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Mindful Muscles Workbook: MODULE 1



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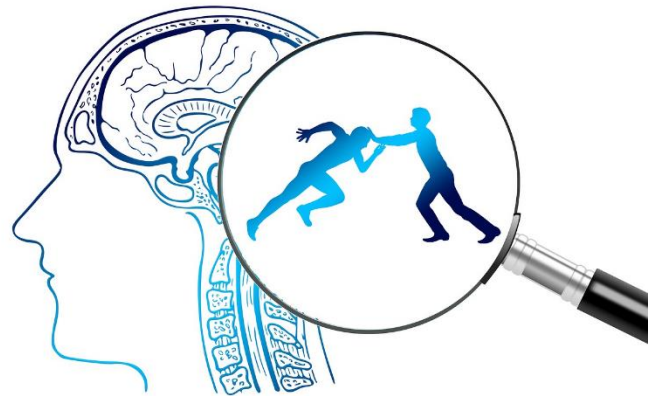
Becoming aware of your thought patterns and values

What is this module about?

In this module, you will learn how to identify, categorise, and think about unhelpful thought patterns. You will also learn how to identify and reflect upon your personal values in the context of exercising and what these values mean to you.

What will you do?

To get us started, below are different types of unhelpful thoughts that might pop into your mind unintentionally and automatically.



1. Negative filtering: You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. While squatting, you struggle to finish your last set of repetitions, and this makes you anxious. *“Look at how pathetic and weak I am, I can’t even finish all my sets properly”*.

2. Unfair comparisons: You interpret events in terms of standards that are unrealistic. For example, in the gym you may focus on other exercisers who train more years than you do, or bodybuilders who compete professionally. You find yourself inferior to them. You think to yourself: *“They’re stronger and better-looking than I am”* or *“They’re lifting more weights than I can manage”*.

3. What if?: You keep thinking about ‘*what would happen if*’, but fail to be satisfied by any of the possible answers. *“What if my body will never look the way I want it to?”* or *“What if I try to lift something heavier and look ridiculous doing it?”*.

4. Catastrophizing: Despite training hard for months, you believe that a friend’s joke about your physical appearance is true. Your friends’ remark continues to bother you until it becomes almost unbearable, and you cannot shift your mind from the thought that, actually, they might not have been joking or that there is some truth to their comment – after all why would they say that? *“It is terrible, I thought I was fit but I guess this is not what others think”*.

5. Overgeneralizing: You tend to overgeneralise negative thoughts and feelings based on a single incident. For instance, you may look at all the people training nearby and think that everyone else has a better-looking body than you do. *“This generally happens to me, everybody else looks good. I seem to fail at this, everybody else is much better at training than me”*.

Each of us has a particular style of thinking. On the **Four-Column Thought Form** below, keep note of any **situation** that is associated with a negative **feeling** (e.g., sad, angry, anxious). Then note the specific **unhelpful thoughts** that you are having that are associated with this feeling in this situation. Using the checklist of automatic thought categories, note the specific **category** of your negative thought. After you have completed this form for a few days, make a list of the most common unhelpful thought patterns and reflect on how this might affect the way that you feel.



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Four-Column Unhelpful Thought Form			
Situation	Feeling	Automatic thought	Category of thought
<p><i>Example 1:</i></p> <p><i>You are in the gym and you think to yourself: "Look at them, I'll never be as strong no matter how much I try"</i></p>	<i>Sadness</i>	<i>I'm a failure in whatever I do</i>	<i>Overgeneralising</i>

Challenging unhelpful thought patterns

Following from the previous exercise you will now examine the advantages and disadvantages of unhelpful thought patterns.



Examining the Advantages and Disadvantages of Unhelpful Thought Patterns

What do I have to do? Use the table below to reflect on and evaluate your thoughts.

Why is this helpful? This exercise can help you determine the worth of unhelpful thoughts and help you determine if you are thinking realistically about different experiences or preventing yourself to think positively.

How to do this exercise? As a first step, bring in mind an unhelpful thought you had last time you were doing sport or exercise (e.g., *I feel that all my efforts are in vain*). Then consider what are the advantages and disadvantages of this thought. For instance, you may consider that “*this thought motivates me to exercise more*” is an advantage, and that “*this thought ruins my exercise mood*” is a disadvantage. Then think about how life would improve if you believed or recalled this unhelpful thought less (e.g., *thinking less about it would help me enjoy exercise or training more and be less worried*). Please note that you don’t have to change this thought, but just to become aware of it and the ways it might affect you.

Unhelpful thought	Advantages	Disadvantages	How would my life improve if I believed this thought less?
<i>I feel that all my efforts at the gym are in vain</i>	Motivates me to exercise more	Ruins my exercise mood	I'd enjoy exercise or training more and be worry-free

Part 2 – Why are values important?

Goals provide motivation, but values are things that we can commit to. Values are personally relevant and determine how we approach our training/physical activity. They are the things that you feel are important for the way that you would like to live and engage with the world around you.

Everyone's values are different.

The aim of this task is to get you to think carefully about what you value most when you are exercising



Understanding your Values

What do I have to do?

On the next page you will see a list of values. Values could perhaps best be described as principles (ethical or moral) that guide your approach to life. They are standards of behaviour. They are the things that you, personally, think are important for the way that you would like to live. As such, and importantly, there are no values that could be described as right or wrong. There are only values that can be described as personally meaningful.

1. Your task is to choose, from the list on the next page, the **5 values** that you feel are most important to you. This in itself is not an easy task and so you might want to spend some time thinking carefully before choosing your 10 most important values. Remember, there is no right and wrong here, only what is personally meaningful for you.
2. Once you've chosen your values, we'd like you to narrow your list down to further so that you have chosen core values. Again, this is not an easy task, so think carefully and take your time. Think about why each value is important to you, and, perhaps, why one is more important than another.

Why is this helpful? This exercise can help you determine your values and remind yourself why you engage in exercise or sport.

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<i>DUTY</i> to carry out my duties and responsibilities	<i>MINDFULNESS</i> to live conscious and mindful of the present moment	<i>CHALLENGE</i> to take on difficult tasks and problems	<i>TOLERANCE</i> to accept and respect those who differ from me	<i>WORLD PEACE</i> to work to promote peace in the world	<i>NON-CONFORMITY</i> to question and challenge authority and norms
<i>WEALTH</i> to have plenty of money	<i>CONTRIBUTION</i> to make a lasting contribution in the world	<i>CHANGE</i> to have a life full of change and variety	<i>COURTESY</i> to be considerate and polite toward other	<i>AUTONOMY</i> (to be self-determined and independent)	<i>MASTERY</i> to be competent in my everyday activities
<i>RISK</i> to take risks and chances	<i>PASSION</i> to have deep feelings about ideas activities, or people	<i>ACHIEVEMENT</i> to have important accomplishments	<i>FUN</i> to play and have fun	<i>INTIMACY</i> to share innermost experiences with others	<i>HUMILITY</i> to be modest and unassuming
<i>LOVED</i> to be loved by those close to me	<i>SIMPLICITY</i> to live simply, with minimal needs	<i>MONOGAMY</i> to have one close, loving relationship	<i>PURPOSE</i> to have meaning and direction in my life	<i>SELF CONTROL</i> to be disciplined in my own actions	<i>ACCURACY</i> to be accurate in my opinions and beliefs
<i>LOVING</i> to give love to others	<i>SELF-ACCEPTANCE</i> to accept myself as I am	<i>POWER</i> to have control over others	<i>SELF-ESTEEM</i> to feel good about myself	<i>SELF-KNOWLEDGE</i> to have a deep and honest understanding of myself	<i>SERVICE</i> to be of service to others
<i>HOPE</i> to maintain an optimistic and positive outlook	<i>MODERATION</i> to avoid excesses and find a middle ground	<i>GROWTH</i> to keep changing and growing	<i>TRADITION</i> to follow respected patterns of the past	<i>SEXUALITY</i> to have an active and satisfying sex life	<i>FAME</i> to be known and recognised
<i>HEALTH</i> to be physically well & healthy	<i>ACCEPTANCE</i> to be accepted as I am	<i>PLEASURE</i> to feel good	<i>KNOWLEDGE</i> to learn and contribute valuable knowledge	<i>HELPLESSNESS</i> to be helpful to others	<i>ECOLOGY</i> to live in harmony with the environment
<i>DEPENDABILITY</i> to be reliable and trustworthy	<i>VIRTUE</i> to live a morally pure and excellent life	<i>RATIONALITY</i> to be guided by reason and logic	<i>COMFORT</i> to have a pleasant and comfortable life	<i>EXCITEMENT</i> to have a life full of thrills and stimulation	<i>SOLITUDE</i> to have time and space where I can be apart from others
<i>GENUINENESS</i> to act in a manner that is true to who I am	<i>STABILITY</i> to have a life that stays fairly consistent	<i>FORGIVENESS</i> to be forgiving of others	<i>LEISURE</i> to take time to relax and enjoy	<i>CREATIVITY</i> to have new and original ideas	<i>NURTURANCE</i> to take care of an nurture others
<i>HUMOUR</i> to see the humorous side of myself and the world	<i>SAFETY</i> to be safe and secure	<i>ATTRACTIVENESS</i> to be physically attractive	<i>FLEXIBILITY</i> to adjust to new circumstances easily	<i>POPULARITY</i> to be well-liked by many people	<i>FITNESS</i> to be physically fit and strong
<i>COMMITMENT</i> to make enduring, meaningful commitments	<i>CARING</i> to take care of others	<i>ROMANCE</i> to have intense, exciting love in my life	<i>REALISM</i> to see and act realistically and practically	<i>FAITHFULNESS</i> to be loyal and true in relationship	<i>BEAUTY</i> to appreciate beauty around me
<i>COOPERATION</i> to work collaboratively with others	<i>COMPASSION</i> to feel and act on concern for others	<i>GENEROSITY</i> to give what I have to others	<i>SPIRITUALITY</i> to grow and mature spiritually	<i>RESPONSIBILITY</i> to make and carry out responsible decisions	<i>JUSTICE</i> to promote fair and equal treatment for all
<i>HONESTY</i> to be honest and truthful	<i>INDUSTRY</i> to work hard and well at my life tasks	<i>ADVENTURE</i> to have new and exciting experiences	<i>INNER PEACE</i> to experience personal peace	<i>OPENNESS</i> to be open to new experiences, ideas, and options	<i>AUTHORITY</i> to be in charge of and responsible for others
<i>FRIENDSHIP</i> to have close, supportive friends	<i>INDEPENDENCE</i> to be free from dependence on others	<i>ORDER</i> to have a life that is well-organised	<i>FAMILY</i> to have a happy, loving family		

How to do this exercise? Please use the table below to write what these values mean to you and rank them in order of importance.

Value	What does it mean for you?	Rank them in order of importance

Realising your Mental Strengths

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The ancient Greeks and Romans used to believe that a healthy mind resides in a healthy body. Becoming physically strong or fit through exercise is great. But it's also great to realise how you're already mentally strong. With the following exercise you will be able to identify your *character strengths* – the values and characteristics that you mostly cherish.

What do I have to do? Use the link shown below to access a free, evidence-based, online questionnaire that assesses personal character strengths.

Why is this helpful? This exercise will help you identify your character strengths, and relevant research has shown that this is associated with a wide range of positive psychological outcomes including increased happiness, self-confidence, and reduced stress.

How to do this exercise? Use the link below to be redirected to the online and free self-assessment questionnaire. Then you will follow the instructions presented there to receive your personalised report of character strengths.

Link to the free, self-assessment questionnaire on personal strengths

<https://www.viacharacter.org/>



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