



---

# MANAGING YOUR MIND

---

## The Mental Fitness Guide

---

Gillian Butler, Ph.D.

Tony Hope, M.D.

*New York   Oxford*  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
1995

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York  
Athens Auckland Bangkok Bombay  
Calcutta Cape Town Dar es Salaam Delhi  
Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi  
Kuala Lumpur Madras Madrid Melbourne  
Mexico City Nairobi Paris Singapore  
Taipei Tokyo Toronto

and associated companies in  
Berlin Ibadan

Copyright © 1995 by Gillian Butler and Tony Hope

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,  
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Butler, Gillian.

Managing your mind : the mental fitness guide / Gillian Butler, Tony Hope  
p. cm. Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-19-510379-3

1. Mental health. 2. Self-management (Psychology) I. Hope, Tony. II. Title.  
RA790.B83 1995

158—dc20

94-44245

5 7 9 8 6 4

Printed in the United States of America  
on acid-free paper

---

# MANAGING YOUR MIND

---

## *Preface*

This book is a guide to help you in both your personal and your work life. It will show you how, through managing your mind, you can develop the relationships you want, enjoy your leisure, be more effective in your work, and deal with your moods. It is a keep-fit guide to the mind.

One of the false dichotomies of modern life is that between work and personal time. It is widely held that there is a set of skills that we need for the one and a quite different set that we need for the other. But this is not true. The skills of problem solving, for example, are of great value in our personal lives, and overcoming stress and anxiety is a key skill in our work. Being fair to yourself, and to others, helps both personal and work relationships. Low mood is a major cause of unhappiness and also reduces effectiveness at work.

In this book we show how you can make use of effective strategies, for example, giving yourself rewards (Chapter 7), or using the methods of cognitive therapy (Chapter 9), and simple techniques, for example, the salami rule (p. 348), to improve the management of your life.

It is impossible to acknowledge all the sources and influences that have contributed to the writing of this book. First and foremost is our

experience in helping people with difficulties in their lives. Then there are our teachers and colleagues, from whom we have learned techniques and refined our use of them. We have also been helped by the writers of other books, many of which we have referenced in the section on further reading. It is the fact that we have found books so helpful, both for ourselves and for helping others, that gave us the impetus to write this book.

We thank the many colleagues who helped us develop our own methods and thoughts, including Julie Chalmers, Nigel Eastman, Chris Fairburn, Melanie Fennell, Maria Gilbert, Helen Kennerley, Joan Kirk, Catherine Oppenheimer, John Sadler, and Alan Stein and the members of the Oxford Adult Mental Health Department of Clinical Psychology.

We thank our agent, Caroline Dawnay at Peters Fraser and Dunlop, and Joan Bossert and the staff at both the New York and Oxford offices of Oxford University Press, not only for their hard work and skills in the production of the book but also for their support and encouragement throughout the process of its writing. Donna Dawson and Julie Hurn gave extremely useful feedback on the entire book. Kathleen Mooney not only gave detailed advice on the first draft but also invaluable help on the provision of further reading. We are most grateful to them both. We would also like to thank Marie-Anne Martin for her witty and imaginative index and Sandra Cooper for her accurate and speedy word processing.

The feedback on individual chapters has been most important. We would particularly like to mention Josephine Butler, Sophie Butler, Kathy Gedling, Chris Lake, Sheena Meredith, Ingrid Skeels, Rachel Turner, and Anne Yates.

Without the continual support and encouragement of our families, and in particular from Christopher Butler and Sally Hope, we could never have written this book.

This guide is intended to be practical. We hope that it achieves its aim of making available to the reader a wide variety of strategies and techniques for managing the mind.

*Oxford, England*  
*April 1995*

*G. B.*  
*T. H.*

# *Contents*

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1. What to Expect from This Guide	3
2. The Scientific Background	8
<b>PART ONE TWO PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING MENTAL FITNESS</b>	<b>13</b>
3. Valuing Yourself	15
4. Recognizing That You Can Change	20
<b>PART TWO THE SEVEN BASIC SKILLS</b>	<b>29</b>
5. Managing Yourself and Your Time	31
6. Facing the Problem	45
7. Treating Yourself Right	52
8. Problem-Solving: A Strategy for Change	61
9. Keeping Things in Perspective: Help from Cognitive Therapy	71
10. Building Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem	89
11. Learning to Relax	104

<b>PART THREE</b>	<b>HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>117</b>
12.	The Importance of Relationships	119
13.	The First Key to Good Relationships: Being Fair to Yourself and to Others	127
14.	The Second Key to Good Relationships: Recognizing Voices from the Past	144
15.	The Third Key to Good Relationships: Relationships as Systems	158
<b>PART FOUR</b>	<b>THE TWIN ENEMIES OF GOOD MOOD</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Anxiety</b>		
16.	Getting the Better of Anxiety and Worry, or Defeating the Alarmist	173
17.	Overcoming Fears and Phobias	192
18.	Stress: How to Live with the Right Amount of It	207
19.	Dealing with Panic: Controlling the Alarm System	221
<b>Depression</b>		
20.	Depression—The Common Cold of the Mind	234
21.	Digging Yourself Out of Depression	245
22.	How to Become Less Vulnerable to Depression	265
<b>PART FIVE</b>	<b>MIND AND BODY</b>	<b>271</b>
23.	Breaking Habits and Stopping Smoking	273
24.	Overcoming Sleep Problems	290
25.	Good Eating Habits	301
26.	Averting Problems with Alcohol	314
27.	Tranquilizers and How to Stop Taking Them	321
<b>PART SIX</b>	<b>THE WORKING MIND</b>	<b>341</b>
28.	The Fundamentals of Effective Study	343
29.	Key Study Skills: Reading, Taking Notes, and Using the Material	351



## **C O N T E N T S**

ix

30. How to Improve Your Memory: Part 1. The Palest Ink and Other External Memory Aids	364
31. How to Improve Your Memory: Part 2. Internal Memory Aids	371
32. Making Decisions	386
33. Thinking Straight	397
 <b>NOTES</b>	 <b>409</b>
<b>FURTHER READING</b>	<b>411</b>
<b>INDEX</b>	<b>423</b>

# Introduction





## What to Expect from this Guide

“The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there.”<sup>1</sup> The future, too, can be a different country. This book is both an invitation and a guide. It is an invitation to you to enjoy your life to the full, and it is a guide for achieving such enjoyment. It is based on our accumulated thirty years’ experience of helping people through times of difficulty, and it is based on modern scientific research.

You can expect to find, in this guide, practical ways of improving many aspects of your life: your life as it affects your relationships, your mood, your health, and your work. These practical ways have been developed both through helping people with the stresses and strains of life and through helping to increase the effectiveness of managers we have worked with.

You can expect to find many ideas on how to improve your life by developing skills, understanding, and strategies to suit your circumstances and inclinations. Using this guide will help you to use your mind to its fullest potential: to improve your psychological fitness. Specific ideas are presented in a step-by-step manner. Psychological skills, skills of the mind, just like physical skills, are usually best learned by adopting a clear step-by-step approach. You would expect a keep-fit book to give some precise guidelines about specific exercises. You would expect a cookbook to give precise recipes so that

you know what you should be doing at each stage. This book is intended to be used in just the same way to make practical improvements in your day-to-day life.

### *Psychology and Management: The Two Bookshelves*

Look around your local bookstore. On one shelf there are books on psychology—for example, “How to treat your anxiety.” On another there are books on management skills—for example, “Effective time management.” These two types of book seem to inhabit different worlds. The first is the world of your personal life, your feelings, and your home. The second is the world of work: the world of action and the office. We believe that these two worlds are not so different and that we need to integrate feelings and action, work and play. The skills and attitudes which help you to be more effective in your work also help you to find fulfillment in your personal life. The attitudes and skills which help in personal life are relevant to improving your effectiveness in your work.

It is time that we gave up the habits which separate feelings and action, home and work. They originate in old-fashioned and unhelpful stereotypes. It is time for the techniques of psychology and of management to be integrated so that we can develop our own strategies for personal growth. One purpose of this book is to bring about such an integration.

### *A Keep-Fit Guide to the Mind*

The relationship of physical fitness to health is now well known. Simple measures can improve physical health: for example, exercise and sensible diet. We no longer think about physical health only when we are ill; but do things regularly, as a matter of course, which will help us to keep fit and well. Such a keep-fit approach is also relevant to the mind. There are specific ways of improving mental as well as physical health, of stretching and strengthening the mind as well as the body, which will enable us to lead a fulfilling life and help to prevent us from becoming overwhelmed by the stresses and strains which none of us can entirely avoid. A second purpose, therefore, of this book is to provide you with specific methods and techniques needed for keeping the whole person, not just the body, in good working order.

## *The Inner Game of Life*

In recent years there has been much interest in the idea of “inner games” of various sports: tennis, for example. The idea behind the concept of the “inner game” is that how one plays a sport depends on the mind as much as on the body. Indeed, it is first and foremost the mind that is important. For the mind is the seat of motivation: it determines how well and usefully and frequently we practice, and it determines whether we want to do it, and whether we enjoy playing the game. It is also the mind that determines whether, like true champions, we rise to the challenge at key moments, or let ourselves down on the points that really matter. In short, even with physical activities, inner factors—mental factors—are of critical importance

This book could be called the *inner game of life*. Whether you are concerned about managing your work or your personal life or your leisure, success and satisfaction will depend on your inner thoughts. Your inner thoughts will help to determine your outer life (just as the inner game of tennis determines how much and how well you practice); and your inner life will affect how you react to your experiences (just as the inner game determines whether you enjoy the tennis).

This book will help you with this “inner game” so that you can increase both enjoyment in life and success—however *you* would like to measure success. And this last point is important. This book is not designed to impose our way of living on you. How you want to live is up to you. What we want to show you is how you can develop your inner skills so that you can live life in the way that you wish.

## *Our Clinical Experience*

The scientific assessment and development of ways of helping people have been of enormous importance both in our own work as therapists and researchers, and in selecting the techniques for this guide. But science does not have all the answers, and this book is the result of our extensive clinical experience. We believe that techniques and ideas that are useful come from a range of sources, as we have outlined in the next chapter on the *scientific background of the techniques presented here*. In our own work we make use of and synthesize this range in order to help each particular person as best we can.

In writing this book we have drawn extensively on our own experience. This experience has guided us in the choice of techniques, and

we have tried to explain these using the methods that our clients have found helpful. We have thought for a long time that many of these techniques and ideas would be useful to everyone, because they can help in the process of keeping mentally fit; knowing about them will make it easier to take action quickly when you need to. Delay may perpetuate or worsen all sorts of difficulties. Another purpose of this book is, therefore, to make available to all the ideas and techniques which have been helpful to many, many others.

### *How to Use This Guide*

This book is a practical guide to keeping fit—in your mind as opposed to your body. Its purpose is to help you to enjoy your life to the fullest. For most of us, joy in life is at times diminished by too much worry, by periods of depression, or by other disturbing moods. The demands of modern life keep up a pressure which constantly threatens our psychological well-being. Keeping psychologically fit will help you to withstand these demands and will give you the flexibility and stamina to make the most of yourself.

This book is a guide for you to use in whatever ways you find most helpful. We recommend that you read Parts 1 and 2 first. Select from Parts 3, 4, 5, and 6 as appropriate, reading them all if this is the way you like to read or browsing through them if you prefer.

- *Part 1* explains the two principles on which our ideas are based.
- *Part 2* describes, in practical terms, the seven basic strategies, or skills, that will enable you to take positive control of your life.
- *Part 3* focuses on three keys to help you develop fulfilling relationships.
- *Part 4* provides specific and practical guidance about ways of overcoming anxiety and depression: the two big killers of pleasure and confidence.
- *Part 5* gives guidelines on looking after those aspects of the body that most closely relate to the mind.
- *Part 6* is concerned with skills that will help you to develop your full potential in an effective and creative way.

This guide is to be kept close at hand. To benefit most, you will want to refer to it again and again. Changes take time and persistence. At first, you will easily revert to old habits: to old ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. As this happens, re-read the relevant passages. Bear the following three points in mind:

1. Think of this book as a buffet table, and select those dishes which attract you. We present many ideas—those which we have found are helpful to the people we have worked with. Not all ideas are helpful for everyone. Pick and choose those which are relevant to you.

2. Learn the techniques which we describe so that you can apply them to your particular situation. Throughout the book we provide stories based on real people in order to show how the ideas presented can be used in real and specific situations. In some of these examples you will recognize a part of yourself; others will seem quite foreign to you. If the example does not seem to fit, do not dismiss the general method. For instance, in Chapter 8 we describe the technique of problem-solving using a specific example. The particular solutions this person used may not work for you; but it is the technique of problem-solving which is important and which you should think about using to solve your problems.

3. Do not dismiss ideas because they seem like common sense. Good psychology, once you know it, often seems like common sense, but it rarely seemed that way before you knew it. Common sense involves too many contradictions always to be right. Besides, in moments of uncertainty, when doubts set in, in the heat of the moment or in the depths of despair, most of us lose sight of common sense. It often deserts us in the hour of need. The ideas and techniques presented in this book have been chosen because they are helpful and effective when put to use. One value of this book is that it can nudge you into applying a technique you already know about but are not making proper use of. You may “know” the “Distant Elephants rule” (p. 41). It may be common sense, or you may have learned it before, perhaps in a management course. But you may not be using it. You may still be saying “yes” to things because they are so far in the future that you fail to work out just how large a commitment they will be. Think of this as a workbook that will help you to learn new techniques, and to apply techniques you already know but do not use.

The future is an exciting country. You need not be held back by the past. If this book can help you along the road, then it will have achieved its purpose.



## 2



# The Scientific Background

The methods and techniques we describe in this book are derived from research in many different branches of psychology. They are derived both from basic research itself and from the application of basic research to helping people in practical ways. We also draw on scientific knowledge about physiology and physical medicine, to relate what is known about the mind to what is known about the body.

### *Experimental Research in Psychology*

Fundamental research in psychology tells us an enormous amount about how the mind works. The painstaking, experimental work of psychologists, which started just over 100 years ago, has mapped out some of the basic processes involved in learning, remembering, and thinking. It has revealed the part we ourselves play in constructing our perception and understanding of the world around us. It has helped to explain how we develop, and to unravel the stages that we go through on the road from childhood to old age. It has thrown light on the relationships between our thoughts, feelings, actions, and sensations, and how these interact with the outside world: with the context within which we find ourselves. Its findings help us to under-