

WORKBOOK

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*Change Your
Brain*

10 Essential Mind-Body Skills
to Improve Your Mental Health

BY EMMA MCADAM, LMFT

Introduction: Pick the Low Hanging Fruit

In this course I'm going to teach you a bunch of strategies to improve your mental health. But the most important thing is to not get overwhelmed, and not to try to make too many changes at once. Throughout this course you'll learn 10 ways to improve your mental health, and each of these skills comes with lots and lots of options.

As you watch this course, with each section write down one strategy that you think would be easy to implement, enjoyable, or most impactful for you (worth a lot of effort).

So for example, in the section on Regulating your Circadian Rhythm, you may decide that opening your windows in the morning is the action you'd like to take. Write that down in the box below. Don't take action on it yet. Then go on to watch the rest of the videos in the course.

After you've watched the entire course, choose one of the changes from this list that seems easiest to implement. Make this change and then once you feel like it's not too hard to maintain that change, come back to this list and pick one more change to make.

Small, tiny, gradual changes can make the biggest difference in your mental health.

My Master List

In this section write your preferred change from each skill

1. Change your Mindset	
2. Regulate your Circadian Rhythm	
3. Create Movement	
4. Abundant Mindset	
5. Improve Sleep	
6. Simple Mindfulness	
7. Feed Your Brain	
8. Clear Your Mind	
9. Regulate Your Nervous System	
10. Build Your Support Network	

Skill #1: A Growth Mindset

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from changing how you think

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you consider yourself optimistic?	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
Do you get stuck in negative thinking?	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Do you believe there is only one solution to most problems?	No, there may be solutions I just don't know about yet	Usually	Yes
Do you believe that you can improve your mental health?	Yes	Not Sure	No, coping is my only option
When you come across a problem, do you frequently think "well this is just who I am" or "I can't change, I just have to cope"	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently

Explore: Do you frequently get stuck in rigid or negative thinking?

Do you have a Growth Mindset or a Fixed Mindset when it comes to mental health?

Consider your Options: There are a lot of ways to change how you think, consider some of these options or come up with your own. Make a plan to do just one of them.

- Read through the attached chart on cognitive distortions, circle any that you frequently use. Consider how you might change that.

- Ask someone who knows you well if you frequently use cognitive distortions
- Read the book “Mindset” By Carol Dweck
- Take the Survey in Section 2.1 of this Course on Growth vs. Fixed Mindset
- Watch my bonus video on a Growth Mindset with Mental Health
- Read a memoir about someone who overcame large challenges in their life (ie Unbroken, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Man’s Search for Meaning)
- Go to therapy
- Read a self-help book (see my recommendations [here](#) or <https://kit.co/TherapyinaNutshell>)
- Attend a mental health support group
- Watch a mental health video on Youtube (I’ve got a lot of them, but there are other great educators like Dr. Tracey Marks)
- Later in this course you’ll learn that the following things help improve Neuroplasticity, consider adding one of them to your routine:
 - Sleep
 - Exercise
 - Good nutrition
 - Antidepressant Medication, Ketamine (work with your doctor)
 - Mindfulness Practice
 - Gratitude Practice
 - Learning to Regulate your Nervous System

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to act on your belief that you can change?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it’s helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Fostering a Growth Mindset

(This section is derived from Video #28 in the 'How to Process Emotions' Course)

*"In a **growth mindset**, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work - brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment." -Carol Dweck, author of Mindset*

Circle the statements that you believe.

Fixed Mindset		Growth Mindset
Mistakes are a sign of failure or being defective. "I'm just bad at math"	Mistakes	Mistakes are an opportunity to learn and improve myself. "I just haven't learned that math skill yet"
I'm always going to fail. Other people are just lucky, I'm just unlucky	Success	I can impact my outcome with effort and attitude.
You either have it or you don't. It's just talent. It's something you were born with.	Abilities	I can develop my abilities.
Depression is a permanent biological or character trait and there's nothing I can do about it.	Depression	Depression has many influencing factors and I can learn new skills that can help me improve or resolve my depression
I'm just a bad person	Identity	I can learn new skills, I can try a little every day to improve myself.
Emotions are just things that happen to you	Emotions	I can influence my emotions by how I act and how I think
Emotions are bad, a sign of being weak, or are something to be avoided	Emotions	Emotions are something you can learn from, and listen to, but you don't always have to act on them.
Feedback is a personal attack.	Feedback	Feedback helps me grow and improve to be a better human being.
I'm discouraged if others are successful or better than me.	Others' Success	I'm inspired by the goodness of others, I can learn from others to be better.

I'll stick to what I already know and what I'm good at	Trying New Things	I'm willing to learn new things
It's fine the way it is, It's too much effort to change	Difficulties	I know this will help me even if it's difficult. I can do hard things
It's easy for them, they were born smart or they don't have anxiety	Nature or Nurture	Hmm, I wonder how they're doing that? Let me try to figure it out.

Do you have more of a growth mindset or a fixed mindset?

You can develop a Growth Mindset. This is a skill that you can learn.

- Embrace imperfections, don't hide them, see them as an opportunity to grow. Focus on Progress, not Perfection.
- Replace the word "failure" with "not yet" as in "*I haven't figured out how to be a good listener, yet*".
- Focus more on effort and the process of learning, than on the outcome.
- Focus more on your values, the kind of person you want to be, rather than on approval from others.
- Get good at asking for and receiving feedback.
- Give yourself credit for the effort you put in, not just the outcome.

Choose one or two areas you can replace fixed thinking with a growth mindset, write them down here:

Identifying Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive Distortion:	How You Think	How You Feel	Antidotes:
1. All-or-Nothing Thinking Everything has to go well or it's all a failure	<i>"Why try?" Why bother if I can't do it all? Or "If I can't do it perfectly it's not worth it"</i>	Hopeless, Depressed, Justified in Giving Up	Focus on Progress not perfection. Allow yourself to try without having to be perfect. Remind yourself that little efforts add up over time. Just get started and try to do one part
2. Overgeneralizing You take one bad instance and assume that everything will be awful after that.	<i>"Nothing good ever happens to me" "If this happened once, then it will probably always happen again"</i>	Depressed, anxious, overwhelmed	Break problems down into tiny pieces. Face one problem at a time. Look for exceptions and small changes that you can make.
3. Black and White Thinking You think in extremes. We only see the negative in a situation or in ourselves.	<i>"I'm a complete failure" "My parents are such idiots" "You never listen to me" Almost any time you use extreme wording like "Always, never, completely, terrible," etc.</i>	Upset, It magnifies all emotions- sadness, anxiety, anger, etc.	Try to see both sides of an issue. Use precise language about 1 specific thing. Ask "What else is there?" Is there more information that I'm ignoring? Can I see both the good and bad at the same time?
4. Mind Reading Assuming you know what	<i>"Nobody likes me" "Everyone is judging me"</i>	Insecure, Anxious, Fearful	Ask clarifying questions, even sensitive ones. Get more information. Fact check.

others are thinking	<i>"My boss must think I'm incompetent"</i>	and sometimes Angry, Vindictive or Upset	Remind yourself that you may not be making accurate guesses about other people's perceptions.
5. Catastrophizing Assuming that fears and worries about the worst case scenario must be true.	<i>"This is never going to work" "I'm going to fail and make a complete fool of myself" "She's late. It's raining. She has hydroplaned and her car is upside down in a ditch."</i>	Fearful, Anxious, Hopeless, Helpless	Look for examples of how things have worked out in the past. Ask "Am I safe now?" Focus on the present and on the work you need to do. Choose to open yourself up to positive possibilities and prepare for negative ones. Find something to be grateful for.
6. Emotional Reasoning thinking that our feelings accurately reflect reality	<i>"I feel stressed about school, the teacher must be giving us too much homework" "I feel hurt, so the other person must be a jerk!" "I feel anxious at the party so I must be an awkward person."</i>	Exaggerates any emotion.	Separate feelings and thoughts. "Just because I feel ___ doesn't mean ___" It's essential to recognize that emotions, just like our thoughts, aren't always based on the facts, they can be influenced by hormones, sleep, hunger, and a lot of other things.
7. Labeling Taking a behavior and turning it into an identity.	<i>"I'm a loser. I'm broken. I'm a failure." "She's a jerk" "He's an idiot"</i>	Hopeless, Angry	Think in terms of behaviors instead of identity. "He was unkind" instead of "He is a jerk" or "I made a mistake" instead of "I am a failure". My kid made a bad choice instead of my kid is a bad kid. Replace it with a growth mindset ie. "I

<p>8. Mental Filtering Only seeing one side of a situation, usually the negative</p>	<p><i>"Nothing good ever happens"</i> <i>"This has been the worst year ever"</i> <i>"I'm the only one who ever takes out the trash"</i></p>	<p>Ashamed, Depressed, Defensive</p>	<p>haven't learned this yet"</p> <p>Build habits around seeing the good in others and yourself. Gratitude Practice, three good things, or just practice saying "Thank you" when someone gives you a compliment.</p> <p>Or if you filter out the negative, or have a problem with denial, I create a system of accountability (ie feedback session, a support group like AA, etc)</p>
<p>9. Personalization Taking others' actions personally- believing they are about you.</p>	<p><i>"If my son misbehaves, it must be because I'm a bad mother"</i> <i>"If my boss yells at me, it must be because I'm messing up"</i> <i>"If the cashier is rude to me, they must not be respecting me"</i></p>	<p>Guilty, Overwhelmed, Burdened, Helpless Depressed Anxious</p>	<p>"Not my monkeys, not my circus" I am not responsible for other people's choices. I will focus on my own choices. Is this about them or me? "Maybe they are just having a bad day..." Be open to feedback, but only on what you're responsible for.</p>
<p>10. Unreal-Ideal Comparing ourselves unfairly to others</p>	<p><i>"Susan seems to handle this job just fine, how come I'm struggling?"</i> <i>"Bob seems to have it all together, perfect job, perfect wife- I'm such a loser"</i></p>	<p>"Never Good enough" Shame Depressed Anxious Mistreated</p>	<p>Remember that you are only seeing one small aspect of another person's life. Build real relationships with real people who are honest about their flaws. Focus your energy on your life and your values. Spend less time on social media or unfollow toxic accounts.</p>

Skill #2: Regulating your Circadian Rhythm

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from improving that area.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you get exposure to natural daylight throughout the day?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you get exposure to natural daylight in the morning?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you have a hard time falling asleep?	No	Sometimes	Usually
Do you have a hard time staying asleep?	No	Sometimes	Usually
Do you have enough energy to get through the day?	Usually	Sometimes	No
Do you experience depression or low mood in the winter?	No	Sometimes	Usually
Do you experience agitation or insomnia in the spring?	No	Sometimes	Usually
Do you use screens in bed or in the last hour before bedtime?	No	Sometimes	Usually
Do you use screens first thing when you wake up?	No	Sometimes	Usually

Explore:

How do you think your exposure (or lack of exposure) to daylight during the day and dim light at night might be impacting your sleep, energy or mood?

Consider your Options: Here are some practical things you can do to use light to help regulate your circadian rhythm, and improve sleep, energy and mood.

Check the changes you would be willing to make, then choose just one of them to implement. Remember, it's best not to try to make too many changes at once.

- Open your blinds/curtains in the morning
- Sit outside in the morning
- Go for a walk in the morning
- Spend some time outside on your breaks at work
- Open your blinds/curtains during the day
- Go camping
- Choose an outdoor activity to do with friends or alone (hiking, frisbee, birdwatching, photography, etc)
- Purchase a therapy light and use it for 10-20 minutes in the morning
 - [Northern Light Brand](#)
 - [Carex Brand](#) : *This company was a sponsor for my channel in the past
- Turn off screens an hour before bedtime
- Dim lights in the evenings
- Limit exposure to screens/blue light in the 2 hours before bedtime
- Use Blue light blocking glasses in the evenings

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to improve your exposure to light to help your brain regulate its energy levels?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it's helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Skill #3: Creating Movement

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you engage in some kind of movement daily?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you get exercise as part of your job? (ie you do manual labor)	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you do aerobic activities (where you get your heart pumping hard and it's hard to breathe and talk at the same time)?	Yes, a few times a week	Occasionally	No
Do you have some kind of exercise that you enjoy (dancing, climbing, hiking, etc)	Yes	Kinda	No, I hate all kinds of movement
Do you sit for work?	No	Sometimes	Yes
Do you sit a lot at home?	No	Sometimes	Yes
Do you take walks, stretch or do some other kind of movement during your breaks?	Daily	A few times a week	No, I just look at my phone
Do you work out excessively or compulsively? (frequent injuries, exhaustion, low weight, it interferes with living the life you value, or signs of strain on heart)	No	Sometimes	Yes
Do you have people you exercise with? (ie friends, teammates, a trainer, an accountability partner)	Yes	Sometimes	Rarely
Are you very overweight or underweight?	No	A little	Yes, very
Does exercise make you anxious?	No	A little	Yes, very

Explore: How does your body ask for exercise? (ie-it feels stiff, sluggish, bloated)? How do you feel after you exercise?

How do you think the amount of movement you are getting impacts your energy, health or mood?

What kinds of changes would you like to see?

When is the best time for you to exercise, when are you most motivated and available?

What are your favorite ways to get movement in? What do you enjoy doing with your body?

Who could be your social support-either exercising with you or keeping you accountable?

Consider your Options: Here's a list of ideas you could try to improve your physical health or get in a little more exercise:

- Get a standing desk at work
- Bike or walk to work
- Walk to the next bus stop/train station instead of the one closest to you
- Try one new type of movement that you may enjoy (biking, climbing, dancing, birding etc)
- Go for a walk or stretch during your breaks from work
- Do some kind of physical service for a neighbor- (ie mow their lawn, rake their leaves, chop some wood, pull some weeds, etc)
- Get a group of friends together to walk, bike or hike
- Hire a personal trainer
- Customize the activity tracker on your smartwatch to prompt you to take short walks, etc.
- Make some meeting walk and talks, (where you walk as you talk)
- Go for walks when on phone calls
- Set a fitness goal, like running a 5k or climbing a mountain, then hang pictures of your goal around your house and set a system to achieve your goal
- Make a really tiny tiny step towards your goal (like putting on running shoes every day, or going to the gym for only 5 minutes each day)
- Volunteer to walk a neighbors dog
- Take your kids to the playground and walk laps around the playground while they play
- Print out a monthly calendar and put a big red check mark each day that you accomplish some small goal (like walking 15 minutes that day)

- Explore what kind of equipment would make exercise easier for you (ie well fitting clothes, supportive shoes, a comfortable bike seat. I'm not encouraging you to make some huge purchase. But the right equipment can make exercise much more enjoyable)

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to improve your physical health?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it's helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Skill #4: Creating an Abundant Mindset

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you might benefit from intentional practice to see the good.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you show appreciation to the people around you?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you say "Thank You" a lot?	Yes, multiple times a day	Daily	Rarely
Do you consume a lot of news media (i.e. read the news, watch news on TV)?	Less than 30 minutes a day	Around an hour a day	Hours every day
Do you think the world is getting worse every day?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you notice the positive in your circumstances?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you have an intentional daily gratitude practice?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you beat yourself up a lot?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you <u>dwell</u> on thoughts that your life is worse than everyone else's, that it's unfair or how miserable you are?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you frequently bring up memories of the worst moments of your day/life?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you accept compliments?	Yes, graciously	I'll be polite, but I don't believe nice things people say about me	No, I think they're just saying it to be nice
Do you take time to remember the good moments in your day or life?	Often	Sometimes	Never

Where do you put your attention? Do you regularly dwell on the positive things in your life?

Consider your Options: Here's a bunch of ideas you could try to see the positive in your life, remember, it's best to just make tiny changes that are sustainable, so just choose one that seems do-able for you.

- Start a gratitude journal and write a few things each day that you're grateful for
- Download a gratitude journal app, set reminders or notification on your phone to help you remember to do it each night
- Team up with a friend to text each other the good from each of your days
- Do the 3 good things exercise daily for one week
- Write a letter of gratitude to someone
- Tell a coworker or friend something you appreciate about them
- Sit in a quiet place and think about when something went well-bring to mind how it felt
- If you believe in God, pray a prayer of gratitude, don't ask for anything, just express appreciation
- Tell your child/spouse/parent/boss something you really appreciate about them
- Show appreciation to the service staff you interact with (cashiers, waitstaff, janitors, etc)
- Watch less news, use that time to do good in the world instead
- Follow uplifting accounts (like goodnews or upworthy) on your social media, unfollow any accounts that bring a lot of negativity to your life.
- Download my free "Daily Journal" Template and use it for one week

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to notice the good in your life?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it's helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Skill #5: Improving your Sleep

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from improving the quality of your sleep.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you go to bed at a regular time?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you wake up at a regular time?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you have a hard time falling asleep?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you have a hard time staying asleep?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you have a hard time waking up?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you watch TV, do homework, work, eat, or other alerting activities in bed?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you drink caffeine after noon?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you drink caffeine daily or excessively?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you use screens in bed or in the last hour before bedtime?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you use screens first thing when you wake up?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you lay awake for a long time in bed trying to fall asleep?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you take long naps(longer than 30 minutes) during the day?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you use alcohol, nicotine or eat heavy or spicy foods before bed?	No	Sometimes	Often

Do you think a lack of sleep impacts your mood and energy? Yes or No

If so, write a little about how lack of sleep impacts you:

Consider your Options: Here are some practical things you can do to improve your sleep:
Check the changes you would be willing to make, then choose just one of them to implement. Remember, it's best not to try to make too many changes at once.

- Go to bed at the same time every night for 1 week
- Wake up at the same time every morning for 1 week
- Choose to not nap (for one day or multiple days, you set your goals)
- Don't use your bed for working, eating or other exciting activities for 1 week
- Decrease caffeine usage
- No caffeine after noon
- Try using no caffeine for one week and see how it impacts your sleep and mood
- Put up light blocking curtains
- Get morning sunlight exposure
- Try the CBT-I technique, get out of bed if you're lying awake for more than around 15 minutes.
- Create a soothing bedtime routine- it might include a few of these: Evening snack, warm bath, change into pajamas, brush teeth, get into bed, read a book, pray, go to sleep
- Exercise during the day
- Use your night shift setting on your smartphone
- Turn off phone notifications at night
- Set your thermostat to be cool in the evenings (68 degrees or lower)
- Put your phone on 'do-not-disturb' mode while you are sleeping
- Put your phone in a different room when you're sleeping (don't look at it right before bed or right after waking)
- Use a sleep tracker (ie an apple watch) to explore your sleep patterns

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to improve your exposure to light to help your brain regulate its energy levels?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it's helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Skill #6: Simple Mindfulness

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from trying Mindfulness.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you get stuck in your thoughts?	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Do you get wrapped up in emotions?	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Can you separate yourself from your thoughts and feelings?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Do you frequently worry about the future?	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Do you get stuck dwelling on the past?	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Do you feel alive and present in the here and now?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Do you beat yourself up for feeling sad, anxious, angry or other “negative” emotions?	Rarely	Sometimes	Often

Explore: Are you judgmental with your emotions? Which ones do you label as “positive emotions” and which ones do you consider to be “negative emotions”?

Do you feel uncomfortable when you slow down or have nothing to do?

Consider your Options: There are a lot of ways to practice mindfulness, consider some of these options or come up with your own. Make a plan to do just one of them.

- Try the mindful eating activity
- Try the mindful breathing activity
- Try the mindful body scan activity
- Try [mindful walking](#)
- Download an app like [Calm](#) or [Headspace](#) to develop a mindful practice
- Find a mindfulness [playlist](#) on Youtube that you like and practice it each day for 7 days

- Download an app like “Insight Timer” or the apple watch app “Breathe” to prompt you to be mindful through your day
- Read a book on mindfulness like “Wherever You Go, There You Are” or “The Places That Scare You”
- Create a soothing morning routine that involves mindfulness, meditation, prayer or some other quiet practice.
- Set limits on your phone usage or screen time
- Sit on the Toilet without looking at your phone
- Drive without listening to anything
- Go for a walk without any distractions

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to be a little more mindful each day?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it's helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Skill #7: Feed Your Brain

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from improving what you feed your brain.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you eat vegetables regularly?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you eat a wide variety of naturally colorful foods?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you eat around 30 different plants weekly?	Yes	Occasionally	No
Do you eat fermented foods (like kimchi, yogurt, or sauerkraut)?	Yes, Daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you eat foods in their natural, less processed state (ie whole foods like an apple, vs. processed apple juice or oatmeal vs. sugary cereal)?	Yes, Most of what I eat is whole	Some of what I eat is whole, some is processed	Most of what I eat is highly processed
Do you eat greasy, fried food high in saturated fats?	No	A few times a week	Daily
Do you eat sugary, high calorie “empty carbs”?	No	A few times a week	Daily
Do you use caffeine?	Never or Rarely	Daily	Multiple times a day
Do you frequently diet, have limited or restrictive eating patterns, or an eating disorder?	No	Sometimes	Yes
Do you regularly eat healthy fats like those found in nuts, seeds, wild-caught fish and olive oil?	Yes, Daily	Some days	Rarely

Explore: How healthy do you think your diet is?

Are you regularly eating healthy foods that feed your brain?

Do you drink Caffeine daily? Have you noticed any side effects or do you struggle with Anxiety or sleep difficulties?

Have you noticed any way that what you eat impacts your mood?

Consider your Options: Here are some examples of small changes you could make to improve your nutrition. Remember, one small change that you stick with is better than trying huge, difficult changes that you aren't able to sustain.

- Add in a vegetable to your dinner, something simple like Carrots and ranch dressing, broccoli, or a premade salad
- Explore local fast-casual restaurants that you could replace a fast-food meal with a healthier meal (ie Panera, Zupas, Chipotle etc)
- Check out the book "Eat This, Not That" or the website to explore replacements for the worst foods in your diet
- Try a new veggie from the grocery store that you've never eaten before, or expand your diet to include new foods
- Buy some pre-made salads from the store for your meals
- Replace vegetable oil with canola oil or olive oil
- Consider supplementing with Omega 3's
- Consider supplementing with a multivitamin and/or Multimineral (EMPower is a well researched option, *not a sponsor)
- Eat fish one day a week
- Explore meal planning, or meal delivery kits like Hello Fresh or Green Chef, or an online meal planning like eMeals that pairs with Walmart pickup to plan your meals and deliver the ingredients
- Add a fermented food to your diet or consider a probiotic supplement- (check out the link in the course to Dr. Mark's guide)
- Work with a licensed nutritionist to explore how to improve your nutrition
- If you have rigid rules about eating or you're a chronic dieter, read the book "Intuitive Eating"
- Speak with your doctor about your health in general, explore your diet and ask if you may benefit from a blood test to explore deficiencies.

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to improve your nutrition and feed your brain?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it's helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Skill #8: Clearing Your Mind

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from journaling.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
I know what I'm feeling and why I'm feeling it.	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
My life has purpose and meaning.	Yes	Kinda	Not really
I frequently repeat my mistakes.	Sometimes	Usually	Over and Over
I often feel overwhelmed	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
I have a hard time remembering the good things that happen to me	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
I have goals I want to achieve	Yes	Kinda	Not really
I have painful or confusing memories I'd like to resolve	No	Maybe	Yes

Explore: Do you love journaling? Hate it? Don't know where to start?

Can you imagine any way that Journaling may help improve your mental health?

Are there any situations/emotions/memories that feel overwhelming, confusing or difficult for you that you haven't written about? Write a list:

Do you have an active strategy to notice the positive things and your growth in your life? If so-what is it? If not- how could you use journaling to improve your happiness by keeping track of these things?

Consider your Options: There are a lot of different ways to keep a journal, consider one area you'd be willing to try.

- Try the Brain Dump activity
- Try gratitude Journaling or the 3 Good things activity for 2 weeks
- Work with your therapist to explore how you can process old trauma through writing
- Set a reminder on your phone to take one picture per day
- Download a journaling app like DayOne and set a reminder to journal every day for one week
- Buy a notebook or journal and just write about your day, thoughts, or emotions each day for one week
- Download the "Daily Template" from my journal template 'The Oak in the Acorn' and follow the prompts each day for one week
- Use an app like Chatbooks to print out pictures from your phone
- Try any creative way that you'd like to start journaling (ie bullet journaling, daily sketches, making an audio recording, emailing yourself an entry each day, etc)

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to clear your mind?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it's helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Skill #9.1: Regulating Your Nervous System - Managing the Stress Response

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from using stress regulation techniques.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you feel constantly stressed out?	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Do you have a hard time winding down?	No	Often	Always
Do you frequently feel scared, anxious or upset?	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Do you frequently feel angry, irritable or frustrated?	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Do you get exhausted, overwhelmed and shut down?	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Do you know how to relax your body when it's time to calm down?	Usually	Most of the time	Rarely
Do you sleep pretty well?	Usually	Most of the time	Rarely
Do you feel burned out?	No	Kinda	Yes

Explore: How are your overall stress levels? Do you feel constantly stressed out? It's ok to feel stressed occasionally, the stress response is meant to help us get activated and get things down or create safety, but chronic stress can make us sick.

What do you notice in your body when you feel anxious or stressed?

How do you feel when you take slow deep breaths?

What works for you when you want to calm down or relax? How healthy are your coping skills? (ie exercise is a pretty healthy response to stress, Drinking too much is not a very healthy response to stress)

Consider your Options: You can learn skills to manage your stress levels, some of them are simple and only take a few minutes a day, others may feel quite big like changing a job or setting boundaries. Pick one change that you are willing to make to decrease your stress.

- Practice a Self Regulation technique once per day (ie diaphragm breathing, the yawn, etc)
- Say no to an unnecessary task that is stressful for you
- Increase your exercise routine
- Do a brain dump activity (See the section on Journaling)
- Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation at night
- Use a calendar to schedule out your day and set realistic expectations for your routine
- Create an intentional morning routine that starts your day off right
- Create a relaxing evening routine that helps you wind down
- Learn more about the stress response by watching my video on the fight/flight/freeze response
- Take the Free Grounding Skills for Stress, Anxiety and PTSD course
- Learn Paced Breathing
- Schedule in a relaxing post-work activity
- Set some healthy boundaries around your time, energy, work or relationships. (ie don't answer emails at night or weekends, cut off an unhealthy friend, say no to a stressful event, be assertive instead of a people pleaser)
- Put your finances in order- ie set a budget, get out of debt, etc

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to manage stress?

I will

At what time?

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc)

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member)

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app)

How will I notice if it's helping?(this helps improve dopamine and motivation)

Skill #9.2: Regulating Your Nervous System - Nature Therapy

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from spending more time in nature.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you spend a little time in nature each day?	Yes, daily	Some days	Rarely
Do you keep plants in your house?	Yes	Fake plants	No
Do you spend time in green(forest) blue (water) or other natural spaces each week?	No	Sometimes	Often
Do you spend time on the weekends in nature	Often	Sometimes	Never
How much time per day do you spend looking at a screen?	0-3 hours	4-10 hours	10+ hours
Do you have green or blue spaces near you?	Yes	A little	No
Do you feel scared, uncomfortable or uncertain about being outside?	No	A Bit	Yes

Explore: How might spending more time in nature improve your mental health?

Do you feel uncertain, uncomfortable, scared, or lacking skills when it comes to spending time outdoors? (if so, do you want to learn more skills to make it more comfortable?)

Consider your Options: Some people spend hours or days in high-adventure or wilderness outings, other people enjoy keeping a few plants and animals near them. Consider some of the following options to increase the amount of time you spend with nature:

- Get a plant for your home
- Open your windows to let in natural sunlight
- Put a beautiful picture of nature on your TV, Phone or Computer Screensaver
- Hang beautiful pictures of nature in your home or workspace
- Go to the city park for your lunch break
- Plan a trip to a local nature park
- Plan a camping trip
- Visit a national park or other awe-inspiring natural place
- Play with an animal (like a dog, cat, horse, etc)
- Work with your neighborhood or city planners to promote more green spaces
- Plant a garden, even if it's just potted plants. If you don't have much space you can grow herbs in something like this: [herb planter](#) or this [indoor herb garden](#)
- Watch a nature video
- Follow nature photographers on social media
- Take a walk outside during your work breaks or before work
- Take a class, a guided hike, or read a book to learn more skills to make time in nature more enjoyable.

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to help spend more time in nature?

I will

At what time?

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc)

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member)

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app)

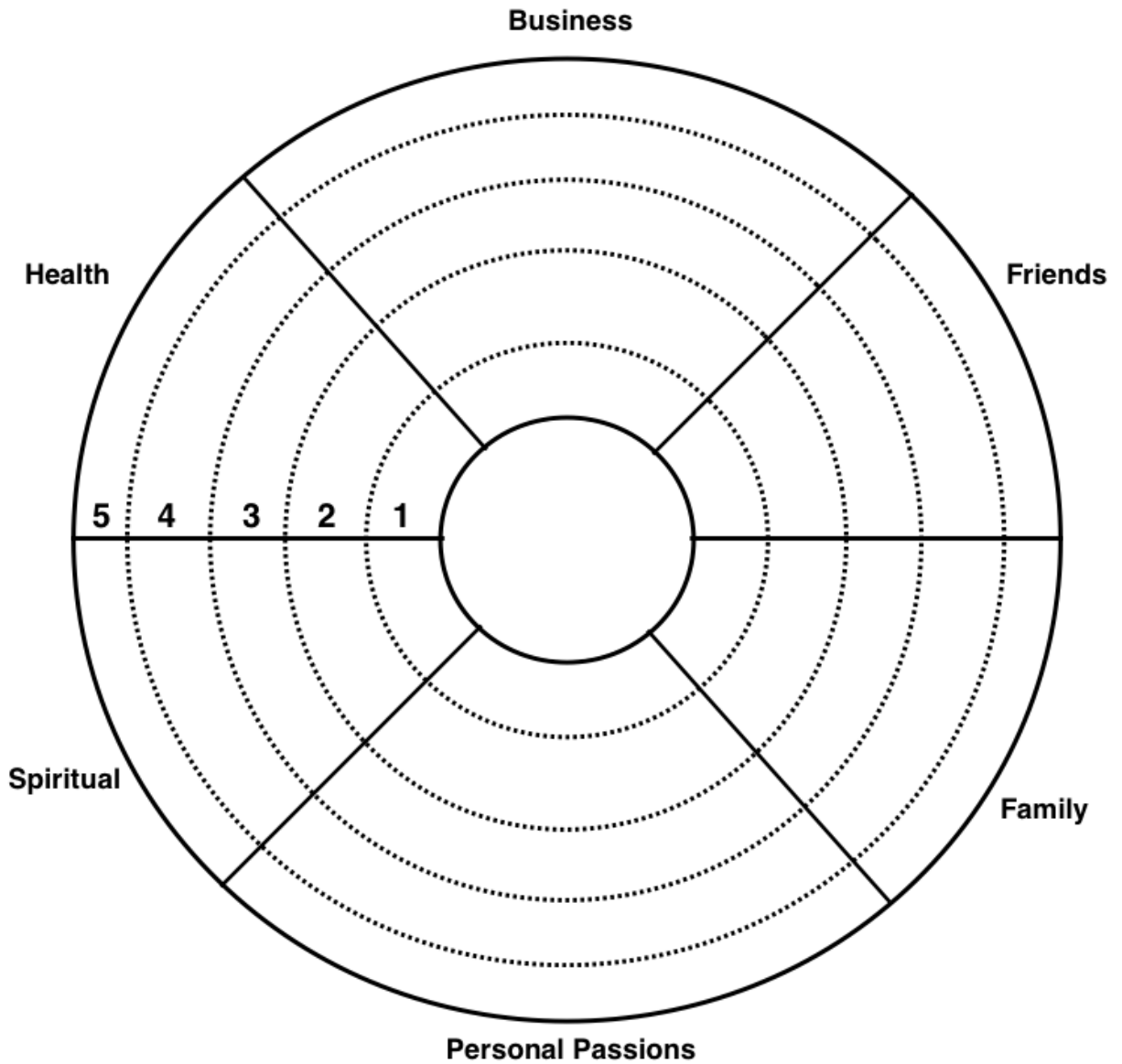
How will I notice if it's helping?(this helps improve dopamine and motivation)

Skill #10: Building Your Support Network

Explore: Circle your answers in the columns below, if you circle any answers in the red category, that may indicate that you may really benefit from improving your support network.

	Keep up the good work	May need some improvement	Could see large benefits from change
Do you have a close friend?	Yes, many	At least 1 friend	No
Are you close with your family? (If they are healthy)	Yes	Sorta	No
Are your friends and family supportive?	Yes	Kinda	No
How often do you interact with supportive people?	Often	Occasionally	Rarely
How often do you interact with abusive people?	Rarely	Every once in a while	Often
Do you feel lonely?	No	Sometimes	Frequently
When something goes wrong, is there someone you can call?	Yes	Maybe	No
Do you give and receive positive physical touch and eye contact?	Multiple times a day	Daily	Weekly or less
Do other people rely on you?	Yes	Kinda	No
Do your relationships feel deep and meaningful to you?	Yes	Kinda	No
Do your relationships feel tense, strained, dramatic or conflictual?	Rarely	Often	Frequently
Do you frequently feel upset about people at work?	Rarely	Often	Frequently

Explore: Using this circle, write the names of your social connections in each of these areas with those closest to you being in the middle and acquaintances out toward the edges.



Where do you have lots of support?

Where do you need to build stronger connections?

Do your closest friends know how much they matter to you?

Consider your Options: Underline the changes you would be willing to make to improve your connections, then check just one of them. Remember, it's best not to try to make too many changes at once.

- Show someone how much you appreciate them (ie tell them, send them a text, make a meaningful gift or card, etc)
- Deepen the relationships you already have. Small little actions really do add up over time.
 - Send a text message
 - Plan a lunch date
 - Call someone up to ask how they're doing
 - Make a reminder to call someone you care about
 - Put birthdays and other events into your calendar, do something nice for them or just tell them "happy birthday"
- Find a support group: Hospitals, community mental health providers and therapy practices often offer support groups.
- Join a club or pick an activity. Find a group of people with similar interests and get to know them.
- Look for a Spiritual Group to join or attend a church function
- Try community education, take a class that you're interested in like bowling or pottery. If nothing else you'll get some new skills
- Find a service project that you're interested in. You could check the United Way's website or the app JustServe for ideas, even things you can do at home
- Say Yes to the next thing you get invited to.
- Practice an outward mindset- make other people feel like they matter to you.
 - Ask someone about themselves.
- Take the initiative to invite people deeper into your life. It doesn't matter how, it can be as simple as inviting people over for dessert or a movie night or planning an outing together. Suggest to meet up at a show. The important thing is just putting yourself out there. If you wait for the other person to do it, they often won't.
- Learn to develop healthy boundaries. Some relationships are better with firm boundaries and you may even be better off if you cut off unhealthy people from your life. Work with a professional to learn how to help set healthy boundaries with people.
- If you experience a lot of conflict in your relationships, read "The Anatomy of Peace" by the Arbinger Institute
- Strengthen your marriage-
 - plan a date
 - take my Relationship Skills Course
 - Read a book like John Gottman's "7 Principles for Making Marriage Work" or "The 4 Habits of Joy Filled Marriages"
 - Sign up for the Utah Marriage Commissions Free courses on improving relationships.

Make a Plan: What is one small change you will make to strengthen your support network?

I will _____

At what time? _____

How will I remember? (ie set reminders in phone, set alarm on your alexa, put a post-it note by the bedside, etc) _____

Who can support me in this? (friend, therapist, coach, family member) _____

Where will I track it?(ie habit tracker, calendar app) _____

How will I notice if it's helping? (ie something you can quantify- write about it in a journal, keep track of how many hours of sleep you get, write down how energetic you feel, etc)

Making Change Happen

OK! Now you've watched the entire course.

You've selected one change from each section and written it on your Master List

Now's the time to choose one or two small changes that you're going to work on for around a month, until they become easy, habitual, a part of your routine.

I'm including a copy of my favorite habit tracker here for you to use. Feel free to put your new habits into it and give yourself a big ✓ each time you do your new habit.

So, for example, if your new skill is taking a multivitamin each day and you also want to decrease your screen time at night, write down the new habits and on the tracker and each day you do them, give yourself a big check mark.

When those habits seem easy, start chipping away at a new one.

By changing just 1% each day, you'll have massive change in the space of one year.

You got this!

You can Change Your Brain!

HABIT BUILDER

MONTH

Intention

Focus Area

Tasks

DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
HABIT																															

"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." -Annie Dillard

Course Resources

To see the studies referenced in the course, please see the transcripts for the course.

Skill #1: A Growth Mindset

- [Atomic Habits](#) by James Clear
- [Mindset](#) by Carol Dweck
- [The Brain that Changes itself](#) by Norman Dodge
- [Unbroken](#) by Laura Hildebrand
- [I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings](#) by Maya Angelou
- [Tiny changes add up- YouTube Video](#)
- [Fight Depression and Anxiety With Your Core Values](#)
- [Man's Search for Meaning](#) by Viktor Frankl

Skill #2: Regulate your Circadian Rhythm

- Therapy Lights:
 - [Northern Light Brand](#)
 - [Carex Brand](#) : *This company was a sponsor for my channel in the past, I currently use their product and like it.
- [Blue Light Blocking Glasses](#): There are many options on amazon
- [Light Blocking Curtains](#)

Skill #3: Creating Movement

- [Neuroscience Pinpoints Unique Way Exercise Fights Depression](#)
- [Mindful Exercise](#)
- [How to Make Exercise Fun](#)

Skill #4: Creating an Abundant Mindset

- [The Hiding Place](#)- by Corrie Ten Boom
- [Gratitude journal](#)

Skill #5: Improving your Sleep

- [More on Sleep Hygiene](#)
- If you have [Nightmares](#)
- [Happy Place Meditation](#)
- [Why we sleep](#) by Matthew Walker
- [The Insomnia Workbook](#)
- If you wake up in the middle of the night watch [this video](#)

Skill #6: Simple Mindfulness

- [Mindfulness for Beginners](#)- by John Kabat Zinn
-

Skill #7: Feed your Brain

- Dr. Tracey Marks [guide](#) to Improving your Gut Health

- [The surprisingly dramatic role of nutrition in mental health](#)
- [The Better Brain](#)
- [The supplement](#) studied by Bonnie J. Kaplan (Author), Julia J. Rucklidge- EMPOWER

Skill #8: Clear Your Mind

- [Journaling for Mental Health Course](#)
- [DayOne](#)

Skill #9: Regulating your Nervous System - Stress Management and Nature Therapy

- [Exercising Outdoors vs. Indoors](#)
- [Last Child in the Woods - Saving Our Kids from Nature Deficit Disorder](#) by Richard Louv
- Find a [campground](#) near you

Skill #10: Build Your Support Network

- Volunteer with [The United Way](#)
- Find a [MeetUp Group](#)
- This is my [Worldwide Church](#), check it out or find some other source of spiritual support (no pressure)
- [NAMI support groups](#)
- [AA support groups](#)
- [SAMHSA](#) mental health and addiction support
- [The Anatomy of Peace](#) by the Arbinger Institute
- [How to make friends](#)
- [Platonic- How the Science of Attachment Can Help You Make—and Keep—Friends](#) by Marisa Franco