



—— MENTAL FITNESS, MEASURED AND TRAINED

A FRAMEWORK FROM MINDFIT[®]

A framework for measuring and training mental fitness

Nine attributes of mental fitness, a short self-assessment built on them, and training that rehearses the moment it prepares you for.

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Measuring what has been hard to measure

This white paper presents MindFit®, a framework for measuring and training mental fitness. Mental fitness is the set of skills and attributes required to adapt to life's demands. No published assessment measures it directly. MindFit® addresses that gap with an integrated framework of nine mental fitness attributes and a 27-item self-assessment.

A 2023 pilot involving 30 participants over twelve weeks of tailored mental fitness exercises recorded an average mental fitness score increase of 8.2 points. Participants also reported enhanced coping skills (73%), reduced stress (73%), improved mood (80%), and an overall increase in wellbeing (87%). The pilot was uncontrolled and its outcomes were self-reported, so these results are an early signal rather than evidence of efficacy.

MindFit®'s goal is to establish an actionable framework for mental fitness and to build accessible training on top of it.

01 — INTRODUCTION

Why mental fitness, and why now?

Mental fitness is essential for handling life's demands (Robinson et al., 2015). Higher workloads, constant connectivity, and complex social interaction produce stress and cognitive overload (Misra and Stokols, 2012; Kushlev et al., 2016), while reported capacity to cope has not kept pace (APA, 2023; Office of the Surgeon General, 2023). That widening gap between demand and capacity is MindFit®'s focus.

Addressing a market need

Interest in mental fitness has grown faster than the tools to measure it (Robinson et al., 2015). Traditional mental health instruments such as the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale or the Beck Depression Inventory are built to detect symptoms of illness, not to describe capacity, and they were not designed to describe adaptive capacity.

That leaves a gap for a standardized assessment that evaluates mental fitness holistically. MindFit® addresses it with a scientifically grounded assessment methodology, on the principle that what gets measured gets improved.

Robinson and colleagues established the construct and its guiding principles but did not publish a validated instrument. MindFit® builds on that foundation with a framework of nine attributes: clarity, strength, drive, coordination, agility, flexibility, efficiency, support, and endurance. A 27-item self-assessment covers them, designed to be practical for day-to-day use, and its psychometric properties have been evaluated in a study of 600 US adults.

02 — THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Defining mental fitness

While "mental fitness" is increasingly common as a term, formal definitions are not. The first comprehensive definition came from Robinson's Delphi study, which describes it as the modifiable capacity to utilize resources and skills to flexibly adapt to challenges or advantages, enabling thriving (Robinson et al., 2015). Its guiding principles: mental fitness is a positive term distinct from illness; it is comparable to physical fitness in public perception; it is measurable; and it can be improved.

Related constructs

Mental fitness intersects with, but stands apart from, several established constructs.

Psychological wellbeing concerns life fulfillment and positive functioning (Keyes, 2007).

Emotional intelligence concerns perceiving, understanding, and regulating emotion (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). **Resilience** is the capacity to recover from adversity (Luthar et al., 2000). Mental fitness encompasses aspects of each without being reducible to any of them.

It also differs from broader fields. **Executive functions**, including inhibition and working memory (Diamond, 2013), form the cognitive foundation for higher-order skills but do not address the emotional and motivational states mental fitness includes. **Positive psychology** offers the closest analog, and its interventions function much like mental fitness exercises (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), though such interventions tend to build on existing strengths, whereas a fitness model requires training weaknesses as well.

Why it matters

Attributes of the kind mental fitness describes are associated with better functioning. Resilience, for example, is associated with lower stress, anxiety, and depression, and with wellbeing more broadly (Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004; Huppert, 2009). These relationships are largely correlational, and this paper does not claim that training any single attribute produces downstream health outcomes.

Challenges in measurement

Measuring mental fitness is harder than measuring physical fitness, which has objective and well-established indices (Caspersen et al., 1985). The principal obstacle is the absence of a standardized instrument that assesses the construct directly. Existing tools measure adjacent constructs: the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal for emotional intelligence, the Resilience Scale for Adults for resilience (Friborg et al., 2003), the Brief Self-Control Scale for self-control (Tangney et al., 2004). Each captures part of the picture. None assesses mental fitness as a whole, which fragments both understanding and intervention design.

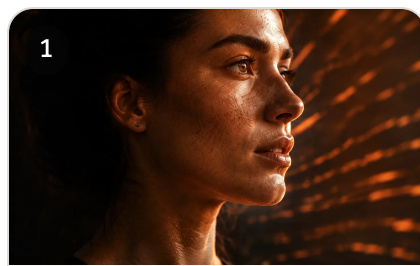
03 — MINDFIT® IN PRACTICE

Three components: assess, train, sustain

MindFit® comprises three components: self-assessment, training, and ongoing support.

01 Component 1 – Self-assessment

MindFit®'s self-assessment covers nine attributes of mental fitness and produces a single overall score.



1

Clarity

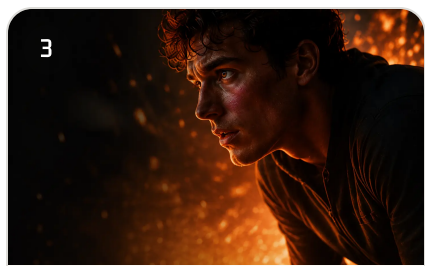
Assess well-being when deciding on priorities and next steps.



2

Strength

Maintain composure under increasing stress.



3

Drive

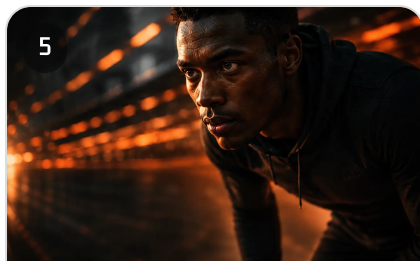
Generate the motivation to pursue your goals.



4

Coordination

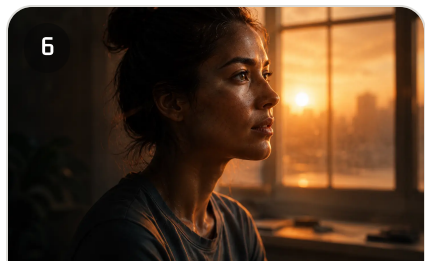
Manage multiple responsibilities effectively.



5

Agility

Direct attention in response to changing circumstances.



6

Flexibility

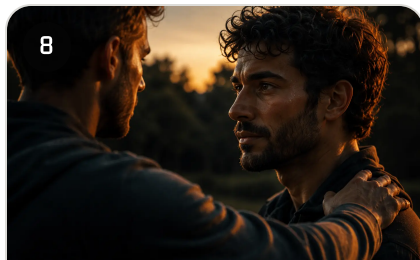
Find alternative ways to reach goals when facing obstacles.



7

Efficiency

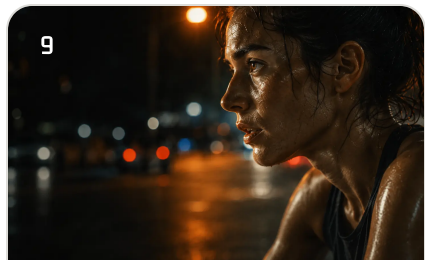
Perform tasks well with minimal wasted time or effort.



8

Support

Build supportive relationships and seek help when needed.



9

Endurance

Sustain mental effort over time without significant fatigue.

The framework derives its nine attributes by integrating psychological theory with terms adapted from Caspersen's foundational paper on physical fitness (Caspersen et al., 1985), following the parallel suggested by Robinson et al. (2015). It traces an individual's path through accepting and resolving life demands, and the attributes required along the way. The resulting set spans stress management, emotional regulation (Gross, 1998), cognitive agility (Diamond, 2013), and resilience, and aligns with components of the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011), the adaptive processes of the transactional model of stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), and the fulfillment criteria of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Assessment structure

The assessment measures the nine attributes with three items each, for a total of 27 items. Items use a four-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, producing a maximum of 108 points, normalized to a score out of 100. One item per attribute is reverse coded. The full item set appears in the appendix.

Scores map to five tiers:



Tier boundaries were set during development and align well with the score distribution observed in a validation sample of 600 US adults.

The 2023 pilot evaluated the assessment's feasibility and acceptability. Participants understood the items, answered consistently within attribute categories, and reported that the assessment produced meaningful insight into their mental fitness profile. These findings concern usability and acceptability. Psychometric validation is a separate question, addressed by a completed study being prepared for publication.

02 Component 2 – Training

MindFit[®]'s exercises are informed by techniques from clinical and performance psychology and adapted for use outside a clinical setting.

The design principle is that training should resemble the situation it prepares you for. Rather than teaching a technique in calm conditions and leaving the user to apply it during a difficult moment, each exercise has the user bring a real situation from their own life and rehearse the specific skill that situation requires while under controlled pressure. The pressure is calibrated to a training zone rather than a maximum, and difficulty progresses one variable at a time.

This approach follows stress inoculation training, developed in clinical psychology in the 1980s, which teaches a coping skill and then rehearses it under graded, realistic stress (Meichenbaum and Deffenbacher, 1988). Its performance-domain descendant, pressure training, has been tested directly: a meta-analysis of 14 controlled studies across sport and law enforcement (n = 394) found a moderate improvement in performance under pressure, holding for both novices and elite performers (Low et al., 2021).

Each of the nine attributes has a corresponding technique, including cognitive restructuring, boundary setting, root-cause analysis, cognitive reappraisal, creative problem-solving, prioritization, integration, communication self-efficacy, and mindfulness.

03 Component 3 – Ongoing support

The third component supports maintenance and progression.

Progress tracking

Users observe development over time and adjust their plan.

Regular check-ins

Light, recurring prompts that support consistency.

Data-driven adaptation

Engagement data informs how the program develops.

Research integration

Advisors review new findings and incorporate them.

04 — PILOT STUDY & FUTURE RESEARCH

2023 pilot snapshot

The 2023 pilot involved 30 participants who engaged with tailored mental fitness exercises over twelve weeks.

30 participants

12 weeks

27 item assessment

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Average score increase

73%

Enhanced coping skills

73%

Reduced stress levels

80%

Improved overall mood

87%

Greater wellbeing

A NOTE ON DESIGN AND LIMITATIONS

The pilot was uncontrolled, with no comparison group, and all outcomes were self-reported. Change over twelve weeks cannot be attributed to the program on this design. These results indicate feasibility and acceptability and provide an early signal worth pursuing. They are not evidence of efficacy.

Qualitative themes

Participants valued the combination of psychological education with practical tools and the self-directed approach it enabled. Many cited improved life planning and daily stress management. Several noted increased awareness of their own mental state. Participants described the assessment as useful for identifying both strengths and weaknesses, and highlighted the value of regular practice and variety.

Future research

A psychometric validation study of the 27-item scale has been completed in a sample of 600 US adults and is being prepared for publication. Factor analysis supported scoring the assessment as a single overall index of mental fitness rather than as nine separate subscales, which is consistent with how MindFit® reports results. Full findings are not reported here.

Beyond it, the pilot supports proceeding to larger and better-controlled work. Priorities are a controlled trial of the training program, replication of the assessment's properties in independent samples, and longer follow-up to examine durability.

Development of the framework will continue to focus on refining the assessment and expanding the training library, informed by ongoing research.

05 — CONCLUSION

Framework and intent

Mental fitness is measurable, and Robinson and colleagues proposed that it is also trainable. The tools to do either have lagged behind interest in the idea. MindFit® proposes a nine-attribute framework, a short self-assessment built on it, and a training approach grounded in the principle

that practice should resemble the moment it prepares you for.

The 2023 pilot was small, uncontrolled, and self-reported. It establishes that the assessment is usable and the program acceptable, and it provides an early signal worth testing properly. The work to establish efficacy remains ahead, and this paper should be read as a statement of framework and intent rather than a claim of proven outcomes.

The MindFit® Mental Fitness Scale

Twenty-seven items, three per attribute. Responses use a four-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Items marked **(R)** are reverse coded.

Clarity

1. I can clearly articulate my feelings, needs, and priorities to others.
2. I regularly assess my well-being when deciding on priorities and next steps.
3. I often feel uncertain about my goals and direction in life. **(R)**

Strength

4. I stay composed when facing life's challenges.
5. I know my limits and when to set boundaries.
6. I often take a while to bounce back after experiencing setbacks. **(R)**

Drive

7. I can generate the motivation needed to pursue my goals.
8. I often feel driven to pursue my goals.
9. I find that my motivation comes and goes. **(R)**

Coordination

10. I can juggle multiple responsibilities without compromising on quality.
11. I can break down complex tasks into more manageable parts.
12. I often feel overwhelmed when managing several responsibilities at once. **(R)**

Agility

13. I can shift my attention to more important matters when priorities change.
14. I stay focused on important tasks in the midst of irrelevant distractions.
15. I feel overwhelmed when unexpected changes affect my work or goals. **(R)**

Flexibility

16. I find alternative ways to reach my goals when faced with obstacles.
17. I consider alternative methods when my usual methods aren't working.
18. I often repeat the same behaviors, even when they're not helpful. **(R)**

Efficiency

19. I complete tasks efficiently without compromising quality.
20. I use my time and effort wisely to accomplish what needs to be done.
21. I often spend more time or effort on tasks than necessary. **(R)**

Support

22. I have positive relationships that can provide support when needed.
23. I actively seek help from my support network when I face challenges.
24. I often avoid asking for help from others when I face difficulties. **(R)**

Endurance

- 25. I can sustain mental effort during long tasks without significant fatigue.
- 26. I find ways to stay mentally refreshed during long tasks.
- 27. I tend to give up on tasks when they become difficult. **(R)**

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