DUDEFLUENCER PRESENTS

THE MANLY MAN'S GUIDE TO EMOTIONAL FITNESS

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INTRODUCTION

You know what everyone's least favorite day of the week is? Leg day. Yet we still trudge our butts over to the gym after an extra scoop of pre-workout, practicing lunges through the hallways because we understand leg day's importance. For many men, leg day is a struggle to get through. Still, it's easier than any full-body emotional fitness workout. But now It's time to get emotionally swole AF.

The Manly Man's Guide to Men's Emotional Fitness is just that: a full-body workout to improve your emotional strength, agility, and well-being through a collection of easy-to-do at-home exercises. There are at least 62.5 million gym members in America, and taking care of our physical bodies is essential to life-extension. Yet, we tend to ignore the other half of wellness by skipping emotional workouts for other stuff.

The idea of men's emotional fitness feels daunting, and I completely understand that. What I hope this men's emotional fitness guide does, though, is illustrate just

how simple these workouts can be, while highlighting the many benefits of exercising your mind. So if you're ready to take the next step towards crafting the best version of yourself you can be, then let's go get our emotional pump on.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL FITNESS?

Emotional fitness is the habits and exercises we do to pursue healthy minds and well-being. It's no different from physical activity, except you'll be way less sweaty. You won't have to worry about setting off any lunk alarms. Nick Wignall said, "our emotional health depends on a foundation of positive habits and exercises." And we already know the importance of building healthy habits and how those habits affect our mental well-being.

When we plan out our men's emotional fitness workout plan, we want to have the same focus and dedication as we do our physical fitness. That means targeting specific emotional muscles that we use daily and strengthening them to the point where we are introspective, courageous, and communicative.

One of the reasons why I created the Dudefluencer membership program is because I wanted to help be a guide for other dudes on their emotional fitness journey. Suppose you're working through some stuff,

or just trying to build some healthy emotional habits for the first time. In that case, it's easier when you have a community of dudes around you. That's one of our community's goals: to create a challenging yet fruitful emotional fitness routine that satisfies all of your human needs.

Remember, you can't physically see your emotional growth, so, understandably, you may feel frustrated if you don't see results right away. That's okay, and it is entirely normal. But don't get discouraged; emotional fitness requires consistent practice, and the more effort you put in, the better the output. Living a fulfilled life needs a little bit of action, and since we spend so much time worrying about our physical health, maybe it's time we schedule some emotional work as well.

THE MANLY MAN'S GUIDE TO EMOTIONAL FITNESS

Welcome to the Manly Man's Guide to Emotional Fitness. As most of our Manly Man's Guides, our goal is to not only introduce you to what you can do but also provide a series of viable options to practice your emotional fitness craft. While there will be some overlap, it's important to note a couple of things. First, not all of these solutions may work for you. That's okay; some people love planks, other folks like old-fashioned sit-ups. What's most important is that you give yourself time to work out your emotional body. Second, all of this work only works if you're capable of being honest with yourself. Happy or not.

If you're ready, then let's go and take the next step to become emotionally swole AF.

INTROSPECTION

You've got your gym membership all paid up, you're rocking your best Crossfit sneakers, and have the perfect pump-up playlist ready to go. But when you walk into the gym, you're overwhelmed. You quickly realize you can't just start banging and clanging. At best, you'll look like an idiot. At worst, you'll fuck up your back permanently. That's why every gym takes you on a facility tour, and most offer a free walk-through.

The same goes for the emotional fitness gym. You shouldn't expect to just start doing stuff and expect results without learning the basics. That's why practicing introspection needs to be your starting point.

Introspection is the examination of one's own emotional and mental processes. Another way of looking at the reflection is, "self-contemplation; self-

examination; contemplating one's own conduct, thoughts, desires, emotions." Many men have with introspection two-fold: one, we don't prioritize self-examination because we find other activities to keep us occupied. The second is that self-contemplation can be difficult.

Introspection isn't just looking back at your positive memories but requires reviewing all of your thoughts and emotions. Good and bad. Lean too far one way or the other, introspection could prove to be unhelpful.

What can introspection offer us?

I'm going to use self-awareness interchangeably with introspection for this section because the benefits of both tend to overlap with each other. The services of self-awareness influence include increased happiness, more productivity, and improvement as a leader because you are clearly aware of who you are, your strengths, and your weaknesses. Hubspot wrote all about the benefits of introspection in the workplace. This quote by Shelley Duval and Robert Wicklund perfectly describe the results of self-awareness: "When we focus our attention on ourselves, we evaluate and compare our current behavior to our internal standards

and values. We become self-conscious as objective evaluators of ourselves."

Before we can start working out our emotional muscles, we first need to honestly and clearly take a look at who we are first. Without that ability, the rest of these exercises are just window-dressing while ignoring the larger problems we face.

Introspection Activities:

The form is essential when practicing introspection. Anthony Grant said, "the more time the participants spend in introspection, the less *self-knowledge they have*. In other words, we can spend endless amounts of time in self-reflection but emerge with no more self-insight than when we started." That's why we need to make sure we practice our introspection/self-awareness in healthy ways.

What Not Why: Tasha Eurich introduced me to the idea of "What Not Why" in her article about the right way to be introspective. Eurich describes the activity, "*Why* questions can draw us to our limitations; *what* questions help us see our potential. *Why* questions stir up negative emotions; *what* questions keep us curious.

Why questions trap us in our past; *what* questions help us create a better future. In addition to helping us gain insight, asking *what* instead of *why* can be used to help us better understand and manage our emotions."

Asking ourselves what versus why allows us to translate our emotions into language, and by doing so, forces us to be more proactive in finding a solution. For example, instead of asking yourself, "Why do I feel this way?" ask, "What emotion do I feel?" Eurich says this act of emotional fitness will "stop our brains from activating our amygdala, the fight-or-flight command center," and allows us to stay in control.

Journaling: I've written about the importance of journaling before since it became a part of my morning routine, but there are other scientific benefits to taking 20 minutes every day to scribble out some thoughts. James Penneker researched the benefits of journaling with men who had just been downsized from their company. While reviewing the research, Susan David noticed that "Just months after the emotionally charged writing sessions, the men who had delved into how they truly felt were three times more likely to have been reemployed compared with those who had not.

Not only did the writing help the men process their experiences, but it also helped them step out from their despondent inertia and into meaningful action."

For healthy emotional fitness, journaling is a great start. I also recommend taking a look at Mind Journals. Their product is specifically designed for men and provides an accessible introduction to journaling. If you want to go old-school with just plain paper and a pen, you need to give yourself at least 20 minutes of uninterrupted time. And make sure that you are writing for the full 20 minutes. Here are some introspective journal prompts that can get you started on your emotional fitness journey.

Meditation: This might be the third article in a row where I've talked about meditation's importance. If you're looking for initial steps to take on your emotional fitness adventure, meditation is best. There are differences between reflection and rumination, but be aware that the line between the two can be slim. Meditation requires your brain to be focused on. Your attention is in charge, whereas while ruminating, you do not have a clear focus. Be careful to not mix the two up.

Headspace offers a collection of guided meditations (and some are for free) that do an excellent job of getting your feet wet in introspective meditation. Allow the soft voices to ring through your headphones for 20 minutes, and the guided meditations do a fantastic job of making sure you stay on track. There's also a ton of options available on Youtube (WARNING: Quality is not guaranteed on Youtube) that you can just pick up and play as well. No matter what, emotional fitness requires you to focus first on yourself.

GROWTH

You've figured out how to use all of those machines in the gym, now what's next? Obviously, it's getting swole because if you're going to the gym, you've probably set up some sort of goal for yourself. That's where the next step in our emotional fitness workout plan comes in: focus on growth. The desire for growth fuels our decisions because I mean, who wants to remain stagnant?

Growth is most apparent when working out our physical muscles. The more pull-ups you do, the larger your biceps will become. But we're also striving for growth at work when we go for raises and promotions. We focus on development in education when we move

from high school into our next educational pursuit, whether it's college or internships. Hell, whether we recognize it or not, we are growing in every romantic relationship we pursue: we learn from our past and seek healthier and more desirable relationships.

Emotional growth asks you to look at all of the above, plus two other elements tied to emotional maturity: connection and expression. For connection, personal development is about deepening relationships with friends, family, and partners. Expression is the creative ideas our mind works up that fuels us, and emotional growth is the catalyst for making positive change in our lives.

What can growth offer us?

I don't need to quote a bunch of research because this should be obvious: personal and emotional growth pushes us out of our comfort zone to develop healthier relationships, move forward in our careers or personal pursuits, and ultimately continuously allows us to evolve. No one wants to be described as stagnant.

A lazy weekend day feels great once in a while. Still, if you're spending seven days a week sitting on your

couch doing nothing productive, eventually your physical and mental health will suffer. That's why growth is so vital for our emotional fitness routine. Ask yourself, how can I get to the next level? What are my next steps in life? I've done some work on emotional growth in our Dudefluencer team meetings. I've seen that our next steps are pre-planned so often for us to be delighted; we need to look at what we desire and how we can achieve it.

Growth activities:

Growth and personal development are closely intertwined. So when thinking about activities you can do to help pursue growth, so much of it depends on your willingness and desire to develop yourself. After some introspection, you'll probably have a couple of ideas in mind of areas in your emotional life you'd like to improve upon; use that as the basis for these activities.

Goal Setting: If we don't set goals for ourselves, how are we supposed to know where we want to grow? As your emotional fitness instructor, I believe you must have clear goals for yourself. At the regular gym, you might want to be healthier or train for cardio. In the

emotional gym, some focus is on building close male friendships, setting healthy habits, and improving communication in relationships. Maybe there's something else you'll want to work on, that's fine. That's the purpose of goal setting: to develop individual plans for success.

I suggest a session of goal setting after a good meditation. Your head is cleared out, and you're entirely present. Then make three lists: goals for a year from now, plans for a week from now, and goals for today. Hopefully, all of those goals build off of each other, and as you cross them off, you'll start feeling that sense of accomplishment. Without pushing ourselves to get to that next level, we will find ourselves bored and stagnant.

The 1% Model: So much of our emotional growth happens behind the scenes, making it difficult for us to recognize it as it happens. And that's precisely how the 1% emotional growth model works too. The idea is that by thinking long-term, it's easy to become frustrated and give up. With the 1% model, you choose a goal and strive to do 1% more of it every day. Solomon Thimothy said about the 1% more model, "It

works because 1% is such a small effort, you won't even notice how you become significantly better."

Think about your goals for a moment. Can you tie those into the 1% model? What can you do one more of each day that will help you accomplish your weekly goal? An extra 1% is easy to give; it's more of a matter of having a goal in mind that you're trying to complete.

Take Action: Honestly, without taking action, none of this emotional fitness work will be worth anything. Courage is about doing something, no matter how scared you might be. When I say that you must take action for growth to occur, that simply means you need to do something. Maybe during your meditation, you realized that you were lonely and wanted to make some new friends. Well, without taking that first step, nothing will change.

Growth, and most importantly, life doesn't occur without taking action. Emotional fitness requires us to utilize the skills we gain in the emotional rec center. And the best part, you can do something right now. When I was struggling, I immediately reached out to

my friends at one of my lower points. I noticed a problem, took action to solve it, and in the meantime, grew.

I want you to become the best version of yourself, and that requires you to grow.

CONTRIBUTION

Close your eyes and think about the last gesture you made for someone. An act of kindness from your heart, not one that was required or asked of you. And now remember how that made you feel? I bet you felt incredible after that? That's the emotional fitness power of contribution. Giving to others is one of the easiest, most rewarding ways to take care of your emotional well-being. Not only that, but there's also a

ton of research that backs up the idea that contribution is essential to a healthy physical and emotional life.

Ask yourself, how have you helped someone today? What have you done that might have improved the world (or someone's world)? A contribution does not need to be grand gestures; it could be as small as being present when talking to a good friend. Plus, contribution doesn't have to cost us anything. Volunteering and mentoring provide us with the same joy and happiness improving our emotional well-being leading to longer, more fulfilled lives.

Contribution is one of the simplest, most straightforward ways to improve our emotional fitness. Take a look at your goals, along the path of achieving them, is there any way you can give back? Make choices that allow you to contribute to society.

What does contribution offer us?

According to Mental Floss, "volunteers show an improved ability to manage stress and stave off disease as well as reduced rates of depression and an increased sense of life satisfaction." They attribute these health benefits to improved social circles and community,

both of which have been attributed to longer lifespans. One study found that "older people were up to 35% less likely to die during the five-year study if they reported feeling happy, excited, and content on a typical day." The more we contribute, the better our emotional and physical health becomes.

Contribution also provides us with a sense of purpose. We all strive for meaning in our lives, and there's no better feeling in the world than being able to give to someone else. As well as it allows you the opportunity to become a mentor or lively member of a community. As an educator, contributing and giving back to my students was the most rewarding part of the job. I'm sure fathers feel similar watching their children grow up into incredible human beings.

Fill your heart, do something great for someone you love (or a stranger), and watch how it improves your emotional fitness.

Contribution Activities:

These activities are all about giving back, and some of them you can do from your home's comfort. I would recommend that you try and do as many of these

activities in person. However, face-to-face contact is always more optimal than over Zoom or Facetime. Think about contribution this way: you have lived an interesting, impactful life, and have many life lessons to give. Pass what you've learned down to others, give them your knowledge.

Text a friend: Sounds obvious, right? But we know men, and we know that men don't like to be forthcoming about stuff that's bothering them. Now is the perfect time to reach out to someone you love and let them know that you care about them and that you're generally just going to be there for them. Emotional fitness hinges on deepened connections, so what better way to contribute and build your emotional fitness muscles than building upon the friendships you already have?

You don't have to fancy; just reach out to some people you care about and let them know. That's it. Such a small gesture goes a long way in contributing to someone else's life.

Volunteering: This feels like an obvious one, but there's a ton of opportunity to volunteer in whatever

hobbies you find interesting. Maybe you like animals, you can volunteer at your local animal shelter. Or possibly, you want to help young people who had a similar background growing up as you? Don't just choose the first volunteer opportunity that comes along; instead, pick a cause that's meaningful to you and share your knowledge (and passion with others).

Finding a volunteer opportunity is as simple as a Google search for volunteers in your area. You can also visit Volunteer Match to see what's available in your area. For contribution to best help your emotional fitness, choosing in-person charity rather than just donations allows you to fulfill your need for connection.

Become a Mentor: Volunteering and mentoring are similar, but not at the same time. You have specific skills and knowledge that you can pass down to people, so why not pay it back? A mentor allows you to contribute back to society in various avenues. Whether it's in business or mentoring young people, you have the chance to impact a generation. Plus, mentoring allows you to gain a new perspective

(growth) and reflect on past decisions (introspection). It's a tremendous all-around situation.

Mentoring.org provides an easy way to find mentoring options in your area. Dudefluencer is also a big fan of the Boys and Girls Club of America. Both of these resources match you up with young people who can use your valuable, worldly insights. Think about everything you wish you'd known growing up; now's the chance to pass that information onto someone else.

GRATITUDE

The last emotional fitness muscle I want us to work on is our gratitude muscle. A 2003 study revealed, "a

prevailing sentiment in both classical and popular writings on happiness is that an effective approach for maximizing one's contentment is to be consciously grateful for one's blessings." The more thankful we are, the higher our self-esteem and the greater our overall happiness. And gratitude costs absolutely nothing. It's free. You can even practice gratitude alongside your morning meditations.

Gratitude is about reflecting on all that you have and being grateful for it. Tony Robbins describes living a life of gratitude as a mindset shift. We all have options on what we want to focus on. Why focus on the negative when we can improve our emotional fitness? As Robbins says, live a life of abundance. Whether we realize it or not, we always have something to be grateful for.

And in our darkest emotional times, it's imperative to remember all that we have. Be thankful for our life, for our friends, for everything. Trust me, it's way better than living a life full of regret.

What does gratitude offer us?

I highly recommend our power of thank you article. It goes in-depth on a bunch of gratitude related outcomes. You'll find a lot more information there if you're interested.

For emotional fitness, gratitude does a tremendous job fulfilling our need for deeper relationships. Thus, those deeper relationships then lead us to happier, healthier well-being. When one person expresses gratitude towards another, that strengthens the connection and reinforces trust.

Gratitude also provides us with benefits in the workplace. According to numerous surveys, the number one reason people quit their job is "because there is a tremendous lack of recognition." Think about how great it feels to be complimented on a job well done and what happens next. You want to continue doing great work, so you pursue growth opportunities. All of these emotional fitness tasks are related to one another.

Gratitude activities:

Activities that promote gratitude often overlap with those that enhance other emotional fitness muscles.

And the best way to end your emotional fitness routine is with some calming gratitude exercises. We are trying to accomplish a change in mindset; we want to move towards one that sees the abundance of joy available in their lives. We want to see the good in ourselves, in our lives, in the world around us. By doing so, you'll realize that the rest of your emotional fitness journey will be that much easier.

Gratitude journal: A gratitude journal is just that: a journal where you list out the things you are grateful for. This particular exercise works really well if performed before bed. It allows you to reflect on the day and recognize all of the positives rather than focusing on the negatives. All you need to do is take 5-10 minutes a day and write out everything you are grateful for.

The Five-Minute Journal is one of my favorite guided gratitude journals on the market. Still, you can honestly visit your local Barnes and Noble and find something similar for around the same price. If you're looking for something a little less structured, then any notebook or cell-phone app will do. There's also the Gratitude Journal app on iOS if you're looking to do

everything on mobile but are looking for some prompts along the way.

Thank you walk: Thank you walks are partially inspired by Tony Robbins' morning priming routine. His exercise routine aims to filter out the negative stimuli and find the positives in our lives. As someone who has done these many times before, I can say that they've put me in a better mood throughout the day. Plus, you're not just working out your emotional fitness but also your physical fitness needs.

One way to get started is to find a gratitude walking tutorial online such as the one linked. There are numerous options available, so don't just settle for the first one you see. I'd also look to Headspace for their walking gratitude meditations. They can be played on your cell phone, which makes walking and thanking that much easier. Of course, you can always visit Tony Robbins to find audio and video tutorials of his gratitude, walking meditations for extra practice.

Write letters: Who doesn't love a good letter? There is a deep connection between writing something by hand and the emotions we attach to those words. And

in a day and age where handwritten notes have gone by the wayside for social media and text messages, those handwritten letters mean that much more. But don't think you need to mail them out, you don't have to. Of course, it would be beneficial to your emotional fitness if you do, but it's not a necessity.

To write a gratitude letter to someone, simply grab a pen and paper and write out why you're grateful to them. I've done it a few times, and it's helped me reflect on the positive memories of past friendships and relationships. And the sooner we do that, the healthier our emotional fitness muscles become.

CONCLUSION

Emotional fitness doesn't have to be a chore, but it's absolutely something you should be working on consistently. If you find yourself struggling, my first suggestion will always be to journal out your thoughts and try to pinpoint what's going on. Next, reach out to your community- your friends, your partner, heck, even your coworkers. No matter what, you don't have to go through something alone.

I believe in you. You've got this.