

There is usually an inverse proportion between how much is on your mind and how much is getting done.

memory part of your mind—the part that tends to hold all of the incomplete, undecided and unorganized ‘stuff’—functions much like RAM on a personal computer.... there’s limited capacity; there’s only so much ‘stuff’ you can store in there and still have that part of your brain function at a high level. Most people walk around with their RAM bursting at the seams. They’re constantly distracted, their focus disturbed by their own internal mental overload.” He goes on to say that there is usually an inverse proportion between how much is on your mind and how much is getting done.

When you clean out your closet, you’re left with items you are letting go of—things that need to be given away, sold, recycled, or thrown out. When something no longer serves you, you can choose to let it go. When you choose to clean out your mind, it is also a process of letting go.

The clearer your mind, the easier it is to clear your cluttered spaces.

Just as more clutter can enter your physical spaces if you don’t clear them out on a regular basis, more clutter can also accumulate in your mind. So it’s important to find some ways to clear out your mental clutter on a regular basis, as needed.

There are lots of ways to let go of the clutter in your mind so you can change your thinking, change your perspective, and focus more on what you want. There are sixteen tools in this chapter. Some of them might work well for you, and some of them may not. They are all tools to have in your toolbox, to use if and when they might be helpful.

Remember, there is no one way to clear your mental clutter. That’s why I suggest that you experiment a bit. Try some of these ideas out, use your own “gut” instincts—your own inner wisdom. There is a lot to choose from. If you try something and it doesn’t work, try something else. You always have a choice. Take what works for you, and leave the rest.

The clearer your mind, the easier it is to clear your cluttered spaces.

There is no one way to clear your mental clutter. Take what works for you, and leave the rest.

TOOL #1: The Practice of Being

Have you thought about how much of your life is focused on “doing” and “having?”

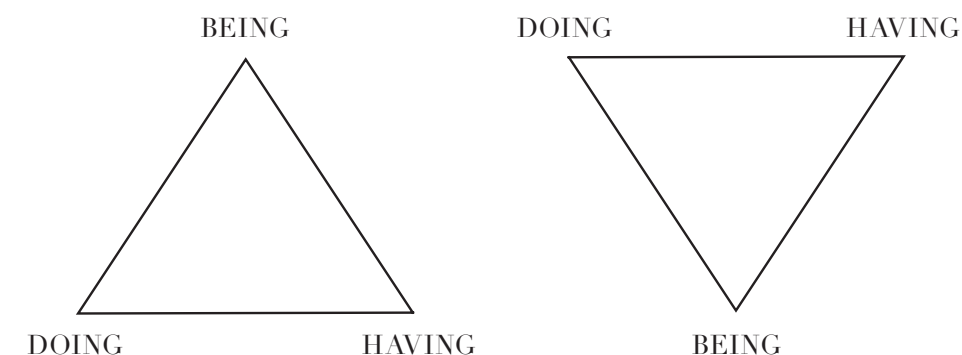
For many years our culture has taught us to focus on “doing” things and “having” things, and, if there’s time, we might spend time “being” (see the triangle on the left, below). There is a lot of emphasis on what we do and what we have, and what we externally have to show for it. Many of us have gotten caught up in this spiral of “busy-ness” and accumulation. It causes a lot of stress, and life can become very frenzied, overwhelming, and exhausting. This doesn’t set the stage very well for taking care of ourselves and the clutter that may be piling up as a result.

Learn to “be.”

In recent years, more and more people are recognizing that they need to balance their very busy lives with things that calm them down, such as yoga, meditation, quiet time, and deep breathing. There are many benefits to these and other practices. They can help us feel more grounded, centered, and relaxed. They can produce those feel-good endorphins, and we’ve already learned how much more energy we have when we are feeling good!

“There is more to life than speeding it up.”

MAHATMA
GHANDI



Decisions are easier when you come from a place of being.

One of the best benefits of “being” is the discovery that, when we come from this place of “being” (as shown in the right triangle), it is much easier to decide what is best for us in choosing what to “do” and what to “have” in our life, mentally and physically. It’s literally a practice of turning things around (as you can see from the illustration on the previous page) and choosing to process things from a different perspective— from a quieter place, a “being” place. We need to remember personal growth expert and author, John Bradshaw’s words, “You are a human being, not a human doing!” Decisions are easier when you come from a place of being.

When you make decisions from a place of being they are more likely to have lasting results. You are more likely to stay organized and clutter-free!

Would you be willing to spend more time “being”?

When you take time to go into the quiet, you have an opportunity to relax and tune in to your own inner wisdom and guidance. From this place of “being,” you can make choices that matter to you about what to do and what to have, what to say yes to, and what to say no to, what to let go of, and what to keep.

Take some deep breaths.

The simple practice of taking a few deep breaths can quickly take you out of almost any stressful or challenging situation. It can instantly change your perspective and your state of mind, whether you’re driving in traffic, stressing out at work, or staring at all the piles of clutter that need sorting.

How fortunate we are to have this internal reminder to “be.” Focusing on the breath is a simple way to stop all the “doing” and shift to “being.” One deep breath (or two or three) can stop the racing mind and the stress, and bring us into a more peaceful state of mind in any given moment. This takes practice. Why not try it right now.

EXERCISE #1: DEEP BREATHING

Focusing only on your breath and doing your best to quiet your mind, inhale deeply through your nose with three slow counts, feeling the air moving into your nose and down the back of your throat. Hold your breath for two slow counts, and then slowly exhale through your mouth for five slow counts. Repeat until you feel less stressed. If you choose, repeat the same exercise and say to yourself as you inhale, “I am breathing in peace,” and on the exhale, say, “I am blowing away tension.” Choose any words here that work for you.

Can you see how that calms you down and stops the flurry of things buzzing around in your mind? Repeat this several times for a greater feeling of calm.

My clients have found it very effective when starting an organizing or simplifying project, to stop and take a few deep breaths before they begin.

EXERCISE #2: LIGHT A CANDLE

If this appeals to you, light a candle as you’re about to begin a round of sorting, organizing, or letting go— especially in or near the space where you are planning to work. It sets a tone, it sets an atmosphere (just as you might light candles on a dinner table or before taking a long bath). It’s also a way to acknowledge that your process of letting go and *lightening* up is in progress; it helps set the intention for you to be and feel lighter.

Each time I sit down to work on this book, I light a candle (the tall ones that come in clear glass, are safe, and last a long time). It’s an instant centering for me, a visual cue, a reminder of the light within me. This light is available in every moment for guidance, inspiration, and support. It allows me to open more fully to all the ways I can guide, inspire, and support everyone reading this book and beyond. It also reminds me as I’m writing to “keep it light.” Sometimes lighting a candle can be quite magical!

When we are able to make ourselves as still within us as an untouched mountain lake, we have an exquisite reflection of all that is in and around us."

LAURA VAN DER-NOOT LIPSKY, TRAUMA SURVIVOR SPECIALIST

EXERCISE #3: SCHEDULE QUIET TIME

Set aside some time to simply relax into the moment and do absolutely nothing, even if it's just for a few minutes. This time has become even more important, as we bombard ourselves not only with information overload, but technology overload! Recent studies indicate that when people keep their brains busy with digital input, it can affect their mind's processing. When you choose some downtime away from this, there is space to learn and remember needed information, and come up with new ideas. Allow time and space for creative ideas to flow in!

EXERCISE #4: PLAY WITH SOME OTHER IDEAS

What are some other ways that you might come to a place of "being," where your mind is free from clutter? How do you relieve stress, get centered, clear out, and lighten up your mind? Here are some examples you might choose from.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Be in nature | Cry |
| Walk, hike, run | Read |
| Play a sport | Clean |
| Stretch | Make a list |
| Knit/crochet | Journal |
| Garden | Savor a piece of fruit |
| Take a long bath | Talk with a friend |
| Play with your pet | Picture a sunrise or sunset |
| Dance | Imagine yourself in a favorite setting |
| Sing | Focus on a favorite symbol |
| Listen to music | Pray |
| Play an instrument | Meditate |
| Drum | Take a shower |
| Laugh | |

As I look at this list, I'm reminded of how many times I have taken a shower and used it as a metaphor for washing away all that no longer serves me. I let the water flow over me, imagining it first washing out the old, and then allowing the new, cleaner, clearer energy to flow through me. It's a wonderful way to get into a "being" place.

This also reminds me there are many different kinds of "meditations" sitting, walking, running, dancing, lying down, showering, gardening, etc. I have trouble sitting in one position for a long time, so it was very helpful to me when I realized there is more than one way to meditate.

Even the simple act of washing the dishes can be a meditation rather than rushing to get the dishes done so you can move on to something else, simply be with and enjoy washing the dishes for the sake of washing the dishes. Take a few deep breaths; become aware of the water; watch it flow over the dishes. Notice the color, pattern, and weight of the dish in your hand. Smell the soap. Watch the bubbles. You might even drop an essential oil into the water if that helps you get centered. This practice may take you a few minutes longer, but the benefits far outweigh the extra time.

What works for you?

Review the ideas above and make them yours, by circling, highlighting, starring, and/or adding your own favorite ways to clear your mind and get into a place of being. You might want to list them here for easy reference:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Any and all of these practices can serve to clear the spaces in your mind of its clutter those old thoughts, beliefs, fears, doubts, limitations, judgments, and self-defeating messages.