

DECLUTTERING YOUR MIND



Decluttering Your Mind

Just like your physical environment can be cluttered, so can your mind. Mind clutter often manifests itself as circular thoughts, inability to sleep, and even a failure to focus on the job at hand due to the problems elsewhere. To have a decluttered mind means to be able to focus on living the best life you want to live without being distracted by the minutia of life. If you're going to free your mind of clutter read on.

Clean Up Your Physical Environment

Studies show that having a cluttered environment can negatively affect your mind. Due to the actual physical effects of having the clutter around, plus the dirt and germs that come with it, you will automatically feel more mentally uncluttered just by cleaning up your environment.

- **Start with The Obvious** – Each person has an area of their physical environment that is causing the most issues with having mental clutter. For you, it could be your office, your automobile, or maybe even the garbage. It might be “all of the above” – in that case, start with something that will give you more bang for your buck. For example, if you're often late fix those issues first.
- **Create Clean Habits** – Starting today, even before working on your mental clutter (or physical clutter) promise yourself that you will clean up everything you use right away. If you take a bath, clean the bathroom. If you prepare food, clean up after yourself. Yes, that may mean that you are cleaning everything. Encourage other family members to do the same.
- **Get Help** – For some people, they will need to help with some aspect of physical decluttering. You may need physical help with lifting, or maybe you need actual help cleaning and organizing. Find out what that help costs of if you have family members or friends who will help.

The more you can clean up your physical environment the better luck you're going to have with ending your mental clutter. The main reason is that physical clutter can make you sick. It increases the likelihood that you'll develop anxiety, depression, and even respiratory problems.

Keep a Journal

Don't just journal in the same way all the time. Sometimes you just need a way to get out everything that's on your mind, but other times you need to journal more effectively so that the information is useful to you later. One problem with mental clutter is it can impede your ability to focus and get things done in a timely and accurate way. Journaling can help you “empty” your brain clutter.

- **Journal What You're Worried About** – When you are having trouble sleeping or are experiencing circular thoughts don't fighting it. Instead, get ahead of it. Before bed, journal what you're worried about. If it's something you have control over, develop a plan to attack that problem. However, if you cannot do anything about it, find something positive about the situation and let it go.

- **Journal About the Positives in Your Day** – This is a good thing to get down on paper because you can read it again when you're having a negative day. Acknowledging the positives, at least once a day, is an excellent way to let go of mental clutter.
- **Journal Your Goals & Plans** – You can also use journals while you plan anything in your life. You can use text, images, and more to make your journals come alive. They can be on your computer, or you can use the old-fashioned paper kind. It's up to you.
- **Just Write it All Down** – Set aside about 15 minutes a day (before you get ready for bed is a good time) to write down everything. Dump your brain out on the paper with whatever is on your mind, good, bad, or ugly.

You may even want to keep several journals so that when you pick one up you know what it's for. You may need to let go of a story from your past, which may require that you write the story down. Next, you may want to plan your diet to help you lose weight and get healthy. You may also want to go over how you plan to handle a stressful situation. You can use journals in many ways, according to what you need to accomplish.

Be More Mindful

It can be difficult to focus on the here and now; however, the ability to enjoy your life to its fullest potential depends on your ability to prioritize and focus on what is happening currently or "in the moment." Many people have trouble doing this because they have been conditioned to think and plan-ahead for the future.

While "tomorrow" is important, most of life's cherished moments are not planned. They just happen unexpectedly; so, if you aren't paying attention to what is happening around you at the given moment, you may end up missing out on the most rewarding and memorable aspects of life. To help you be more mindful, try out these strategies.

- **Turn It Off or Tune It Out** – When you need to focus on your top priority, block out everything except what is most important to accomplishing your goal. Whether you're enjoying a long walk at sunset or completing your data entry task, identifying and tuning out or ignoring irrelevant bits of information will help you focus better. Developing your control over where your focus is helps you to stay on track and in the moment.
- **Breathe** – Did you know that most people don't breathe correctly? A lot of us tend to hold our breath. When you breathe correctly, your diaphragm should rise and fall with each breath, not your tummy. You may need to adjust your breathing when you want to focus. Put your hand on your diaphragm and concentrate on each breath.
- **Bulleted Brain Dump** – Keep a bullet journal handy so that when you want to get something done right now you can let go of stuff first. By writing bullets as reminders, you don't have to get deep into the details. You can just acknowledge it and move on.
- **Set Up Your Area** – The area you work in needs to be set up specifically for the task you need to complete. It should be clear of clutter and have as much open space as possible. Only items related to the task should be at hand. This helps to keep your attention on your work, rather than glancing at things in the room and getting distracted.

- **Set Your Alarm** – Sometimes it's easier to focus if you can let go of time limitations. If you only have so much time to get things done setting the alarm can make a big difference to your level of progress and productivity. The alarm allows you to focus 100 percent of your attention on your task or event, which leads to greater productivity and success.
- **Free to Be Here and Now** – Like Nike says, “Just do it.” Give yourself permission to focus on one thing at a time. In fact, choose to do this as much as possible, since multi-tasking tends to create mind-clutter and eventually contributes to stress and confusion. When you learn how to focus on the here and now, pushing out things that don't pertain to the current activity, you feel more successful and actually accomplish more.

You have control over your thoughts, feelings, and actions. The key to being able to focus at-will is to recognize what distracts you and when you are most likely to become distracted. When you can do this, you can take the steps necessary to head distractions off at the pass. Depending on your needs, you may need to turn off electronics or apps to maintain your focus. Thoughts unrelated to your task may creep into your mind. Using some of the refocusing techniques can help you ignore those. The more you practice refocusing and decluttering your mind, the easier it will be to avoid distractions.

Turn Negative Thoughts Around

Everyone has negative thoughts. The problem with them is often that those thoughts are merely brain clutter. What makes them clutter is if you cannot do anything about it and have no control over it, giving it brain space and time is useless. With practice, when you think of something negative use different tricks to turn it around.

- **List Your Negative Thoughts** – As you first start trying to turn negative thoughts around you should take the time to list your most common negative thoughts in order of prevalence. You can do it on paper or on the computer. Use one page per negative thought category.
- **Set A Time Limit** – Don't spend too much time listing your negative thoughts. The regularly occurring ones should be readily memorable to you. Give yourself about 15 minutes or less to get the list made.
- **Replace the Negative Thought** – Now that you have a list, on each paper or page write down a thought you can have instead. It might also help to note whether you have control over the source of the negative thinking. If you do, set up a plan for change, if not set up a plan to let it go.
- **It's Your Choice** – It might not feel like it, but you really do have a choice regarding what you allow yourself to think about. You can push the thoughts out of your mind by making a concerted effort to focus on something else.
- **Make a Continuous Effort to Love More** – When you replace negative with positive you win. One way to let go of negativity is to get and give more love. If you need to volunteer to hold infants or go volunteer at a shelter, or just go hug your spouse or kids more, you should do it. The more you laugh and love the more positive you will become naturally.

- **Understand What You Get Out of Thinking Negatively** – If you are having issues letting go of specific negative thoughts and behaviors consider that you may be getting a positive result from your obsession that you've not factored into letting it go. Figure out what that payoff is, and you will finally be able to let it go.
- **Make New Habits** – Bad habits can always be replaced by good habits. Habits, in general, can be developed for anything you'd like to do regularly. New habits like listing your top three positive memories of the day around the dinner table, or cleaning up after yourself more often, or turning off electronics habitually the moment you come home – all of it adds up.
- **Give Up the News** – It's not that you should be uninformed, but most news, whether on the radio or TV is sensationalized for maximum drama. That usually means that it's mostly negative with an occasional "feel good" story thrown in. This only adds to your negativity and negative thoughts.
- **Give Up Doms Day Shows** – So many people love negative broadcasting whether it's doomsday movies, TV series, or documentaries. While you're trying to get better at ridding your mind of the clutter of negativity focus on watching only positive things.
- **Set Up Some Daily Affirmations** – It might seem silly at first but getting yourself used to thinking positive may require the addition of daily affirmations. You can do this with the help of a book, a subscription email, or by just making them up yourself that is related to your life and pulling them out of a jar each day.

You can routinize success. If you set up a system to change something or get something done if you follow the system and process you will succeed. It's so crazy easy that you may not yet believe how powerful you really are over your life including your thoughts. You are not powerless.

Get Back to Nature

When it comes to your mental health, spending time in nature can help you relax, as well as rejuvenate you. At our core, we are part of the animal kingdom. Our bodies need to feel grass and sand between our toes, the wind in our hair, and the sun on our skin. If you're not getting outdoors much, you may be amassing more mental clutter than normally would.

- **Go for A Walk** – The simplest and easiest way to get outdoors is to go for a walk each day. A 20-minute walk without technology in the sunshine can make so much difference in your life and how you feel about it that you'll want to do it more once you get started.
- **Go Camping** – Even if you've never been camping, a simple weekend camping trip (you can stay in a cabin, a tent, or an RV) without any technology with you and far from the commotion of the world, will change your life. Even if you're not especially fond of nature yet, just a weekend will change everything.
- **Try Something New Outdoors** – Try to find new things to do that are outdoors. Hiking, golfing, walking, running, swimming, skiing, boating and so forth are all fantastic ways to

spend time outdoors. You may find other things to do like playing pickleball, flying model airplanes or something else. It's entirely your choice.

- **Increase Vitamin D** – When you go outside in the sunshine more you can replenish the level of vitamin D in your system. Vitamin D is an essential vitamin that everyone needs. It's more like a hormone, and a deficiency can cause negative thoughts and body pain. Ask your doctor to check the levels of essential vitamins like B12.
- **Smell the Fresh Air** – When you are outside, take time to focus on what's around you. Smell the air, feel the breeze, soak it all in. When you're focused on the reflection of the sun on the ripples of water after you skipped a rock across it, you cannot be thinking of your worries
- **Get Around Animals** – Like nature, animals are also beneficial for making us feel happy and confident. Even if you cannot have your own animal, there are ways to get around other people by either volunteering or working part-time with pets.
- **Watch a Sunrise & a Sunset** – Schedule at least monthly, watching one day, sunset and another day the sunrise, from a great location local to you. The more often you connect with nature the more centered, contented, and rested you'll feel.

The truth is if you're having an exceptionally difficult day, disconnecting from technology can make all the difference. You can let go and just focus on your surroundings, the sights, the smells, and the feeling you get being out there instead of whatever else is happening.

Take Time for Self-Care

An excellent book to read is called, [Love Yourself Like Your Life Depends on It by, Kamal Ravikant](#). It's very short, so it won't take much time. You can read it free by trying out Kindle Unlimited, or you can get it in print. This book explains why you need to love yourself. Your life really does depend on it.

Do you love yourself enough to ensure that you do everything you can to succeed? To ensure you do take time for self-care and self-love, you may want to think about the following ideas.

- **Exercise More** – Moving more is always a good thing. It's good for your heart and your belly fat. However, it's also good for your mind. When people exercise more, they're usually more alert and feel more capable of taking on difficult tasks.
- **Meditate Daily** – This is a great thing to learn because when you really learn to meditate, you can do it anywhere. You can do it for just one minute to clear your mind, or you can do it for 30 minutes to reset your mind and body.
- **Sleep 7 to 9 Hours** – Everyone needs a different level of rest, so you'll need to figure out what is ideal for you. For most people 7 to 9 hours is what they need. Less than six hours a night, of sleep and you could be in danger of exacerbating your mind clutter and even inviting mental problems to come to you.
- **Eat Healthily** – There are so many fad diets around that it can be hard to figure out what eating right means. If you eat enough nutrition in the right level of calories for your body

type and take supplements when needed per your blood tests, you're doing great. Having the proper diet can help control the amount of mind clutter you experience. Your focus and energy fluctuate with your blood sugar level so the more balanced it is, the easier it will be to concentrate and focus.

- **Get A Massage** – Another way to relax that also has other medical benefits is to get regular massage. You can get your spouse to do it, or you can hire someone to do it. You can find people at all price points. Try your local school. Massage forces you to relax for 30 to 50 minutes and helps rid your body of toxins that can affect your thought patterns.
- **Prioritize Family** – When making your daily schedules, don't forget about doing things with your family. Spending time with family allows you to let go of one nagging mind clutter -- guilt, which is a wasted emotion if there ever was one. Guilt can lead to so many negative and self-depreciating thoughts that finding a way to end it is essential.
- **Don't Forget Your Friends** – You need to spend time with your same-sex friends who share your interests. Play miniature golf, go bowling, or something that enables you to converse with each other. You'll be happier and more satisfied with your life when you have friends.

When you love yourself, you're more able to show love in a healthy way to others. You don't have to be selfish to practice self-care either. When you are well cared for you are better able to take care of others. In addition, you're much less likely to keep a cluttered, unproductive mindset.

Don't Multitask

No one can really multitask. It's a total myth that people can. You can waste a lot of time when you are switching back and forth between things because you are switching back and forth. You're not doing both at the same time. It's impossible. If you think you can check Twitter while you're writing the next great American Novel, you're wrong. The same goes with letting go of negative thoughts and mental clutter. Don't add roadblocks by trying to multitask.

- **Set Schedules for Everything** – It might seem weird but if you schedule everything you do, it's going to be easier to stop multitasking. For example, if you really hate doing something schedule a shorter amount of time to do it, so it's not a big deal or something for you to try to procrastinate on.
- **Turn Off Things You're Not Using** – If you don't need it for the task, turn it off. For example, if you are spending some time paying bills, you don't need to have Facebook notifications on.
- **Eliminate Distractions** – When you know you're going to do anything, look at the potential distractions and think of ways to eliminate them. Some things may distract you that don't bother others. You know you.
- **Know Your Priorities** – It's easy to put into perspective when you know your priorities and can use them to help you make good choices.

- **Be Mindful** – Basically, this just means that you should stay totally aware of your thoughts and actions that you're doing right now. Don't let your mind wander. If it does, bring it back. Look at your child's smile. Look at your husband's biceps. Whatever it takes.
- **Say No** – To help you stop multitasking, start saying no more often. At the very least, think about the consequences before you add anything else to your plate. Most of the time people have so much mental clutter is because they have a great deal of life clutter and are trying to do too much. Do one thing well instead of tons of things poorly.
- **Know Yourself** – No one knows you better than you know yourself. If you don't believe multitasking is an issue, check it out to see if you've been missing the signs. [There is a cool site that has a test on it for you to try](#). Labinthewild.org. When you realize you really can't do it, and that by scheduling tasks in a way that you can focus on each thing that your standards and quality (and enjoyment) go up you won't find it as hard to stop it.

When you can compartmentalize your life, you'll find it easier to let go of mental clutter. When you're with your family, be with them. When you're at work, focus on work. When you're in nature, take in nature. This can be hard to do with smartphones, TVs, and screens everywhere you go; but, if you're aware of it and refocus when you notice that you're becoming distracted, you can get back on track.

Develop Habits

When you create habits, you develop a situation where you will get things done without even trying. You don't have to be reminded anymore to brush your teeth, right? With this idea in mind, let's look quickly at how you create habits that help you avoid mind clutter.

- **Commit for A Month** – They say it takes 21 days to create a habit but let's try to take a month instead. Commit to doing whatever habit for a month. Then reevaluate to find out if it yielded as much positivity as you thought it would.
- **Do the Task Daily to Create the Habit** – If you want to create a habit, you'll have to rely on rote "doing" at first. Over time, doing something on a daily basis is going to turn it into a habit.
- **Pick Something Easy at First** – Choose something simple to change first. Don't choose something you're physically addicted to. Instead, choose something that is genuinely a behavior issue such as ending negative thoughts.
- **Set Reminders** – Use your calendar to set reminders for the actions you are trying to turn into a habit. When you get the reminder, don't ignore it. You will feel better if you do the thing instead of ignoring it. Remember, small successes help end more mental clutter.
- **Be Consistent** – To create a habit, you must do the action every single day on schedule. The more consistent you are when you are trying to train yourself to have a healthy habit the more likely you are to be successful with it.

- **Know Your Triggers** – Everyone has triggers that cause them to either do something good for themselves or do something terrible. If you have a trigger that causes you to do something wrong, try to change that trigger to the good activity. For example, if you are trying to stop thinking negatively but every time you see a particular commercial on TV, it triggers the negative mind clutter. Make that a trigger to donate to your favorite charity combatting whatever is triggering you in the opposite manner.
- **Interrupt Bad Thoughts** – One way to end bad thoughts is to add a positive thought at the end. “I am not good at using this program, however with training, I will become better.” “I am not very neat, but with practice, I can become neat.”

Anyone can develop good habits or bad habits. You merely need to be committed to doing something you said you’d do. It doesn’t matter if you told yourself or someone else. You just have to do it. When you follow through and do what you say, your mind clutter will be lessened due to letting go of procrastination and perfection.

Automate

One way to get things done in a more organized manner is not to do them at all if you can automate them. There are many things you can automate both at home and at work. Let’s look at a few ideas. Automation can take lots of your mind clutter away and make you feel almost normal.

- **Bill Paying** – Most banks today have a form of bill paying automatically today. Look at your bank account to set this up. Don’t use the automation from your bill companies because they are known to cancel them after a period. Your bank will only cancel the payments if you ask them to. **Hint:** Get your utility bill transferred to “budget billing” and the bill will be the same each month.
- **Work Tasks** – At work, you can automate a lot of things with the tech you have available from email filtering to bookkeeping to using macros in MS Word to type an often-used sentence or phrase.
- **Supply Delivery** – Do you use a specific supply a lot but forget to buy it? Get vitamins, razors, cat litter and so forth delivered without shipping costs automatically setting up Amazon’s “subscribe and save” option. Only do this with things that you know you’re going to use regularly, so you never have to buy them at the store.
- **Grocery Delivery** – Instead of going shopping, let someone else do it for you. You can shop online and then have someone deliver the groceries to you. Alternatively, you can go pick them up saving you hours a week.
- **Services** – Whether it is spraying bugs, fixing hair, or other types of regular services, make your appointments ahead of time and put them in your calendar. Getting it done on time and regularly is better and less costly than waiting for the last moment.

Examine your life, and your work, so that you can figure out what you can automate using the technology you have. For example, if you have a home assistant like Alexa, you can use her to compile your grocery lists as you run out of things. Then, ask her to send you the list in email.

That automates your grocery list, so you don't keep forgetting to add items or forget to take it with you.

Use Lists to Make Decisions

Lists keep things in order and declutter your mind. Most people think they have a much better memory than they do, but even if you do have a great memory, there is just something magical about keeping a good list, prioritizing it correctly, and then marketing off things as you finish. It's a significant boost to the mood.

- **Categorize the List** -- You'll want to ensure that you are making your list right by keeping each category separate. It's so much easier to use technology to make lists because you can reorder things easily. Consider using software like Trello.com to help you make good lists. You can also turn emails from Gmail into a task list.
- **Schedule Everything** -- When you make a list, it's not done just when you have a list of things to do. Instead, you also need to schedule when things will be done. It also helps to consider how things will be done too so you can get the time right.
- **Think in Steps** -- Some of your tasks will need to be done in a particular order. Note that as you make your list, schedule things realistically so that things can be done in order and not end up with a bottleneck.
- **Combine Like Things** -- When you notice that you have a lot of things to do on a particular side of town or in a specific room of your home, combine the tasks together so you can get them done all at once.
- **Avoid Bottle Necks** -- When you prioritize things on a list, it's important to know how to do that to avoid bottlenecks. As you move things around on your list, note the things that must be completed in order first. Get them into the right order. Then add the other things.
- **Learn to Compartmentalize** -- One thing the male species at least in the USA does better than women is to compartmentalize their life. They're good at going to work and having an out of sight, out of mind, mentally. This is actually very good for mental health. You should be able to focus on what you're doing right now instead of what might happen or what is happening with someone else.
- **Make Decisions** -- One issue that adds to clutter is the inability to make decisions. Sadly, many people who are overwhelmed by excessive clutter, both physical and mental, tend to have trouble making decisions about even the small things. However, to get rid of clutter you need to be able to make choices faster, even on the spot.

For example, if you receive mail and are going through it over the trash can which is the best way to avoid leaving mail trash and clutter around, you need to be able to look at that mail and decide right away what to do.

When you are dealing with choices during the day, you need to be able to trust yourself to make good choices such as which blouse to donate and which to throw away. You don't want to hold

on to a shirt you don't wear for ten years. It's sad. Someone could have been using it all that time.

Now that you have some ideas about how to get yourself mentally uncluttered it's time to get started. What do you want to work on first?