dr Brené Brown's work on **vulnerability** and **shame**! For the first time, I could understand what was holding me trapped. I knew I could come to terms with my story, to rewrite the story I wanted for my life. I also recognised that I had behaviours that were driven by my fear that were hard to unplug and rewire.

Through specific practices around mindset and positive psychology, I have managed to get into the **flow** and change my world. You can too! [Read more about my story here.](#)

On the previous page, I defined Mental Fitness. Our ability to navigate and respond positively to life's challenges. I also have a picture of water flowing over rocks.

I always ask my clients to visualise WATER and shatterproof GLASS.

Which seems stronger? Let's unpack it, shall we?

Glass can protect me from the elements, it's transparent and it allows me to see my world, but I can't feel my world. Glass will shatter on rocks, and there is no agility.

When I think of water, I think of the power water has—the ability to move over rocks. Water can move huge ships and nourishes my body. I can feel the wet, cold water and I can run my hand through it.

I want you to consider what you are most like? Have you become rigid, fearful, hyper-vigilant? Are you striving for success? Do you feel you smash into life and then need to pick up the pieces? Are you tired and know there must be more? (There definitely is.)

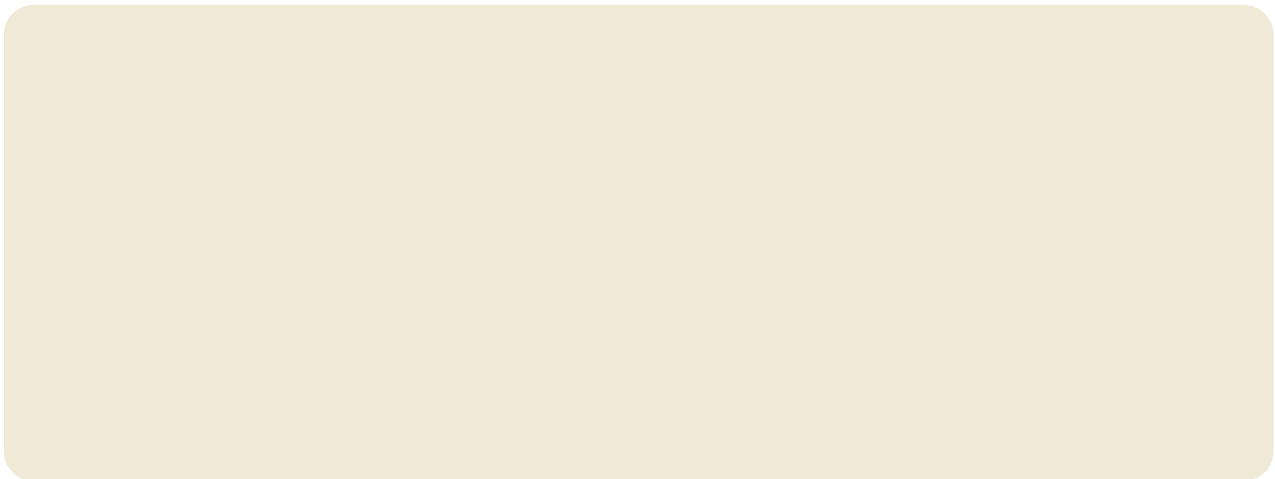
Maybe you are in your flow. You have learnt how to move around the rocks, and you are in a positive mind frame. You know that things will be ok and that you are more than able to be in this moment and navigate your world. You are joyful, peaceful and embracing life.

This guide is only the beginning of your journey, and I will provide you with five steps to Grow your Mental Fitness. Remember, everyone struggles, and mental fitness is becoming as important as physical fitness and healthy eating. Take time, prioritise yourself and do the work; only you can; you are worth it!

Benefits of Mental Fitness

- A positive approach to life even when it's hard
- Increase your ability to really be present, hear, see and love those you in your life
- Decrease your stress and worry
- Increase your ability to be more effective, bring your talents and gifts
- Have the courage to show up when it's challenging
- Increase your ability to connect with others and show vulnerability
- Increase self-care and self-love
- Live a longer, more fulfilled life
- Be wiser, more generous
- Reduce self-destructive thinking and behaviours
- Unlock your potential

Which areas do you want to change in your life? Why not select a few and consider why they are important to you?



My Brain is The Key

As we are formed, our brain has been wired to protect us. Our protection lies in the survival brain. The beauty of our brain is that we have neural pathways that light up when things happen, telling us how to respond. We have an alarm system built into our brain. The Amygdala defines and regulates our emotions. It's known for processing fearful and threatening stimuli. So it sends the neurons into the survival part of our brain, where our protection response lives.

The trouble is the amygdala can't tell time. When it triggers, it will tell an old story again in the present moment, meaning we react instantly, negatively.

So I hope you can guess that many of us live a fair part of our lives in our survival brain. This means we are focused on survival, self-protection etc. This means we end up isolating, judging, fearing and becoming very EGO driven to survive. We miss the opportunity to THRIVE!!! Thriving is happiness, peacefulness, joy "in the moment", acceptance, love, compassion, openness, courage... being willing to be together with others.

So we need to learn a few practices that will stop the activate a switch and help us build our frontal cortex (where THRIVE and WISDOM) lives. MRI scans have shown that by engaging in Mental Fitness practices, we can develop grey matter in the frontal cortex and reduce grey matter in the survival brain.

1

Be Present

Being present and connecting to a physical sensation allows our brain to stop the neural firing and gives us the power/ courage to shift our thinking! So this is our first step. I am going to provide you with a few practices to try at various times during your day. Remember, we are working on you being fully present, fully connected to this moment.

Your Feet

Shift your awareness to your feet. Feel the weight of your feet on the ground. Wiggle your toes.

What sensations are you feeling? (Hot, cold, soft, hard floor, sand between your toes.)

Be in this moment for a short time, Breathe in deeply, keep your mind focused on your feet, your weight on the ground, your toes...

Reflection

How did it feel to focus on your feet? To wriggle your toes? To breath deeply?

Did you realise that at that moment you are not your FEET? Your feet are a part of you, but they are not you.

The same as you have a mind, and also it is not YOU!

Mindful Eating

Prepare your favourite Meal. Sit down with your food and quiet your mind.

With each bite, savour the flavours, the textures and the goodness. Eat slowly, with purpose and focus on your breath and this very moment.

Mindful Eating

What did your experience feel like? Savouring the moment, the food, giving yourself permission to be?

2

You are not your thoughts!

This is powerful, and I need you to own this! You are not your thoughts, just like you are not your foot! We have millions of thoughts running through our brain, and when we are peaceful, we can choose the ones that best serve us. The ones that encourage, that are filled with grace and that are not underpinned with judgement and fear. Let's tune into your thoughts, shall we? Only when we hear the lie (of judgement and fear) can we retell the story!

Tuning in... to your mind

Listen to your mind... what is the chatter about? Your mind is playing like a radio station in the background of your thinking all the time... It is playing... judgement, fear, feelings, memories, sensations, ideas...

Notice your thoughts... notice that it is only a broadcast like a radio station...

You are not your thoughts; you can choose which station to listen to. You can tune into the ones that are filled with goodness. You have a choice.

Tuning in... to your mind

What does the negative radio station play? (To change the station you need to recognise it!)

What positive station are you going to create and play? What is the message?

Stop your Autopilot!

Where is your autopilot taking you? Do you sometimes drive to the office and you can't remember how you got there? Well, your autopilot has taken over! You are not present...

Why not turn off your autopilot, why not be present in the moments you have. Do things on purpose... notice the trees, the road, the birds, your hands the steering wheel.

When I am present I don't allow my *autopilot* to take me to places that don't serve me. I am deliberate in my actions and I am here, now today!

“The mind is a superb instrument if used rightly. Used wrongly, however, it becomes very destructive. To put it more accurately, it is not so much that you use your mind wrongly — you usually don’t use it at all. It uses you. This is the disease. You believe that you are your mind. This is the delusion. The instrument has taken you over.”

Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*

Stop your Autopilot!

When do you go on autopilot?

How can you practice being present?

What did you notice today when you drove to work?

What did you notice when you stayed present in a challenging meeting?

3

Gratitude Fills My Cup

Gratitude... the most powerful underrated or misunderstood practice! Actually, I have heard people say that some of this work is "fluffy" because it isn't hard and challenging. The research on positive psychology says that if we can look at our world for the good it gives us at this moment, we can wire our brain for opportunities vs risks. We wire our neural pathways to the frontal cortex of wisdom vs the saboteur's brain!

I love a good definition; it helps me understand and create clarity and measurement. Gratitude is: "The act of noticing and appreciating all the good things in our life."

What I have...

So often, we think happiness is not what we have now... We see the bad in what we have or the NOT YET, and we don't celebrate the small things, the good in this very day!

Starting a 21-day gratitude challenge will help you look at the things in your life that are a gift, good, imperfect, and yet, perfectly ok! I started doing 21-day practices a few years ago after finding this research and deciding to rewire my brain for the positive moments; guess what it worked, so now it's up to you...

What I have...

Consider three things in your life today that you know you are grateful for... what are they? Why are you grateful? What is the gift or goodness in this thing/person/situation/ opportunity:

Your tourist moments...

What wonderful things did you notice about your world?

What things did you hear? See? Smell?

What are you grateful for?

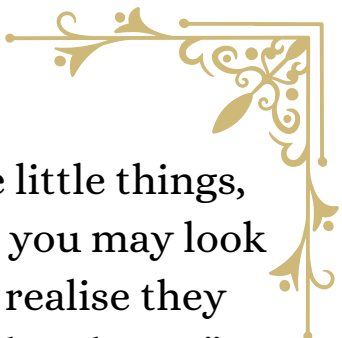
What have you lived past that you now realise you should embrace more of?

Be a tourist in your own life!

Being excited to live every day is such a gift! Why not get up one day this week and become a tourist in your life!

When you get up, notice the small things, enjoy your breakfast, when you travel to your commitments or go on a walk, get so curious be in the moment as if you are seeing things for the first time.

Be deliberate, curious, walk through your day... Notice everything you can. Why not add some gratitude along the way!



**“Enjoy the little things,
for one day you may look
back and realise they
were the big things.”**

Robert Brault



4

The Story of Me

You are not your story. Your story is a series of events that have shaped your perspective, fears, emotions, skills and experiences. When we fear our story, we live in constant fear that others will judge us as not good enough. We fear showing the world who we are in case we get hurt. I am not saying walk around and tell people all the stories about you, choose what you share with who, yet make peace with the internal fear of your story. I have had a tremendous story of love and loss, of disappointments and pain and shame. When I hop onto the story's narrative for the pain, the suffering, and the guilt, I kept reliving it. In actual fact, I started developing compensation behaviours to make me feel better or to get through situations. I have learnt that my mental fitness practices of embracing my story allow me to be FREE, open, and give and receive connection.

Story Time...

You didn't choose your history.

We grow through situations as a child, ones where we learn how to survive. Where those around us might have hurt us, might have done the best they could with their own fears.

So we need to recognise this truth. We also need to recognise how past hurts become patterns in our life today. How the past impacts our ability to make decisions...

Sometimes we hide because of our history... Sometimes we fight... sometimes we become what we fear...
WE CAN CHANGE THE PRESENT AND FUTURE!

Story Time...

How do past hurts inform who you are today?

How have they affected the choices that you made?

What stories does your mind to explain who you are?

Naming my story...

If you are truly the author of your story... why not name it?

Before I practiced acceptance and vulnerability my story would have been called ... "The Scarlet Letter."

Now my story is The Glass Angel who can help heal others through her journey!

What would you name your story?

What would you like to name your story?

****You can shift the story you are living, you can get mentally fit, agile and bring your best!**

Imagine writing your own story (you are taking ownership) and living your life with purpose? I know it's possible because I am living it. My story can only be authored by me when I take the pen, choose to be who I really am and open myself up.

What is the key? The key is acceptance and vulnerability; they both have a role to play. I don't believe you can write your story if you are still holding on and fighting parts of your story. The shame, fear and disappointment of what it is not keeps you locked in. Vulnerability is the willingness to set into uncertainty even when I don't know what it is. Acceptance is recognising that what happened in my life is past. The overcompensation I practised is not needed. Why? Because I am here right now. I can look at my world differently; I can be free. Finally, looking at my story with love and reflecting on the gifts of my story allows me to put the shame bag down and embrace my journey.



Live your legacy

If you are indeed the author of your story, your mental fitness and the way you see your world can help you unlock your potential...

What do you want your story to be about?

5

Training Your Brain

They say 90% of our happiness is based on how we see our world, and 10% is based on our environment! So we need mental fitness practices that will help us see things differently—wire our brain for opportunities.

Be aware of your thinking

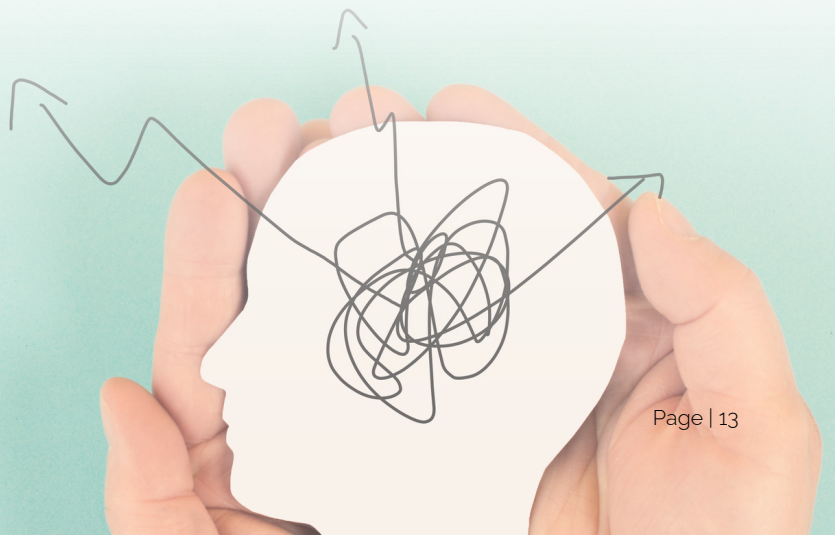
If you are not your thoughts, you need to understand what you might be saying to yourself. It could be that you recognise a negative emotion before negative thinking. Some of the things you are looking to understand are: thoughts, feelings, sensations and memories.

When you realise you are on a negative pathway...

1. Step back (imagine you are walking out of a dark forest, you can see the light)
2. When you leave the forest behind, stand in the open field and slowly look back and observe
3. What impact has your negative pathway had on you and those around you?

Now remind yourself that that negative memory, feeling, emotion only serves you for 1 min; it's there to help you take positive action or step out of the forest.

What is your reflection on this activity? What came up for you? What can you choose to release because you know?





Unhook from your Mind!

Your brain generates so many thoughts, and these can be hooks.

To better understand what can take you into a negative mindset is to reflect on what happens when you get hooked on challenging thoughts.

How do you handle it?

Acknowledge that you get hooked in certain situations.

Choose to let go of the thought... as negative thoughts don't serve you... Now reflect on what you can do to better understand the situation, your response and what you can learn.

What situations hook you?

What can you learn about yourself?

What positive action can you take in the future?

What can you do now?

Changing behaviour and thinking takes time and takes effort. In partnership with Positive Intelligence, we are running the 8 week PQ - Mental Fitness Program.

Why join a program? We provide a structured approach to changing your perspective, helping you build Mental Fitness and connecting you with others who are on a similar journey of growth and agility.

How often have you joined a gym on your own and simply given up when it was too hard?
How many times have you decided to change your eating habits and struggled?

This program has a unique approach of:

- Self-paced learning (on the Positive Intelligence App)
- A mental gym with Positive Intelligence brain work-outs (2 min, 5 min and 12 min)
- A coach and weekly group check-in's to reflect on your challenge during the week and your discoveries
- A program with daily mental fitness challenges and reminders

What have others said about this journey?

I have a curious mind, and thus love to learn new things. Over the years I have completed several courses on various topics but was still frustrated as I tirelessly fought with emotions such as fear, anxiety, poor self-image, being judgemental, etc. and simply could not understand why. Then I was introduced to PQ (Positive Intelligence) from Shirzad Chamine. My first thoughts were – this is so easy – it sounds too good to be true. Looking back, I can summarise it as good, true and loaded with practicable facts. Not only did it provide me with answers to all the negative emotions and energy (from myself and others), but it is also an easy step-by-step approach and guidance without any judgement from Shirzad or my coach (Christina Foxwell). This is a life-changing course where you are equipped with knowledge of “the why” but most important “the how” to support you in moving forward.

Amanda Terblanch
Health & Safety Leader

I have found the Mental Fitness Program (PQ) to be one of the best programs I have done over this past year. At first, I thought it would be another thing to feel guilty about not having time to do “properly”, but it ended up being the exact antidote to this kind of thinking. In a year that brought chaos to our worlds, it brought me calm and a recognition of my restlessness!

Cynthia Stanton
COO, Sydney North Health Network

