

Module 5 Transcript

An Introduction To Mental Fitness

“The world wasn’t formed in a day, and neither were we.”

-Lee Haney

Time. Choice. Genetics. Lifestyle. Diet. Habits. Chemistry. Movement. Rest. Mindset.

This course is not a quick fix. I’m not going to promise ten hacks that will change your life in a few seconds--even though that does sound catchy. And we’re not going to uncover that one weird herb or supplement that will magically put you in a prime mental state. What we will do is give you the tools and information you need to start to take action for yourself and create a lifestyle that fosters optimal mental health for you.

In our first sessions, we’ve introduced the concepts that make up the foundations of our overall understanding of mental health: the foundations of the brain, how it works, and what can go wrong. To understand how to best improve the symptoms of depression and anxiety, however, we have to ask: what external factors are contributing to them in the first place? We know there are some reliable culprits: chronic stress, drugs and alcohol, physical illness, lack of good sleep, environmental toxins, lack of physical activity, social isolation, and obesity have all been consistently linked to an increased risk for depression and anxiety in dozens and dozens of research studies.

At the end of the day, this course is a primer on mental fitness, and mental fitness is--as I define it--the knowledge, patterns, habits and skills that culminate in a more enjoyable, more mentally sound life. In effect, it’s not a result, but a lifestyle.

If you’re watching this, you’ve probably read countless articles about all of these things. You’ve scanned diet and exercise blogs. You’ve heard hundreds of tips like drinking celery juice or putting butter in your coffee, about sleep hygiene and time blocking. And I suspect

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that if you're like me, you've bought and tried some of these products.--because goodness knows there are more people than ever before trying to sell you stuff to feel better.

So rather than complicate, I want to simplify--to get back to the root causes and core pillars of good mental health. And I want you to leave with the confidence and clarity you need to start making even small choices that will help you to reclaim agency in your life.

And with that, I want to introduce some core tenets of mental fitness:

Simplicity --You might be thinking, "Is this guy going to make me give up bread? Coffee? Am I going to have to run for eleven hours a week? And how many of these toxins are actually poisoning me, anyway?" So let me say two things right off the bat. Each of us has our own tastes, values, and needs when it comes to deciding how we want to fill our plates and fill our days. Remember: any good approach to mental fitness is tailored to your own preferences and designed around what works for you, so everything I'm saying about mental fitness should be filtered through your own sensibilities, your own lifestyle, your culture and your own contexts. Secondly, mental fitness is a game of small changes. You don't have to completely overhaul your life all at once--simple, small steps can have a huge impact when combined together.

Nutrition-- How you fuel your body and brain is important. I should know--I practice Nutritional Psychiatry, which looks at mental health through the lens of diet and food choice. Despite the fact that a flood of studies have now been published demonstrating that a whole food, nutrient-dense diet really is a form of medicine, both in terms of physical and mental health, many clinicians and patients are still approaching depression and anxiety in the same old ways. And that needs to change. Luckily, you don't need to rely on a mental health practitioner to make the kind of dietary changes needed to improve your mental health. You can learn how to best nourish your brain—and yourself—and start eating to beat depression and anxiety.

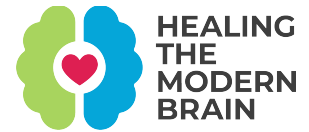
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Movement-- This is a two-for-one that basically asks: what are you doing, and what are you NOT doing? This includes physical activity--exercise, getting around--as well as social activity. Who are you seeing, and who are you spending time with? More fundamentally, what are you spending your time on. The brain is not a muscle, but it was designed to thrive and grow as a living, changing organ.

Rest--A good night's sleep is something that many people struggle with, and when our sleep is good we hardly think about at all. It is a crucial ingredient for overall mental well-being.

Mindfulness, purpose, and, goals-- We're looking to establish a fundamental engagement with the self. That's what all of this is about. When I first meet with patients, I want to know how we'll know that our work together has been successful. And so often when I see the results of good clinical care and the results of good therapy, of lifestyle changes, I see that people have a better, and more clear sense of their own purpose, their ability to enter into a mindful state of great self-awareness. These tenets are fundamental to mental fitness, our ability to engage in the self, and understand our inner world, to get into a mindful, attentive and focused state and to work towards achieving the things we feel closely connected to as our purpose.

Connection—Connection to our own self and purpose, connection to those around us who we love, a connection to our greater community and to the world, connection is a fundamental piece to feeling your mental best. Historically, we've put minimal thought and focus into how our own choices relate to our brains but it doesn't have to be that way. You can dictate what sort of building material you want to provide your brain. You can eat very high quality, nutrient dense ingredients and foods that help your brain function at peak performance. You can avoid toxins, pollutants, habits and substances that do just the opposite. You can even focus on getting a good night's rest and when you do these things



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you're in a place to better prevent and manage depression and anxiety. Because, often times healthier brains are made not born.

By the end of this, you'll get a look at some of the most important new concepts in mental health. You'll engage with your own body, and your own mind. And, you'll be on the path to leading a life you want to live, in a way you want to live it.

All of these core tenets will help you to achieve these things, and it all starts with making the decision.