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MAKEOVER YOUR MIND: FLEX YOUR MENTAL MUSCLE TO REACH YOUR FITNESS GOALS

MAKEOVER YOUR MIND

Want to achieve your fitness goals? Start by flexing your mental muscle, says success coach Sharron Lowe

How would you describe your life right now? What would you say if I asked you 'How are you?' Before you answer, take a moment and think about what most people would say if they were asked that question. If you stopped 100 people on the street and asked them, 'So, how are you today?' Do you think the majority would answer with 'I'm fantastic thanks, my life's great'? Or do you think the majority would answer 'I'm fine' or 'I'm OK' in a bored, apathetic tone that lacks any passion?

When I hear the words 'I'm fine' I think of this simple mnemonic of the word 'FINE': Frustrated, Insecure, Negative and Exhausted! Why? Because more often than not it's a pretty accurate description of how that person really feels:

- Frustrated – they feel dissatisfied and unfulfilled with their lot in life
- Insecure – they do not feel in control and do not believe they can really have what they want
- Negative – they focus on what's wrong in their life and not on what's right
- Exhausted – they feel apathetic and lack energy, drive and passion

For too many people, saying 'I'm FINE' actually means they experience many of the emotions described above. Does any of this ring true for you, or do you know someone who fits this description? I'm sure you do. But you don't ever want to settle for a life that's OK or fine, do you? You deserve so much more.

Picture someone getting to the end of their life and saying to their family, 'Well you guys, I asked you all to come here today so I can tell you that I've achieved everything I set out to achieve in my life. Early on I made the decision to aim for and get an average life. I chose to be

steady, dull and boring, to never have the highs so that I then wouldn't have the lows. And I've pulled it off.'

You don't want your life to be 'average' – nobody does. We all want to live a life packed with passion, phenomenal experiences, amazing highs and adrenaline rushes. This is life as it should be lived. And yes, at times, we will also suffer lows, but these experiences are opportunities to learn and grow so we can then truly appreciate and enjoy the highs that we create.

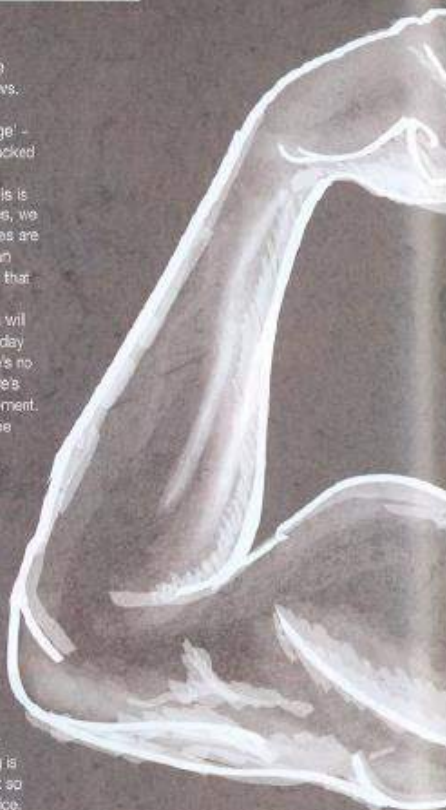
So, before moving on, decide that you will not settle for accepting 'fine' for even one day of your life. Make each day count, as there's no such thing as an unimportant day. And here's why: you are fabulous now, in this very moment.

Having read that statement you will be thinking something along the lines of:

- Yep, I am fabulous (with a grin on your face); or
- I'm not fabulous – I'm just about OK, at a stretch.

If it's the latter then you need to change your focus away from what's wrong or lacking in your world. Start to be grateful for what you have now and not regretful for what you haven't got. Feeling fabulous will come from uncovering and then focusing, with all your will, on what's good in your life, because you can't have rosy thoughts about your future if your mind is full of the blues. In life, what's wrong is always available for you to think about – but so is what's right: your thoughts, your choice. So recognise and appreciate all that's right in your life now. It's the only place to begin. It will help you fast-track to where you want to go and the journey will be quicker, easier and far more pleasurable.

Adapted from Sharron's new book *The Mind Makeover* (£13.99, piatkus.co.uk)



10-MINUTE MAKEOVER

We caught up with the success coach to find out how to adopt a healthy attitude...

What's the secret to success?

"The secret is to take charge of your mind and your thoughts. Your thoughts trigger your emotions, your emotions trigger how you feel and your feelings influence the actions you take (or don't take, as the case may be). Your actions shape the outcomes of your life. The whole basis for a mind makeover is taking control of those thoughts."

What are your top tips for staying motivated?

- By taking charge of your thoughts you regain control, but the truth is, you're always in control of them when you decide to be.
- Seize opportunities. If they aren't there, create them!
- Success is not within tangible things, but within us. Success alone is not the end goal. It doesn't matter what job you have or how much money you earn — when you are fulfilled you are truly successful.

What would you say to someone who needed a confidence boost?

"If you are putting off the gym or want to drop a dress size, you first need to decide you want to exercise or lose weight. Then, motivation comes from channeling your frustration and disappointment to help kick-start your new healthy regime. You need to ask yourself, 'what's in this for me?' and your trigger will either be born out of desperation or inspiration — your motivation cannot come from external influences, before anything happens in your outside world, it has to change in your inside world. Before you commit to any fitness regime, diet or any shift you want to achieve personally in your health, you need to first work on your mind; change how you see things in your head and the journey of action will be so much easier."

How can someone stay on track when they've hit a plateau?

"File and save in your mind each experience you've had. We are all guilty of rushing from one activity to another, for example we might rush from work to the gym, then move on to the next thing on our list. Stop! Store in your mind that experience and acknowledge the positives you did it, and you did it well."

Remember the saying, "what's in it for me." And, if one day you can't fit in a session or you slip off the healthy eating wagon, don't beat yourself up about it — there is no such thing as failure, there are only lessons to be learnt."

How can you turn fitness goals into a reality?

"Fitness does not come from a membership card, it comes from commitment. Just as it's your mind, it's your body and health. A mind makeover must come before a diet and health overhaul — they are intimately linked, you can't have one without the other. If you sign up to the gym, but claim that you've never been very good at fitness, there's little point you turning up. You have to get your mind fit so that you go into your workouts with commitment, determination and motivation. Think about how to get your mind in the best shape possible to make your goals quick, easy and doable. If you achieve it in your mind, you'll achieve it in your life. If your mind is working against your fitness goals, don't bother paying out for that gym membership — take charge of your thoughts first, then progress from there. Think about your inner voice, is it your friend who tells you you're 'fabulous', or is it the enemy that

confirms you were never really good at exercise? It's very hard to beat the enemy if you've given them a home in your head."

