

THE 12 HABITS
of
MENTALLY STRONG
PEOPLE.



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Alex Mathers

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*What 25 years of mental struggle taught me about using the
mind well*

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The 12 Habits of Mentally Strong People

What 25 years of mental struggle taught me about
using the mind well

I've struggled with anxiety, a quick-temper and crippling overthinking most of my life.

I've lost friends, opportunities, girlfriends and many happy moments because of it.

These experiences forced me to learn everything I could about mental health over fifteen years.

I look back on those years from a very different perspective. It taught me so much about suffering, and how we can limit and stress ourselves through the power of the mind.

If I had never struggled, I'd never have had the drive to try to figure it all out.

In doing so, I became an accidental expert on mental health, psychology, and consciousness. Today, my experience of life is very different, and I am truthfully rarely stressed or anxious. I, of course, have my moments. They are just punctuated with longer periods in between, and don't last long at all. I now coach hundreds on how to develop their mental strength.

'Mental strength' as a label is - of course - an approximation.

You can't measure mental strength, beyond one's own subjective assessment.

But you could say it reflects a state of mind characterised by an absence of stress.

For clarity's sake, my stance is this: we are our strongest when we are least perturbed by our thoughts and judgements.

This is how I'd define 'mental strength.'

As Eckhart Tolle said:

“The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation but thought about it. Be aware of the thoughts you are thinking. Separate them from the situation, which is always neutral. It is as it is.”

We can't see mental strength as a 'character trait,' rather it's more a state of mind (and one that will fluctuate).

What makes someone mentally strong, therefore, is their ability to maintain a calm - and therefore more effective - state of mind more of the time. That's it. Everyone experiences a lower mood. Everyone gets stressed. Everyone gets angry.

How long you spend in a lower mood state, and with what level of intensity - that's the question.

It is this that will create a picture of one's general 'mental strength.'

I've found there are common approaches shared by those who have developed significant long-term mental resilience. And I know them intimately in what I have nurtured and felt through my own self-growth.

These commonalities take the form of everyday behaviours.

And behaviours done with consistency are habits.

Mental strength, therefore, reflects one's habits.

These are the habits shared by the mentally strong:

1. No longer tries to 'fix' themselves

Those who believe they need 'fixing' - and if you ask around, many do - will be caught in a continual loop of insecurity.

When we act as though we need to improve who we are, we reinforce the idea that something is wrong with us, and therefore maintain a negative self-image.

It's not that any of us need fixing - it's that most of us need to let go of the idea that something is wrong with us. In this way, there is no specific set of actions we need to take to live an accepting life.

We are already whole.

It just requires us to truly see this.

Then we are free to get back to what we want to do with the full enjoyment that springs out of being present.

2. Does not tolerate stressful thoughts

'People are not disturbed by things, but by the views they take of them.'

—Marcus Aurelius



The mind will continually throw up all kinds of thoughts, without us even trying.

This is a given. Strong people know the inevitability of this, and do not allow stressful thoughts to be engaged for long. They may arise, but they are not tolerated. We see them merely like little flies buzzing around the head of a bull.

They are there but they are inconsequential. They are not engaged. We turn our attention to other things. This makes all the difference.

3. Uses breathing to slow thoughts

There is a close link between breath and the rate at which we cycle through new thoughts. Anxiety reflects an overly active mind.

An active mind also feeds back into an experience of what feels like anxiety. It is a loop.

As such, slowing down our breathing can be used to calm ourselves physically, slow down our thoughts and reduce the sensation of anxiety.

Try it now.

Take 5 slow breathes in and out through the nose. See how your entire body relaxes via the out breath. When our bodies relax, so do our minds become still.

4. Sees the past as an illusion

Mentally strong people know that the past is merely a concept.

It is not real.

People who suffer tend to buy into the idea that the past is a tangible and significant component of their experience.

They allow thoughts of the past to determine their present behaviour. If they were bullied at school, they will justify thoughts about those events to determine a present personality that fears criticism, for example. This need not be.

When we can let go of the past's hold on us, we are free to enjoy the present.

5. Exercises most days

Ideally daily, those who want to maintain a strong mind, understand the mind and body connection.

When we treat ourselves well physically, our brains and minds benefit.

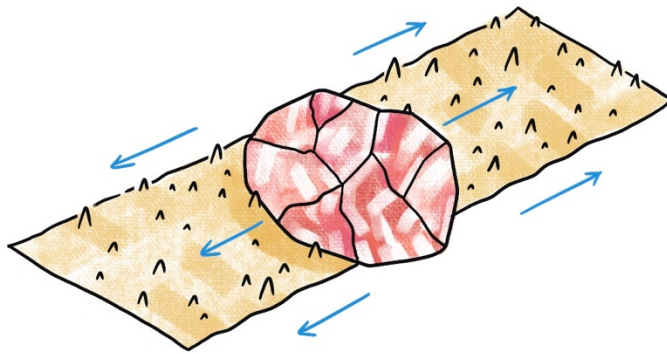
The mind - you could argue - IS the body in a sense. We are far more vulnerable to unhealthy thinking patterns when we haven't been in motion. You know this whenever you spend a lot of time staying still, you will find yourself feeling worse and worrying more. Life is motion.

We are trying to cheat life and joy when we go static for too long.

6. Sees the opportunity or lesson in apparent hardship

"A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials."

—Seneca



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Little improved my life more than taking on the Stoic approach that a lesson is found in every hardship.

Those who suffer have tuned out their capacity to see this. In interpreting the challenging event as only a 'difficulty,' they close off the alternative view.

Every challenge can be seen in a fresh light that energises us, if we have the patience and willingness to see it.

For example, I recently had a dream coaching client say no to my proposal to work together. I was initially disappointed, but quickly found a way to feel better about it.

I saw the experience as an opportunity to remain calm and therefore grow and become stronger, but I also saw it as added incentive to hone my coaching craft further and become a better coach. It is always a matter of perspective - it is not situational.

Every problem is an opportunity to grow.

7. Knows 'the gap'

The gap is the space between a thought and a behaviour response. Those who experience a lot of anxiety and stress or are quick to anger have cultivated very little by way of this gap.

The mentally resilient have.

They know not to react angrily when a button is pushed, rather to allow time to pass (gap) for the emotion to subside, before carrying on. Over time, their relationship with their 'gap' becomes second nature, and not something that requires much conscious effort, if any.

They simply live as the expression of their calm, resilient mind out of practice. This is the power of habit.

8. Tolerates uncertainty

'The whole future lies in uncertainty: live immediately.' —Seneca



Life takes on a hellish nature if we feel the (very human) need to know exactly what will happen next.

This is obviously not possible. Our wish for knowing will never be granted. Peace is awarded to those who can let go of the need to know.

When we're free of the pressure to know, we have the headspace to be effective and resourceful in the moment. The most confident, happy people are at ease with uncertainty.

They lean into it and perform better in all areas of life because of this.

9. Chooses ease

Many of us believe that our stress is determined by what happens in our lives - in our circumstances. This is false.

As Marcus Aurelius said:

“You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.”



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Stress arises out of our thinking - our personal perception alone. Because of this, we can determine our experience, because we are the creators of that experience.

We literally create our entire experience.

Think for a moment about how the brain takes external stimuli and data, filters out most of it, and presents it to us as our own version of an experience. It's all happening inside our skulls.

We can choose to be at ease. We can choose to be happy. It is internally generated.

10. Moves slowly

Life slows when we slow down physically. Try it.

Notice how those who are fidgety or move and talk quickly are often the most anxious. Anxiety is created, in large part, by trying to rush through life.

We can't process reality as quickly, and so everything becomes more complicated when we rush. Remember: we create our reality.

If we rush, we create a rushed life. Slow down. You can. Everything becomes easier.

11. Understands the difference between imagination and rumination

Mentally strong people know the tremendous power thoughts hold.

They can be used to envision futures, design bridges, empathise with others, and make powerful calculations.

They also know their destructive power, especially when they take the form of worry or rumination. It will make all the difference simply to know that worrying serves absolutely no useful purpose for you.

Many people continue to choose worry or over-analysis as a strategy to deal with their challenges because they hold out a belief that it might do some good. It never does, and will always make you feel worse.

Know the difference, and cut rumination short.

How will you know to do this? When you feel bad, you'll know to stop and return to presence.

12. Regularly connects to pure awareness

Awareness is taking in the world around us without judgement.

When we judge, we feel the negative meaning of these judgements, and we create stress for ourselves. For example, if we think that person is annoying, we will feel this thought.

Awareness is our gateway beyond this.

Opening our senses gets us out of our heads and more receptive to what's happening around us. It also stills the mind, allowing us to instantly benefit from the continual flow of innate intelligence and creativity that is our gift from the mind.

You'll know exactly what this means whenever you've received an insight without effort when you have been present, doing exercise, been in the shower, and so on.

Take a moment to listen, feel; truly sense your environment right now without judgement, and you will know the calming power of mindful awareness.



Come back to this guide regularly, absorb the ideas and put them to practice. As you can see, the majority of these habits are more about letting go than doing anything in particular, and that's the point. This is good.

Most of us sabotage ourselves further by trying too hard to be a certain way. But remember the first point: we don't need 'fixing.' We simply need to ease off the breaks to see how resilient, alive and creative we are by default.

It is when we interfere the least, and allow our thoughts to settle - that's when we realise our mental strength.

Good luck on your journey.

I'm right here with you.

Feel free to [contact me via email](#) or dm with any questions, or if you'd like to discuss working with me more directly.

If you haven't yet subscribed to my newsletter, for daily ideas and support around developing an elite mindset, you [can do so here](#).

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To your peace,

Alex

