

# Mind Over Money: How yoga, aerobic helps this MD & CEO to keep mentally agile; believes in work-life integration

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## Synopsis

A great morning ritual sets the stage for a productive day, helping one to achieve peak performance. My body clock is conditioned in such a way that it wakes me up early in the morning every day



"The first thing I do in the morning is hydrate myself with a cup of warm water, as it's a great detoxifier. After that, I do Yoga/some [aerobic](#) exercises for about half an hour," [Sonia Dasgupta, MD & CEO, Investment Banking, JM Financial.](#)

In an interview with ETMarkets, Dasgupta said: "To me, managing stress is not about managing work-life balance. It's about how you can efficiently manage work-life integration," Edited excerpts:

### Thanks for being part of the segment. With over 2 decades of experience as a banker, and investment professional – how do you keep yourself mentally fit?

For CXO roles in any sector, the broad mandate is to keep delivering short-term results while progressing towards long-term goals. And striking a balance between the two requires "a sound mind in a sound body".

To me, mental well-being is closely related to physical well-being. I believe in the nourishment of body and mind because it's the body-mind synergy that drives our energy, focus and endurance.

To keep myself mentally fit and agile, I practice mindfulness through meditation, opt for a well-balanced diet and slot in downtime which could be watching my favourite sitcoms, catching up with friends/family or reading despite following a busy schedule.

One needs to find ways to reset to avoid brain fog. That's my way to remain mentally agile.

### Yoga is a powerful tool to relax your mind. Please take us through your daily routine. Is there a specific modality that you follow?

A great morning ritual sets the stage for a productive day, helping one to achieve peak performance. My body clock is conditioned in such a way that it wakes me up early in the morning every day.

The first thing I do in the morning is hydrate myself with a cup of warm water, as it's a great detoxifier. After that, I do Yoga/some aerobic exercises for about half an hour.

I have been an avid practitioner of Iyengar Yoga for many years. Yoga calms and declutters my mind as well as keeps me physically fit and agile.

I also spend time practising gratitude, as it gives me positivity and purpose in life. A calm mind always leads to better decision-making.

I also spend some time reading to gather my thoughts. Another key morning ritual which I practise is to plan the day by preparing a to-do list.

### What's your de-stress mantra?

To me, managing stress is not about managing work-life balance. It's about how you can efficiently manage work-life integration.

That's why after a hectic round of meetings or during travel, I take some downtime by immersing myself into my favourite genres of music from bands like the Eagles or Dire Straits or whatever is trending.

When I am in a mood to watch something light-hearted, I play episodes of Friends or The Big Bang Theory. I also find it very de-stressing to spend time with my teenage kids and hear their take on their daily experiences.

Learning new ways of doing things from the young minds at the place of work or at home refreshes my perspectives.

### You are also an avid reader. Can you recommend some books which inspired you?

Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson. The biography offers insights on how the mind of a genius works. The book aptly captures his aptitude to combine his technology foresight into marketing ingenuity. It's a candid version of how he used simplicity and utility to build one of the world's biggest iconic brands.

### Tell us about your journey as well as a banker. How did it all start?

While I was growing up, the idea of being a doctor was fascinating. Their dedication and selflessness to serve people and how they bring smiles to people in pain were quite inspiring to me.

They are still role models to me, but destiny had a different plan, and I narrowly missed the Mumbai merit cut off. As a part of my Plan B, I took admission to St. Xavier's College, Mumbai to study economics, mathematics and statistics.

The academic exposure to economics, finance and numbers actually set the tone for my career. Mathematics being my favourite subject at school, I developed a penchant for solving challenges that the numbers threw at me.

I sensed that I had found my calling and decided to pursue higher studies in finance to become an investment banker.

After doing my post-graduation at IIM Ahmedabad, I joined the M&A team of JM Financial in 1995. I gradually started building sectoral expertise while working across multiple verticals in the investment banking division.

Working with industry stalwarts like Nimesh Kampani was career-defining moments for me, as those experiences enriched me as a professional.

Over the following years, I straddle multiple roles which required me to engage with financial institutions, healthcare and PE investors.

Thanks to Morgan Stanley JV in 2001, I gained global exposure through a stint in Australia. I worked on offshore deals and ADRs/Bond issuances of Indian corporates.

In 2015, I was appointed as the Head of JMF Group Borrowings. In this role which is in addition to my senior management position in investment banking, I got an opportunity to work closely with all JM Group entities.

While working, I grew as a professional tremendously by gaining in-depth knowledge on lending business and subtle aspects of loan negotiations.

I was eventually elevated to the role of CEO of the Investment Banking business in 2022. Leading one of the finest teams of investment bankers has not only further enhanced the sense of responsibility and leadership competencies in me but also expanded my knowledge horizon.

### What role does mental fitness play, especially in leadership roles?

Mental fitness is a must for growth-focussed leadership. It's the secret sauce that keeps one sharp and adaptable in the ever-changing business landscape. Mental fitness is at the core of informed decision-making.

(Disclaimer: Recommendations, suggestions, views, and opinions given by experts are their own. These do not represent the views of the Economic Times)