

Mental Focus: How Your Mind Can Treat Your Back Pain

Knowing how to do back exercises and having the physical ability to do them is only part of the equation.

When it comes to back pain, you may need more mental focus than you do for other kinds of exercise. No matter whether you are trying to work with stiff muscles, areas of numbness, or other problems, mental focus is a vital key to listening to your body and figuring how best to avoid injury while you try to improve your condition.

What is Mental Focus?



**This Ancient Method
Unlocks the Secret to Erasing
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In Just 90 Seconds**

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At its simplest, mental focus is the ability to harness your mental, physical, and emotional efforts in pursuit of a relevant task. There are three things that can rob you of your focus long before you even choose to begin an exercise program for back pain:

- **Boredom** – if you never enjoyed exercising, or were constantly embarrassed in gym class, don't expect back pain to change how you feel about exercise. That being said, even if you don't enjoy physical activity, there

are many different exercise systems available. For example, if you don't find conventional exercises appealing, consider trying yoga or even Tai Chi. When you enjoy what you are doing, or feel mentally stimulated by it, then you will find it much easier to keep your focus.

- **Low Expectations** – Simply put, if you don't believe you can do something, you will create obstacles to success. These may include making excuses for why you can't exercise, or allowing yourself to be distracted. When you believe you can achieve something of value, you will have improved mental focus. To overcome low expectations, lower your goals to a point where you can achieve them and gradually go forward from there.
- **Tiredness** – When you are in pain, just moving a few inches can make you feel exhausted and overwhelmed. Even one small spot of pain can be enough to disrupt plans for days on end. Under these circumstances, you will need to take additional steps to develop the mental focus necessary to power through the pain.

In many cases, you may be led to believe that a lack of good mental focus is caused by distractions. Some people will tell you that you need to readjust your priorities, or pass other forms of judgment about your situation.

Before you blame yourself or someone else for your lack of focus while exercising, go back and look at the three underlying causes of loss of mental focus. No matter whether the underlying problem is boredom, low expectation, or tiredness, you will need to address those issues first. As you overcome these challenges, you will find it much easier to ignore distractions and go forward with your exercise routine.

Why Does it Matter?

Without mental focus, it will be very hard to set goals and

ensure you can follow them. Consider a situation where you want to be able to sit comfortably in a chair without a back injury starting to twinge. Let's also say that your physical therapist gave you 5 exercises to do at home 3 times per day.

As much as you may want to do the exercises, here is what your typical exercise routine may look like after a few days if you have poor or undeveloped mental focus:

- You don't even get to do the exercises because the phone rang, you were busy texting, or something else prevented you from getting started.
- While you were exercising, you found yourself thinking about something entirely different. This might include items that might need to go on your grocery list, if you have enough gas in the car, or dozens of other mundane things that can be easy to lose track of. Instead of staying with your routine, you go and look to answer those questions.
- During your exercise routine, you rush through it because you forgot to do something else, or you feel like you should not be using so much time on your program.
- While you are exercising, you fail to keep track of your form and twist the wrong way or wind up with an injury that prevents you from working out for a few days.

As you can see, without good mental focus, you may never even get around to doing the exercises that will give you relief from back pain. To make it even worse, even if you do overcome the initial obstacles created by poor mental focus, you may wind up with an injury that prevents you from making further progress.



4 Ways to Develop Mental Focus

No matter whether you are starting back pain exercises for the first time, or have failed one or more times in the past, building your mental focus may be of some help. Here are three easy ways to get started:

Guided Meditation

When all is said and done, the main part of mental focus revolves around your ability to hold your mental and physical efforts on a particular task as opposed to other competing tasks. On the other side of the equation, keeping your mind on a single point or task can be very difficult. Guided meditation can teach you how to bring your mind back to a specific point, as well as hold it there for longer periods of time. Once you learn how to shift your mind away from competing thoughts while doing the meditations, it will be easier to achieve that goal while you are exercising.

Create a Series of Structured Work Periods and Break Time

Unless you live in a vacuum, there are bound to be people, animals, and events that distract you. If you are tired from

your exercise routine, or feeling pain, that can also break your concentration and prevent you from reaching daily exercise goals. Sometimes, when you know that you are very close to reaching a small goal, it is much easier to power through whatever is distracting you. Let's say you have a half hour set aside for back pain exercises. If you extend that time to 1 hour and break it up into 10 minute increments of exercise and 10 minute increments of rest, you will be much more likely to complete the program. Building in rest breaks gives you a chance to recover and prepare for the next round.

Evaluate Your Priorities

Have you ever felt really good about a particular project or goal, and wound up chatting with a neighbor or doing something else instead? Did you feel really bad when you finally got to a point where you could resume following your original plans? If so, then you can see where evaluating your priorities is a key to developing and maintaining good mental focus. During this process it is very important not to judge yourself for straying from your original plans. Instead, it is best to see how you can eliminate the distractions from derailing your plans again. As long as you recognize and intend for your exercise to take priority over certain distractions, there is every chance that you can overcome poor focus and succeed in your plans.

Be Clear About Your Boundaries

Many times, other people don't stop and think about the fact that you have other interests and need to take time for yourself. If you have loved ones, friends, or co-workers in your life, be very clear about the fact that you will be exercising for back pain. Be open about the fact that you have a set time every day that you will be pursuing this goal, and that you will not be available until you are done with the routine. Listen carefully to the things people may come up

with as reasons why they may disrupt you during this time. If you can come up with alternatives, then talk about these options.

The more distractions you can eliminate by setting clear boundaries and open communication, the easier it will be to hold your mental focus later on. At the very least, when there are others that depend on you, there will be less need to worry if you know they have other options while you are taking care of your back pain. This alone can make it much easier to put yourself in a mind frame to complete your program and feel good about taking the time you need to pursue your personal goals.

When you have good mental focus, it is much easier to achieve your goals. While mental focus cannot compensate for agility and strength lost because of back pain, it can help you do the exercises that will assist in your recovery. If you decide to start an exercise program, but notice you are having mental focus problems, it may be of some help to go back and work on focus first. Once you have a more disciplined mental outlook, you will be less likely to fail. As an added bonus, if you are having problems in other areas of your life, developing better mental focus skills may help you in those areas as well.

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