

MINDSET STRATEGIES



 dietflex

 LOZ life

WHAT IS MINDSET?

1. fixed mental attitude or disposition that predetermines a person's responses to and interpretations of situations.
2. An inclination or a habit

Mindsets are beliefs – beliefs about yourself and your qualities. Think about your intelligence, your talents, your personality, your weight. Are these qualities carved in stone? Or are they things you can cultivate throughout your life?

With regard to weight, people with a fixed mindset believe that their weight is set. They might say things like “My entire family are big, that’s just the way we are.” Or “Every time I lose weight I just put it all back on.”

When looking at fitness, most people understand that putting in the effort will see results. That doesn't stop some people, though, from saying things like “I’m no good at running”, or “I’m too big to go to the gym”, or “I’m too busy to do any exercise.”

People with this mindset believe that nothing they do will help change their weight in the long term. Oddly, they may then set out to prove that they are correct in this belief.

People with a growth mindset, on the other hand, see their qualities as things that can be developed through their dedication and effort. They know that they can lose weight or get fit and then set out to do just that.

MISTAKES

Making one mistake, be it an accidental slip-up or a deliberate binge, does not mean that you've failed. It obviously wasn't the best thing you could have done, but it was one mistake. Your ability to take responsibility for your actions will dictate your next course of action.

Choose to learn from the experience. Ask yourself if the mistake was worth it? Sometimes it might be, for example at a really special occasion. In this situation, you might just remind yourself that it was truly a ‘one-off’ so you don't need to worry about it again.

Other times the mistake won't be worth it, such as succumbing to the smell of the bakery as you walk past. If you don't learn from this mistake, every time the temptation is present you'll give in. Learning from it may involve strengthening your willpower, deliberately using the opposite side of the street to avoid the temptation, or ensuring you always eat a meal before walking past the bakery. Learning from the mistake tells you that you have a growth mindset; you're capable of growth and change, and that you're moving ever closer to your ultimate goals.

Like any long-term plan, losing weight or getting fit may be a slow and deliberate process. If you're lucky you'll just follow your plan exactly right from the start and losing weight and improving fitness will be a dream come true. Most people find that they go through a period of adjustment, where it might be two steps forward and one step back. How long this lasts may well come back to mindset.

Those with a growth mindset find that the adjustment phase is very short – perhaps making just one or two mistakes. Those with a fixed mindset discover that their habits seem to be fixed, too, and despite wanting to make changes they can't see how to make it happen. Instead of focusing on the end goal, they may be better to focus on taking 'baby steps' as they slowly progress towards their goals.

During this slow progression, it's important to employ positive thoughts. What you focus on is what you'll do again. Giving yourself a pat on the back for the successes you have each day actually reinforces that positive behaviour. Acknowledge the challenges and the mistakes, but recognise that these amount to a very small number each day. Keep the mistake in perspective by acknowledging it and then putting it out of your mind, refusing to focus on this one small thing.

ANGEL & DEVIL

In developing a growth mindset, as well as considering the physical forces which affect our decision making, we also need to focus on emotional forces. We each talk to ourselves far more often every day than anyone else talks to us, and the inner dialogue we use has a profound impact on our beliefs and attitudes. Some of this inner dialogue is positive, some negative.

If you're feeling successful and the effort you're making seems to be paying off, your inner voice is likely to be more positive. "It's working", "Keep it up", "Wow, this is really getting me results" are examples of positive inner talk. It's like a little angel is sitting on your shoulder being a cheerleader, encouraging you to keep on going. Your angel helps give you strength to resist temptation and to get through the tough times.

Conversely, if you're feeling a bit low or deprived of your old favourites, or if despite your best efforts the scales just aren't doing what you want, you may find that negative self-talk appears. Examples might be "You're hopeless",

"It's not fair", "I really deserve that donut". Instead of the angel, it's like a little devil has made an appearance on your shoulder.

Sometimes there seems to be a fight in progress: the angel on one shoulder, the devil on the other. Who will win?

Recognise that the angel is on your side. She has the same goals as you and wants only the best for you. The devil fights against change, sabotaging your efforts wherever possible. The angel and devil often talk at the same time, both trying to win. Acknowledge that the devil will occasionally win, but every time the angel wins is a step toward strengthening the angel and banishing the devil – for good!

MINDFULNESS

Working towards an awareness and understanding of your eating and exercise behaviours can help you to make positive changes. Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awareness to experience.

Eating mindfully is to be aware of the taste, texture and mouth-feel of what you're eating. Your focus is on your food and your enjoyment of it, not on the TV or text messages or thinking about dashing out the door because you're late for work. Recognise the emotions you feel whilst eating, acknowledge the emotions, but don't judge yourself for them.

Emotions are always present. Sometimes they're constructive, sometimes not, but often they're so familiar that we barely even notice them. Being mindful allows you to view the emotion and to start developing an understanding of why it might be present.

10 THINGS TO HELP STRENGTHEN YOUR POSITIVE THOUGHTS:

1. Breathing

Deep breathing exercises, meditation and yoga can help take your focus away from thoughts and bring your attention to your breath. Take a long, deep breath in through the nose and exhale slowly through the mouth. Breathe from your belly, not your chest, and focus on the sound and rhythm of your breath.

2. Smile.

Smiling helps change your mood and relieve stress, and as it takes fewer muscles to smile than to frown, it's easier.

3. Surround yourself with positive people.

When you're stuck in negative self-talk, be with or talk to people who can put things into perspective and won't feed your negative thinking.

4. Change the tone of your thoughts from negative to positive.

Instead of thinking "Everyone else is having them and I don't want to miss out: one donut won't hurt." try "Good on me for doing so well. Now I'm going to eat so much nourishing food that there won't be room left for junk."

5. Don't play the victim.

Your current situation is not what will last forever. Avoid the "poor me, bad things always happen to me" mentality. Instead, make the decision to take responsibility for your future choices. Every choice you make has a consequence, moving you toward or away from your goals. Ask yourself which direction each choice will take you, and accept the consequences of the choices you make.

6. Be mindful.

You're surprisingly vulnerable to negative thinking when you're doing something that's practically second nature to you. When you're in the flow – say, while doing the housework – the part of the brain which handles executive function relaxes and lets the habit centre take over. While you're going through the motions of what's so familiar, nasty thoughts can sneak in and take control. Get your brain to refocus by turning your attention to exactly what you're doing. Be mindful with the housework: notice the dust being swept up, feel and smell the washing as you fold it, notice the tug of the vacuum hose, feel the soap suds in the sink.

7. Remember that no one is perfect and let yourself move forward.

It's easy to dwell on your mistakes. Rehashing it in your mind, berating yourself and feeling guilty or like a failure is negative thinking and can't change what has happened. Accept that you may have made a mistake and get back on track. You can't change the past, but you can determine the future.

8. Music

Slow-tempo music can have a calming effect, which can be mindful as we focus on the sound and vibration of each note, the feelings the music stimulates within you, and other sensations that are happening right now. As thoughts intrude, notice them and gently bring yourself back to the music. Singing can also have a very positive effect. When we sing, we show our feelings and this provides an amazing stress relief. Don't worry about what you sound like – in the car or the shower we're all superstars.

9. List five things that you are grateful for right now.

Being grateful helps appreciate what you already have. Your five things will be very personal: they may include a job you love, a happy relationship, healthy kids, enough money to put food on the table, a great group of friends. Really, they can include whatever is good in your life.

10. Read positive quotes.

Some swear by placing Post-It notes with positive quotes on their computer, fridge door and mirror as reminders to stay positive. Others prefer to memorise a 'mantra' to recall as needed throughout the day. Avoid thinking "This is silly; how could it possibly work?", and instead think that the positive quotes are taking the place of negative self-talk. In this way, you're filling up on positivity so that there is simply less room for negative thoughts to intrude.

TRY ONE OF THESE WEEKLY CHALLENGES:

- Work on going to bed at the same time each night, preferably before 9pm. Get a good night's sleep
- Alternate the 10 steps above each day, and see how you feel.

NOTES
