

MINDFUL SELF DISCIPLINE

WORKBOOK

Exercises – Templates – Worksheets
Checklists – Tools

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FUNDAMENTALS



Self-Discipline Inventory



Become more motivated to practice self-discipline by realizing how it will impact the different areas of your life.

Part 1: LIFE INVENTORY

Fill in the table below, considering the benefits of having more self-discipline in the different areas of your life, and the challenges and costs that come from lack of self-discipline.

	Benefits of having more self-discipline	Challenges coming from lack of self-discipline
Health	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
Career	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
Finances	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
Love Life	1	1
	2	2
	3	3

	Benefits of having more self-discipline	Challenges coming from lack of self-discipline
Fun	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
Family and Friends	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
Social Contribution	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
Growth and Spirituality	1	1
	2	2
	3	3

Part 2: AREAS OF FOCUS

- Select two areas of your life that you want to focus more on. In which two areas would you like to up your game? These can change over time.
- Choose one key habit for each of those two areas. It could be a positive habit that you need to build or improve, or a negative habit you want to break, or both.
- How will you feel if you succeed in making those changes? Aim for a short description of it. Examples: "Fulfilled", "Grounded and in control", "Filled with energy", "Satisfied that I made good use of my talents", "Abundance in life", etc.

Areas of life	Habit to Build	Habit to Break	Success Feels Like



Balance Your Self-Discipline



Practice self-discipline in a balanced and sustainable way.

If being disciplined for you means burning the midnight oil for weeks or months on end, obsessively pursuing a goal or activity at the expense of all other things—such as your relationships or physical wellbeing—then you are in for trouble. This is not sustainable. It leads to willpower fatigue and, eventually, to burnout. This is known as *hyperopia*.

For your discipline to be sustainable, you need to balance it with self-care, downtime, and other replenishing activities. This exercise helps you plan for that, and create rules and principles to help you maintain that balance. This is especially important for the Type-A personalities.

Self-Care	Downtime	Recharge

Examples

- **Self-care:** Sleep at least seven hours every day; eat healthily; don't eat "on the run"; exercise regularly.
- **Downtime:** Take a proper one-hour break in the middle of the day; have five-minute mindfulness breaks every other hour; switch off from work during the weekends (don't check email); take at least two weeks of uninterrupted vacation per year; take time off to celebrate finalizing big projects.
- **Fun & Renewal:** Have activities that you do only for fun or pleasure; pick up an artistic hobby; spend time in nature, without an aim and without headphones.



Decision Fatigue Buster



Prevent, or at least diminish, willpower fatigue by eliminating the need to make trivial decisions repeatedly.

Every decision we make takes effort and is thus a form of stress. Making decisions takes some mental energy, and it is proven that after a long period of decision-making, the quality of our decisions deteriorates. We become tired of thinking things through, exercising self-control, and paying attention to details.

Take some time to list the many daily decisions that you need to make repeatedly in your life. Then find ways to automate, delegate or eliminate those decisions. Some examples are:

- Instead of deciding every day what to eat and what to wear, make those decisions ahead of time every week, and then just follow through.
- Instead of spending time and energy deciding what you should do next, have an organized to-do list where you just need to pick the first item on top of the list; and only go for the second item once you have finished the first.
- Turn off all non-essential phone notifications so you don't need to constantly decide what is worth checking out or not.
- Have a fixed morning routine so you never again need to decide how to spend the first hour or so of your day.

Ruthlessly simplify your life. This will allow you to have more time, energy and space for your aspirations.

Repeated Decision	How will I automate it, delegate it or eliminate it?

Once you know what to do, take the next step for each item. Begin to implement it now.



Willpower Challenges



Exercise your willpower muscle daily.

To build a muscle, you must apply resistance to it, embrace the pain, and push through. Likewise, with willpower and self-discipline—they grow through resistance and friction. Embrace that pain, and don't shy away!

Exercising your willpower in the direction of your goals will increase your inner fire because friction creates heat. When exercising your physical muscles, it's physical heat. When exercising willpower, it's psychological heat. In the spiritual traditions of India, this psychological heat is called *tapas* (not to be confused with Spanish snacks). *Tapas* is considered the main factor for self-transformation. Unimaginable things are possible through *tapas*.

You can mold a piece of iron to your desired shape only if you strike it while it's hot. Likewise, exercising your willpower daily generates the needed inner heat that allows you to mold your life—and yourself—as per your design.

Don't shy away from this inner heat. Invite it. Rejoice in it. Seek to exercise your willpower, in one form or another, every day of your life. How do you do that? Practicing self-discipline with your goals and aspirations is a natural way of exercising your willpower.

Another way is to focus on exercising the willpower muscle by itself, by choosing to do something difficult every day, on purpose. It doesn't matter how small it is. If it generates psychological heat, if it stretches you, it is a form of *tapas*.

The idea is to choose a small commitment every morning—something that is meaningful and challenging for you—and keep to it throughout your day, *no matter what*. See the table on the next page for some examples of challenging daily commitments.

These are just some ideas to get your juices flowing. Some of them may not be an issue for you at all, so they are not good candidates for this exercise. Choose whatever is challenging and yet meaningful for you. Focus on a different challenge from the list (or make one up) every day, for twenty-one days. This simple practice exercises not only your willpower, but also your self-awareness skills.

What happens at the end of twenty-one days? Your willpower will be more reliable. You can then use it to change any particular behavior you want; or you can go through the list again, narrow it down to five main challenges, and this time stay twenty-one days on each one.

Finally, don't worry if these challenges feel unachievable at this point. The point is not doing it perfectly, but just to get you to exercise your willpower muscle and to show you what is possible.

Will Do challenges	Won't Do challenges
Take a cold shower for five minutes	Complain about anything
Practice intermittent fasting for 18 hours	Use any swear words
Feel grateful whenever I say "thank you"	Slouch
Cultivate contentment and optimism	Drink coffee
Speak out when I see injustice	Eat sugar
Breathe deeply before unlocking my phone	Argue meaninglessly
Be in bed at 10pm sharp	Use any social media app/site
Have one difficult conversation	Interrupt anyone who is speaking
Do something I've been postponing	Watch TV or play games
Exercise 30 minutes more than usual	Snooze my alarm
Hold eye contact with people	Have any junk food
Say "no" when I need to say "no"	Bite my fingernails/lips/cheeks
Be friendly toward everyone I meet	Check email outside working hours
Think before I talk	Check or send any text message
Do something I was avoiding	Gossip
Be on time for everything	Indulge in negative feelings
Speak kindly and truthfully at all times	Say any harsh words



ASPIRATION PILLAR

Find Your Aspiration



Clarify your core aspirations.

Part 1: IDENTIFY YOUR CORE VALUES

Your core values are the feelings, experiences, and activities that you care about the most in your life. They are what you want to experience more of, and grow into. They are the stuff that your aspiration is made of. Here are some examples of values (the list is endless):

Ambition	Assertiveness	Beauty	Enjoyment	Exploration
Family	Loyalty	Freedom	Friendship	Productivity
Prosperity	Purpose	Respect	Security	Fun
Communication	Compassion	Confidence	Awareness	Control
Creativity	Curiosity	Growth	Happiness	Health
Strength	Honor	Humor	Individuality	Innovation
Wisdom	Intuition	Joy	Leadership	Logic
Love	Mastery	Service	Skill	Spirituality
Empowerment	Energy	Excellence	Meaning	Order
Originality	Passion	Peace	Playfulness	Truth
Recognition	Art	Knowledge	Home	Legacy

Go through the list above and highlight your top five values. Feel free to come up with your own values, as these are just examples.

Part 2: DISCOVER YOUR ASPIRATIONS

1

How do you spend most of your *time* (apart from work)?

2

Where do you spend most of your *money* (apart from life essentials)?

3

In what area(s) of your life are you naturally most *focused, reliable, or disciplined*?

4

What do you most *think about, desire, and dream about*?

5

What do you love to *learn, read about, and explore*?

6

What *inspires* you the most?

7

What types of *injustices* really frustrate you?

8

Which *virtue(s)* do you admire the most?

9

What do people who know you well say that you were *born* to do?

10

Fast-forward your life ten years and look back. You are *proud* of achieving one thing. What is that?

11 Think of three *peak experiences* in your life, when you were at your best. What was going on at that time? Which values were you living?

12 Which *relationships* or people have most influenced your sense of purpose? How have they inspired you?

13 If you had unlimited *resources* (time and money), what would you set out to do?

14 If you *could not fail*, what would you choose to do, be, have, or achieve?

15 If you had only two years left to live, what would be the *most important* things you would do in that time?

16 Suppose every experience of your life, including all your failures and successes, was designed to train you for your <i>destiny</i> . What has your whole life prepared you to do?

Part 3: FIND THE PATTERNS

When you are finished with these questions, look for patterns in your answers. What are the handful of deeper values and desires they are all pointing to? Group similar values in themes, and rank your themes from most important to least important.

MY ASPIRATIONS	
1	
2	
3	



Black and White Exercise



Increase your motivation and commitment to your aspirations.

Part 1: CONNECT TO PAIN AND PLEASURE

Deep inside our brain, our core drives are all about escaping pain and experiencing pleasure. Therefore, the more you associate your long-term goals and aspirations with avoiding pain in the different areas of life, and experiencing reward in those areas of life, the more energy and motivation you will have.

In this exercise, come up with at least three *pain items* and three *reward items* for each area of your life. If you have more than one aspiration, go through this exercise for each of them.

	Impact of neglecting my aspiration (<i>pain</i>)	Impact of fulfilling my aspiration (<i>rewards</i>)
Health		
Career		
Finances		
Love Life		
Fun		
Family / Friends		
Social Contribution		
Growth / Spirituality		

Part 2: CONNECT WITH SELF-DISCIPLINE



Keeping in mind all of the benefits that you have just brainstormed, think about the real benefits of developing the self-discipline needed to fulfill your aspiration. Reflect on how your life would be in the near and far future, both with and without self-discipline.

If I....	How will my life be in the near and far future? Who will I be? How will I feel? What will I have and experience?	
(A) Develop the self-discipline needed for my aspirations	1 month from now	
	6 months from now	
	2 years from now	
	10 years from now	
(B) Don't develop the self-discipline needed for my aspirations	1 month from now	
	6 months from now	
	2 years from now	
	10 years from now	

My recommendation for these two exercises is to spend twice as much time on them as you normally would. They are perhaps the most important ones in this Workbook.

Part 3: YOUR MOTIVATION CHEAT SHEET

Using what you've learned from the previous two exercises, let's create a "motivation cheat sheet" for yourself. Find images that clearly represent the two possible versions of yourself and of your life—the more emotional they are, the better—and include them in the first row.

	 Conditioned Life (-1) <i><u>no self-discipline</u></i>	 Designed Life (+1) <i><u>with self-discipline</u></i>
Who will I be?		
What will I do?		
How will I feel?		
What will I have?		

After you have finished:

- Print this page and paste it on the wall next to the places where you work, exercise, eat, etc. Keep fanning the fire by looking at this daily.
- Track how many steps you are taking toward your Designed Life (+1) or away from it (-1), each day. (You can use the [Mindful Self-Discipline app](#) for that.)



Success Chronicles



Increase your self-belief and self-confidence

Self-belief is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. With it, self-discipline is possible; without it, it is difficult, for you will sabotage yourself. When you believe in yourself, you have more motivation, more resources, and more energy to overcome obstacles on your way.

One of the ways of developing self-belief and self-confidence is to review all the times in your past when you accomplished something difficult, overcame a challenge, or persevered despite obstacles. That is the purpose of this exercise—to take inventory of your successes, and give you reasons to believe in yourself. Aim to think of at least twenty items.

Spend some time remembering those moments and reinforcing the feeling of “I can do it” and “eventually I figure things out” that comes from reflecting on those experiences. It doesn’t matter in which area of life your difficult wins happened, or how big or small they were. Anything that you can find as evidence that “I can make it” is good enough.

Life Experiences that Build Self-Belief	
Difficult things I have done or accomplished	
Challenges I have overcome in the different areas of life	
Times I have persevered despite obstacles	



Make Your Offering



Increase your commitment by deciding what you are willing to “sacrifice” for your goals and aspirations.

To make space for the new, you need to let go of the old; to transform yourself, you need to sacrifice yourself. You do that by letting go of anything that is not aligned with your goals and values, thus creating space in your life for what matters most.

This exercise will help you carry out a *life audit* and see in what ways you are not yet aligned with your aspirations. Then you can choose to take action on those, little by little, without overwhelming yourself. You don’t need to do it all at the same time.

Also, it is better to do this exercise after you have gone through the *Black and White Exercise* in this Workbook, so you have the motivation and commitment needed to justify your “sacrifices”.

STEPS:

1. Think of your aspiration, or an important goal you want to achieve.

Think of all the ways that you are not living in alignment with it right now.

Examples:

- Spending most of your time, energy or money on other things
- Procrastinating on taking action due to discomfort or anxiety
- Being attached to your current identity, or an opposing desire
- Holding onto beliefs, excuses, and worldviews that hold you back
- Being too distracted with pleasures, fun, information, and trivial activities
- Bad habits that make you get -1’s in relation to your aspirations

2. Decide on at least three things you are willing to *offer* in order to make progress toward your goal.



AWARENESS PILLAR



PAW Method Summary



The PAW Method is the heart of the Awareness Pillar. This summary will help you practice it more easily.

Whenever you are facing a decision—however small—that can impact your aspiration, take a moment to practice the PAW Method. Whenever you are feeling impulsive, or driven by something other than your higher self, practice the PAW Method.

You want to practice it especially when you notice that you are about to make a decision that will be a -1 in your life. For example: making an exception to one of your commitments, skipping your exercise, indulging in something you have decided to let go of, procrastinating, etc.

For a step-by-step walkthrough of the PAW Method, always in your pocket, become a member of the [Mindful Self-Discipline app](#). The app includes a +1/-1 life tracker!

Step 1: PAUSE

Pause. Take a moment **to slow things down**, rather than acting on your impulses. If needed, step away from the triggering situation or temptation.

Practice deep and conscious breathing for a few moments, so that you can move your awareness from the “hot system” of the brain (impulsive) to the “cool system” of the brain (purposeful). The simplest way to do this is to follow the three-breath rule: breathe slowly and deeply three times, through your belly, not your chest.

You can also implement three one-minute mini-meditation breaks throughout your day, to make pausing happen more easily and naturally for you. Set up reminders for it.

Step 2: AWARENESS

Become aware of your **options**. Is the decision you are about to make a +1 or a -1?

Then become aware of your **drives**. You may *know* what is your best option, and still something inside of you may be pulling you to do something else. Therefore, you need to also develop awareness of your drives—which are the psychological forces at play inside you. Here are some questions to help you do that:

1. What **stories** am I telling myself?
2. What **emotions** are here?
3. What **urges am** I feeling?

Step 3: WILLPOWER

Sometimes, pausing and becoming aware is enough to help you make the decision that you need to make, and stay on track with your goals. When that is not enough, you need to apply your **willpower** to shift your state, there and then.

Willpower is a very broad concept. I define it as “your ability to control your attention, emotions, and actions, despite the presence of competing stimuli” and “your capacity to delay gratification, override unwanted thoughts and feelings, and shift your internal state”. It is the action element of PAW.

There are many different ways to apply willpower in your daily life, and the *Mindful Self-Discipline* book covers several techniques for it. You don't need to practice them all—just choose a couple that really work for you. Here is a quick reference table for them.

Technique	Chapter	Summary
Shift Your Self-Talk	12	Question your limiting beliefs and redirect your attention to more empowering narratives. Use affirmations if needed.
Make Your Offering	13	Remember your purpose and develop the willingness to let go of whatever is not aligned with your deepest values and aspirations.
Shift Your Focus	18	Zoom out of short-term thinking, remember your aspiration, and be kind to your future self. Consider the long-term consequences.
Shift Your Perception	19	Develop attraction toward the goal-promoting activity, and aversion toward the temptations, using cognitive reappraisal.
Embrace Your Pain (ROAR)	20	Process any negative emotion/experience in the present moment by recognizing it, observing it in your body, accepting it, and releasing it.
Let Go of Perfectionism	21	Accept that you will make mistakes from time to time. Be kind to yourself, and release unrealistic expectations.
Procrastinate Distraction	22	Procrastinate the distraction, so it's no longer instant gratification. Leave it for later, and instead re-focus on your goal.
Challenge Your Excuses	23	Question your excuses. Challenge them. Shift your thinking to something that will allow you to move forward (counter-excuse).
Baby Steps	28	Break down your activity/journey into smaller steps, so that the next step is clear, simple, and easy enough that you don't need to skip it.
Not Now Technique	29	Snooze all doubts, distractions, fears, and dramas for a set period of time ("doubt-free experiment"). Say "not now" and move forward.
ALFA Method	30	Acknowledge the disappointment and frustration, learn from it, forgive yourself, and take positive action again.
Never Zero	31	Stay on track with your commitment no matter what, even if you have to default to the "minimum action".
Focused Work	33	Select a period of time to practice absolute focus. Snooze all distractions during that time. No multitasking allowed either.



ROAR Method Summary

We have a deeply ingrained desire for comfort, but growth only happens when we can accept physical and/or emotional discomfort. This can be done forcefully (through willpower) or mindfully (through acceptance). The mindful way is to open your heart to the experience of discomfort, by using the ROAR Method.

All pains and discomforts, be they physical or emotional, are just sensations in your body. The big emotions that you are afraid of feeling—such as anxiety, shame, fear, grief—can be reduced to unpleasant sensations in your body. You don't need to run away from them. You don't need to let them tell you what you should or shouldn't do. They are just warning signals.

The same is true with the cravings that push you to do things you don't want to do. They are just sensations in your body. You don't need to chase them. You don't need to obey them. You can just be aware and let them be.

The ROAR Method is very simple.

- **Recognize** the emotion or urge that is here. Label it to yourself, “Anxiety is here” or “Boredom is here”.
- **Observe** it in your body as pure sensations. See where they are, and what they are like. Stay for some moments in the place where they are the strongest.
- **Accept** the sensations as they are, without rejecting them, without aversion, without contracting. Just stay with them. Create room for them. Let them be there, as if it makes no difference for you.
- **Release** the sensations with every out-breath. Imagine that you are breathing in and out through those sensations in your body, and that they are dissolving with every exhalation.

Do this for a couple of minutes, and it will shift your state. In most cases you will be ready to move forward. This is how you *mindfully* embrace your pain. The ROAR Method is so important that I often recommend my clients to have an image with the word ROAR as their phone wallpaper, for a constant reminder.

Challenges Audit



Overcome unrealistic expectations, especially in the form of *false hope syndrome*.

Once you have a clear aspiration, magnified through the power of the *Black and White exercise*, and specified into a SMART goal, take some time to develop a healthy sense of respect for the journey ahead, and the obstacles you may encounter.

Let me say this again: go through this exercise *only after* you are already motivated and committed to your goal. Then this exercise will help you stay on track for longer. On the other hand, if you start thinking of the obstacles before you are motivated, you are likely to give up before you even try.

Obstacle	Likelihood (%)	What will I do to overcome it?
Get distracted with other things		
Lose sight of my aspiration		
Feel demotivated or bored		
Get confused about my next steps		
Get burned out and lose faith		
Unexpected failures		
Things taking longer than expected		
Repeatedly taking wrong turns		

Obstacle	Likelihood (%)	What will I do to overcome it?
Other areas of my life start to demand more attention		
Begin to doubt myself		
Limiting beliefs holding me back		

Make sure to think of a strategy to overcome whatever obstacles you wrote in the first column. Doing this will bulletproof you for the journey. And if you can't figure something out yet, please don't go into hopelessness. Instead, learn to figure things out; get a good book on the topic, or a consultant/coach if you can afford one. There is always a way out.



Self-Compassion Exercise



Learn to be kinder to yourself, so that you don't create negative emotions that lead you to indulge in bad habits or give up on your goals.

If you have the tendency of being hard on yourself, this can prevent you from persevering in the things that are important to you, because you never feel that you will be good enough. If this is the case, go through the following exercise to learn how to shift to a more empowering state.

Part 1: SHIFT THROUGH YOUR MIND

Think of the actual sentences you say to yourself repeatedly, in the privacy of your mind, when you are being hard on yourself or being too much of a perfectionist. Fill in the first column below with examples of your disempowering self-talk.

In the second column, write what you could say to yourself instead, in a way that would be compassionate and empowering. If you have trouble figuring out what that might look like, imagine what you would say to support a close friend who is saying those disempowering things to himself/herself.

Disempowering Self-Talk	Empowering Self-Talk

Part 2: SHIFT THROUGH YOUR BODY AND EMOTION

Another way to shift from self-criticism to self-compassion/self-empowerment is to make that transition in your body and emotion. To do that, you must first map the two states in your body (energy), and heart (emotion).

1. When you are in a state of self-criticism or self-loathing, notice:
 - Where do you feel it in your body?
 - What are the sensations like? (Warm or cool? Focused or spread? Still or throbbing? Deep or shallow?)
 - How does it feel in your heart? Think of as many adjectives as you can to describe that emotional experience.
2. Bring yourself to a state of self-empowerment. You could do this by remembering a time when you stood up for yourself, took care of your own needs, picked yourself up after failing, or moved forward toward your aspirations. The goal is to temporarily re-create that state. Then ask yourself the same questions:
 - Where do you feel it in your body?
 - What are the sensations like? (Warm or cool? Focused or spread? Still or throbbing? Deep or shallow?)
 - How does it feel in your heart? Think of as many adjectives as you can to describe that emotional experience.
3. Now you know exactly how these two different modes of being feel like in your body and heart. From now on, whenever you notice the symptoms of self-loathing showing up in you, during your daily life, see if you can shift to the state of self-compassion or self-empowerment. You do that by remembering how it feels, and recreating those sensations in your body and heart.

	State of Self-Criticism or Disempowerment	State of Self-Compassion or Empowerment
Physical Sensations (BODY)		
Emotional Experience (HEART)		

To learn more about this process, review the technique *Kindle the Virtue* in Chapter 38 of the book. Finally, you may also like to try the Loving-Kindness meditation to help you cultivate a state of self-compassion and self-love. To access my guided meditation on Loving Kindness (together with 50+ other meditations), check out my [Limitless Life meditation program](#).



Mindful Technology Use



Diminish digital distractions and interruptions, thus creating space to cultivate your power of focus, creativity, and motivation for long-term goals.

This part of the Workbook will give you guidelines for being more purposeful and mindful about your use of technology, digital media, and the internet. Choose how deep you want to go in each key area (light, medium, full), and take action straight away.

(Note: each level includes the steps of the previous levels.)

A general guideline that applies across all these categories is this: be **mindful**, and be **purposeful**. Move from automatic and mindless use of technology to a purposeful and self-aware one. Here are some examples of what it would look like to apply this principle:

- Whenever you unlock your phone for a particular purpose, fulfill that purpose before you click on any other app or notification.
- Before deciding to Google something random or interesting, ask yourself: “Why am I doing this? Will this help me take a step toward my aspirations in any way?”
- When using the internet, decide exactly what you are looking for, and ignore all the distractions popping up and taking you elsewhere. Leave when you are done.
- When you start reading an article or watching a video, finish it before clicking somewhere else. This will train your willpower, resilience, and focus.

DISTRACTION	MONK MODE		
	Light	Medium	Full
Email	Unsubscribe from all newsletters that don't have an uplifting impact on your life. Don't keep your email tab/app on your computer open all the time.	Decide on three times of the day to check email. Do not open your email at any other time. Work through your emails until you reach <i>inbox zero</i> .	Delete the email app from your phone; if you ever really need to use it, log in via the browser. Only check email twice a day, and not before 9am.
Social Media	Review your social media accounts to unfriend or unfollow half of the people. Leave all the groups and forums that you are not really active in.	Decide to only use social media twice a day, for 15 minutes each. No usage outside that time frame. And stick to a single platform.	Delete all social media apps from your phone. Use it only on your computer, once per day. Choose a maximum of 50 accounts to follow.
Browsing	Install browser plugins that will block time-wasting websites, and that also have a "focus mode". See here for a list of tools.	Only keep open the tabs that are relevant to what you are doing right now. Save all else as resources for later.	Be purposeful when using the internet. Limit "curiosity browsing" to no more than thirty minutes per day.
Phone Usage	Delete all unused apps. Turn off push notifications for all except ten apps, for which it's essential for you to know/respond promptly (all others you can check when you pick up your phone and see the red badge). Have fun and don't share it on social media.	Three times every day when you have a free moment, instead of unlocking your phone, do one minute of conscious breathing. Turn off push notifications for all except five apps. Install a phone usage app.	Have a Power Hour for your work each day, during which your phone is in airplane mode and all computer notifications are off. Go out once a week, leaving your phone in the car or at home. Keep your phone in a separate bedroom when sleeping.
Internet Usage	Stay offline from the time you wake up until the end of your morning routine. Have meals away from your phone and computer. Keep your phone in your pocket when with people.	Stay offline from an hour before you go to bed until the end of your morning routine. Use a timer for turning off your Wi-Fi router at your chosen time.	Have a day a week fully offline and screen-free. Schedule a one-minute break for every hour of screen work; then look away from the screen, meditate, or stretch.
Games, News, Forums	Cut in half the amount of time you spend on games, news, and forums.	Limit your time in games, news, and forums to an hour per day.	Delete all games. Limit your time in forums and news to 30 minutes a day.

Phone addiction is an epidemic. It harms your ability to focus, to motivate yourself, to form lasting memories, and to stay productive. It keeps your mind and energy constantly engaged with trivialities and junk dopamine, making it harder for you to live a purposeful life.

The steps above may seem scary at first, but you will soon get used to them. Once you do, you will not miss the old habits, and will wonder what took you so long to make such a positive change.

To learn more about the harms of the mindless use of our devices, read [this eye-opening article](#).



Dopamine Audit



Become aware your sources of instant gratification and distraction, so you know what to watch out for and so that you can create strategies for remaining focused. Doing so will allow you to reclaim your motivation and channel it toward your long-term goals.

Fill in the table below, taking into consideration your previous two months.

Table Guide:

- **First column:** take inventory of all the sources of instant gratification and distraction in your life, by using the following questions:
 - What are your go-to sources of instant gratification?
 - What do you default to when you have a spare minute, or are feeling tired?
 - What do you default to when you are feeling bored or down?
 - How do you soothe yourself when you feel emotionally distressed?
- **Second column:** how many minutes or hours does that activity take per week?
- **Third column:** on a scale from 1 to 10, how much happiness does that activity actually deliver?
- **Last column:** which of your aspirations, core values, or long-term goals are negatively impacted by that activity?

Distraction	Time	Happiness	Impact on Aspirations



Monk Week Guidelines



Guidelines for doing a Monk Week, so that you can have a “dopamine reset”.

(This is a summary of the guidelines taken from the book. For a guided experience of it, check out the [Monk Week retreat](#).)

The Monk Week is a period in your life where you avoid all junk dopamine and instead cultivate presence, contentment, discipline and focused work. You basically go into *monk mode* on all distractions and temptations. It is a way to reclaim your energy, motivation and focus, in order to channel it toward living your aspirations and fulfilling your long-term goals.

WHERE TO DO IT

You can do it in your own home, or you could go on a retreat. A new environment does make things easier, but you need to be very mindful about how you transition back to your daily environment – otherwise, your brain could associate that change with the new environment, rather than see it as your new way of being overall.

WHEN TO DO IT

Choose a time in your life when you are ready for a big reset. Ideally a time when you are not super busy, so that your attention and energy are not required to be engaged in many things at the same time. Here are some ideas:

- A transition period, such as after the end of a phase of life
- A preparation period, such as before starting a new big project
- A New Year reset, so you start the year on the right foot

WHAT TO LET GO OF

During the Monk Week, you completely cut out all your sources of distractions and junk dopamine, or at least you keep them to the bare minimum if related to real family needs or work needs. Here are some examples of things to cut out during this experiment

X	Comfort food (sugar, snacks, coffee, alcohol, fast food)	X	Daydreaming
X	Email and messaging apps	X	Downloading new apps
X	Gaming	X	Entertainment
X	Social media	X	Shopping
X	News	X	Ruminating
X	Pornography	X	Smoking
X	Aimless browsing	X	Emotional addictions (arguing, gossiping, complaining, shaming, etc.)
X	Time-wasting websites		

Allow only the *necessary* use of the things that give you a dopamine hit, and let go of the rest. Check email or messages just once or twice a day, for necessary purposes only. If there is no need related to work or family, take a complete break. Eliminate all possible sources of junk dopamine, or your brain will channel *all* its energy into whatever dopamine source is still left.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON

Have one or two main projects, or areas of life, that you want to focus on during your Monk Week. Choose these projects according to your aspirations, and the SMART Goals you have created for them.

Figure out the key activities or habits you need in order to make progress on your goals, and spend most of your time each day working uninterruptedly on them. In between sessions of focused work, take a break, go for a walk, or simply *do nothing*.

Start and end each day by reviewing your aspirations, and your *Black and White exercise*.

Make sure to also practice self-care, to replenish your willpower. This includes making sure that you:

✓	eat healthy	✓	exercise daily
✓	sleep well	✓	stay connected to people (or whatever keeps your heart warm)
✓	meditate daily		

TRANSITION

You have completed a Monk Week—congratulations! Notice how different you feel.

Notice how there is a greater sense of purpose, focus, and energy. Notice how you may feel more grounded, calm and in control of your life. Notice how you haven't missed your distractions as much as you thought you would.

After the Monk Week, review which forms of instant gratification are really worth the costs and which ones aren't. If you want to add any of them back, do so with awareness and temperance, slowly and consciously.

Be very conscious of your transition back into your normal life. Don't rush this process. Pay close attention so that you don't mindlessly fall back into the old habits and patterns (the default mode). Fully let go of all sources of junk dopamine that you haven't really missed, and create rules to limit your engagement with other distractions.

Aim to have at least one to three permanent changes to your daily habits as a result of your Monk Week. Then every time you do it again, you layer new positive changes on top, until you get to the point where you are fully satisfied with how you are spending your time and energy—and thus your life.



Challenge Your Excuses



Become aware of your most common excuses, and create counter-excuses that you can quickly use in times of need.

A powerful way to overcome excuses is by using the PAW Method. When you notice that you are giving yourself an excuse, you then:

- **Pause:** slow things down. Interrupt the pattern of excusing yourself. Instead of acting on your excuse, take three deep breaths.
- **Awareness:** become aware that you are telling yourself a story. See clearly the excuses that came up, and where they will take you (-1). Labeling your thoughts can help, simply saying in your mind, “Excuses are coming up”, or “Rationalizing”.
- **Willpower:** intentionally shift your state by challenging your excuses and changing your self-talk

Fill in the table below so that you know exactly how to challenge each one of your excuses, and what self-talk to shift to. This will make it much easier for you to successfully shift your state in the moment, rather than having to figure everything on the fly.

Excuse	How to Challenge It	Empowering Self-Talk

For examples of what this might look like, refer to Chapter 23 of *Mindful Self-Discipline*.



ACTION PILLAR

Habit Mastery Checklist



A summary of steps for building effective habits, step-by-step.

Chapter
25

STEP 1: Choose Your Habit

When choosing your habits, make sure that they are

- **Aligned** with your aspiration, and one of its SMART Goals
- **Specific**, telling you exactly *what* to do, *when* and *where*
- **Enjoyable**, if possible

ASPIRATION	
HABIT	
SMART GOAL	

Chapter
25

STEP 2: Prepare the Ground

Do you need any special tools, knowledge, or other external circumstances in order to be able to do your habit? If so, your first step is to prepare the ground by getting these things ready.

PREPARATION STEP 1	
PREPARATION STEP 2	
PREPARATION STEP 3	

STEP 3: Choose Your Cue

Formula: "After X, I will Y".

What will be the cue for your habit? It could be a specific *time* of the day, place you go to, *person* you meet, *event* that happens, *activity* that you finish, or *emotion* that you experience. That is the "X" in the formula above, and "Y" is your specific habit.

HABIT CUE

Here are some suggestions for effectively implementing your habit cue:

- For *time* cues and *event* cues, create a calendar event or set an alarm on your phone.
- For a *place* cue, see if you can have an object in that place, or a post-it note, that will remind you of the habit. Make changes in your environment so you are reminded to do the habit.
- For the other types of cues (*person*, *emotion*, *activity*), you will need to make a "mental note" of it, and resolve to remember to do your habit when that trigger happens.

STEP 4: Choose Your Action

What is the precise action you will take when triggered by your habit cue? If possible, make it quantifiable. For example: write five hundred words, run on the treadmill for twenty minutes, play three songs on the guitar, meditate for fifteen minutes.

Choose what will be your *ideal action* (what you'd want to do every day), and your *minimum action* (the minimum that you'll do when you feel like skipping).

IDEAL ACTION

MINIMUM ACTION

STEP 5: Choose Your Reward

Try to find an intrinsic reward for your habit. Think of how to implement at least two of the three modes of intrinsic rewards:

- Enjoy the **activity itself**. Use the *Shift Your Perception* technique (Chapter 19).
- Enjoy how you **feel after** the activity. Connect with your body, and be more mindful of the natural rewards of that activity.
- Enjoy the **emotional satisfaction** of having done something meaningful or important.

1. What will I do to enjoy the activity itself?

2. What enjoyable sensations do I feel right after performing my habit?

3. How can I enhance the emotional satisfaction that comes from having taken action?

STEP 6: Be Prepared

Do the *Contingency Plan* exercise in this Workbook, so that you are ready for the challenges that may come your way.

STEP 7: Commit

Now that you have ticked off all the boxes, it's time to choose a start date, and make a firm commitment. Review the *Never Zero* chapter of the book, and move forward resolutely!

Habit Master Checklist

(1) Habit	Aspiration	
	SMART Goal	
	My Habit	
	Tests	Is it aligned? Yes / No Is it specific? Yes / No How enjoyable is it? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
(2) Preparation		
(3) Cue	Habit Cue	
	Implementation	
(4) Action	Ideal	
	Minimum	
(5) Rewards	During the Activity	
	After the Activity	
	Emotional Satisfaction	
(6) Contingency	Plan completed?	
(7) Commitment	Your <i>Never Zero</i> commitment statement	



Awareness Journal for Bad Habits



Gain greater awareness of the cues that are leading you to engage in bad habits, so that you can replace harmful habits with healthier ones.

To break bad habits, you need to first develop awareness around what triggers you to want to indulge in them. This exercise will help you with that. For at least one week, take note of every time you indulged in the bad habit you want to break, and the circumstances around it.

Fill the table below as follows:

- **Bad Habit:** the habit you want to break
- **When:** date and time of when the indulgence happened
- **Where:** where you were when the indulgence happened
- **Trigger:** what triggered you to go for the bad habit
- **Feeling Before:** what your dominant emotional state was right before you indulged
- **Feeling After:** how you felt after indulging

Bad Habit	When	Where	Trigger	Feeling Before	Feeling After

After going through this self-awareness exercise for one week, you then:

- Notice the **repeated patterns**. Figure out the specific places, times of the day, or emotions that are the main trigger for you indulging.
- Decide to use those triggers as reminders to practice the **PAW Method**. At the very least, pause for a minute to breathe deeply and slowly before indulging.
- Make changes in your environment, routine, or lifestyles so you feel less triggered.

Contingency Plan



Be prepared for the obstacles and challenges you will meet on the way, so that it becomes easier for you to bounce back from failure and persevere.

Go through an obstacle audit and create simple if/then scenarios, also known as “implementation intentions”.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Make a list of all the challenges, excuses, and obstacles that may tempt you to skip your habit or break your resolution. (*If ____ happens,*)
- Next to each item, write how you will respond. Specify the exact action you will take, or the exact self-talk you will use to overcome that challenge. (*I will ____.*)

Challenge		Response
If	happens,	I will .
If	happens,	I will .
If	happens,	I will .
If	happens,	I will .
If	happens,	I will .
If	happens,	I will .
If	happens,	I will .

Review this list at least once a week, until it is all internalized.

For the most challenging items on your list, consider practicing the **POWER Visualization** regularly, so that you can program your brain to follow through with the plan. Review Chapter 23 of the book for instructions, or use the guided meditation on the [Mindful Self-Discipline app](#).



**DAILY
LIFE**



Mindful Time Management Summary



Briefly review the four elements of mindful time management, for daily practice.

Go through an obstacle audit and create simple if/then scenarios, also known as “implementation intentions”.

TIME PLANNING

- Dedicate a few minutes at the start of each day (or the night before) for planning.
 1. **“What are my priorities today?”** Consider your aspirations, your three most important tasks, and what tasks will most contribute to your wellbeing.
 2. **“How will I keep my priorities today?”** Think about what will not get done, how to avoid interruptions, and how to budget your time so your priorities get covered.
 3. **“How can I make things run more smoothly today?”** Resolve clashes of schedule ahead of time, schedule breaks and downtime, and remove friction.

TIME BOUNDARIES

- Every decision has a cost. Oftentimes, saying *yes* to someone’s request is saying *no* to your goals. To be disciplined, you need to be able to say *no* and protect your time.
- Separate the decision from the relationship with the person making the request. Say *no* assertively but graciously. Saying *no* is not selfish.

TIME AWARENESS

- Be aware of time! Effective time management requires constant time awareness.
- Make your **calendar** and your **watch** your best friends; check them multiple times a day to help you stay on track with your schedule.
- Stay ahead of what comes next on your schedule and know what you need to do to be ready for it. Be aware of what you are supposed to be doing at any given moment, and how much time you have left in your current time slot. Don't go overboard.
- Consider using time-tracking apps and countdown timers.

TIME FOCUS

- Every time you indulge in a distraction, you are training your mind to be scattered; every time you refuse it, you are training your mind to be disciplined and focused. Improve the quality of your activities by avoiding distractions and being wholeheartedly present in each activity.
- Whenever you are focused and a distraction comes up, remember that you *always* have the option to engage in that distraction or not. You always have the choice to remain focused.
- Work in short, focused batches of time, during which you remain absolutely focused on a single task, with no distractions or multi-tasking allowed. (Power Hour)
- Bundle all trivial tasks, interruptions, and small errands to be dealt with together, once or twice a day. Ignore them when they come up at other times during the day, or make note of them for later.



Morning Routine Summary



Briefly review the five elements of an effective morning routine, for daily practice.

FIXED START

Morning routines are killed by irregular wake up times. In order to start on time, you need to always wake up on time. This means *never* pressing the snooze button, and having a regular sleep schedule.

FIXED LENGTH

Your morning routine can be anything from thirty minutes to two hours. Consider booking it on your calendar so that nothing else is scheduled at that time, and also so you have a daily reminder.

STRUCTURED

Divide your available time into time blocks, scheduled back to back, and assign one time block for each of your most important aspiration-related activities. Use alarms as reminders, and consider having a printed copy of your morning routine in each room of your home.

FOCUSED

Keep your phone in airplane mode so that you are fully offline until you finish your morning routine. Be wholeheartedly focused on each activity, treating it as the most important thing in the world when you are performing it.

ACHIEVABLE

Initially, make your morning routine shorter than what you are able to do, so that it is easy to follow; then grow it gradually. Consider having a different morning routine for weekends.

MY MORNING ROUTINE

Sleep Time	
Wake up time	
Activity #1	
Activity #2	
Activity #3	
Day Planning	
Finish time	

SETUP CHECKLIST

<input type="checkbox"/> Booked in Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> Reminders Set	<input type="checkbox"/> Achievable
--	---	--

Influencer's Detox



Review who your influencers are, and realize whether they are helping you take steps toward your conditioned life (-1) or toward your designed life (+1).

INSTRUCTIONS

- Think of the people you spend most time with, and fill in the table below. You might also include people who have a strong influence on you, even if you don't spend much time with them.
- In the second column, fill in their main life goals, values, and habits. Whether we like it or not, we tend to be influenced to adopt similar life goals, values and habits of the people we choose to spend time with.
- In the third column, consider how you feel when you are with them, and how you feel after you meet them. Do you feel negative (agitated, anxious, doubtful, stressed)? Or positive (calm, empowered, animated, inspired, etc.)? Do they make you feel more inclined to follow your aspirations, or less so?

PERSON	WHO THEY ARE	HOW THEY INFLUENCE ME
	Life goals:	How I feel with them:
	Main habits:	How I feel afterward:
	Life goals:	How I feel with them:
	Main habits:	How I feel afterward:
	Life goals:	How I feel with them:
	Main habits:	How I feel afterward:
	Life goals:	How I feel with them:
	Main habits:	How I feel afterward:
	Life goals:	How I feel with them:
	Main habits:	How I feel afterward:
	Life goals:	How I feel with them:
	Main habits:	How I feel afterward:

Do the process above in relation to ten to twenty people in your life. Consider also going through a variation of this process in relation to the:

- websites you visit
- books and blogs you read
- types of movie or series you watch
- places you go to
- social media accounts you follow

Once you have filled in all columns for your influencers, then review the results and get to a conclusion in relation to each one of them.

- Who do you want to spend **more time** with? These are people who feed the best in you, help you grow in life, inspire you, or push you toward your deepest goals and aspirations.
- Who do you want to spend **less time** with? These are the people who may make you feel good but don't really help you grow in relation to your goals and values.
- Who do you want to **stop** spending time with? These are people with unhealthy life habits, those whose values are not aligned with your higher aspirations, or those relationships that are just unhealthy and even toxic; people who undermine your growth, slow you down, and do not really want to see you succeed.

Spend <i>more</i> time with	Spend <i>less</i> time with	Spend <i>no</i> time with

If you don't have at least three to five people in the "spend more time with" category, it may be a good idea to start building some new relationships, based on your values and aspirations.

Implementation Guide



This is a copy of the last chapter of the *Mindful Self-Discipline* book, which gives you the map to implement all of its concepts into your daily life. It is here for your convenience.

YOUR SELF-DISCIPLINE SETUP

Begin by going through the exercises in Steps 1 to 3 of the Aspiration Pillar (Chapters 7, 8, 9)—this will help you have an aspiration that is clear, strong, and also translated into actionable goals. Then create milestones and specific habits for each of these goals, so that you have an action plan and you know exactly what you need to do to move forward without feeling overwhelmed (Chapter 25). These are all things that you set up once and then review *quarterly*.

Once you have clarity about your aspiration, goals, milestones, and habits, it's time to design your daily life in a way that will allow you to effectively build those habits and make progress toward your goals. You do that first by choosing the best cue for each habit, the ideal and minimum action, and the rewards that will help you remain on track; you then take steps to improve your environment, and create a contingency plan so you avoid “failures” (Chapters 26, 27, and 30).

After that, you create a morning routine that includes your most important habits (Chapter 34). You might find the need to review and fine-tune this second group of tasks *weekly*, until you find what works best for you.

Depending on where you are in your life, you may at this point decide that you need a hard dopamine reset, and plan your first Monk Week (Chapter 22).

This whole initial *self-discipline setup* can take anywhere between two hours to a whole day. When you are finished, you will be ready to take action in a way that is effective, purposeful, and consistent. Consolidate it by making a *Never Zero* commitment (Chapter 31), and then get started.

YOUR FOCUS TECHNIQUE

After finishing the book, you likely have a much clearer idea about the biggest obstacles that you need to overcome in order to live a more self-disciplined life, and the virtues that will help you get there. It's now time to choose which obstacle you will focus on first, and then start practicing the concepts and techniques in that particular chapter of the book.

Below is a list of common self-discipline challenges and where to go in the book to learn the tools for dealing with them. Refer also to the *Index of Practices* section at the end of the book for a more complete list of tools.

- Lack of motivation (Chapters 7-10, 13, 31, 35)
- Inner conflict (Chapter 11)
- Lack of self-belief (Chapter 12)
- Victim mindset (Chapter 12)
- Lack of commitment (Chapter 13)
- Fears and anxiety (Chapter 20)
- Giving up (Chapter 21)
- Distractions (Chapter 22)
- Excuses (Chapter 23)
- Forgetfulness (Chapter 27)
- Procrastination (Chapter 28)
- Doubts (Chapter 29)
- Failures (Chapter 30)

You only need to focus on the chapters that address the challenges that you actually have. Even then, you don't need to do all the exercises. As soon as you find something that works for you, focus on that technique for a daily practice until you get results. That is your Focus Technique.

Your Focus Technique can change over time. For example, perhaps right now you are struggling with fear or anxiety, and so you decide to focus on the Embrace Your Pain technique (Chapter 20). Then, after a couple of months, you may realize that fear and anxiety don't hold you back so much anymore, but you find yourself procrastinating a lot, and so your Focus Technique changes to Baby Steps (Chapter 28).

I suggest you work on one obstacle or virtue at a time, focusing on it for a full month before moving on to another one. You *could* practice two at a time, but for many people that leads to too much strain on their willpower, a sense of overwhelm, and then frustration for lack of progress. It's better to start small and be consistent. Remember, self-discipline is the journey of a lifetime.

YOUR DAILY PRACTICE

Once you do your Self-Discipline Setup (above) and once you're aware of what your biggest challenges are, then all you need to focus on is maintaining a daily practice that keeps you on track with your goals and values. Here is a template for you to try.

MORNING

As part of your daily morning routine, practice at least ten minutes of meditation (Chapter 37). You can learn more about it in my first book, *Practical Meditation*, or by joining the *Limitless Life* program, or by following any guided meditation from any teacher you trust.

After your meditation practice, you then take a couple of minutes to do the Three Rs:

- **Remember.** Remember your aspirations and review the main self-discipline technique that you are focusing on, so that they are more top of mind.
- **Recommit.** Think of your SMART goals and chosen habits, and recommit to following them. Keep doing this every day until it becomes second nature.
- **Resolve.** Set an intention for your day. Your intention is a goal for your practice of awareness—something for you to pay attention to during the day, and constantly come back to.

DAY

Throughout the day, practice the PAW Method and one of the three main willpower techniques (Chapters 17-20). Get into the habit of pausing more before every decision, becoming aware of your +1 and -1 options, and then using your willpower to shift your state, so that you can live more in harmony with your goals.

Enhance *pausing* by including one-minute mini-meditations three times a day. Enhance *awareness* through tracking your actions as +1 or -1.

EVENING

At the end of your day, go through the three-question journaling method described in Chapter 16. This only takes two to five minutes, and it helps you develop gratitude, awareness, and intention.

These daily practices don't take a lot of your time, yet they pay rich dividends. They allow you to be more self-disciplined with your life, time, and energy. Every day that you follow these practices is a day when you have taken a firm step toward your aspirations and ideal self.

FINE TUNING

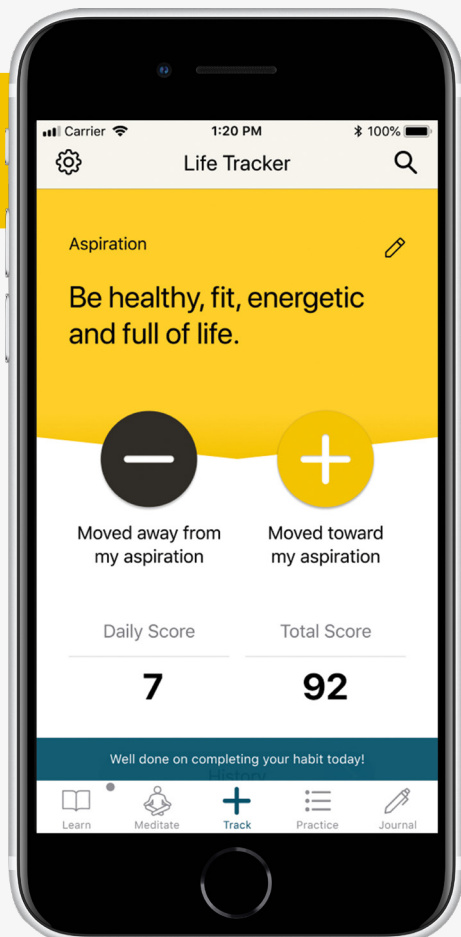
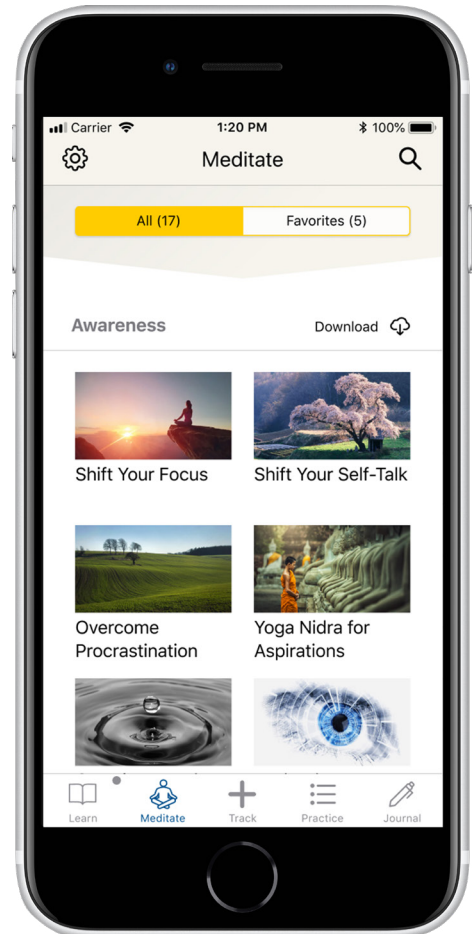
If you do your initial self-discipline setup and follow the daily practices above (including your Focus Technique), you are well on your way.

At this point, you may want to make sure that you are set for practicing self-discipline in a sustainable way, without burning out or missing out on other aspects of life (Chapter 3). You can also fine-tune your lifestyle choices to make sure that you are making things easier for yourself by having good nutrition and enough sleep (Chapter 36), by keeping good influences in your life (Chapter 35), and by organizing your day in a way that manages your energy well and prevents decision fatigue (Chapter 4). Finally, you can learn to use self-discipline to better manage your time (Chapter 33), and to develop the virtues you need to be the person you want to be (Chapter 38).

Become a Member

Take Mindful Self-Discipline to the next level!

- Access over 20 exclusive guided meditations
- Save your favorite meditations, and make them available for offline use
- Practice the ROAR Method, ALFA Method, and POWER visualisation daily
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Master self-discipline.
Live your values.**



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