

Step into Compassion, Step into a Happier Brain

By ELISHA GOLDSTEIN, PH.D.



It may be the single most beneficial thing for your brain in terms of learning, mood and memory says Harvard Medical School psychiatrist John Ratey, author of the book, [Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain](#). I'm talking about exercise. But we also know that compassion, the act of which is altruism, are adaptive in terms of stress, anxiety, depression, and addiction, and great predictors of health and well-being. So why not marry the two?

There's a plethora of opportunities to get involved with some form of exercise to raise money for a cause that not only helps other people, but also brings meaning and purpose into your life. Purpose and meaning are essential for true happiness.

Now here is where mindfulness comes in; take a moment to watch your mind and see what it's doing. Are the thoughts and stories in service of connection, or disconnection? Meaning, are they finding ways to move you further from this idea or closer to it? If the answer is further from it, check into those thoughts, get curious and ask yourself the following three questions, adapted from the work of Byron Katie.

1. Is the thought true?
2. Is it absolutely true?
3. Flip it. What are some good reasons to do it?

We're all enslaved by automatic judgments that can often bring us further away from what can be truly helpful to us. It's this inherent automatic negativity bias that I and others have written about over and over again. If it's good for our bodies, our brains, and our mental health, and has ripple effects that benefit a cause we care about, what's the downside?

Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "Life is routine and routine is resistance to wonder."

Isn't it time to break from routine? What would happen if you saw every step in a marathon for a cause, as a step towards compassion?

Not to mention that it often has a great effect of bringing people together if you end up training with a group. This sense of connection with people who feel a sense of purpose elevates us.

In addition to marathons, there are Dance-a-thons, and even Clean-a-thons, where people choose a part of the city to go around and clean. This might also be a form of exercise.

Make the choice to investigate this today. Use your favorite search engine, look up something local or some place you'd like to travel to, make a plan and try it out.

If you have something upcoming in your area, please share it below. Your thoughts, questions and stories become living wisdom for us of all to benefit from.

[Couple at the gym photo](#) available from Shutterstock

 [Submit](#)  [Reddit](#)  [Print](#)  [Email](#)

 [+1](#) Recommend this on Google

 [Like](#) 160 people like this. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends like.

60
tweets

1

[retweet](#)

[Pin it](#)

Foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn, author of the [Mindful Solutions at Work App](#), the [Mindful Solutions audio series](#), and the [Mindfulness at Work™](#) program currently being adopted in multiple multinational corporations. Join [The Now Effect Community](#) for free Daily Now Moments, Weekly Updates and tips and free access to a Live Monthly Online Event with Elisha Goldstein, PhD.

Like this author?

Catch up on other posts by [Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D.](#) (or subscribe to their [feed](#)).

- [Comments](#)

Comments

[View Comments / Leave a Comment](#) ▶

This post currently has **1 comments**.

You can [read the comments](#) or [leave your own thoughts](#).

Last reviewed: 19 Sep 2012

APA Reference

Goldstein, E. (2012). Step into Compassion, Step into a Happier Brain. *Psych Central*. Retrieved on September 20, 2012, from <http://blogs.psychcentral.com/mindfulness/2012/09/step-into-compassion-step-into-a-happier-brain/>

[Home](#) • [About Us](#) • [Ad Choices](#) • [Advertise with Us](#) • [Contact Us](#)
[Privacy Policy](#) • [Terms of Use](#) • [Site Map](#) • [Disclaimer/Disclosure](#) • [Feeds](#)

Psych Central **Professional**
[Psych Central Answers](#)
[Psych Central Blog Network](#)
[Psych Central News](#)
[Tests & Quizzes](#)
[Sanity Score](#)
[Forums](#) • [NeuroTalk](#)

[ADHD](#)
[Anxiety](#)
[Bipolar](#)
[Depression](#)
[Schizophrenia](#)
[Psychotherapy](#)

 Like 29k

 Follow @psychcentral 28.5K followers

Copyright © 1992-2012 Psych Central. All rights reserved.
Site last updated: 20 Sep 2012