

Module 8: Create Positive Neural Pathways On Your Way to Enlightenment

Welcome back! We're in module 8, where you're going to learn how to create neural pathways on your way to enlightenment. But before we jump in, let's take a step back so I can explain what I'm talking about when I say neural pathways and also review what we've learned so far that can help you do this.

Now, when we do something over and over again, it becomes a habit. Habits are good because they save energy. When we can perform without having to concentrate so much, like in driving, we can accomplish more with less mental drain. But what about creating a new habit, even a mind habit? Let's say you tend to beat yourself up, and you've done it all your life. You know it's not good for you, but you just don't know how to change it. The key is to identify an alternative behavior and repeat it over and over again until it becomes automated as a habit.

When you repeat a behavior, you create lasting neural pathways in your brain. So don't worry about how you've always done things; it's never too late to change because your brain is flexible that way. It's called neuroplasticity, and the fact that your brain can create new pathways is good news. Your job is to identify what you want and then repeat it for three to six months for it to become a habit.

Over the course of this program, I gave you weekly challenges. If you've been practicing these little daily behaviors, you may have already built habits that can significantly affect your life for good. And if you've slipped and haven't been consistent, start today. As a tip, the more you can engage your five senses and either recall a past experience that was positive and what you learned about yourself that you can take forward or visualize a future where you have optimal results and can tap into what they look and feel like, the easier it will be to create neural pathways. Cool!

So, that's what we're going to set out to do today. Meanwhile, let's review how we've already engaged your mind to achieve this goal.

Number one, we talked about thinking traps. Once you build up self-awareness of your old ways of thinking, you can course-correct. These include prediction, memories, and catastrophizing, among many more.

Number two, we talked about attribution errors and how they can lead to a negative spiral. These include attributing failures to internal stable and controllability factors when, in fact, there is more to the story.

Number three, we talked about reframing things that you perceive as threatening and create fear in you, reframing them to look at them as challenges instead. This simple switch can help change your arousal level and help you be more tuned into problem-solving rather than simply panicking.

When you do these three things over and over, you create new neural pathways. But today, we'll talk about some other important practices to get your mind unstuck. Let's lighten your mental load.

In addition to all the amazing tools you've already learned this week, we have six objectives. Number one, examine your values to establish the purpose and meaning you derive from work. Number two, focus on the aspects of your work you love most to get maximal joy out of each day. Number three, overcome limiting beliefs that keep you stuck. Number four, learn mindset strategies for doing your best work. Number five, create a successful meditation practice to refocus your brain and reduce reactivity. Number six, minimize habits that stimulate the fight-or-flight response.

Before we begin the process of creating neural pathways on purpose, we need to be clear on what our purpose actually is. Living on purpose refers to aligning your decisions with your values. Values can be looked at as intrinsic if they are qualities that live inside of you and extrinsic if they are benefits from the job that affect your life. Examples of extrinsic values include compensation, job security, balance, recognition, and leadership. These are typically things we might negotiate about when we interview for a new job or seek to create a certain lifestyle. Intrinsic values include autonomy, creativity, and most importantly, a sense of purpose. It's when you are using your strengths to serve others and making a difference in the world that you feel most fulfilled.

And that leads us to two critical value-driven questions. What are the values that led you to pursue your career, and are these the same values that keep you there? Ultimately, you want to ask yourself, "Am I working to live or living to work?" And if you don't like your answer, what needs to change? Another thing to consider is how aligned your personal goals are with that of your organization. This is so important because when values are misaligned, it's a recipe for burnout. According to researcher Christine Padesky, it's important to find a balance between pleasurable and accomplishment tasks. If you tend to focus too much on pleasurable tasks, you need to focus more on accomplishments. But typically, high achievers tend to focus more on accomplishing than engaging in pleasurable tasks. So, if that's you, you'll need to combine pleasurable activities with your values.

Christine encourages people to "supercharge" their activities. Here are some tips she gives:

Number one, consider what it is that you have to do and how that fits with your goals. If, for instance, your value is cooking dinner, ask yourself how that fits with your fitness goals.

Number two, if you value time with your family, invite your family members to cook with you or chat with extended family members while cooking.

Number three, if you value spiritual development, you could focus on gratitude while you're cooking, focus on all the amazing things, and how you have something amazing to be grateful for.

Number four, if you are trying to build resilience, you can pay attention to how you overcome obstacles while you are cooking dinner.

So think about how to lead a value-driven life both in and out of work. It will be a lot more meaningful that way. And as the saying goes, "Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down."

Focus on aspects of your work that you love most to get maximal joy out of each day. So when we talk about refocusing the mind, it's not just to change your thinking; it's also to know where to focus externally. Now, you might find that there are aspects of your job that you love and other aspects that you could really do without. When you focus on the aspects you don't like, you're going to feel negative. So, of course, you can refocus on the aspects that you like, and that's going to help. But in addition, it's also helpful to take inventory of what aspects of your work you really like and see about ways that you might incorporate more of that into your day. So if there's a way to minimize focusing on aspects of your work that you don't like, consider how you might do that as well. Enjoyment increases engagement in work, which ultimately not only helps your performance but helps your mental and emotional health.

And there are two parts to what is called job crafting. The first is to challenge your perception of yourself and what's possible. The other part is about making decisions about how to conduct your work so that it is more meaningful. Research conducted by University of Michigan professors points to four techniques that can help professionals in the service industry craft their job to have a more significant impact.

Number one, go beyond your job's essential functions. If you are a nurse or doctor, this might include educating your patients on how to take care of their health.

Number two, tailor your services to your customers' needs. Your clients will have varying needs, and by tailoring your services to those needs, you have an opportunity to craft your job and create a human connection. For example, you might create additional resources to hand out to patients who have needs beyond what you are best there to serve them for, or maybe even create a list of service providers that you can refer them to. So think about how you can really tailor to their needs or maybe niche down and work with a specific population.

Number three, avoid negative communication with customers. Often, professionals in the service industry become burned out because they deal with customers who might be unpleasant, extremely needy, or unappreciative. While having good communication and negotiation skills are important to help you deal with such interactions, finding ways to avoid working with these kinds of individuals can also be part of job crafting. So, if you've ever been to a restaurant that has a sign saying "we reserve the right to refuse service," you've seen this principle in action. So consider how you might apply it to your industry and job.

Lastly, number four, conduct your work in meaningful contexts. As a psychologist, I could choose to work in a hospital, a clinic, a foster care agency, a university, or a private practice. In deciding where you perform your job, think about the population you most want to serve. By crafting your job to suit your needs and passions, you gain control of your experience at work. This can improve your self-image, your human connection, and your resilience. It's a great way to increase your resourcefulness so you can cope with the demands of your job with less stress. So, as you can see, job crafting is a way to alter your perceptions of your job as well as design your job to better fit your needs. To do so, you need to be aware of your needs, desires, strengths, and weaknesses, and mindfulness is what helps with all that awareness.

So a great exercise for you to do is to sit down and think about what are your needs with regards to your job? How do you want to feel at work? What are your desires? What do you love doing at work that you want more of? What are the areas where you're strongest and the areas that you're weakest? This is going to come in handy when you're thinking about which patients you might not serve and rather refer out, and the ones that you keep are the ones that align with your strengths. So think about those four areas as a way of taking this information about job crafting and really applying it to your situation.

Now, let's move on to limiting beliefs. When you have a limiting belief, you either won't take action or you're going to sabotage your attempt. Limiting beliefs stem from our early life experiences and schemas, or the thematic umbrellas under which these beliefs lie. Let me give you a story so that you can understand how this all comes together.

Imagine that there's this little girl, and she grows up in a family that's so loving. Her parents are always telling her how much they love her, and they hug and kiss her and tell her how wonderful she is. When that girl grows up, how will she see herself? She might have thoughts like, "I am a good person" or "I am loved." And how will she see other people? She might think to herself, "Other people are kind and generous." And how will she see the world? Well, she might think, "Oh, the world is a wonderful place."

But what if, just down the street from this girl, another girl was growing up in a very different kind of home? A home where her parents either beat her up or neglected her, who kept telling her how awful she is, how she is always doing things wrong, complaining about her? How will that girl see herself when she grows up? Well, chances are that she is going to have a very negative perception of herself. She's going to have beliefs about herself like that she's a bad person, that other people are evil, unloving, uncaring, that the world's not safe. So you can see how sometimes the way in which we grow up can really influence our worldview. These are what we call schemas. The schema is that there's some sort of a theme or a pattern, and then under that umbrella, we have all kinds of beliefs.

So if I don't believe that I'm a good person, I might have all kinds of thoughts about myself. One of them might be, "I am bad." Another might be that I always make mistakes, that I'm not smart, that people don't love me. I might have a number of different beliefs. Just to give you a sense of how this all comes together, here are some very common limiting beliefs:

One that you've probably heard of and maybe even resonates with you is "I am not enough." This is a primary limiting belief that leads to fear of failure, which then, of course, leads to procrastination or perfectionism, which we'll be talking about today. But in addition to that, there are loads of other limiting beliefs. The belief that "I am a failure." What happens when we have that belief is that every time we experience failure, we don't attribute the failure to the experience. We make it about us, like it's not that I have failed. So it's different than if I say, "I made a mistake" or "I failed my test." It's different than saying, "I am a failure" because if I believe that about myself, then everything that I try to do, I won't have confidence in myself for doing because I believe that I'm a failure. And what do failures do? They fail. So I'm kind of setting myself up here. The same with "I can't be successful." It's like, no matter what I do, I'm

never gonna be successful. Okay, that's not true. We all have strengths and weaknesses, so you can't just rule yourself out of every situation.

"My needs won't be met." This is a belief that sometimes people have, and then, as a result of that, they feel like they don't matter, that they have to take care of themselves because they can't really count on anybody else. They have to be excessively self-reliant. Now, self-reliance is a great skill to have, and I do recommend people take responsibility for themselves and meet their own needs. But at the same time, this belief that your needs won't be met doesn't serve you. Other people cannot be trusted. So, we already said that's kind of one of those beliefs that we have about other people that stem sometimes from our early life experiences. When someone's betrayed us, when someone has mistreated us, if you were bullied in school, you might not believe that you can trust other people. If you were in a relationship where there was betrayal or abuse, you might believe that other people can't be trusted. And the problem with this belief, clearly, here, is that it's an overgeneralization. Maybe one person did something wrong with you, but it doesn't mean that all people are going to do that to you again. So, you have to really mind the way that you think about things and how you might overgeneralize because it's not helpful.

"I don't belong with other people." It might be that, maybe when you were growing up, you felt like you didn't belong with your peers. And so then, you carry that around with you your whole life, and every time you enter a group of people or you're in a setting where there are others around you, you automatically keep yourself out of the crowd because you believe that you don't belong, that you can't fit in, that there's no room for you.

"The idea that there's something wrong with me." I have a lot of clients who actually have this belief, and they have this because of the way that their parents really treated them when they were young. I have one client, for example, whose mother was very abusive. She humiliated her, she would do all kinds of things that were very hurtful. So when you're a child and your parent, who you look up to, does these kinds of things to you, the only way that you can really make sense of the situation, because you look up to your parents, is that they're not the problem, you're the problem. And so what happens is when that goes unexamined, we continue to believe that there's something wrong with us for the rest of time. And so it's really important for you to really take a look at what are the things that you believe and why you believe them, and if they're serving you and whether they're accurate and helpful and all those kinds of things. The same way we examine our thinking.

"I can't do my work without other people's help." That's when you really don't believe in yourself. This is what we call a lack of self-efficacy. When you don't believe in your ability, you feel like you need other people to do everything for you. And certainly, that can't be true, because we all have strengths and weaknesses.

"Other people's needs are more important than my own." Now, whether you're conscious of this belief or not, if you put other people ahead of yourself, you believe this. And we see this a lot with people who don't have boundaries, who are people pleasers. So just note, if this is you, that this is essentially what you're saying with your actions, and then you have to look at that and ask

yourself, why are other people more important than you? Why don't you deem yourself to be important? So this is an important thing to look at.

Another belief is, "I have to stay vigilant or perfect, or something terrible will happen." So we see this a lot with perfectionists, and there's a sense of anxiety. If I don't do this perfectly, and we also see this with people that have OCD. If I don't clean, if I don't wash my hands exactly or if I don't do X, Y, and Z, then the other shoe's going to drop, then something bad is going to occur. And you really have to check that because you're making a prediction that is negative about the future, and you're making a lot of assumptions here. And this keeps you stuck in this pattern of anxiety and having to compulsively do something over and over again, and that is not based on truth, and it's also not helpful. It's like a huge energy suck, right? It's an energy drain. So be really careful about what you tell yourself.

Lastly, "If others know how I feel, they wouldn't like me or they would judge me." So oftentimes, what do we do in order to try to fit in? We mask our feelings, we pretend like we don't care about something when we really do. We worry too much about what other people think because we want so badly for them to like us. And you know what? That's only going to take you so far in life. So it's really important that you are authentic, be true to yourself, and find people who like you for who you are. If somebody doesn't like you when you show up authentically, move on.

Now, I want to move on and share with you another 10 tips, and these are about mindset strategies that you can use to really help you turn your way of being in the world around, the way you think, and overcoming those fears.

Tip number one: Focus on getting to optimal. By "optimal," what I mean here is thinking positively, which really affects your confidence and your performance, and having adequate resources like your time and your energy. So you want to engage in a task with positive thinking, like "I can do this" and "I have the time." Don't start it when you don't have time or when you're too tired because that's going to affect your success rates. So really think about having adequate resources coupled with that positive thinking, and that will make it more optimal. This is why it's important to be good at estimating task length because you ensure that you give yourself ample time to get things done so you don't overwhelm yourself.

Tip number two: Strive for balance between good work and getting the job done, as we talked about. So it's really about focusing on why you do what you do. It's not because it has to be perfect, but you're doing it for a reason. So reconnect to your sense of purpose.

Tip number three: Thinking about everything that could go wrong does not set you up for success. So you can do this exercise in your mind where you time travel to your achieved goal. So let's say you are that person who wanted to run the marathon but you are not a runner, you're out of shape, you've never run before. You have six months. Maybe fear sets in. If you do this time travel in your mind, see yourself running that marathon, and when you can see it, the end result that you're going for, ask yourself, "Why was I afraid?" And then consider, in addition to that, kind of looking to the future.

You can also look at lessons from past failures, what are some things that I've learned from having some failures that happened already? And then being able to use that as a way to be able to deal with whatever I'm dealing with in the present.

Tip number four is appreciate your efforts. So often, we only focus on the outcome but when you recognize the work that you invested in, you can feel good about yourself no matter what the end result is. I have a story about this in my book “The 7 E Solution” and you know, I worked with the client who had a real issue with follow through, and one of the things that really changed his performance after working together was that he was getting too stuck on the outcome, and he would procrastinate because he because thinks would get in the way, his thoughts would get in the way. And when I said to him, “You know, you really should appreciate the efforts, whether you have the outcome that you want or not.” It really was like this whole mindset shift for him because he was like “Wow.”, and this is along the lines of appreciating the journey, not just the destination, right? Focusing on the journey. And so, this was huge for him. And so, I encourage you, if you're not already doing this, to really think every single day about your contributions regardless of whether you had a success or a failure. You put effort into this, you put your time and your energy into doing something, and you should give yourself credit just for showing up.

Tip number five, reframe failures as opportunities to learn about what doesn't work. The more you know, the better you'll perform the next time around.

Tip number six, give yourself permission not to know all the answers. No one expects that of you, so why do you put this unrealistic expectation and pressure on yourself?

Tip number seven, remind yourself that you are enough. You don't have to be perfect or be more or less than what you already are.

Tip number eight, forgive yourself for any wrongdoings. You may have messed up, made a bad decision, or even hurt someone. But harboring negative feelings against yourself does not help you move forward. What do you achieve by holding yourself back? Allow yourself to be human. We all make mistakes, so forgive and move on.

Tip number nine, become self-attuned. So, I want you to ask yourself what you're trying to avoid. This is the thought, and when you think about this thing that you're trying to avoid, what do you feel? Look at the feeling in your body. It's important to notice how you impact your emotional and physical health with your thoughts. Is this how you want to feel? If not, take this opportunity to change it by thinking about the situation differently.

And lastly, create accountability. You want to create a system for accountability for yourself. Most people really need structure to be productive because our mind is easily distracted. What do you need to keep you on track with your goals? One of my clients use the app Habitica to keep her on track for the personal goal she had for herself. And there are other strategies to keep you on track for daily tasks as well, like Trello for your to-do lists, or gold, good, old-fashioned pen and paper, where you write down each morning what you plan to accomplish that day. And then go down the list, and check things off as you achieve them. This works for me along with calendaring, I like to keep it simple.

So far, we mentioned the importance of being aligned with your values and overcoming your limiting beliefs, so you don't self-sabotage. And on optimizing your mindset, one more thing to consider is that when you are working to create a new habit, one skill you need to have in your back pocket is mindfulness. Mindfulness is being aware of where you stand and is the first step toward taking the right action. It helps you discern what your stuck points are and gain control over your body and mind, because stress is based on perception. When you utilize tools that bring you into the present moment, you get out of future thinking and can change your current state. Practicing this can be super quick and easy. The next time something good happens to you, focus on it for 20 seconds. As you do so, try to absorb the goodness of it, not only in your mind, but also in your body. Notice the physical sensations and emotions that come up. If typically, you notice a beautiful flower and then quickly move on, linger on the experience for 20 seconds to fully absorb it so it lands in your long-term memory. The number one tool to help you create more mindfulness in your life is meditation. You already know how beneficial this is as a practice, but let's talk about how to set yourself up for success.

Number one, declutter a space in your home for meditation. It's so important that you have a space that you can come back to again and again each day when you want to meditate, and it kind of sets the mood for your meditation. When you have a lot of clutter in your area, it's hard to focus, you can easily become distracted, you become stressed, and it's hard to just let go of everything. So, you want to create a clutter-free little area for yourself, and maybe even have it be something that's inspirational. You can have little quotes on the wall, you can have a statue of Buddha, if that does it for you, maybe some candle, some fresh flowers, a beautiful picture, whatever is going to inspire you and help you feel calm. Think about when you go to a spa, how they have this very relaxing music on, and there's aromatherapy in the air, and you kind of get into the mood of it, right? Helps you to relax right as you walk in the door, that's kind of what you want to do with your meditation space.

Number two, get your financial affairs in order. So, one of the things that I was taught with regards to meditation is that because so much of this is energetic practice, money has a lot of energy. And if you are in debt, if you have outstanding bills, and those kinds of things, then you are not energetically as aligned as you can be. And that's going to affect your meditation practice. So, it is encouraged that you get your financial affairs in order, which means that you should be, I mean, you should be doing this anyway, right? But for meditation practice, it actually is something that is recommended, so that way you don't have worries and stress on your mind. You can feel really confident that you are on top of all of your financial matters, you know exactly what's happening, and so if you're not in that place right now, then I want you to create some goals around this and really think about what do you owe, who do you owe it to, when does it do, what's your plan to pay it back, how are you going to do that, is it something that you can do over the course of a few months, or is it something that if you don't really think about? It can linger on for years, you might want to create a plan about creating additional streams of income, perhaps to help pay it back sooner. Maybe it's a credit card that you owe money on, and they're charging you 25 interests, you might want to then switch it over to another credit card for zero percent interest. Or find some ways of really just a plan, really to put all your finances in order.

Number three, create a daily routine of meditating. So, we talked about creating these neural pathways, and that really is something that happens when we do an activity over and over again. Now for example, I have gone into the habit of meditating every morning when I wake up. So, I wake up, I get dressed, I brush my teeth, and then I go downstairs. And I've got my little meditation area with my meditation cushion, and I bring my phone, and I sit down, and I'm quiet, and I know no one's gonna disturb me while I'm here, and I can totally relax and go inside and really get into the experience. So, you want to eliminate any sort of possible distractions. If you have kids, you want to let them know that you are meditating. Maybe you put a sign on the door, you close the door, or if that doesn't work, lock the door. You know, whatever it is that you need to do, if you've got a pet that's going to be--, look in this picture, if the pet's not nice and calm, but it's like constantly like moving and making noise, and licking you or whatever, then you need to maybe put them in another room just for those few minutes that you're meditating. So, whatever it is that you need to create that optimal experience, you want to do that. And then, when you do it every single day, you get into the routine, and it doesn't become this thing that you have to remember to do or is really challenging to do. It's kind of like when you wake up, and you brush your teeth, you don't really think twice about it, and that's kind of how it is with me and my meditation. I've been doing it for a while now, so it's just part of my routine in the morning. I get up and I do it. Now, if you ask me to meditate in the evening, that would be a whole other story because I don't have that as a routine. It's not something where I've created that neural pathway yet, so it would take me some time to really get that organized. First, I'd have to really decide that that's what I want to do, and then I'd have to commit to it. I'd probably have to make some visual reminders to get me to do it or have like some alarm go off to remind me. So, that's how it works, right, when we're trying to create a new habit. So, for you, whatever it is that you need to do to create your habit, if you can spare at least 10 minutes every day to meditate, it's gonna make a world of difference. In the way that you experience this world, really, I mean what I've found is that it really changed my reactivity levels. I've had clients who have felt instantly calm, and it just is a great stress reliever. So, it has both short-term and long-term effects, and it really does retrain your brain to slow down and to be more mindful. So, I highly, highly recommend it.

Number four, keep track of your meditation sessions manually or through an app. For example, I like Insight Timer, it's a great app. I-n-s-i-g-h-t, timer, t-i-m-e-r. And that helps keep you your streaks. So, if you need accountability, this is a great thing. As you're building up this new habit, because it gamifies it. So, every day that you meditate, you get a point. And if you've been doing it, let's say, for five days straight, you get five points. If you miss that sixth day, then you gotta start over. And so, it makes you think twice about whether you're going to let that go or you want to keep it up. I had a client that I worked with, and I tell you this guy was so committed to keeping his streak that compel or high water, this guy did not miss a beat. His mom passed away, she was struggling with cancer for a long time. So, he was taking care of her, and during that entire time, it was so easy to make that excuse of like "I'm busy, I'm stressed, I'm drained. This is like very emotional for me." But he actually used meditation as a tool to help balance him. And then, she passed away, and then he got married, and then they had a baby. And then, like, all these things happen that are super stressful and very time consuming, and he never let his meditation go. So, I tell you this story because if he can do it, you can do it. It's just about committing to the practice, all right? And using that that streak in order to help, keep you on track, and you can do that manually. One way that you can do it is take a calendar, like you

see in this picture, and every day that you meditate, you put an x on that day. And you can see there's a visual streak of x's, and if you miss a day, then you have to start all over counting from number one again.

Number five, focus on the space between your thoughts. So, we've talked about how to set yourself up, but then what happens when you're actually meditating. And there's a lot of misconceptions about what meditation is, and should be, and can be. And people don't like it, they think it's too hard, you know, they're judging their meditation. So, here's what I want you to know. The whole point of this practice, especially when we're talking specifically about mindfulness. Mindfulness is you're gonna have a million thoughts because that's just how your brain is designed, right? Your brain is designed to just think about stuff all the time. So, your job is just to find the space in between the thoughts, and the more you practice this, the bigger the space becomes, and it doesn't, it's never going to get to the point where you have no thoughts. So, take that concept out of your mind because that is not the goal. The goal is, okay, there's a thought, and there's another thought, and I'm noticing the thought, and I'm bringing myself back. The more that you create that space in between the thoughts where you're just, maybe, focusing on your breathing, or you're counting, or you're focusing on your heart, there's all different ways that you can do it. Then you're not thinking about your to-do list, and you're not thinking about what happened yesterday, you are thinking you're not thinking, you're just basically focusing. You have more of a presence, and that's what mindfulness is. It's being in the present moment and noticing is your heart beating, or do you, can you listen to your breath the sound of your breath? That's a great way to do it. Maybe you count as you breathe, and you focusing on the inhale, and then the exhale. You know maybe, you hear some noises outside, and you just pay attention to the noise and you're not really thinking about anything. You're just noticing it and you're focusing on all the things that are internal, as opposed to all of these thoughts, right? So, that's what it really is about. And the more you understand that, the more you'll be able to do it in a way that actually makes a difference.

And lastly, I love this picture because I was looking for something that really depicts dragging yourself, right? So, not that you're dragging yourself to your meditation practice, but what happens is once you're in the practice, you might notice that your mind has wandered, as we said, because you're having all these thoughts. And then your job is to drag it back. And what I mean by that is to bring it back to center without judgment. So, again it's not about being perfect, it's not about not ever having a thought, it's not about am I good at this or not good at that, because that's a judgment. To let that go, it's really just about showing up, and keep plugging away until it gets a little bit easier, right? And it's really just about this practice of noticing where your mind is going. So much of the time, our mind takes us on all these trips all over the world, and we go along with it. We don't even notice what's happening, and so mindfulness is a meta skill. It's where you are thinking about your thoughts, you're kind of noticing what's happening, and then you're pulling away from that. You are dragging yourself back to center. So, hopefully, this picture sticks in your mind.

We're going to talk now about not just habits that are helpful, but also minimizing unhelpful habits that stimulate the fight or flight response. Now, in the notes section of this module, I'm going to provide you with a link to an article that talks more in detail about the effects of chronic

stress, and how it leads to this fight-or-flight response, so you can understand how this is affecting your body. But now let's talk about what not to do.

So, this one, this first one about holding a low power pose. If you're not familiar with the work of Amy Cuddy, I have included a link to her Ted Talk in the notes of the module, but I really highly recommend that you watch it. It's fascinating research, and basically what she's talking about is that the way in which you hold your body has an impact on how you feel. Why? Because it releases certain hormones, and we know that stress and fear are associated with hormones, such as cortisol. Whereas confidence is associated with more testosterone. So, by focusing on, she makes us distinguish this distinction between low power poses and high power poses. But being mindful about how you carry yourself, you can actually have more energy and feel better. And she basically says it can happen very quickly. Focusing on good body posture, and practicing power posing for only two minutes can give you the boost that you need whenever you feel like that's something that you need. So, we talked before about building up this crisis intervention toolbox. This is definitely something that you can put in that box because it works in the moment. It doesn't really have long-term effects. It's just working right now. So, she talks about for example, if you're going in for a job interview and you're feeling really stressed. Rather than focus down on your piece of paper and reviewing your notes, stand up straight, put your hands on your hips, really create this feeling of expansion which helps you increase your testosterone, feel more confident.

Number two, focusing on lack. So, when you focus on everything that's missing or what I call the not enoughness factor, you trigger your fight-or-flight response. You get into survival mode, you can't really relax. So, here's what you need to know. Things may not be exactly as you would like them to be, but more often than not, there's more abundance than we realize. And the reason we don't see it is because we have fears that stem from as far back as our childhood. If you grow up poor, then no matter how much money you have now, you might still feel afraid of not having enough, or of losing what you do have. If you have insecurity about your worth, you might have a fear of being fired from your job, because you think you won't find another one. If you're divorced, you might fear that you'll never find a mate. And so much of this really comes down to your mindset. So, really be careful about what you tell yourself.

Number three, drink caffeine and alcohol. So, both of these things can really negatively affect your sleep, and when you don't sleep, it really affects your energy, your ability to focus your mood, your motivation. When you don't sleep, you're less likely to work out, and you're more likely to eat poorly. So, this further depletes your energy, and it makes you need to have more coffee to give yourself a boost. And then you're stuck in the cyclical pattern. If you're stressed or you're overthinking things, you may feel like you need alcohol to help you sleep, but actually alcohol has a negative impact on your sleep quality. And in order for you to really learn more about the effects of these substances on your sleep, I'm also including a link in the module notes to another short Ted Talk about this topic.

Number four, eat simple carbs. So, we've already mentioned that when we're stressed, when we don't have a lot of time, we haven't really planned in advance, sometimes we reach for things that are readily available, that are easy, and oftentimes, these are processed foods. These are simple carbs, and the irony is that when we're stressed, this is the last thing that we need. What we really

need to do instead is replace these with what I call stress busters, because these help increase your resilience. So, you've probably heard of brain foods. That's the same idea. Some examples include salmon, flax seeds, dark leafy greens like spinach, sardines, dark chocolate, and blueberries. But you can go online and find the whole number of different stress busting foods that you can supplement into your day. So, it's really important to plan in advance. If you know that in the middle of the day, your energy starts to drop. Instead of going to get a latte, bring box of blueberries to your office, or maybe some nuts. I didn't mention nuts, but nuts are really great as a brain food because they have, they're high in fat. But it's really good fat for your brain, helps you focus, help you thrive, right? Bring something that is easily digestible and plan your meals so that you have some of these other foods in your lunches, like salmon and spinach, and some other things, okay?

Number five, accumulate more stuff and let things pile up. So, obviously that's not what we want to do. And we already know why. Instead, you want to declutter and organize your space, because it's going to have such a profound impact on your energy levels.

And lastly, stay connected 24/7. So, this is what we do when we don't have boundaries, right? Every time we get an email, or a phone call, or a text, we pick up our phone. We're like, "What's going on? What's happening? Who's calling me? What do I need to know?", you know? And this is not giving you an opportunity to really disconnect. So, you really want to turn off your devices, your technology, and overall, reduce your media time.

So, let's wrap up. What is your biggest takeaway from today? We talked about so many awesome things related to your mind, and creating habits, and changing your belief systems, and your mindset. So, there's so much here that I think is valuable, and I hope that you did too. So, think about what is your biggest takeaway, and what is it that you really commit to doing differently this week? We've always talked about how important it is to check in with yourself and think about what you're learning. What your takeaways are, and then how to implement what it is that you're learning? So, every week's gonna look a little different because our schedules change. And so, what's coming up for you this week, and what might get in the way of this plan that you have for yourself? Really sit down, and think about that, and how you can overcome any of those obstacles.

Now, these are the practices that we have discussed up until now, and so to review. They include organizing your space, and hopefully you've been keeping up with that. Reviewing your day and jotting down notes, so this is something you would do in the evening to just check in with yourself. Practicing gratitude, this is a great exercise to cultivate that optimistic mindset, to really get into that place of abundance. Eliminate energy drains, this is a continuous practice to just notice what drains your energy and what you can replace it with, focusing on what you can control because the alternative is to just feel frustrated, right? Prioritize important things, because alternatively you would be focusing on things that are a big waste of your time and just not accomplish as much, and not feel as accomplished. So, we don't want that. Cultivate self-compassion, and this is in place of perfectionism, and in place of self-criticism. So, be kind with yourself, all right? Now, engage in self-care, this is super important as you know, because if you're a high achiever, you are likely either taking care of business in order to accomplish a lot, or you're taking care of everybody else because you like to please. So, it's so important that you

take the time, set time aside really for your self-care. Super important to keep you energized so that you can show up in an optimal way. And lastly, implement strategies to overcome perfectionism and procrastination, and we talked about that last time, and all the things associated with that, so I won't repeat what that includes.

But today, what I want to leave you with are two things. So, what do Dr Seuss and Google have to do with you? Well, for next week you need to do some prep work. I have two videos for you to watch, and the links are going to be in the module summary. So, make sure to go there, watch them, and here is what I want you to do. Consider have a content of the first video, the Dr Seuss, one applies to you, especially now that we are nearing the end of the program. What have you learned over the past several weeks that have changed the way you show up in the world? And what about your relationship with yourself? You may need to watch it a few times to really absorb it all, and jot down some notes for yourself. Remember, it all boils down to balance. The second video has an accompanying worksheet, so make sure to print and fill it out. It will tie into our last module, and I cannot wait to hear all about your experience. 'Till next time.