

The Way of the Mindful Athlete Course Workbook



By Gwen Lawrence

This workbook is designed to accompany Gwen Lawrence's *The Way of the Mindful Athlete Course*, helping you integrate its principles into your athletic and personal journey. It includes the six principles, reflection exercises, quizzes, journaling prompts, assignments, and tools to deepen your understanding and practice.

Introduction

What is a Mindful Athlete?

A mindful athlete combines physical training with mental and emotional awareness. This approach fosters peak performance, resilience, and a deeper connection to one's craft. Studies have shown that mindfulness training can enhance athletic performance by improving focus, reducing stress, and increasing self-awareness. For example, research published in the *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* highlights how mindfulness interventions significantly improve athletes' ability to manage anxiety and maintain composure under pressure, ultimately leading to better outcomes in competitive settings.

The 6 Principles of the Mindful Athlete

1. Awareness

Description: Awareness is the foundation of mindfulness. It involves being present in the moment and understanding your body, thoughts, and emotions.

Journaling Prompts:

1. When do you feel most aware during your athletic performance?

2. Describe a moment when you "zoned out." What caused it?

Quiz:

1. Define awareness in the context of athletic performance.

Name five times when you could do better to be more aware

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

- List two benefits of cultivating awareness as an athlete.

- 1.
- 2.

Assignment:

- Spend 5 minutes each day observing your breath. Write about any changes in your focus during workouts or competitions.

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

conclusion?

2. Intention.

Description: Setting clear, meaningful goals shapes your actions and outcomes. Intentions help athletes align their efforts with their long-term aspirations, ensuring every action contributes to personal growth and success. Research published in the *Journal of Sport Psychology* has shown that athletes who set specific intentions experience improved motivation, greater focus, and enhanced performance outcomes. By fostering a sense of purpose, intentions also encourage resilience in the face of challenges, making them an essential tool for sustained success on and off the field. Setting clear, meaningful goals shapes your actions and outcomes.

Journaling Prompts:

1. What are your top three intentions for this season? and why?

1.

2.

3.

1. Reflect on a time when you performed without a clear goal. How did it feel? What was the goal?

Quiz:

1. Why is intention important in mindfulness?

2. How can intentions differ from goals?

Assignment:

- Create a list of daily, weekly, and monthly intentions for both your training and personal life. Additionally, dedicate space to outline and review your monthly intentions over the next three years. Reflect on how these intentions evolve as you grow in your mindfulness practice and athletic journey.

Write your monthly goals here for the next year. Post them where you can see them.

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

What did you learn about yourself as you committed to these monthly goals?

What will your weekly accomplishment list be?

Mondays

Tuesdays

Wednesdays

Thursdays

Fridays

Saturdays

Sundays

What did you learn about yourself as you planned your weekly goals?

What will your daily accomplishment list be?

3. Balance

Description: Balance is about achieving harmony between your physical, mental, and emotional states. Balance is crucial for an athlete's success as it ensures harmony among physical, mental,

Have you experienced this stressful event before and were unable to get through it successfully?

Assignment:

- Practice a yoga sequence focused on balance and write about its impact on your mental clarity. Where will you get this class from?

4. Strength

Description: Strength in mindfulness is not just physical but also mental and emotional resilience. For an athlete, this multi-dimensional strength is critical to navigating the intense pressures of competition, maintaining focus under stress, and bouncing back from setbacks. Mental resilience empowers athletes to face challenges with clarity and determination, while emotional resilience fosters stability and confidence, even in the face of failure. By cultivating this holistic strength, athletes are better equipped to sustain high performance, recover effectively, and maintain a balanced mindset that supports both their athletic and personal growth.

Journaling Prompts:

1. What does strength mean to you beyond physicality?

Can you practice this? How will you do it?

2. Recall a moment when you demonstrated mental strength. What did you learn?

5. Flexibility

Description: Flexibility involves adaptability in the body and mind. For athletes, this dual flexibility is essential for responding effectively to the dynamic challenges of their sport. Physical flexibility improves range of motion, reduces the risk of injury, and enhances overall performance. Mental flexibility, on the other hand, allows athletes to adjust strategies during competition, remain calm under pressure, and recover quickly from setbacks. This ability to adapt both physically and mentally fosters resilience and sustained success, enabling athletes to perform at their best in a variety of scenarios.

Journaling Prompts:

1. How do you handle unexpected changes in a game or training?

Do you need to change this? if so, how can you change this?

1. Describe a time when increased flexibility (physical or mental) enhanced your performance.

3.

6. Focus

Description: Focus is the ability to maintain attention on your task despite distractions. For athletes, focus is vital both on and off the field as it enhances decision-making, reaction time, and overall performance under pressure. Studies published in the *Journal of Cognitive Enhancement* demonstrate that mindfulness-based focus training improves athletes' cognitive control and reduces susceptibility to distractions. Furthermore, research from the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* highlights how maintaining focus during high-pressure situations can significantly reduce stress and increase accuracy, contributing to better outcomes in competitive environments.

Journaling Prompts:

1. What are your biggest distractions during performance? How can you mitigate them? Have they effected your game in the past?

2. Reflect on a time when you felt "in the zone." What contributed to that focus?

How do you know you were in the zone?

Quiz:

1. Why is focus essential for peak performance?
2. Name one mindfulness technique to improve focus.

Which technique will you use?

Assignment:

- Practice a daily meditation focused on single-pointed attention. Record your experience and its impact on your focus during training.

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Conclusion from your days of observation.

Mindfulness Tools and Practices

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Physiological Impact: Diaphragmatic breathing engages the diaphragm, allowing for deeper, more efficient breaths that enhance oxygen exchange in the lungs. This practice stimulates the vagus nerve, activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which counteracts the stress-induced "fight or flight" response. It reduces heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and increases feelings of calm and relaxation. Additionally, diaphragmatic breathing improves blood flow and helps cleanse lactate from the bloodstream, reducing physical tension and promoting mental clarity.

Description: A foundational mindfulness practice used by Navy SEALs to control stress and refocus the mind.

Why do you think the Navy Seals would use this technique?

Does it make sense for you to learn and incorporate it?

When would you incorporate it?

Benefits:

- Reduces anxiety and stress
- Enhances focus and calmness
- Activates the relaxation response

Practice Instructions:

1. Sit or lie comfortably.
2. Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of 4.
3. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
4. Exhale through your mouth for a count of 8.
5. Repeat for 1-5 minutes daily.

Reflection:

- How do you feel after practicing diaphragmatic breathing?

- Did you notice changes in your physical or mental state?

How long did these changes last for you?

Body Scan Practice

Description: A mindfulness exercise that increases awareness of physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts. Regular practice of body scanning not only helps identify areas of physical tension but also fosters emotional awareness and clarity. It encourages a non-judgmental observation of one's internal state, leading to improved stress management and relaxation. Research from the *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* supports that body scans can reduce anxiety, enhance emotional regulation, and even improve sleep quality by promoting a sense of calm and grounding.

Steps:

1. Find a quiet, comfortable place.
2. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.
3. Gradually bring your attention to different parts of your body, starting from your toes and moving upward.
4. Notice sensations, tension, or discomfort without judgment.

Homework:

- Practice a body scan for 10-20 minutes daily. Record any patterns or insights you notice.

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Conclusion of your body scanning experiences.

Anchor Words

Description: Simple mental labels used to maintain focus during mindfulness exercises. Anchor words serve as a tether for the wandering mind, helping to bring attention back to the present moment. By using these words, practitioners can interrupt cycles of distracting thoughts, reduce mental chatter, and enhance emotional regulation. Research indicates that the consistent use of anchor words during mindfulness exercises can strengthen cognitive control, increase resilience to stress, and improve overall mental clarity.

Examples:

- "Breathing in, breathing out"
- "Calm" for emotional grounding
- "Present" for centering thoughts
- One-word descriptions of what you see hear smell taste and touch, "green" "car" "tired" "soft"

Exercise:

- During mindfulness practice, use an anchor word to redirect attention when your mind wanders. Where do you think you can implement this?

Why do you think you should implement this there?

- Reflect on how this impacts your focus and emotional state.

Life Detox Strategies

Purpose: Declutter the mind for improved clarity and focus. A cluttered mind and environment can lead to increased stress, difficulty concentrating, and reduced productivity. By simplifying your mental and physical space, you create room for better decision-making and heightened awareness. Research has shown that reducing cognitive overload through decluttering enhances memory and focus, while creating a more organized environment promotes a sense of calm and control. This practice allows you to direct energy towards meaningful tasks and maintain emotional balance.

Four Strategies:

1. Practice non-violence and compassion in actions and thoughts. This principle encourages athletes to foster a mindset of empathy and kindness, which can improve interpersonal relationships, reduce stress, and cultivate a more positive and supportive mental state. It aligns with the broader mindfulness goals of maintaining balance and emotional control, ultimately contributing to enhanced focus and resilience in both sports and life. Refrain from stealing time, energy, or resources from others.
2. Commit to truthful and mindful speech. For athletes, this practice fosters trust and integrity both within themselves and their teams. It helps to build better communication

skills, reduce misunderstandings, and create a supportive and collaborative environment. Truthful and mindful speech also encourages self-reflection, allowing athletes to align their words with their values, which can lead to greater focus and emotional balance in high-pressure situations.

3. Reduce exposure to toxins, including negative influences and distractions. For athletes, minimizing exposure to such influences helps maintain mental clarity, emotional balance, and consistent motivation. By focusing on positive and supportive environments, athletes can improve decision-making, enhance concentration during training and competitions, and sustain a healthier mindset overall. This practice allows for greater alignment between personal values and athletic goals, ultimately supporting peak performance.
4. Refrain from stealing time, energy, or resources from others: Promotes respect for boundaries and a balanced exchange of energy in relationships. For athletes, this practice is essential to maintaining harmony within a team environment and fostering positive relationships with coaches and peers. It also helps reduce unnecessary stress and distractions, enabling athletes to channel their energy effectively toward personal and team goals, thereby improving overall performance and focus.

Each strategy aligns with creating a supportive mental and physical environment for improved focus, resilience, and performance.

Assignment: Identify one area in your life to "detox" (e.g., limiting negative self-talk). Track your progress over a week.

Identified area _____

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Conclusion from your week.

3. What steps will you take to continue integrating mindfulness into your routine?

Final Assignment:

- Create a personalized "Mindful Athlete Manifesto" that outlines your commitment to each of the six principles. Use this as a guide for your ongoing journey.

Resources

- Suggested Reading: *The Way of the Mindful Athlete* by Gwen Lawrence
- Guided Meditation Apps: Headspace, Calm
- Yoga for Athletes Resources: Gwen Lawrence's Yoga Programs
- Additional Videos and Exercises: Links to body scan and breathing practices from Gwen Lawrence's materials

Notes Section