

# WHERE'S YOUR HEAD At?

You might have your physical exercise routine sussed, but could it be time for a mind makeover? Personal trainer Lucy Fry delves deeper...

Whether your goal is achieving a PB, dropping a dress size, or finally getting around to doing that once in a lifetime fitness challenge, you are always far more likely to succeed if you mind and body are in tune. Instead of adding yet another physical training session in, try working on your mind during that time. Just one hour preparing yourself mentally for every five hours spent working your body can reap great rewards. Here are just a few methods that have been used by athletes and regular fitness enthusiasts to reach their goals.

## Mind Master Class 1

### MEDITATION



Put very simply, meditation is about learning to be in the present moment. It is being aware of your body, and being both focused and relaxed at the same time. If your mind wanders during meditation, it's important to gently bring it back to focusing on your breathing, using your senses to help yourself to concentrate only on the here and now, rather than becoming preoccupied by external or internal noise – which could be physical, mental or emotional.

I asked Andy Puddicombe, founder of Headspace meditation project ([getsomeheadspace.com](http://getsomeheadspace.com)), how meditation might help an athlete or regular fitness enthusiast to reach their



## Mind Master Class 2

### **HYPNOTHERAPY**

I once saw a hypnotherapist to try and help break a negative cycle of drinking too much, missing training sessions (due to a hangover) and therefore never reaching my fitness goals of looking and feeling a certain way. My mind had been holding me back, sabotaging all my body's good work by goading me into seeking short-term release instead of long-term satisfaction.

The hypnotherapist and I worked together on building two very distinct images. The first was who I wanted to be, and the second was how I felt, far too often. One was of a lean, tanned kickboxing goddess, full of energy and smiles. The other was a scrunched up ninja turtle with huge bags under her eyes, lying in bed feeling depressed, sick and lonely. The more extreme the better, the therapist told me; the stronger the images, the more powerful they could be. Then, when under hypnosis, such visual armoury could be used to tell my subconscious to stop holding me back, as he repeated the images in detail. They were stronger than ever in my mind when I emerged from the session.

"Hypnotherapy is a very good tool for helping you to achieve your fitness goals," says London based hypnotherapist Daniel Fryer ([inhypno.com](http://inhypno.com)). "With the help of a skilled therapist, you can overcome resistance and focus on the things you want to achieve – as opposed to the things you don't," he says. "Hypnotherapy can also help to boost your confidence, willpower and desire to succeed. It can even help



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## Mind Master Class 3

### **NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING**

The best description I have heard of NLP is that it is the art and science of using your mind to achieve specific and desired results. 'Neuro' refers to the brain; 'linguistic' looks at the words a person uses in order to gain an insight into that person's thinking; and 'programming' refers to the study of thinking or patterns which people use in their lives. So, the basic premise of NLP is that the words we use reflect the way we perceive our problems (albeit subconsciously). By helping us to change those words, NLP practitioners can also help us to change our minds, and overcome the former barriers in place. To find an NLP practitioner near you, log on to [anlp.org](http://anlp.org)



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goals. "The brain is just like any muscle in the body," says Andy. "If you train it, it changes."

"You will always perform better if you are in the moment and present, than if you're engaged in some internal dialogue. Even if that dialogue is positive in nature," he adds.

Andy explains that meditation is not just about sitting still and being present, but that it can be done walking down the street, while drinking a cup of tea, talking to a friend or even during a 10k race! "To be undistracted is to be meditative."

**TRY  
it...**

**MEDITATIVE TIP:** Aim to focus on the way your body feels when you train, instead of allowing yourself to become sidetracked by other people or sounds. In a way, when people talk about 'getting into the zone' in fitness, they are talking about becoming truly focused, in a pseudo-meditative state. Need help? Why not sign up for Headspace's Take Ten project ([getsomeheadspace.com](http://getsomeheadspace.com))? It's free!

## **WHAT works?**

As for whether any of these things actually 'work', it is a question which can only be answered subjectively. Every individual responds differently to different treatments, just as some people love yoga, others would rather run about on a rugby field – and some enjoy both! The only way to find out if it works for you is to give it a try. Other alternative therapies that can help unblock subconscious (or conscious) knots include acupuncture, reiki, shiatsu and homeopathy. Go for it!