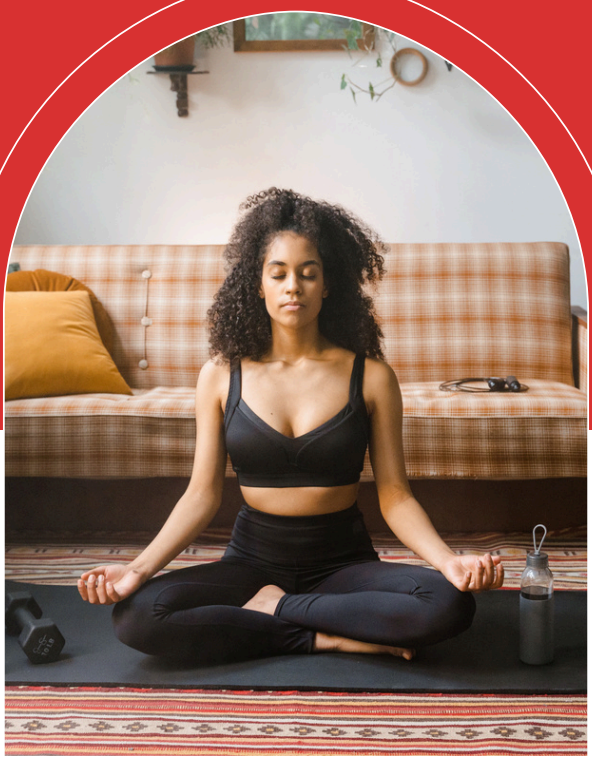
4 WEEK MIND CHALLENGE



Take Care of Yourself and Your Mind



INTRODUCTION

In this day and age, our mental health has taken a back seat to many things.

While it's true that more people are talking about mental health than ever, the rise in awareness could be attributed to the rising number of people dealing with various mental health issues.

It doesn't matter if it's chronic stress, anxiety, depression, or anything in between - we could all use some self-nourishment to feel a bit better.

Medical Disclaimer

The information in this program, including but not limited to text, pictures, and other material, is provided solely for educational and informational purposes. The content in this article isn't intended to replace any professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the opinion of your physician or another trained health care practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a medical condition or treatment, and never disregard professional medical advice or delay in getting it because of something you read in this program. As it is, we can guarantee no results for your specific condition.

THE CHALLENGE

This 4-week challenge is designed to help you improve your mental health in every way possible.

You will get a "task" you need to do every day during the challenge, and every task we suggest will be based on scientific research!

All of the studies referenced can be found hyperlinked in the article.

We will first explain every task in the challenge, trying to make you understand the rationale behind everything.



DEEP BREATHING

Our brain associates different breathing patterns with different emotional states.

For example, it's common to hyperventilate in stressful situations. Our breaths get shorter and faster, so our heart rate and blood pressure go up. On the opposite end of the spectrum, our breaths tend to be deeper and much slower when we are calm.

We can stimulate that sense of calm in our body even under stressful situations by taking big, long breaths.

Deep breathing activates our parasympathetic system (the state of our bodies where we are in the mode of rest and recovery.)

A 2018 study by Xiao Ma showed that diaphragmatic breathing in adults lowered their stress levels and increased their cognitive performance.
You should do deep breathing by breathing through the stomach, otherwise known as diaphragmatic breathing. You can figure out how to do this by laying on your back and placing one arm on your chest and the other on your stomach.

Try to expand the stomach 360 degrees- front, back, and sides, without having your chest move.

It may be difficult initially, but you'll get the hang of it.

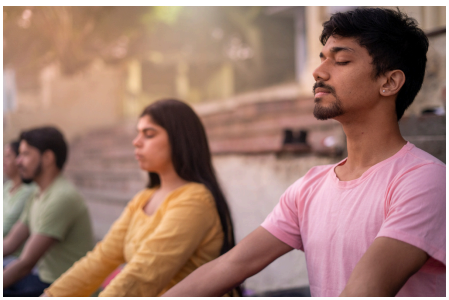
The two most used protocols for deep breathing are called box breathing and 4-7-8 breathing.

Box breathing is done by breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the air for 4 seconds, exhaling for 4 seconds, and then holding for another 4 seconds. Rinse and repeat.

The 4-7-8 breathing exercise is done by inhaling for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, then finally exhaling for 8 seconds. This variation is a bit harder than box breathing because of the longer breath holds.

Both of these exercises are usually done either sitting or laying down, although you can do them wherever- on the bus, before a big speech, waiting for a date, etc.

It would be best to incorporate diaphragmatic breathing whenever you do these exercises for maximum effect.





WALKING

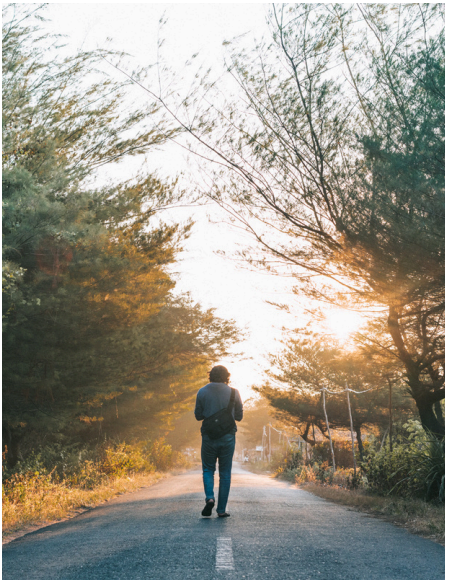
Human beings are meant to move.

Sadly, moving our bodies frequently is getting more complicated as our lifestyles change.

We sit at work, on the bus, or while driving, and sit or lie down while scrolling social media.

Walking tremendously affects inactive people's physical health and improves mood and creativity.

The most promising effects have been seen on people with depression.



READING

Everyone knows they should read, but not many of us do.

Whether you're reading non-fiction or fiction, reading can be an excellent method of expanding your mind while also making you feel better.

A study has shown that reading decreases stress by 68%. It relaxes your muscles and lowers your heart rate.

It can also help us be more emphatic, broaden our horizons, and explore new ideas.



CLEANING YOUR ROOM

Doctor Darby Saxbe showed that clutter has a noticeable effect on mood and self-esteem.

The study consisted of 60 families and showed that women who saw their living spaces as messy had higher cortisol levels. They also felt more depressed throughout the day and more tired at night compared to women in the experiment who described their home environment as restful.

You don't need to renovate your whole house. Instead, start small.

Try to make your bed every morning, organize your work area, or declutter your closet.

SOCIAL MEDIA FASTING

Social media is both highly addictive and has adverse effects on our minds.

Although it isn't inherently bad, social media companies earn their money by keeping our attention glued to the phone.

A recent paper showed that passive social media use is more strongly associated with depression than active use (making posts).

A 2020 study showed that higher investment in social media predicted adolescents' depressive symptoms.
These aren't the only studies showing adverse effects of social media usage, as numerous other studies showed the same thing- social media is ruining our mental health.

Sometimes we really need to disconnect from the internet in order to connect with ourselves.

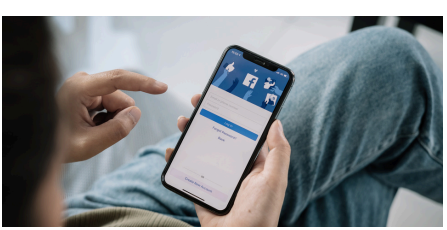
JOURNALING

This one is a fantastic way of freeing up from stress and anxiety. It's also simple and relatively quick, so what are you waiting for?

A study from 2006 showed that journaling could be just as effective as CBT (cognitive-behavioral therapy) in reducing the risk of depression in young adults. Another study by Provencher and colleagues found journaling speeds the recovery of people struggling with various psychiatric conditions.

You can do it in a lot of different ways. Everything from goal setting and tracking to just laying out your feelings on a sheet of paper. Figure out what's something you need the most at the moment, and start journaling!







SHOWING GRATITUDE

Something we should definitely all do more of is showing gratitude.

One study discovered that participants who felt grateful showed a decrease in cortisol levels and were more resilient to negative experiences.

Gratitude can help us feel happier, improve our relationships and maybe even counteract depression.

You can either think about things you're grateful for or, better yet- write them down in your newly acquired journal!

LISTENING TO MUSIC

People have said that art is the highest expression of human communication, and quality music is one of the most available forms of art we can consume daily.

A 2006 study showed that listening to calming music significantly lowered cortisol levels in participants, while a systematic review concluded that music interventions are linked to meaningful improvements in wellbeing.



EXERCISING

You're probably aware of the effects of working out on your body, but do you know how it can positively affect your mental health and mind state?

Last year's study review by the John W. Brick Foundation reviewed over one thousand studies that focused on the relationship between physical activity, exercise, movement, and mental health.

They found statistically significant connections between different types of physical activity and depression, anxiety, stress, general mental health, and wellbeing.

The exercise you choose to do isn't the most important thing in the world; what's important is to find something you love and stick with it!

It can be anything from weightlifting to Zumba.

MEDITATION

Meditation is an ancient practice, spanning back thousands of years and being done all over the world.

This 2019 study shows that meditation positively affects depression and anxiety, directly and indirectly affecting them.

You should focus on your breathing during meditation, trying to eliminate random thoughts that occur to you. Be present in the moment and only feel the physical sensation of your breath.

If your mind wanders off, take notice and bring your focus back to your breathing.



SET UP A SLEEP SCHEDULE

Lack of sleep has been associated with more frequent episodes of depression, anxiety, worsening ADHD, and higher rates of suicide.

Additional sleep issues might arise for people who are suffering from anxiety and depression. For instance, someone depressed might sleep excessively, whereas someone anxious might have problems falling asleep or waking up frequently at night.

This 2009 study suggests that keeping a consistent sleep schedule helps you get more hours of sleep per night and improves the quality of your sleep.

You can obviously see then how a sleep schedule might help your sleep hygiene and mental health.



HEALTHY FOOD

The same thing is true for nutrition as it is for exercising. People tend to be aware of the physical implications of eating good and bad food, but not of the mental ones.

A growing field of research called nutritional neuroscience is assisting in our knowledge of the connections between diet and behavior, cognition, and emotions.

The nutritional deficiencies, including zinc, vitamin D, omega-3 fats, iodine, and magnesium, and consuming a lot of sugar and unhealthy fats, all add up to the deterioration of mental health.

Processed foods are highly correlated with the increased risk of chronic stress, depression, anxiety, and ADHD.

Try to find healthy substitution food options for the stuff you frequently eat. For example, you can drink a chocolate protein shake when craving sugar.





GOING OUT IN NATURE

Most of us are living in environments that are so urbanized that we rarely have a chance to go out in nature. Everything around us is concrete, with a few trees and flowers sprinkled in.

A study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Science found that those who had a 90-minute walk in nature showed decreased activity in the brain region suspected to be a key factor in depression.

People living in cities have a 40% higher risk of mood disorders and a 20% higher risk of anxiety disorders than those in rural areas.



DRAWING

Many of you haven't picked up a pen to draw something since elementary school, but that is about to change!

A small study from 2007 had participants list 10 of their biggest worries and then spend 20 minutes drawing something or looking through art. The group that was drawing reported a greater improvement in negative mood symptoms.

Another small study, this one from 2016, had people do 45 minutes of art therapy. They were sculpting clay, making collages, or drawing. Those who participated in the art therapy had lower cortisol levels and felt much more relaxed.

So, grab a marker or a pen and get to drawing!

DOPAMINE DETOX

This one isn't backed by science, but a lot of people have noticed a ton of positive effects by doing this once in a while.

There's only one rule: avoid engaging in any activity that you enjoy doing and that stimulates the brain.

Only reading, meditating, and thinking deeply are allowed today.

Yes, it will be incredibly boring, but that's the point.





THE 4-WEEK PROGRAM



WEEK 1

DAY 1

Deep Breathing

Do at least 10 minutes of deep breathing using the protocols described in the article.

DAY 2

Walking

Go on a walk. You can go alone, with a friend, with a pet, it doesn't matter. Aim for at least 20 minutes.

DAY 3

Reading/Cleaning

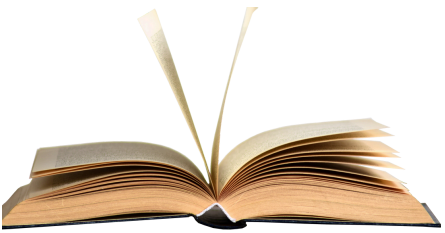
Find a book you want to read and read at least ten pages today.

Find a spot in your home that needs some cleaning or reorganizing. Everything from the bedroom to the work desk is fine.

DAY 4

Walking

Go on a walk. You can go alone, with a friend, with a pet, it doesn't matter. Aim for at least 20 minutes.



DAY 5

Deep Breathing

Do at least 10 minutes of deep breathing using the protocols described in the article.

DAY 6

Walking/Social Media fasting

Go on a walk, just like the previous days. Aim for at least 20 minutes.

Pause your social media use for at least 12 hours.

DAY 7

Journaling

Get a journal and start writing.
You can write about your worries and insecurities or your goals and how you plan to get there.



WEEK 2

DAY 1

Deep Breathing

Using the protocols described in the article, do at least 10 minutes of deep breathing.

DAY 2

Walking

Go on a walk, just like the previous days. Aim for at least 25 minutes.

Journal or deeply think about the things you're grateful for in your life. Try to list at least 20 different things.

DAY 3

Reading/Listening to Music

Continue reading the book you started. Try to read at least 10 pages.

Actively listen to an EP or album of your favorite artist/band.

If you don't have a favorite artist or band, just play anything you like and actively listen to the lyrics, the instruments, and the rhythm.

DAY 4

Exercise

Workout for at least 30 minutes today. You can do anything: weightlifting, Zumba, swimming, it doesn't matter.



DAY 5

Deep Breathing

Using the protocols described in the article, do at least 12 minutes of deep breathing.

DAY 6

Walking/Social Media fasting

Go on a walk, just like the previous days. Aim for at least 20 minutes.

Pause your social media use for at least 12 hours.

DAY 7

Journaling

Get a journal and start writing.
You can write about your worries and insecurities or your goals and how you plan to get there.



WEEK 3

DAY 1

Meditation

Try meditating for at least 5 minutes today.

Find a comfortable spot without any distractions and focus only on your breath.

Use diaphragmatic breathing.

DAY 2

Exercise/Social Media Fasting

Workout for at least 30 minutes today. You can do anything: weightlifting, Zumba, swimming, it doesn't matter.

Pause your social media use for at least 12 hours.

DAY 3

Reading/Eating Healthy Food

Continue reading the book you started. Try to read at least 10 pages

Prepare at least one healthy meal today. Use the internet for some great recipes and ideas.

DAY 4

Social Media Fasting/Gratitude

Pause your social media use for at least 12 hours.

Journal or think deeply about the things you're grateful for in your life. Try to list at least 20 different things.

DAY 5

Meditation

Try meditating for at least 5 minutes today.

Find a comfortable spot without any distractions and focus only on your breath.

Use diaphragmatic breathing.

DAY 6

Exercise/Reading

Workout for at least 30 minutes today.

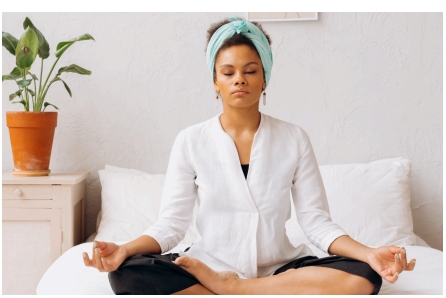
Continue reading the book you started. Try to read at least 10 pages

DAY 7

Journaling

Set up a sleep schedule for the following week. Try to get at least 8 hours of sleep per day.

Get a journal and start writing.
You can write about your worries and insecurities or your goals and how you plan to get there.



WEEK 4

DAY 1

Meditation/Gratitude

Try meditating for at least 8 minutes today.

Journal or deeply think about the things you're grateful for in your life. Try to list at least 20 different things.

DAY 2

Exercise/Healthy Food

Workout for at least 30 minutes today.

Prepare at least one healthy meal today. Use the internet for some great recipes and ideas.

DAY 3

Reading/Drawing

Continue reading the book you started. Try to read at least 10 pages

Prepare at least one healthy meal today. Use the internet for some great recipes and ideas.

DAY 4

Exercise/Cleaning

Workout for at least 30 minutes today.

Find a spot in your home that needs some cleaning or reorganizing. Everything from the bedroom to the work desk is fine.



DAY 5

Meditation/Nature

Try meditating for at least 8 minutes today.

-Go out and enjoy yourself in nature today. Try to spend at least 45 minutes in nature.

DAY 6

Dopamine Detox

Try not to have no fun today. Literally. You are allowed to read, think, and meditate only.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by your thoughts, abort the detox.

DAY 7

Start A New Habit

Congratulations on completing the challenge and doing something for yourself!

Pick one or two things you liked doing the most during this challenge and try to make a habit out of it for the future.

The best-case scenario would be picking up everything from the challenge as a staple of your everyday routine in the future.



FUELCHEF.COM

FUEL FOR A BETTER LIFE



FUELCHEF

FUEL FIT LIFE

CHANGING YOUR

LIFE THROUGH FITNESS



JOIN NOW

FUELFITLIFE.COM