

568: Strengthen Your Mind



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

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We all know that if we wanted to become physically stronger, there are things we could do, exercises we could execute, changes to our nutrition, changes to our behaviors that would help us to become physically stronger. But did you know that there are specific exercises you can do that will help you to become mentally stronger? And the benefit to doing this is far beyond what you may have ever considered. It will make your current life experience more enjoyable as you learn to feel how you want to feel, handle whatever comes at you in your day-to-day life. But it will also make your future better as you're able to get yourself to follow through on the things that you want to be doing, to show up the way you want to in your relationships, and to overall have a better life experience. So today, I'm going to give you strategies to strengthen your mental health. I'm Jody Moore, and this is *Better Than Happy*. Let's go.

Welcome to *Better Than Happy*, the podcast where we apply all the tools of psychology, human behavior, and mindfulness to live our best lives, navigate challenges, and achieve our goals. I'm Jody Moore and I'll be your coach today. Let's do it.

Hey there, everybody. Thanks for joining me for the podcast today. Whether you're joining me on your favorite podcast app or you're here on our new YouTube channel, I'm so delighted that you're here and looking forward to talking to you about this topic today.

So, I recently was scrolling the social media, like I do sometimes, and I came across a program that someone was selling that was called Totally Toned Arms. And I thought, yeah, I want totally toned arms, especially because the woman selling the program had the most beautiful sculpted arms ever. And so I paid the fee and I downloaded her program, and I'm going to get totally toned arms. You just wait and see, right?

But it got me thinking, because of course, once I bought her totally toned arms program, she had a totally toned legs program, and she had many other programs that I could purchase that would help me get into good physical shape. But it made me start thinking about what would I teach

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people if I was going to teach a totally toned mind. If I was going to teach you how to strengthen and sharpen your mental capacity, what does that even mean? And what would I teach you? And that's how I came up with today's episode that I'm going to be sharing with you. So I want to begin with what it means before I go through the strategies that I have for you.

And this is what I think. I think that a mentally strong person is able to direct their mind in a way that serves them. When we are mentally weak or when we are tired, when we are even just literally physically hungry or sick, or maybe something hormonal's going on, etc., then we are unable to direct our minds. Our minds are simply going at whatever direction they choose, usually at the direction of the subconscious mind, easily influenced by what's coming at us outside of us, what other people are saying or telling us, etc. And that is a sign of mental weakness.

Now, again, we all are mentally weak at times. Even the mentally healthiest and strongest have moments of mental weakness. And there can be lots of reasons for mental weakness, just like with our physical health. I can be physically strong or I can be physically weak. And sometimes that's due to things that are in my control, and sometimes there are things not in my control. So this is not to judge anyone, shame anyone. I absolutely do not want you feeling bad if you notice that you feel very mentally weak in certain ways, okay? Whether it's your fault or not, zero upside to feeling bad for it. What we want to do is just recognize that there are a lot of things that we can do, and we want to take ownership over anything we can control, right? When it comes to our mental strength.

So being able to direct your mind is so useful, but why? Well, first of all, because what you're thinking and what you're focusing on is creating what you're currently feeling. So it's creating your current day-to-day experience. The stories that you believe are just true, and I'm not even just talking about the stories you're aware of in your conscious mind. I'm talking about the 95% of your brain or mind, which is your subconscious that is driving you. That is what is creating your current reality, right? And so the better

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you get at directing your mind, telling it what to focus on, the better you will feel day to day. Okay, we're going to get into again why that is, but that's the first thing. You'll feel better immediately as you strengthen yourself mentally.

The next thing that happens is you suddenly feel more in control of your thinking, which makes you more in control of your feeling, which makes you more in control of what you do. Do you ever feel like, I really want to do this thing, I just don't know why I can't get myself to do it. I want to have it done. I want to be a person who does that. Why can I not get myself to do it? Why can I not get myself to sit down and have the difficult conversation with my boss or with my spouse or with my child? Why can I not get myself to consistently follow through on these habits that I know serve me or to stop these habits that I know don't serve me? Why can't I get myself to try the thing, say the thing, do the thing that I think would serve me best? It's because you have a lack of strength, lack of control over your mind in those moments. The mentally stronger you become, the more you are in control of yourself. And so that's what we're going to focus on today.

Now, there's a lot of teachers who teach a lot of different methods of strengthening your mind. I'm calling it strengthening your mind. Many of them will call it lots of other different things, but this is speaking in general to the world of self-help, right? The world of personal development and growth, the world of even mindfulness, spirituality, meditation, all those things are going to come into play today. And I'm going to give you a bunch of things that you can do, which is not to say you need to be doing all of them. It's simply to give you options.

Some of these might be things you're already doing, some might be things you hadn't even considered. What I want to do is connect the dots on how they all have very similar goals and similar outcomes, and then I want you to pick the one or two or three that resonate most for you that you think, that sounds fun to me. I want to try that. Just like there are lots of different nutritional plans you could go on that could make you physically stronger,

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and you got to pick the one that most aligns with you and your lifestyle and what feels right to you and your body, right? I want you to think the same way about these strengthening of your mind techniques. I want you to pick the ones that sound the most like you or the most interesting to dive in and get good at. Okay.

So let's start with the first one: meditation. Okay? I am by no means a meditation expert. I have so much respect for people that are. I am not very good at meditation, to be honest. What I mean by that is being present in a situation by myself where it's quiet and keeping my mind quiet. And that is the ideal when it comes to meditation, right? You are focused on almost nothingness, right? That you can really still and quiet your mind. And that is extremely difficult for us to do.

Now, there are other little bit more easier forms of meditation that I think are also effective, that I'm a little bit better at, like a guided meditation. I can be present and mostly focus my mind around the words someone's saying if they are guiding me through a meditation, especially if they're a really skilled facilitator. You might check out Jenny Wedmore. I love her meditation that she does. I've been to live events with her as well as done some of her stuff online, and she's a great meditation facilitator. There's a lot of people out there you can check out. But if someone is guiding me and they are skilled at it and they have a great meditation and maybe they have a great music and things, then I can be present there with that type of meditation.

But my point is here is that meditation is a process of controlling your mind, right? In order to be present with the words that the leader is saying or to really still your mind and not have it firing off in all directions about what you need to do 15 minutes from now or what happened yesterday or any of those other things requires mental strength. So the more times you do it, the stronger you will get, the better you will get at overriding the part of your mind that wants to run in all directions and just bringing it back to what you

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want it to focus on. Meditation strengthens your mind. Beautiful practice if that sounds interesting to you.

Now, here's the next one that I came up with: cold plunging. Right? Cold plunging has, depending on who you talk to, some physiological benefits as well, but it has a lot of mental benefits. In order to get in the freezing cold ice water and then to stay in the cold water requires that you override your brain wanting to run in all directions, telling you this is awful, you can't do this, you're going to die, you need to get out of this water. Why are we even doing this in the first place? You have to direct your mind. You have to do what I call managing your mind in order to stay there and not lose it. This is one of the main benefits of cold plunging is that ability, and again, the more times you do it, the better you get at directing your mind, controlling your thoughts.

Okay, the next one is sort of like cold plunging, but the opposite. And that is to sit in a sauna. Now, I remember back in the 80s, my friend's grandparents had a sauna at their house, and we went and sat in it for a little while, but I don't think I've been in a sauna since then. So again, I'm speaking from lack of experience here, but I recently was listening to a friend talk about going in a sauna. And just like cold plunging, I think it has some physiological benefits, but also it has some mental health and strengthening your mind benefits, right?

This friend of mine said that when he sits in the sauna, it takes a lot of willpower to stay there and that he's developed the ability to stay in that sauna a lot longer than his other friends who he goes in the sauna with. And that is again, an example of strengthening your mind because you're in a situation that's uncomfortable. This time it's extremely hot instead of extremely cold, right? And you're sweating, your body is trying to cool itself down, and the brain comes online and starts telling you, we should get out of here. This is awful. This is too hot. So really, tolerating any kind of physical discomfort that you choose to tolerate, and I'm not saying you should choose anything you don't want to, but choosing to tolerate physical

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discomfort for a while will require that you direct your mind if you're not going to do it with a panic attack, right? And so that is why both cold plunging and saunas can strengthen your mind.

The next one is a good yoga practice, right? Yoga often does incorporate a sort of meditative component with it as well, but the practice of moving your body in certain ways, and we maybe could say this about any kind of physical exercise, especially if it's difficult to do. But I like the slowness and mindfulness that yoga tends to include because it causes you to really also focus on your thoughts. Again, I do think that's required to do any kind of physical exercise that's strenuous at all, but yoga is the one that came to my mind as the most obvious example.

Next strategy I have for you is something I've been talking about a lot because I feel so strongly about encouraging all of you to do it, and I'm trying to really push myself to do it too, which is to just do things you don't want to do. This can be anything from, again, exercise to having a difficult conversation with somebody, to cleaning out that closet that you've been staring at that you really want to get to, but you keep putting off. Do you notice the feeling you have after you do the thing that you've been avoiding doing? What does it feel like? It's amazing, right?

I finally cleaned out that closet after all these months or years even that I've been looking at it, telling myself I should, and now it's done, and it actually wasn't even as painful as I thought it was going to be. I'm so glad it's done. And what else? You're so proud of yourself for doing it, right? If you don't follow it up with, I should have done that a long time ago, what's the matter with me? If you let yourself enjoy the feeling of, I had to override the now brain.

And that's what overall, I think a strong mind is able to do, is to override the now brain. What do I mean by the now brain? The now brain is the part of you that just wants to do things that are easy and feel good and not do anything that feels bad, physically bad, emotionally bad, even just something unknown and scary. This is classified as bad to the now brain. I

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call it the now brain because it's thinking about what we're doing right now. It doesn't care much about what's going to happen tomorrow or in a year or in 25 years from now. It's just concerned about what's happening right now. And right now, it wants to do the thing that seems like the best chance at keeping us alive and having the most enjoyable experience, which means again, easy, pleasurable, and not at all painful.

But we all know things that are easy, pleasurable, and not painful may or may not serve us in the long run. And so we have to override that now brain in order to create long-term happiness, long-term health, long-term success. So, for example, what would be really easy is just to sit on the couch and eat potato chips and watch TV all day. Doesn't that sound dreamy to the now brain? It does. But what about the primitive, or excuse me, the prefrontal brain, the higher brain, the human brain that only humans have? That part of the brain knows that actually, we might want to do something more productive with our day in order to create more of what we want for tomorrow.

Overriding that now brain, every time you do that, strengthens your ability to do that. So I love thinking about this doing things I don't want to do part of me as a muscle that I can strengthen. The more I do things I don't want to do, the easier it gets to do things I don't want to do. And I also like to think of it as sort of addictive. So when I do something, have that difficult conversation, clean out that closet, go to the gym, even though I didn't feel like it, then afterwards, I really milk the feeling, the good feeling, the gratitude I have to myself for having done it, the relief that it's now done. I try to really sit in it and soak it up and remind myself, this feeling is awesome. I want this feeling more.

What else can I do that feels hard right now that my now brain doesn't want to do so that I can have this feeling again? Look for opportunities to do it. So when people say things to me like, I just don't want to do that. I don't like doing it. It's hard. I say, great. Let's do more things that we don't want to do. Let's do more things that are hard because that's how you get that

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positive feeling on the other side, but because it strengthens your mind. I want you to have a strong mind. It's like picking up heavy weights for getting toned arms.

The next thing you can do to strengthen your mind, this is one of my favorite exercises. We've done this a lot in my program, *Better Than Happy: The Lab*. And I want to encourage all of you to try it out. It's what I call postponing a negative emotion. We're not getting rid of it. We're not afraid of it. There's nothing wrong with this emotion. We're just going to postpone it. So the one that I've used it on the most is worry. Okay? Worry doesn't feel good. I'm calling it a negative emotion. It's created by our thoughts, but as human beings, we all have thoughts at times that generate the emotion of worry.

So what if instead of telling yourself not to worry, what if you told yourself, it's okay to worry, we're just not doing it today. We're going to worry on Friday morning at 9:00 AM. And maybe you have a weekly appointment with worry, and you decide, is it going to be 30 minutes of worry? Is it going to be 15 minutes of worry? Is it going to be an hour of worry? It doesn't matter. You pick what you think feels like an appropriate time frame, and every time the worry thoughts come to your mind, you just write them down and you tell your brain, it's okay, brain, we're going to look at that Friday morning at 9:00 AM. That's our worry time.

First of all, it's a lot easier than just not worrying because you tell your brain, we will look at that later. And so it can kind of settle down and go, okay, she's not just ignoring this, she's not forgetting about this. She wrote it down even. And so it kind of helps to quiet that part of your brain. But it's also an exercise in controlling your thinking, controlling your focus. Because if you're truly going to only worry Friday mornings at 9:00 AM, then you are requiring your mind to focus on something else. And again, the more times you do that, the easier it gets. The better you get at doing it. So simply postpone your negative emotion until a certain time and let me know how it goes. I love that one.

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The next strategy you can try out is to generate a useful emotion for yourself. You can generate emotion on purpose by controlling your mind, by controlling what you're going to think about, what you're going to focus on. So when I say useful, a lot of people think I'm saying positive, and maybe it is a positive emotion. Maybe you want to generate some gratitude, some love, but it could be something like commitment, determination, focus. I don't tend to think of those as positive emotions necessarily because they don't feel great, but they're often useful. Generate a useful emotion.

How do we know what's useful and how do we generate it? Well, you decide what's useful based on the situation. So if I'm sitting down to write a podcast episode for you all and to outline what I'm going to talk about, then a useful emotion might be focus or creativity or inspiration or even determination. If I am going to see my child at school sing a song, perform a song at the school assembly, what's a useful emotion? Maybe gratitude, maybe love, maybe curiosity. So it's situation dependent, right? What would be the most useful emotion, meaning it's the experience I want to have here and it's going to help me show up in the way that I want to show up to execute what I want to in this given scenario? That is how you choose the useful emotion.

Now, how do you generate it? With the thoughts. You ask yourself, what are thoughts that make me feel gratitude? What are the sentences in my mind that make me feel love? What are the thoughts that make me feel committed? What are the thoughts that make me feel inspired? Most people think inspiration is just something that shows up and rains on them unexpectedly. I don't think of it that way. I think of it as something that I can generate by my thoughts. Thoughts like, I have a lot of good ideas here. I know what to do. Ooh, I'm going to try this. Or if I don't have an idea in the moment, I tell myself, the idea will come to me. I will know when it's time. I'm just going to get busy working. I'm just going to start on my podcast outline or start recording my podcast, and the ideas will come to me. I'm very good at receiving ideas.

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That kind of thinking, those kind of thoughts make me feel inspired and motivated, and they get me moving, right? So generate useful emotions. It's a great way to strengthen your mind. I've done this so many times in my life, especially as I've built my business, I did a lot of generating of emotion along the way, and I still do, that it almost feels natural to me now. I don't have to slow it down so much and think about the sentences. I can ask what emotion do I want, and I can sort of drop into it. And my subconscious has already been trained to have a lot of those useful thoughts, and so I can access them almost unconsciously.

Okay, the next thing you can do to strengthen your mind is simply to question your thoughts. You don't have to do it all day. You don't have to do it all the time. But at times, question your thoughts. What do I mean by that? Well, first of all, you have to become aware of the difference between facts and thoughts, and that most of the chatter in your head, the stories that are driving you moment to moment, day to day, are thoughts. They are not just observations of reality. They are your interpretation of reality, your prediction about what might happen next, or your assessment about whether or not this is good or bad or right or wrong. And that's okay. That helps us operate as human beings. But you don't want to always believe all of it. You want to at times question it. This requires mental strength, and as you do it, it will increase your mental strength. Okay?

Let me give you some examples. Let's say you have a boss at work and you don't like the way he runs the company in certain ways. You don't like the way he's running your department, okay? And you disagree with it, and you think this is wrong, he shouldn't be doing it that way, he should be doing it this way. Well, can you at times question your thinking? Can you pause and go, maybe I want to keep that belief that this is the wrong way to run the department, but maybe I want to question it too. Maybe there are some valid reasons that I even would agree with, but I just hadn't considered about why he does it this way. Now, this is going to be the most impactful when it comes to your thoughts about yourself, all the negative, doubtful, fear-based thoughts you have about yourself. I'm not good at that.

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Do you know that's not just an observation of you? That's a thought. It's just a story. It's just a belief. Okay, so question it. Is it true I'm not good at that?

Let me give you an even more specific example. People will say things to me like, I never finish anything. I'm like, really? I don't believe you. I don't think that's true. Let's question it. Let's question that thought, I never finish anything. And they'll tell me, well, I dropped out of college, and I, every time I start a prod, you should see my house is full of projects that I haven't finished, and even, you know, I've started these businesses and abandoned them, and even my spouse or whoever will tell you, I never finish anything. I'm like, okay, but I'm just asking you to question it. Can we question it? Can we find examples of where that's not true?

Because this morning, you started brushing your teeth and then you finished brushing your teeth. And at one point, you were pregnant, and so you started having a baby and you finished growing that baby and you delivered that baby eventually, right? And if we were to go throughout your day, if we were to like videotape your entire life and then watch it back, we would actually see that there are way more things that you finish than don't finish. You finished loading the dishwasher, you finished making dinner, you finished doing that laundry that one time at least. You've finished way more things than you haven't finished. So this thought, I never finish anything. I can see why you're making it true, but I can also prove to you why it's not true.

So then what do we do in the end? You don't even have to decide that it's true that you finish things or that you don't finish things. You just have to have the awareness that it's just a story, that it's both true and not true. And what this does is it moves you from being at the effect of all your thoughts and thinking they're just true to noticing they're just options. And so you're not so affected by them, which gives you way more leverage over yourself, way more control, over again, your current experience and what you want to create for the future.

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So the key to this one is awareness. If you are not deeply aware that this is an optional way to see the situation, then your brain won't let go of it. It will continue to think this is just true. So think of this like somebody who is a singer going to record a song in a sound booth. You've seen videos of this, right? Or an actor going to do a voiceover for a movie. What does it look like in the sound booth? You've seen it. There's a big microphone, and then what do they have on? Headphones. Why do they have on headphones? What are they hearing in those headphones? They're hearing their own voice because the more aware they are of the tone of their voice, the more control they have over altering their voice to make it sound how they want it to sound. So, the more aware you are of your own thinking, your own mind, your own beliefs, your own stories, and how they are those things, thoughts, beliefs, stories, the more control you have, even just naturally, subtly, in your own way, over directing them.

So overall, here's what I'm saying. To be mentally strong, to strengthen your mind, means that you get better and better at using your conscious mind, your prefrontal cortex, the human part of your brain, to direct and rewire your subconscious mind. Because here's what happens. As you get better and better at controlling your thoughts, you rewire that subconscious brain to serve you better and better, so that you don't even have to direct it so much. This is the irony of it. As soon as you get really good at doing it, you won't need to do it as much. That's how our minds work, my friends. I've experienced it myself, and I've seen it happen with hundreds if not thousands of clients over and over again. So give it a try. Let me know how it goes.

Don't forget to follow the podcast, subscribe to the YouTube channel. Make sure you're keeping up with all the things happening here at *Better Than Happy*. And thank you, thank you for your feedback and for sharing the podcast if you got a lot out of it. I'll see you next time.

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and share it with a friend. Make sure you never miss an episode and help me spread the message of mental and emotional health and creating your best life. I'll see you next time.