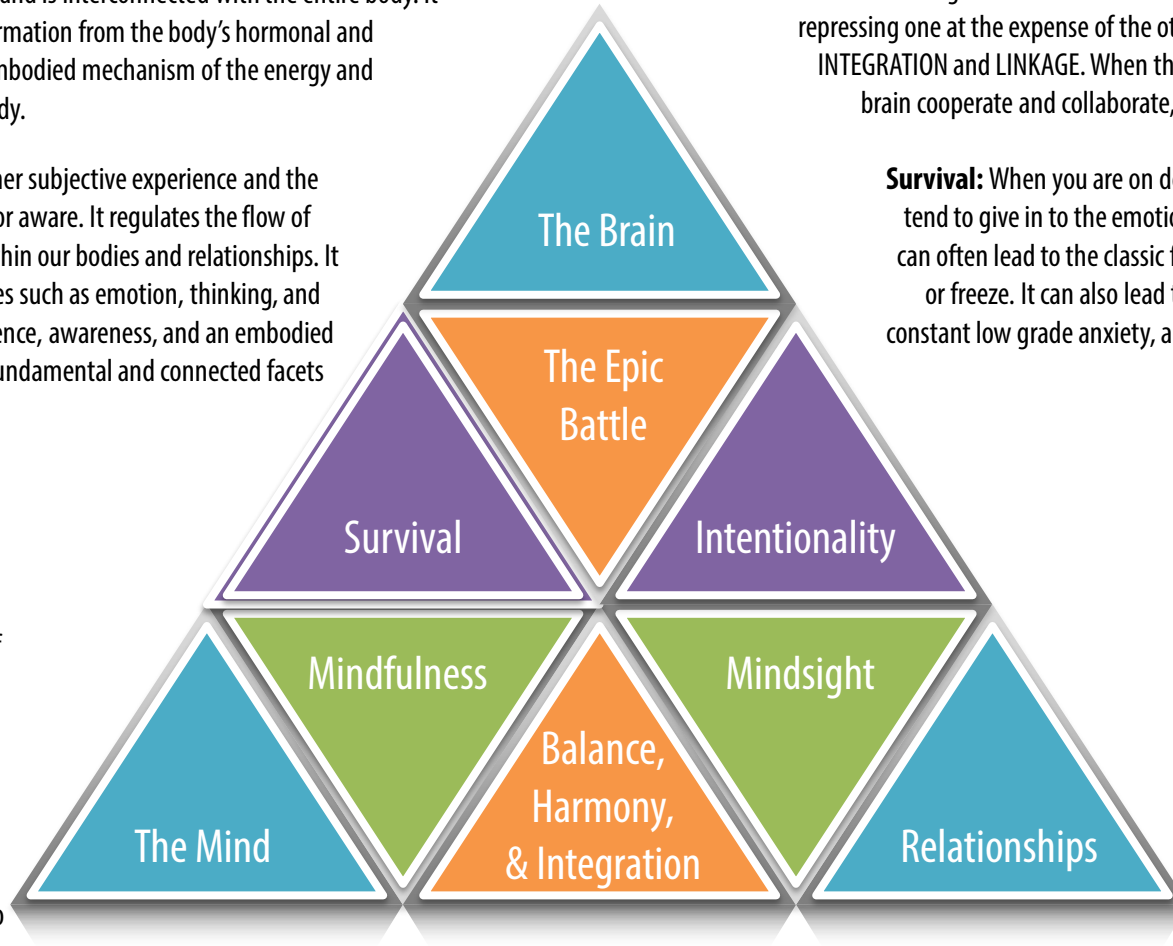


Taming the Brain – The Epic Battle vs. The Triangle of Well-Being

The Brain is the part of the body that rests in the skull, is connected to the body's nervous system, and is interconnected with the entire body. It also gives and receives information from the body's hormonal and immune system. It is the embodied mechanism of the energy and information flow for the body.

The Mind relates to our inner subjective experience and the process of being conscious or aware. It regulates the flow of energy and information within our bodies and relationships. It gives rise to mental activities such as emotion, thinking, and memory. Subjective experience, awareness, and an embodied and relational process are fundamental and connected facets of the mind.

Relationships involve the sharing of information and energy as we communicate with one another. Healthy relationships value linkage of people through respectful communication. This enables differentiated parts of the system—both the internal brain system, the mind, and the broader system of networked relationships—to integrate. This integration is the foundation of good health—both personally and relationally.



The Epic Battle is won by establishing **Balance, Harmony, and Integration** through **Mindfulness and Mindsight** practices

EPIC BATTLE. The Epic Battle is between the emotional brain and the thinking brain. Often one tries to resolve this battle by completely repressing one at the expense of the other. But, this battle is won through **INTEGRATION** and **LINKAGE**. When the emotional brain and the thinking brain cooperate and collaborate, the result is balance and harmony.

Survival: When you are on default mode—autopilot, you will tend to give in to the emotional brain when it is aroused. This can often lead to the classic flooding responses of fight, flight, or freeze. It can also lead to a sense of being overwhelmed, constant low grade anxiety, and high stress levels. This is called “being in survival.”

Intentionality: When you consciously get off of autopilot—default mode—in the present moment, you can then engage intentionality. This enables you to keep your thinking brain online and also enables you to have the emotional brain online also, without the domination of its propensity to drive survival instincts at the expense of everything else. Intentionality is the path to linkage, integration, and the resulting balance and harmony.

Taming the Brain – Practical Exercises and Quick Tips

On the following pages are five exercises that will help you “**tame the brain.**” These are simple, easy-to-do, and will provide immediate results. They are designed to orient you as to how mindfulness and mindsight practices work together to help you tame your brain and regain balance, harmony, and control when things get chaotic, stressful, and overwhelming.

Tame the Brain – Ordering the External Chaos

1. What is Contributing to Your Feelings of Overwhelmedness?
2. Tolerations Exercise – Bringing things to Closure

Tame the Brain – Bringing Internal Awareness and Calmness

1. Meditation / Contemplation Exercise
2. Take 2 – Integration on the Fly- A two-minute practice that can be used in the moment, to de-stress, promote calmness, peace, balance, and brain integration
3. Overcoming Emotional Flooding – How to handle stressful, uncomfortable situations that elicit “fight, flight, or freeze” responses internally
4. Reversing Overwhelmedness – Five Quick Practices to Create Balance and Harmony

We would like for you to commit to doing at least one exercise in each of the categories above. If that feels like a stretch, then do at least one of the five exercises that you feel will bring you the most value, then come back to this section as the need arises to complete the others.

Things Contributing to Your Feelings of Overwhelmedness

INSTRUCTIONS: Set aside some time to **consider the things that are contributing to your feeling of overwhelmedness** (these could be anything from doctors/dentist appointments you haven't made yet, to ongoing worries about someone you care about, fatigue, child care, family issues, work issues, deadlines, feelings of guilt, etc. . .). Write all of these things down in the space provided below:

1.	11.
2.	12.
3.	13.
4.	14.
5.	15.
6.	16.
7.	17.
8.	18.
9.	19.
10.	20.

Step 1 - Look at each item that is contributing to your overwhelmedness

- A) If you have complete CONTROL over the item (you can resolve it on your own), put a circle around it.
- B) If you have PARTIAL CONTROL or can INFLUENCE the item (you can resolve part of the item or influence the outcome through your actions or behavior), put a * by it.
- C) Finally, if the item is COMPLETELY OUTSIDE OF YOUR CONTROL OR INFLUENCE (there is nothing you could do or say that could directly impact this item), put a line through it—cross it off.

Step 2 - Once you have addressed all items on your list, do the following:

- A) For the items you have CONTROL over: TAKE ACTION (however small) on at least ONE of these today to instantly feel better.
- B) For the items you have PARTIAL CONTROL or INFLUENCE over: Write down the steps you will take and exactly when you will do them - today or in the next few days. Solicit help where you need it. Don't be afraid to make a request.
- C) Finally. LET GO of EVERYTHING that is crossed off! If you can't control or influence it, then it is a waste of your precious energy to even think about it!

Focusing on the things that you can take action on and can control or influence move you forward and keeps you integrous, congruent, and in balance and in harmony with yourself and others. It also frees you to focus your energy and time on things that matter the most to you. Review your list and the results of this exercise. What did you learn?

TOLERATIONS – WHAT AM I PUTTING UP WITH?

INSTRUCTIONS: We tend to get dragged down and overwhelmed by things that accumulate over time - and end up cluttering our minds. Now is the time to identify what you're tolerating! You may not want to do anything about them right now, but just writing them out here will raise your awareness and you'll naturally start handling, fixing, and resolving them. So, make a list of what you're putting up with at work - and at home - to determine what might be cluttering your mind and slowing you down!

Examples could be: Incomplete tasks, frustrations, problems, other people's or your own behavior, clutter, shoulds, unmet needs, crossed boundaries, overdue library books/DVDs, outdated wardrobe, unresolved issues or guilt, lack of exercise, eating habits, being indecisive, procrastinating, lack of sleep, etc. . . Over time and as you think of more items, add them to your list. *Why not put your completed chart somewhere obvious - so you can refer to it as the week progresses?*

1.	17.
2.	18.
3.	19.
4.	20.
5.	21.
6.	22.
7.	23.
8.	24.
9.	25.
10.	26.
11.	27.
12.	28.
13.	29.
14.	30.
15.	31.
16.	32.

Meditation / Contemplation Exercise

1	2
Read the quotes below and answer the following questions (You may replace these with scriptures or other quotes if preferred)	Write out these 2 quotes and put them somewhere you'll see them often. Over the next 4 weeks, make an effort to notice the quotes – and each time you do, ask:
i) most UNSETTLES you & ii) most RESONATES with you?	i) "What is this quote teaching me today/now?" & ii) "What WILL I do with or How can I APPLY what I'm learning?"

"The key to keeping your balance is knowing when you've lost it." - Anonymous	"Problems arise in that one has to find a balance between what people need from you and what you need for yourself." - Jessye Norman	"The harder you push yourself, the harder your self pushes back." - Anonymous	"Every time you are tempted to react in the same old way, ask if you want to be a PRISONER of the PAST or a PIONEER of the FUTURE." - Deepak Chopra
"Letting go helps us to live in a more peaceful state of mind and helps restore our balance. It allows others to be responsible for themselves and for us to take our hands off situations that do not belong to us. This frees us from unnecessary stress." - Melody Beattie	"No person, no place, and no thing has any power over us, for 'we' are the only thinkers in our mind. When we create peace and harmony and balance in our minds, we will find it in our lives." - Louise L. Hay	"The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will. No one is a compos sui [master of himself] if he have it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education for excellence." - William James	"Balance is not better time management, but better boundary management. Balance means making choices and enjoying those choices." - Betsy Jacobson
"You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf." - Jon Kabat-Zinn	"If we learn to open our hearts, ANYONE, including the people who drive us crazy, CAN BE OUR TEACHER." - Pema Chödrön	"BE THE CHANGE that you wish to see in the world." - Mahatma Gandhi	"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few." - Shunryu Suzuki

Taming the Brain Exercise #1 – Overcoming Emotional Flooding

Flooding occurs when the emotional brain generates a fight/flight/freeze response to a perceived threat. This includes large amounts of powerful hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol being dumped in your system to create hyper alertness. One of the problems created by flooding is that it shuts down your thinking brain, thus leaving you without the resource of much rational thought in the moment, unless you work to bring your thinking brain back online. You can practice this exercise at any time—not just when you are at risk of being flooded — to generate calm and grounded presence. Practice this consistently so you can build a predisposition to the possibility of staying calm when you are under the pressure of imminent flooding in a charged situation.

- 1. Stop!** When you notice yourself being flooded, stop whatever conversation you are in—both external and internal conversations—and ask for a moment to gather your wits. Even if the other person does not grant your request, stop anyway. Once you are flooded, NOTHING YOU SAY will be beneficial, other than to ask for a moment to gather yourself. If that moment does not suffice, then ask for a TIME OUT and reschedule the conclusion of the conversation.
- 2. Attend to breath.** Start consciously attending to your breathing. Breathe deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth. Your abdomen should go out as you inhale and go in as you exhale. Pay attention to your breathing—follow the breath as it goes in, all the way down to your belly, and “watch” it as it goes out. Do this for at least 12 breaths, but continue to monitor your breathing throughout the conversation and consciously keep practicing deep breathing.
- 3. Continue to pay attention to your breathing.** As stated above, continue to focus on deep breathing throughout the remainder of the conversation. This is critical to keep your internal systems calmed as they have already been aroused and are predisposed to flood again if not managed and regulated through paying attention to your breathing and calming your mind.
- 4. In a neutral manner, put words to your feelings.** To “put words” to what you are feeling enables you to further bring your thinking brain online and get back into the game of collaborating with your emotional brain. To name it and discuss it enables you to gain more control over it. Stay neutral through this.
- 5. Write down your feelings.** If possible, you can write down what you are saying regarding what you are feeling. This multi-sensory approach enables you to further bring your thinking brain back online.
- 6. Reinterpret the event.** Often, emotional flooding occurs in large part due to the way we are interpreting the events that are occurring. You have the power of interpretation and can consciously choose to interpret it in a different way any time you choose to. By reinterpreting it, you enable your thinking brain to put it in a less threatening context, and this helps you bring your emotional brain under control.
- 7. Observe yourself.** You can detach from the extreme subjectivity of being flooded and observe yourself as if you were a third party. This enables you to get some altitude and perspective on the situation. You can also engage your inner observer and start noticing your bodily felt sensations, and other emotions you were unaware of.
- 8. Accepting versus resisting.** Often flooding is accelerated out of our own resistance to what is happening. If you can release your resistance and practice simply accepting the reality of what is happening (you can accept without condoning or agreeing with it), it will help you release the negative energy that is attached to the resistance and is contributing to the flooding.
- 9. Manage your expectations.** Often flooding can be exacerbated by a reaction to unmet expectations. Often those expectations have never even been clearly communicated to the other person. In that case, you might be reacting strongly and the other person can be clueless as to what the situation is. Managing your expectations in the moment can enable you to remain calm and keep rational thought in play.
- 10. Focus on the desired outcome.** When becoming flooded, it is easy to fall into useless arguments about content that are never going to be fully resolved. Often this causes the conversation to continue to escalate. Rather than do this, get clear about what your desired outcome is. For example, the desired outcome could be to maintain calm, be respectful of each other, and take a break if that is not happening.
- 11. Consciously, intentionally relax.** When you are in a flooding situation, you automatically tense up and tighten the way you hold your body. So, consciously, intentionally relax your body—your forehead, shoulders, back, chest, gut, buttocks, legs, arms, hands, and face. Do this as you focus on your breathing. It enables you to more quickly bring your thinking brain back online.

Taming the Brain Exercise #2 – Reversing Overwhelmedness

Five Quick Practices to Create Balance and Harmony

There are many, many things you can do to counteract the debilitating effects of being consistently surrounded by chaotic, stressful situations. It is easy to simply get caught up in the flow of a chaotic, stressful workplace or environment and not practice intentionality when possible. Do not succumb to the perceived inevitability of a difficult work or home environment. Be proactive and take responsibility for your internal state of being. The following are some practices you can do throughout the day, in the beginning of the day, and at the end of the day. Practice them. Post reminders in your calendar to practice them. Make practicing them a habit. It will serve you well.

- 1. Start your day in silence and solitude, practicing clearing your mind of extraneous thought, attending to breathing, and practicing relaxation.** Many people believe they have no time for this. Take ten to fifteen minutes or longer (the ideal is 30 to 60 min); however, always consider it a big win when you do it at all. If you forget, don't worry about it. Practice relating to it non-judgmentally. And just pick up where you left off and practice it. If you do this consistently, it will pay big dividends over time. Make this a life-long habit. Any time it comes to mind, practice attending to your breathing while bringing to mind one single thought or word or phrase that promotes within you peace, joy, and/or calm.
- 2. Body-scan muscle relaxation.** Take a few moments to attend to your deep breathing and consciously relax your body, stopping at the top of your head, and slowly working down, to your forehead, facial muscles, neck, shoulders, upper back, chest, stomach, lower back, midriff area, upper legs, lower legs, feet, upper arms, lower arms, and hands.
- 3. Guided Imagery and Visualization.** This can be done in a variety of ways. One powerful way to do this is to first attend to breathing and clear your mind of all extraneous thought. Then, as you are following your breath in through your nose, into your chest, all the way down to your belly, and then back out your mouth as you exhale, you imagine in your mind's eye any combination of possibilities. One possibility is to inhale peace and health, and exhale all tension, discord, angst, etc. Another is to inhale love and acceptance and exhale love and acceptance for someone in your life. Another is to inhale gratitude and appreciation for the blessings in your life and exhale gratitude and appreciation for a particular person in your life. The possibilities are literally endless. You can also picture a person in your mind's eye as you inhale and exhale and inhale appreciation and exhale love as you picture them. In all these, when you notice your mind wandering, just bring it back, non-judgmentally.
- 4. Meditation and Contemplative Prayer.** For those of you who believe in prayer, this is another powerful practice, in practicing God's presence around you and in you, while attending to breath and releasing extraneous thought.
- 5. Walking meditation.** Some people find it difficult to quiet their mind and release extraneous thought while sitting or laying down. If this is the case for you, try walking meditation, which is the same set of practices—attending to breath, relaxing, quieting the mind, and releasing extraneous thought—while walking. This is especially powerful if done in a quiet nature-oriented setting.

Taming the Brain Exercise #3 – Take 2 / Integration “On the Fly”

Take 2 minutes “on the fly” to de-stress, promote calmness, peace, balance, and brain integration –if you make it a priority and practice the following tips throughout the day, they could make a huge difference!

Take 2 - When we say “Take 2,” what we mean is to take two minutes to do the following exercise:

- **Stop, attend to deep breathing, clear extraneous thoughts, consciously relax, and notice your inner emotions, felt sensations, and feelings.**

Now, here are some scenarios that you can “Take 2”:

- 1. Energize your start to the day. “Take 2” in the morning,** before you get out of bed - attend to deep breathing, clear extraneous thoughts, consciously relax, and notice your inner emotions, felt sensations, and feelings. Try it on for one week, and see what happens.
- 2. Accelerate the Value of Your Meetings.** Before every important meeting, conference call, or presentation, “Take 2” to focus and clear your mind. Then take a moment to consider the upcoming event, and ground and presence yourself for that. Be clear as to your vision and intentions for what you want to create in the meeting. Consider who is going to be there and be ready to connect and establish rapport with them.
- 3. Jujitsu impatience into patience.** Whenever you find yourself getting impatient, with a co-worker, family member, someone in a check-out line at a store, “Take 2”, attend to deep breathing, clear extraneous thoughts, consciously relax, and notice your inner emotions, felt sensations, and feelings—inhalation peace and calmness and exhalation impatience and annoyance.
- 4. While driving.** At a stoplight, turn the radio off and “Take 2” and attend to deep breathing, clear extraneous thoughts, consciously relax, and notice your inner emotions, felt sensations, and feelings—inhalation peace and calmness, exhalation stress and tension.
- 5. Upsetting News.** Whenever you have a phone call or email or text that is upsetting, stop and “Take 2”. While doing so, release the irritation—just let it float away.
- 6. When You’re Tired.** Anytime you realize you are mentally, physically, or emotionally tired, “Take 2” at least once per hour; preferably do it at least twice an hour.
- 7. When you feel stuck.** Get up and move your body. Stretch and “Take 2.” Get a drink of water. And then go again, with an increased state of relaxation and focus.
- 8. When you’re on edge.** Whenever you find yourself irritated or annoyed with another person or situation, practice “Take 2,” and consciously release the negative emotions with each exhale. Inhale peace, exhale irritation and annoyance. Release it and let it go.
- 9. Trapped with no way out.** Whenever you are in a situation that you cannot remove yourself from, but are resisting having to be there, do the following: First, “Take 2” in the moment, then while still attending to breathing and clearing extraneous thought, practice simply being with the situation you are resisting, without feeling the need to change it, and release the resistance. Just be with it and do nothing else. Practice this for a few moments.

These are nine tips, but be creative and develop your own list of ways to “Take 2 - On The Fly.” The possibilities are endless. If you do this throughout your day, the accumulative impact of doing this multiple times during the day is significant!