

HOW TO TAKE CONTROL AND START

Living a Life You Love

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Loving Life Today
to be living life tomorrow

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INTRODUCTION

Are You Ready?

Improving your life starts with one thing – making a choice. Only then can you really find the courage and energy to change your life and take step toward the life you have always wanted.

Are you ready to take that step toward living a more fulfilling, passionate, and happy life?

I hope the answer to that question is YES! Because life is too short to waste time missing out on living a life that you love.

If you are ready to make a change and discover more joyful life, use this book as your guide. It includes over 75 actionable tips for changing your mind, body, and attitude and directing your energy and thoughts toward a more positive and happy life.

Please let me know if you have thoughts or questions as you go through this book, and congratulations on taking a step toward Loving Your Life!

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CHAPTER ONE

**Set a Morning Routine That
Leads to Happier Days**



Your mood can control your mind and body, leading you to a great day when you start it right or leading you to an awful day when you start out wrong.

The way you start your morning sets the pace for the rest of your day.

It's important to take control of your morning in order to take control of your day (and life). To get it started right, incorporate these simple steps into your morning routine.

Wake Up Slowly

Set your alarm at least 15 to 30 minutes early so you're not just rocketing out of bed. Take some time to mentally wake up and prepare for the day ahead. Avoid checking your cell phone or laptop right away; there will be plenty of time for technology later.

Stretch Out

The body tenses up from lying still for so long. In that relaxing spare time you've now created for yourself, stretch your arms up over your head and press your toes down toward the foot of your bed. Take some deep breaths, arch your back, and sit yourself up slowly. Then swing your feet down to the floor.

Take a Minute to Meditate

Focus on your breathing – inhale deeply, exhale slowly, and listen to the air you breathe in. Notice the air moving over your top lip and into your nostrils and feel your belly rise and fall with each breath.

This is an excellent way to keep you focused on remaining present and appreciating another day. Continue as long as you're comfortable, then rise and get moving.

Warm Your Muscles

Now that you're relaxed and limber, move some blood to your muscles for a lasting boost of energy. A couple sets of pushups, squats, and/or jumping jacks are great for getting your endorphins going.

Morning cardio jumpstarts your metabolism and helps you burn more calories throughout the day. You also won't have to worry about trying to make time for this at the end of the day when you're tired from work and ready to sleep again.

Fuel Your Body

Fuel up with the good stuff! While a small amount of sugar is recommended (think teaspoons) and helps memory recall, too much will lead to a crash. Stick to fresh fruits and protein. Greek yogurt is a great way to combine both. Top it off with some orange juice and if necessary, some coffee with real sugar.

Prioritize

We all have 700 things we would like to get done each day, but there simply aren't enough hours. To maintain your sanity, select just 2-3 top priorities for the day and focus on accomplishing those.

Write them on your calendar or to-do list, and as long as you get at least those done, you can consider your day a success. This is much more productive than getting buried by an avalanche of tasks and never completing any of them.

Practice Gratitude

Say thanks, even for common things like breathing normally, sleeping indoors, the food in your refrigerator, and the refrigerator itself!

Remembering all of the good things in your life makes the list of bad things seem much shorter and often, kind of silly. Hold your loved ones close (furry friends included) and be glad for another chance to enjoy life on your terms.

Be Present

This morning routine will help keep your feet grounded in the present moments of this so often forgotten beautiful world and life. Because we tend to think about what has to be done in the future or what has already happened in the past, we forget to remain present.

We allow ourselves to miss out on the beauty of being alive for another day, the beauty of your partner waking up next to you, or the beauty of hearing children or pets in the morning. Being present is an important step, as the gratitude that comes from remaining present and appreciative is priceless.

CHAPTER TWO

**End Your Day With
Bedtime Habits That
Lead To Better Sleep**

A study shows that 52% of women and 45% of men have difficulty getting a good night's rest, and that stress is a main contributor to that difficulty.



There is more to a healthy bedtime
than just tucking in early.

We have all heard the old saying, “Early to bed early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” But there is more to a healthy bedtime than just tucking in early. Good “sleep hygiene” (bedtime habits and routine) involves the things you do hours before bed, and even while you’re sleeping.

A getting a good night sleep might be more important than you think. A study by the [National Sleep Foundation](#) suggests that 52% of women and 45% of men have difficulty getting a good night’s rest, and that stress is a main contributor to that difficulty. So it's a good idea to incorporate a relaxing bedtime routine to ease stress and help your mind and body wind down from the day.

Be Consistent

Create a habit of going to bed at the same time each night. Your body will gradually come to expect sleep at that time, and you'll feel yourself getting tired.

Apps for your phone like [Sleepytime: The Bedtime Calculator](#) can help. People sleep in cycles that last about 90 minutes, and it's important to wake up between cycles, not during them. Tell Sleepytime when you are going to bed, and it will set an alarm to wake you when you'll feel most rested.

Limit Food & Drinks

Make a rule of drinking no caffeine within six hours of bedtime. Dinner and alcoholic drinks should be finished three hours before bedtime. Being wired, uncomfortable, or nauseous will keep you from getting to sleep peacefully. And each will have a different effect on the way you feel when you wake up in the morning. A glass of milk or some water may aid with sleep, but don't bring any full meals to bed.

Cool Down

It takes time for your body to relax and cool down after a tough workout (or hot bath). Don't work out and try not to get your heart rate up too high during the last couple of hours before bedtime.

Turn Off the Electronics

A lot of us watch Netflix or surf the web before bed or even while we're in bed. But bright lights and loud sounds are extremely stimulating and keep your brain buzzing even after they're turned off.

Give yourself at least an hour of time between turning off electronics and settling down on the pillows. Reading a book is one excellent way to unwind your mind.

Write Down Your Thoughts

Journaling and writing before bed is a good way to take inventory of your daily thoughts and concerns, and release them before trying to sleep.

Thoughts come and go without any control, and the ones that consume us are those we attach meaning to. The practice of determining when to let go and when to explore is crucial to improving mental and emotional well being.

Jotting down all the overwhelming thoughts before bed on the notepad next to you and re-exploring them in the morning will help you prioritize the importance of each thought.

It may also help prevent any late night emotional disasters. Many arguments with our significant others occur at night while in bed or before bed because we neglect to take into account that not all thoughts carry weight.

So a thought pops in and we blurt it out, accuse, or blame without any more thought. By writing down your thoughts and giving yourself time to come back to it later, most of the time you may find that they didn't mean much to begin with or is normally something solvable.

Turn Down the Heat

We already pointed out that being too hot can keep you from resting comfortably. Try turning down your thermostat before you climb into bed. Lower temperatures signal to the body that the sun is down and it is time for sleep. Don't go too crazy. Try to keep the temperature somewhere between 65 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit.

Let Go of Worry

Being present is a great way to clear your mind. Close your eyes and focus on the silence in your room or the sound of your breathing.

Let go of all other thoughts about the past and future. If you're having trouble letting go of your thoughts, go back to your journal and write them down. They will be there to deal with in the morning.

Making a habit of these practices can help guarantee you sleep soundly and wake up feeling rested and energized. But if you feel like you've tried everything and still can't quite get the sleep you need, it may help to meet with a professional. The stresses of life sometimes weigh on us in ways that are hard to recognize.

CHAPTER 3

Properly Fuel Your Body



We frequently forget or neglect to recognize the importance of fueling our bodies adequately for our physiological health as well as our mental and emotional health

Irritability, frustration, fatigue, and exhaustion are all natural consequences of your body being deprived of food.

Eating is a basic human need. We are biologically wired to eat in order to survive. However, we frequently forget or neglect to recognize the importance of fueling our bodies adequately for our physiological health as well as our mental and emotional health.

Ever hear the term *hangry*?

HANGRY: angry + hungry

We all suffer from being hangry from time to time, especially if we go too long in between meals. We get short tempered, frustrated, and impulsive, and we take it out on those around us who have to suffer from our own personal negligence.

Irritability, frustration, fatigue, and exhaustion are all natural consequences of your body being deprived of food. Snacking is a great way to prevent these symptoms, keep your body fueled and functioning properly, make you and those around you happier, and even regulate your weight.

Too often we think snacking is contradictory to healthy eating. But that is because we usually think of snacks as empty calorie foods like potato chips, cookies, and candy bars.

But according to [Today's Dietitian](#) when food choices are healthy, low-calorie, low-fat options, snacking can sneak in extra nutrients and help control weight. It can increase your metabolism, reduce hunger, and improve glucose and insulin control, all of which help regulate weight control.

Figure Out How Many Snacks to Eat

Of course excessive snacking while you are already meeting your daily intake of calories in your main meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) isn't a good idea. Snacking should be a supplement to your diet, and the number of snacks you eat per day will be different for everyone.

Here is a way to figure out how many snacks a day is right for you

- 1. Use a calorie calculator to determine how many calories you should eat per day.** [Authority Nutrition](#) offers an easy to use calculator that factors in your gender, weight, height, age, and scale of daily activity to provide a number of calories you should consume per day in order to maintain or lose weight.
- 2. Ration out your calories per meal** allotting a certain amount for breakfast (always eat breakfast!), lunch, and dinner.
- 3. Consider how many snacks you would like to eat during the day** (maybe one in the morning, afternoon, and evening).
- 4. Subtract the amount of snack calories you will consume** (based on the number of snacks you want to eat per day) from your daily meals.

Easy. Now you have set aside calories for your snacks, so you don't have to feel guilty when you go for a mid-morning or early evening snack.

While this section isn't about weight loss, it is about improving overall mental, physical, and emotional well-being. And incorporating healthy eating habits, taking control of your diet, and indulging in foods that you enjoy more frequently throughout the day can help boost your energy and attitude

Snacking on something small every two hours is a great way to prevent the *HANGRY* condition while keeping your body, mind, and soul satisfied. Here are 21 of our favorite snacks under 200 calories.

MORNING SNACKS

- ❖ 1 apple with 1 tablespoon of apple butter or peanut butter
- ❖ 2 hard boiled eggs
- ❖ 1 light English muffin w/ 1 tablespoon of fat-free cream cheese
- ❖ 1 cup fat-free Greek yogurt w/ 1 tablespoon of honey
- ❖ 1 slice whole-grain toast w/ 1 tablespoon of almond butter

AFTERNOON SNACKS

- ❖ 1 cup of frozen grapes
- ❖ 2.2 ounces of ham w/ 1 slice Swiss cheese
- ❖ 1 serving whole-wheat crackers w/ 1 ounce of cheese
- ❖ 1 100-calorie whole-wheat pita w/ 2 tablespoons of hummus
- ❖ 1/4 cup almonds, cashews, or pistachios

EVENING SNACKS

- ❖ 1 cup of fat-free cottage cheese w/ 1 cup berries
- ❖ 1 cup snap peas and 1/2 cup baby carrots w/ 2 tablespoons of fat-free ranch dressing
- ❖ 1 6-inch tortilla w/ 2.5 tablespoons of guacamole
- ❖ 3 cups of microwavable popcorn
- ❖ 20 oz. grape tomatoes w/ 1.3 ounces of goat cheese

SWEET SNACKS

- ❖ 1 square of dark chocolate w/ 1 oz of dried cherries
- ❖ 10 ounces of whole strawberries w/ 4.5 tablespoon of fruit dip
- ❖ 1 frozen banana w/ 10 almonds
- ❖ 1 low-fat Fudgesicle pop
- ❖ 1/2 apple w/ peanut butter
- ❖ 1/2 cup of frozen yogurt, sorbet, or sherbert

CHAPTER 4

Add Mini Meditations To Your Day

Pausing to focus on yourself and your experience throughout the day is not only refreshing, it is actually hugely beneficial to your health -- physically, mentally, and spiritually.



Meditation does not always require hours of time or elastic limbs that can twist into a yogic pretzel.



Meditation does not always require hours of time or elastic limbs that can twist into a yogic pretzel. Instead, it only requires taking a time-out from the hustle and bustle of daily life to take a few breaths and find your center.

How often do you find yourself working on autopilot, not noticing any part of your surroundings but only the task at hand? We often live our lives like a to-do list -- using the hours of the day just to check off tasks before falling exhausted into bed.

Pausing to focus on yourself and your experience throughout the day is not only refreshing, it is actually hugely beneficial to your health -- physically, mentally, and spiritually. This kind of checking in is called "mindfulness" or "self-awareness," and it can change our lives! Although it is historically an Eastern practice, it is being increasingly recommended by Western health experts.

The Benefits of Meditation

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, Professor of Medicine Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, asserts that the benefits of meditation and mindfulness are indispensable and should be introduced to all people at a young age.

"Meditation can transform your life and be profoundly healing. And it does that by working on the entire organism -- from your chromosomes to your cells to your brain. And it affects all organ systems within the body," Dr. Kabat-Zinn explained during an interview on [The Benefits of Meditation on Brain and Body](#).

Mindfulness and the practice of "living in the now" can significantly improve your overall well-being and increase your interpersonal connections and intimacy!



Affection, love, and sex will feel and be better than ever when you learn and utilize self-awareness and ignite your present senses with your husband, wife, partner, or lover.

The best part about meditation is that you can do it anytime, anywhere.

It simply involves actively disengaging your autopilot now and again and taking stock of all of your surroundings. It means paying attention to the sights, sounds, and smells you might have otherwise missed by remaining tangled up in your thoughts and plans about the future.

Try out some of the mini-meditations we've compiled below. They don't require any special outfits or padded mats and can be done anywhere. With practice, your new "autopilot" can become one of daily awareness and appreciation.

Pay Attention to Your Breath

Breathing is so automatic that we usually forget we're even doing it. But the way you breathe actually has a huge effect on your state of mind. Shallow, rapid breaths result from and prolong stress and anxiety, and deplete your body and brain of crucial oxygen.

Take some intentionally deep, belly-extending breaths, and exhale them slowly. Check in on your breath at various points throughout the day.

Listen Intently To Your Surroundings

Turn down the commentary running in your mind and notice the things you hear nearby. The sound of the birds, cars passing by, or the laughter or conversations of others. Crickets or frogs in the evening can be a very soothing chorus and help you clear your mind. Try closing your eyes and picking out each individual sound you can hear.

Look Closely At Your Environment

What sorts of colors are the people around you wearing? Do they look happy, sleepy, stressed? How would you describe the scene in front of you if you were writing a book? This kind of detail is often missing from our daily life. You might be amazed how much more connected you are with your surroundings when you actively describe it to yourself.

Feel the Sensations Of Your Skin & Muscles

How does your shirt feel against your skin? How is the air moving over your arms? Rub your hands slowly together and savor the sensation. Notice the weight of your body as you stand or sit. Shift it from side to side and notice where you feel the changes, which muscles are activated and which are relaxed.

Pause Before Starting A New Activity

You've crossed another obligation off the checklist. Stop and take a moment to appreciate the feeling of accomplishment before moving on. This can be done before walking out the front door, before getting into your car, before making a phone call, or any other time you're about to begin something. Close your eyes, clear your mind of thoughts and anticipation, and just exist for a moment. Then focus yourself completely and solely on your next task.

Undivide Your Attention

Whatever you are doing at the present moment, focus entirely on that activity. Whether you are driving, reading, or carrying on a conversation, turn away all outside thoughts that creep in to distract you. This one takes a good deal of practice, but when you learn to give undivided attention, you will find that your memory and contributions are significantly improved. Don't fret if a distracting thought arises. Simply return your full attention to the activity, rinse, and repeat.

Repeat a Mantra

Mindfulness requires reminders like anything else. Choose a simple term or phrase to repeat throughout the day, and bring yourself back to a place of peace and happiness. It can be as simple as thinking "peace" or "joy" in rhythm with your breaths, or something longer like "I am loved."

Try one specific to your day. If you have a presentation coming up, remind yourself that you are as capable as anyone and have nothing to worry about.

The "I am" statement is exceptionally powerful.

You can create something positive and phenomenal in your life by believing and repeating an "I am" statement, such as "I am loved." You can also work the other way around by eliminating negative statements such as "I am stressed" or "I am tired."

Your body, mind, and soul will react to "I am" statements in a profound way and adjust to make the statements true. Through self-awareness and mindfulness, you can avoid and prevent unnecessary beliefs from controlling your life.

CHAPTER 5

De-clutter Your Life (To De-clutter Your Mind)



Clutter is extremely distracting, reduces our ability to focus and process information, and can cause emotional irritability.

As long as your environment is messy, your mind will be as well.

Have you ever tried to work on a project at home while the house was a mess? Or tried to clean up and found yourself so overwhelmed that you quit altogether? I usually say "messy bed, messy head!" This implies that for as long as your environment, like your bedroom, is messy, your mind will be as well.

These frustrations are natural and result from the stress of working in cluttered spaces. Clutter reduces our ability to focus and process information because it is extremely distracting, not to mention the cause of emotional irritability!

De-cluttering your home or workspace can tremendously reduce stress and increase focus. And while the thought of cleaning up the ever-mounting tidal wave of junk can be intimidating, we are here to help.

We have listed tips to help you conquer the heaps of unnecessary belongings and *OBLIGATIONS* that overwhelm your daily life. That's right, de-cluttering pertains to your schedule as well.

Being stretched too thin causes just as much stress as having a messy house. Creating more space in your daily calendar will reduce the number of things your brain is constantly occupied with and leave you feeling free and refreshed.

Start Slow

Taking on any large project all at once is sure to burn you out. Take only a few minutes out of each day to work on the declutter process.

In 10 minutes organize as much of your cluttered spaces as you can. Sort the scattered papers on your desk. Pick up the clothes in the bedroom. Put away the toys from the kids and the pets. After 10 minutes stop.

Pick up where you left off the next day. Pull everything out of drawers and closets and sort it into piles as you go. Determine what gets used regularly, and what can be parted with. Donate or sell anything that probably won't be missed. Everyone has shoes and clothes that never get worn, they are just taking up space. Let them go.

Down-Load

In modern times, much of our clutter is digital. Outdated contact lists, flooded email inboxes, hundreds of icons on our computer desktops. All of these things slow us and our electronics down. Make a point of clearing out unused information regularly.

Set a day each week to clear out unused programs, downloads and media. This will keep the number of emails or icons from ever becoming too overwhelming. If information is part of your career or hobby, try saving it to an external hard drive and labeling it. Then store your drives in a single location for easy reference later.

Say "No"

Your time is precious, and the more you give away to others the less you have for your own needs. Most of us like to be kind and helpful, but at a certain point helping others means harming yourself. You need time to unwind and enjoy the things that bring you happiness, and you can't do this if you say "yes" to every single request.

There are plenty of ways to say "no" without being rude. Simply apologize and explain that your schedule is tight, but that you might be able to help another time. Remember that you don't owe most people anything, and that they are asking, not telling you to help. They will likely be just fine whether you help them or someone else does.

Let Go

Our mind often feels cluttered because we are clinging to so many thoughts and concerns about the future and past. But those things aren't real in the present, and worrying about them only takes up space that could be used to solve problems and enjoy things right now. Write down your future needs, and then let them go.

This is the practice of mindfulness. Clearing your mind of worry can even be an important first step in decluttering your physical space and your day. The less stress you carry into a project, the more calmly you will be able to complete it.

Relaxation is the key to, and the goal of decluttering. It is a benevolent cycle that, when done patiently and consistently, will lead to more free time and a more organized life. Try committing to it with friends, and hold each other to your goals, just like working out at the gym with a partner. This is a great practice to get into with significant others and families.

Be truthful in your assessment of what you really need, and remember to create designated spaces for the things you do decide to keep. Always put them back after each use. After a couple of weeks, you will start to notice that as the clutter decreases, your focus improves, and so does your mood.

CHAPTER 6

**Nurture Your Relationships By
Making Time for Loved Ones**

When we get caught up in distractions and fail to set aside time and energy for our loved ones, it can put strain on our relationships.



It is important to make time to feed your relationships so they can last, grow, and flourish.

In today's fast-paced environment, it's easy to let your immediate to-do list overtake your life and forget to make time for what is really important --- family, friends, partners, and loved ones.

When we get caught up in distractions and fail to set aside time and energy for our loved ones, it can put strain on our relationships. If our loved ones constantly have to pressure us to spend time with them, they may begin to feel unimportant which can trigger hostility, resentment, and arguments. And in worst case scenarios, the lack of attention can lead to ending relationships.

So it is important that we make room in our lives to spend quality time with loved ones. In our busy world, it isn't always easy. But here are a few ways that can help you feed your relationships so they can last, grow, and flourish.

Call Instead of Texting

Make an effort to call distant family members from time to time instead of just texting. While some contact is better than no contact at all, it's important to make these personal connections to really help a relationship flourish. Hearing someone's voice helps you maintain a stronger connection and you deeper level of communication.

Share Your Skills & Hobbies

Consider how your personal skills and talents may be of use to your loved ones and find ways to share with them. If you're an expert at crochet, offer to teach your niece a few simple stitches so she can make scarves as Christmas gifts.

If your kitchen is overflowing with your homemade canned goods, set aside a few jars of a favorite recipe for neighbors and friends. With a little creative thinking, you may find that you can easily expand some of your everyday tasks to make a big difference in the lives of others.

Cut Out Activities That Aren't Important

Take a close look at your calendar and reevaluate the items that are dominating your time. If you're involved in projects that aren't personally fulfilling, see if you can swap them out for quality time with the people in your life who really matter.

It's easy to fall into the habit of prioritizing the same activities month after month if you don't regularly stop to think about whether you're devoting your time to the right causes.

Send a Birthday Card Instead of a Facebook Message

Social media makes it easy to nourish relationships on the surface without really delving into them and planting roots that will weather the storm.

If your friendships exist primarily on the foundation of Facebook likes and brief comments, you may need to step back and return to a more traditional way of doing things, such as sending a physical birthday card, instead of just writing a comment on your friend's wall.

Carve Out Time In Your Calendar

Carve out dedicated time slots for your loved ones, even for your partners and/or kids who live in the same house as you. Existing side by side is not the same as really making time for one another. Put items like quiet family dinners, long evening story times, or an afternoon jog on your calendar alongside your other obligations to make sure you don't overlook the people who matter most.

Acknowledge What It Important to Others

It's important to think about which aspects of your relationship are most important to your loved ones because they aren't always the same things that are important to you. "[The 5 Love Languages](#)" by Gary Chapman is an excellent book for assisting us with learning the skills necessary to understand our loved ones' love language. It is important that we take some time to listen and understand the ways that our loved ones show and express love rather than how we "expect" to see it.

Your parents may value weekly family cookouts over big birthday celebrations, even if you feel that birthdays trump burgers. While one friend may yearn for a quiet personal chat, another may feel more appreciation from a thoughtful gift. Think about the personal traits of your friends and family members and figure out what's most important to them. Find unique ways to nurture each one of your relationships so you're feeding them with the things they crave most.

Show Up

Sometimes the simple act of just showing up can be the biggest way to show your loved ones that you care. If they are having an important event and you have a busy schedule, just show up. You don't have to stay long, but making an appearance and showing your support is an important part of keeping your relationship going strong.

Step back from your pressing to-do list and make an effort to nourish the important personal relationships around you. Both you and your loved ones will benefit from the effort.

CHAPTER 7

Instill Positive Thinking



Intentional positive thinking not only minimizes daily stress, it also reduces the risk of heart disease and other physical ailments.

The happiest people are those who make an active choice to enjoy the good things in life.

It is easy to feel like some people are just naturally positive or naturally negative, and that may be true in some cases.

But the happiest people are those who make an active choice every day to pick themselves up and enjoy the good things in life. And believe me there are plenty, if you know where to look.

Changing your outlook on life is a major process, but it can be done gradually. You have to start small and practice new habits a little more each day that will slowly start to replace the old, harmful ones.

Research from the Mayo Clinic states that [intentional positive thinking](#) not only minimizes daily stress, but reduces the risk of heart disease and other physical ailments. A healthy, happy psyche actually helps people to *LIVE LONGER*. Don't wait until you feel better to start living healthier, mentally and physically -- start living healthier to *FEEL BETTER NOW*. Trust us on this one.

Listen to Positive Music

We all love music. It inspires us and keeps us company. Even sad music can be good for helping us enjoy our full range of emotions. But listening to the same thing constantly is guaranteed to have a lasting effect on us.

Pay attention to the lyrics of songs you play on repeat. Are they encouraging? Is the tempo of the music energizing? Find a couple of uplifting songs, of any genre, and slip them into your playlist. Use Pandora or Spotify to find more songs like them. Let them be the soundtrack to your new outlook on life.

Surround Yourself with Positive People

It isn't easy being positive in a room full of nay-sayers and bullies. If the people around you are constantly pointing out flaws and problems with the world, they're going to have the same effect on you. It's hard enough to keep yourself uplifted without others dragging you down. Seek out friends who you notice are already positive and healthy. Encourage each other and practice good habits together.

Share Your Positivity

A Chinese proverb states "if you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody else." Have you ever noticed how good it feels to make someone laugh? Or to receive a tightly squeezing hug when you give someone a gift they are grateful for?

Bringing happiness into other people's lives is one of the best ways to create happiness in your own. Tell people they are beautiful. Pay for a stranger's coffee. Smile when you catch someone's eye on the street. You never know how much they might need that kindness. And with any luck, they will pay it forward.

Ask "Does This Matter?"

It is easy to get wrapped up in the trivialities of each day. Getting cut off in traffic, having a frustrating argument, ruining your favorite shirt. Sometimes all of these things seem to happen in the same day, and you are certain it is the worst day of your life.

Create a Sunshine Folder

This can be a physical folder in your desk or a file on your desktop. Fill it with things that make you smile. Photos of family, best friends, or favorite memories, beautiful artwork, or quotes that touch you and keep you going.

Come back to the folder whenever you find yourself dragging. This is your own little world of beauty, it represents everything good about your life and who you want to be.

Practice Positive Self-Talk

[Research Professor Brené Brown](#) reminds us to "talk to yourself like you would someone you love." You would never say the negative things you think about yourself to a loved one, so why is it okay to say it to yourself? You would never keep someone else around who constantly put you down at every turn.

You look to your friends for encouragement and reassurance. And you need to be a friend to yourself. Cut yourself some slack. When you struggle, think "I am learning." When you see your reflection, think "I look great today." When you don't know something, think "I am going to look that up." Repeat anything often enough and you will start to believe it. Choose to repeat positive things.

But how many of these things really matter in the long run? You will forget about the car and the argument eventually, and you will find a new favorite shirt. When you find yourself dwelling on the bad things that have happened, try to think of all the positive things that have happened that day too. They are there, don't miss them because a couple of small mishaps have put you in a foul mood.

The list of tricks is endless. Positivity is a choice that is made every minute of every day, and with the right determination it becomes a natural reaction. One final trick to employ is the art of "pausing." Before you react to any situation, pause and reflect on the facts.

Don't allow your emotions to run away from you. If it doesn't seem like it will be beneficial to get angry, or shout, or storm away from the situation, take a deep breath and think about how you would LIKE to react. Then do it.

CHAPTER 8

**Invite More Intimacy
Into Your Life**

Intimacy refers to all sorts of closeness, with friends and family, as well as significant others. We can be intimate with people intellectually, emotionally, and physically.



Intimacy is crucial to living a fulfilling life.

When we think of the term "intimacy" our minds often conjure thoughts of warm kisses and discarded clothing. This is certainly an important aspect of intimacy, but there is much more to it than that.

Intimacy refers to all sorts of closeness, with friends and family, as well as significant others. We can be intimate with people intellectually and emotionally, as well as physically. And in order to manifest the most fulfilling intimacy, we have to find ways to tap into all avenues of intimacy.

More frequently than not, we are hyper-focused on achieving intimacy only one way -- through sex. And most of us feel like we are not getting enough intimacy through sex alone. It is difficult for our loved ones to fill our "love" and "intimacy" meter solely with intimacy from sex. This creates pressure, and sparks the never-ending relationship "push/pull" cycle.

For some, it can be difficult to experience intimacy and open ourselves up completely. It can be difficult to let people into our inner thoughts and feelings or to engage with others physically, whether that means being crowded together, hugging, or having sex. It's hard for us because getting close to someone always comes paired with the risk of losing that closeness or being hurt in some way. Perhaps it has happened before, and the pain and fear never quite faded.

But intimacy is crucial to living a fulfilling life.

The close connections that we build with the people we love and who love us make even the most trivial interactions feel significant and memorable. Learning to open ourselves up to intimacy starts with learning to be more vulnerable.

Be Trusting

Certainly exposing ourselves to weaknesses and fears seems like a bad idea. But remember the "trust falls" from every summer camp and team-building exercise? They are meant to remind us that our friends have got our back, and being able to truly believe and rely on that is incredibly freeing.

We all want our friends to feel they can trust us, but that is a two-way street. In order to be trusted, we must show trust, as well. And eventually that relationship becomes more comfortable and dependable, until we feel we can say or do anything with that person and know that they will support us.

Although, something important to keep in mind is that trust isn't only represented by behavior from our significant other. At least 80% of it is a personal choice that starts with us. When we choose to hold resentment, anger, or mistrust, then the other person could move mountains to "gain" your trust, yet it will never be enough. Trust is a decision that acts on blind faith that first and foremost has to come from you.

Be Honest

Ever heard the saying "You must love yourself before you can love someone else?" The same is true for honesty. In order to be honest with others about our innermost thoughts and feelings, we must first recognize them for ourselves. What do we really think of the people in our lives and their actions?

If we're honest with our friends and colleagues, we never have to feel like we're putting on a facade. And few things are as refreshing (or respected) as feeling completely authentic. Telling the truth untangles lots of social situations and prevents the need for complicated story-telling. It can be scary, but people appreciate a straight-forward, up-front interaction

Be Courageous

There are lots of risks involved in being more vulnerable, but higher stakes always yield higher rewards. We have to have the courage to work through the fear of rejection or awkwardness or discomfort. Just as with starting an exercise regiment, it often feels impossible in the beginning. But once we start to see results, we are so glad we stuck with it.

One of the largest fears that comes with becoming intimate is the fear that the person we let in will leave or betray us the way others have – that they will abandon us. But if we let that stop us from ever trying in the first place, then we never give that person a chance to prove us wrong. We should never choose to remain alone so that we're never left alone. And we should not attribute the faults of people in our past to people we want in our future.

So trying being vulnerable and open yourself up to some intimacy this week. If you are not feeling okay, ask a friend or colleague if they have some time to talk. If someone gives you a hug, hug them back. Appreciate the closeness that is always within arm's reach. And try being there for others too.

Again, intimacy is a two way-street. An excellent how-to book on facilitating, understanding, and creating intimacy that is an absolute must-read is called "Intimacy," written by a great author, Osho.

CHAPTER 9

Live More Generously



Giving is linked to lower levels of stress and increased gratefulness, and people with chronic diseases have demonstrated better pain management when they were actively giving back in some way.

It's a documented fact that giving to others can make you feel happier.



It's a well-documented fact that giving to others can make you feel happier. In [several studies](#), participants displayed greater happiness and life satisfaction after giving money to a charitable cause. But giving isn't always about money or gifts. The true art of giving is an act of unconditional love. We should give because we want to share love, not because we want to receive anything in return.

If you are giving with the expectation of receiving something in return (even a "thank you"), you are indirectly limiting and discounting the true kindness of your act. People are far more appreciative when you give without an underlying expectation of getting something in return.

Giving is also linked to lower levels of stress and increased gratefulness. People with chronic diseases have even demonstrated better pain management when they were actively giving back in some way. If you're looking for a worthy way to better your life, the answer may come in the form of generosity and bettering the lives of others.

Pay It Forward

Once you have received an act of kindness, you're often prompted to perform a similar act for someone else. In one study, museum visitors were either told to pay what they wished, or told that someone else had paid their admission and given the option to pay the admission of other future visitors. People regularly [gave more in the pay it forward model](#).

Consider the fact that one small act, like paying the toll for the person behind you, could have ongoing ripples. Do small things for others that they can easily pass on to someone else and you can help create a kinder community.

Really Listen When People Talk to You

Sometimes you can act generously without offering anything tangible. By simply listening closely when a friend, family member, loved one, or even a stranger is talking, you can offer them something extremely precious -- your time and attention.

So be generous with your awareness. When your kids are talking about their day, put down your phone or look away from what you are doing and give them your full attention. When your partner or friend need to vent about something difficult in their life, lend a compassionate ear.

Show Appreciation & Admiration

Another way to be generous without offering anything tangible is to give praise and complements. Showing your appreciation and admiration doesn't cost you anything and it can offer a shower of gifts to the recipients. So be generous with your praise and makes someone's day by telling them they look nice or complementing their new hair cut.

When someone in your office accomplishes a difficult task, mention it. If you were part of the project, give specific praise to your partner and let them take the spotlight. Making someone feel better can usually make you feel even better than if you had received the compliment yourself.

Put Meaningful Causes On Your Calendar

Happier people are more likely to give to others, and the act of giving makes people happier. This creates a cyclical effect that you can ride continuously if you make an effort to act charitably on a regular basis. It's easy to get "too busy" to participate in a charity event if you squeeze activities in when you have blank spots on your agenda.

Instead, actively block out periods of time for charitable activities and refuse to give up these chunks of time to anything else so you can nurture your happiness on a regular basis.

Clean Out Your Closets

If your finances are too tight to make a monetary donation to a charitable cause, give from what you have. Clean out your closets and eliminate anything you don't frequently use or deeply love. Donate your unwanted items to a charity like Goodwill or the Salvation Army. Not only will you get the psychological boost of having done a good deed, you'll benefit from the fresh clean space in your closet as well.

Use Your Hobby to Give

If you're an introvert who doesn't enjoy participating in big charity events, you can put your talents to use in the quiet comfort of your own home. Use a hobby that you already enjoy as a way to give to others. If you love to crochet, make scarves for the homeless in winter. If painting is your hobby, offer to make backdrops for school plays or paint a mural for a daycare or hospital.

Consider the activities you already love and ask yourself how the products from those hobbies can benefit someone else. The impact is twofold because you get to indulge in a fun craft and help someone else.

Double What Your Already Cooking

Giving to others doesn't always have to involve a major charity. You can actually reap greater social benefits if you give to a personal connection. Some studies have even shown that giving offers a bigger boost to happiness when it involves someone you know rather than an anonymous recipient.

Since you're probably cooking for yourself or your family already, try doubling the recipe and making extra for someone else. Whether you're taking canned pickles to a neighbor, giving cookies to the mailman, or carrying a frozen casserole to a bedridden friend, a bit of home cooked goodness can have a big impact on others.

Amassing wealth and success often becomes so consuming that we forget the greater good that we can put forth for the sake of others. Make an effort to give often and you'll feel happier as a result.

CHAPTER 10

Have New Experiences



Money can buy you happiness. But you'll get more pleasure for your dollar if you spend your money on experiences -- not consumer goods.

New experiences lead us from boredom, spark our curiosity, and give us confidence to take on new challenges.



A [Cornell University study](#) has put to rest some questions about whether money can buy happiness. The conclusion: money can buy you happiness. But you'll get more pleasure for your dollar if you spend your money on experiences -- not consumer goods.

Experiences can enhance happiness on several levels. People were found to feel better at every stage in the process, from waiting in line for tickets, to anticipating the event, to looking back on the experience later. Having new experiences (whether they cost money or not) can lead us from boredom, spark our curiosity and give us confidence to take on new challenges --- all of which can increase self-esteem, happiness, and our level of life satisfaction.

So whether you have extra cash to invest in the venture or not, embrace the unknown and try out our tips for broadening your horizons and drawing more novelty and happiness to your life.

Attack the Same Question Until Your Get New Answers

Most people eat the same type of food, take the same route to work, and watch the same shows week after week. This also means that many people approach problems the same way every time they pop up, whether that method is working or not.

If you're struggling with a road block in your life, use this as your first excuse to insert a little novelty into your life. Ask yourself the same question over and over until you break out of your typical response and start coming up with creative solutions. When you push yourself and explore answers that seem outlandish, you may help yourself over a hurdle and discover a new, creative way to solve your problem

Try Something You Enjoy Watching on TV

Your favorite television shows offer an insightful window into the experiences you may enjoy in real life. The [work-leisure paradox](#), as dubbed by Chicago professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, addresses the tendency to yearn for leisure when you're at work but get bored with that leisure once you're home.

People feel more satisfied with the way they spend time when they do something productive. So if you're feeling a nagging sense of dissatisfaction even while you're watching your favorite cooking show, it's likely because you're observing, but not doing.

Consider your favorite television shows or books and identify the things you love most. Could you be experiencing these personally rather than experiencing them second hand? Stop watching that home renovation show and get building yourself either on your home or through a volunteer project like Habitat for Humanity. Instead of watching animal rescues, volunteer at your local shelter. If you watch dance competitions on TV, find a dance class in your area. Get creative and find a novel way to do what you would typically just observe.

Change Your Bedtime

Something as simple as getting up early or staying up late could introduce you to a new world of novel experiences. If you're usually a night owl, try getting up early and experiencing a sunrise yoga class. If the wee hours of the night are foreign to you, head out after dark and see what your city looks like when nightclubs and bars are in full swing.

This will allow you to see things in a new light (literally). Little changes, like experiencing a familiar place at a different time of day, can help you explore in small but sometimes profound ways. So don't think you need to make huge steps to start exploring and work with the little shifts you can create around you.

Find Freebies In Your Area

If you're not sure what direction to head for new experiences, begin exploring what's free in your area. Many museums have a special night once a month when admission is free. Street festivals and car shows are often free to attend. Check out the calendar at your local library for classes or lectures you can attend. Sample a wide variety of experiences, including some things you wouldn't have usually considered.

When you're not making a financial investment, there's no need to feel a sense of loss if you experience a novelty that just isn't your thing. Your world will be that much broader just for trying.

Change Your Route

Introducing novelty into your life can be as simple as literally choosing a different road. This is particularly beneficial at the end of the workday or when you're out running errands because you'll have time to stop and explore if something catches your eye.

Bringing a bit of novelty to your life doesn't have to mean a major investment in an overseas vacation (though there's no reason to rule it out!). Find new experiences anywhere you can and you may be surprised where they take you.

CHAPTER 11

Sneak Yoga Stretches Into Your Day

Studies show that practicing yoga (and other physical activities) regularly reduces stress, anxiety/depression, and insomnia.



Regular stretching keeps your body limber and has positive effects on your mood and overall health.

Regular stretching not only keeps your body limber, but has positive effects on your mood and overall health. Studies show that practicing yoga (and other physical activities) regularly reduces stress, anxiety/depression, and insomnia. It can also lower your heart rate and blood pressure.

Many of us spend the majority of our day seated at a desk hunched over a computer screen. Before and after that we spend hours lying still in bed. So it makes sense that our bodies would become stiff and compressed and need to have the kinks worked out.

If you can't make it to the spa or chiropractor on a weekly basis, try some of these stretches to keep your muscles and joints relaxed and strong.

Poses For The Morning

Being jolted out of bed by your alarm probably makes you feel like you're already running late for your day. It's a race to shower, get dressed, and eat before braving traffic to get to work on time. But these morning stretches fast and easy, and will help you start your day feeling refreshed and calm.

Morning Pose: Cat Tilt

Climb up onto your hands and knees, with your hands beneath your shoulders and your knees beneath your hips. Stretch your head and tailbone away from each other, lengthening your spine. Take a slow breath in, then release it as you round your back toward the ceiling, pulling your chin toward your belly. Inhale as you relax, then arch your belly toward the floor and tilt your head toward upward. Repeat three times.



Morning Pose: Lunge

From the Cat Tilt position, stretch your right foot forward so it's between your hands, and your knee is directly above your ankle. Slide your left leg back until your knee and toes are touching the floor. Relax your shoulders and lengthen your spine again. Breathe and press your hips forward for a deeper stretch. Then switch sides.

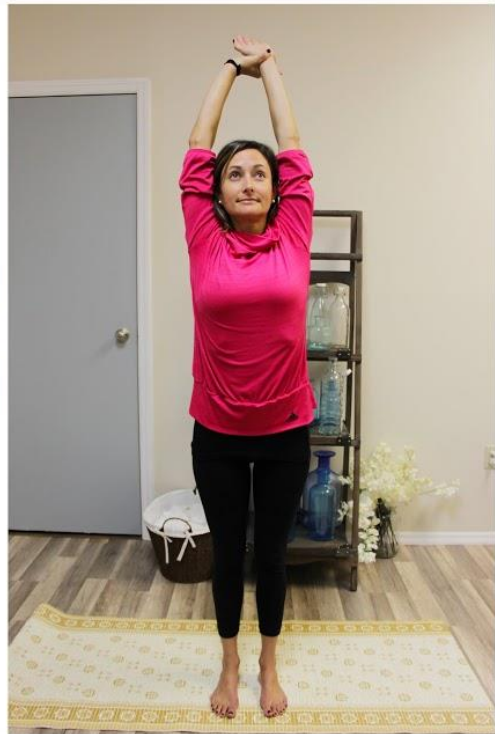


At Your Desk

Long days at the office can wear you down physically as well as spiritually. Not every company has a spa or a gym where employees can blow off steam. Below are some basic stretches you can perform without ever leaving your desk, or better yet, in the sunshine outside the building.

At Your Desk: Shoulder Stretch

This can be done sitting or standing. Lace your fingers together and stretch your palms toward the ceiling or sky. Relax your shoulders and keep your arms lined up beside your ears. Hold this position for five slow breaths, then release. Roll your shoulders back and forth a few times, then repeat.



At Your Desk: Chair Twist

This stretch actually does require a chair. Side facing sideways on your chair, keeping your knees pressed together directly above your feet. Place your hands on the back of the chair and inhale while sitting up as tall as possible. Take a deep breath, and exhale as you twist your torso toward the back of the chair. Repeat, then switch sides and do it again.



Throughout the Day

If you find yourself feeling tight throughout the day, take a few moments to do these simple stretching that you can do pretty much anywhere.

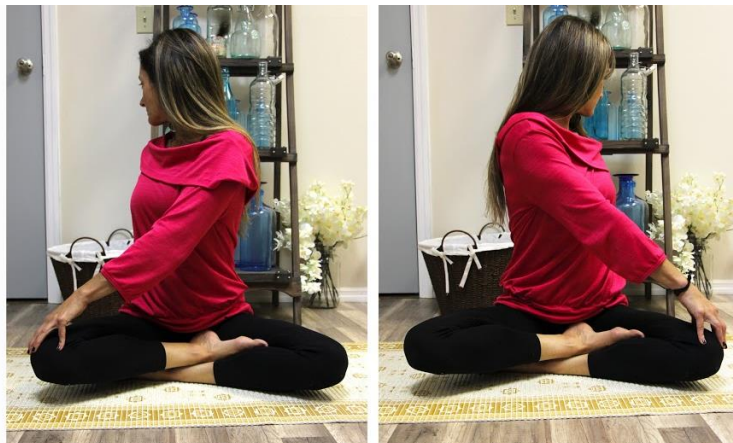
Throughout the Day: Forward Bend

This can also be done sitting or standing. Place your feet a little wider than your hips and fold yourself forward so your face is near your knees (bend your legs some of your hamstrings are too tight). Drop your head and relax your neck. Hold for as long as you are comfortable, then straighten up and take a few breaths. Bend forward again, and repeat.



Throughout the Day: Spinal Stretch

Sit cross-legged on the floor (or cushion) as tall as you can, stretching the crown of your head toward the ceiling. Press your left hand onto your right knee, and exhale as you steadily twist your torso around to the right. Return to center, breathe, then do the same for the other side.



CHAPTER 12

Never Stop Learning



Learning is a lifelong pursuit that can continually improve your ability to adapt to new situations, problem solve, and react to life's challenges with wisdom.

Learning prevents boredom, keeps your brain sharp, enriches your life, and increases self-esteem.

When school is over, education isn't. Learning is a lifelong pursuit that can continually improve your ability to adapt to new situations, problem solve, and react to life's challenges with wisdom. Practicing learning as an ongoing activity will prevent boredom, keep your brain sharp, enrich your life, and increase self-esteem. Your new knowledge may even lead to a promotion, entrepreneurship idea, or other unexpected perks.

Because not all learning comes in the form of a college course or formal exam, you can keep learning a little bit every day with these easy and affordable strategies.

Take an Online Course

You don't need to be enrolled at a university to reap the benefits of their class selection. Many reputable colleges and universities offer free or reasonably-priced online courses through their websites or sites like [Coursera.org](https://www.coursera.org).

So sign up and take a financial course from Columbia, explore public health with a class from Johns Hopkins, or learn more about evolution with the American Museum of Natural History. You probably spend a few hours browsing the Internet at home each day anyway, so why not make the most of this time and absorb some new and fascinating information in your area of interest.

Listen to Podcasts

Enrich your daily commute with podcasts that you can listen to in the car. You'll find podcasts for nearly any interest, whether you want to brush up on your history or get some innovative new cooking ideas for dinner tonight.

Subscribe to a diverse selection of podcasts and you can experience something new every day. Since podcasts are often free to download, you can try out any topic, whether you're familiar with it or hearing about it for the first time. You never know what new interests you may discover.

Get Involved With Local Library Programs

Get to know your local library and you may be surprised at the offerings. From cooking classes to foreign languages, many libraries offer an extensive range of subjects. If you live in the library's area, these classes are often free of charge. Courses on technology are particularly common. If you're looking for a new job or ready for a promotion, explore courses in Microsoft Office or resume writing.

Book clubs are another excellent way to broaden your horizons. Not only will you benefit from the opportunity to read novels you may not otherwise have chosen, you'll get to enrich the experience by sharing your thoughts with others and hearing how different readers interpreted the text in various ways.

Join a Meetup Group

[Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) is a great site for social learners. If you work best in a group, explore your local Meetup options. Foodies can find like-minded friends who are anxious to taste the town, learning about new dishes and wines along the way. Amateur artists can join with others to share skills and techniques. If you don't see a group for your interest, consider starting one yourself. You may be surprised at how many people share your preferences.

Download an Educational App

Add some new apps to your smartphone or tablet and you can uncover a whole world of learning opportunities. Duolingo helps you learn a new language. Book Quiz will test your knowledge of literary works. Download The World Factbook to expand your knowledge of other countries from the comfort of your couch.

With push notifications enabled on your device, many of these apps will even prompt you to keep up with your pursuit of knowledge, so you'll check in daily and continue expanding your knowledge base.

Watch Documentaries

Documentaries can get a bad reputation for being dry and boring, but many of today's films are anything but. Check your local television guide for a documentary that fits your interests and sit down with some popcorn to really take it in.

There are also many documentaries on streaming video services like Netflix. Whether you want to learn more about wildlife or find out what all the controversy is about with fast food, you can delve deeper with well-produced documentaries.

Continual learning is just one way that you can boost your confidence and self-esteem, make yourself more adaptable to change, and challenge your mind

CHAPTER 13

Be Grateful

"Adults who practice gratitude sleep better, have stronger immune systems, lower blood pressure, reduced anxiety and depression, and more satisfied relationships."



Choosing to devote our attention to the things we are grateful for can greatly outweigh the problems that frustrate us.

"What if you woke up today with only the things you thanked God for yesterday?"

Gratitude is defined as "readiness to show appreciation for and return kindness." Director of the Center for Developmental Science at UNC-Chapel Hill, Andrea Hussong, recently stressed [the importance of fostering gratitude in ourselves and in our children.](#)

"Adults who practice gratitude sleep better, have stronger immune systems, lower blood pressure, reduced anxiety and depression, and more satisfied relationships," she explained.

It's important to exercise gratitude like a muscle. Strengthening it can take a lot of time and practice, but once you begin to see results you will be -- well, grateful!

Austrian Psychologist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl famously said that "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." This mentality helped him to survive one of the most traumatic events in human history.

Choosing to devote our attention to the things we are grateful for -- family, health, a bed to sleep in -- can greatly outweigh the problems that frustrate us. Every event in life presents us with an opportunity to react positively and gratefully, we only need to learn how to make that our default. Try out a few of the tips below and begin to experience your own world through rose-colored glasses.

Keep a Gratitude Journal

Often times we forget the minor events that occur in a given day, but writing them down in a diary or journal can help us to recall them later. Imagine if we only wrote positive things in that journal -- when we came back to it later it would seem that things were going very well for us in the time that we were writing. This is the idea of a gratitude journal.

Throughout or at the end of each day, write down things that you appreciated, or that made you smile. Alternatively, try writing these things on scraps of paper and filling a jar with them throughout the year. Then read them before the start of the new year, and remember all the wonderful things that happened to you.

Keep in mind, your gratitude journal doesn't need to be a lot of work. Even just jotting down three one-word sentences a night can make a difference in your life.

Train Yourself to Look on the Bright Side

"Looking on the bright side" or cognitive restructuring is a process utilized in [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#) (CBT) where you counteract negative thoughts using positive alternatives. Whenever a frustrating or depressing thought enters our heads, we can create a list of alternative thoughts and realities to replace it and balance ourselves out again.

Much like the gratitude journal, it can sometimes help to write these things down.

Create a chart with columns for negative thoughts and alternative positive thoughts, and rows for the dates. When you have a negative thought (especially a recurring one) write it in the negative column, then fill the adjacent column with alternative positive thoughts that are more helpful and encouraging.

Help Others

One of the best ways to feel appreciation is to feel appreciated. When we contribute to a cause locally, nationally or globally and we are certain to feel a sense of connectedness and personal value. Seeing the things that other people are grateful for -- medicine, a meal, some shelter -- is an incredibly effective reminder of how fortunate we really are.

If more people employed this last little bit of advice and worked to [spread positivity](#), the world would seem much more accommodating and friendly. Be the one to take that first step.

Show Thanks In Little Ways

- **Send thank you cards.** Test yourself this year and try [this kit](#) that comes with 52 note cards so you can send one thank you a week, all year.
- **Meditate.** Spending even a little bit of time in your day focused on gratitude can make a difference. Not sure where to start? Try out this [gratitude meditation from Chopra Center](#).
- **Set reminders on your phone.** It's easy to forget to stop and be thankful. So use your phone to set reminders throughout the week to be grateful for the things in your life that you may take for granted.

Living with more gratitude can bring more happiness and health to your life. So what are you waiting for. Start living more mindfully today.

CHAPTER 14

**Open Yourself Up
And Let Love In**



If we make a plan and plant our feet, we can let the right people in and have the fulfilling relationships we yearn for naturally.

It's difficult to experience all of life's pleasures if we're afraid to risk trying them out.

On some level, we all fear being hurt emotionally. This can sometimes cause us to avoid situations that have any potential for leading to a painful outcome. But this is an example of playing things too safe.

It's difficult to experience all of life's pleasures if we're afraid to risk trying them out. This is why it is so important to remain open to new experiences, be brave, and let our guard down.

We may put up a wall at first place because we have worries or fears about love and closeness, or ultimately getting hurt or abandoned. One of the biggest factors that get in our way of experiencing love fully and euphorically is our fear of vulnerability. We perceive vulnerability to be a "weakness" or flaw in our character, but it is quite the contrary.

A vulnerable person is a strong and generally happy person who allows themselves to be open so that they can love fully and most importantly, accept love fully. Yes, you have a risk of getting hurt, but you have a risk of getting hurt either way it goes.

Why not hurt while having loved happily and deeply rather than hurt without having any love at all? Also, people who are brave enough to be vulnerable and open themselves to love tend to heal much more quickly when they do get hurt.

While there are certainly people out there who will be hurtful and insensitive, there are just as many who will actually be caring and considerate, and improve our lives. It's not fair to us or to them that they are kept out because of the actions of others.

If we make a plan and plant our feet, we can let the right people in and have the fulfilling relationships we yearn for naturally.

List Your Fears

Knowing exactly what we don't want can be a great way to get what we do want by being able to recognize when we shouldn't settle. The key here is not to write out your fears so that you can keep them at the forefront of your mind, but to recognize them in ways to challenge the validity while finding ways to let them go.

Fear is a powerful emotion because it arises more quickly than any other human emotion. If we stay focused on our fears, we attract more of the things that we fear into our lives. A great way to keep fears from staying at the forefront of your mind is to list the fears, then cross them out one by one and replace them with something that you desire in your life.

List Your Goals

Once you have crossed out your fears, begin to keep your mind's focus on what you do want in your life. Therefore, a list of things that we do want will help us narrow down the people we think might be right for us. It can also help us decide where we might find the right person or what friendships are healthy to maintain in our lives.

If one goal is "spend quiet time with someone" we might hang around a library instead of a popular bar. Obviously no one is going to fit all of our needs or every goal on the list, but even fulfilling a few desires can make for a great match.

Know Your Emotions

Feelings can be extremely confusing as they don't always have rational thoughts attached to them. This is OK. We don't need to have an explicit reason for everything we feel, but we have to allow ourselves to experience that feeling without judgment. We can't withhold our anger and sadness because we "shouldn't feel them." They are natural, and the more we recognize our emotions, the more we can respond to them appropriately.

However, it is important to engage in self-dialogue in order to determine when some feelings are a result of an irrational thought or fear, and find ways to let them go. The sooner we let go of irrational thoughts and fears that result in unwanted emotions or moods, the quicker we will have room for more love, positive emotions, and happier moods.

Trust Your Intuition

We've all made poor romantic decisions in the past, and have received all kinds of advice about what we "should" do. But everyone has different opinions and needs. Friends and family mean well and want to see us happy, but ultimately the decision is ours who we will let into our lives.

We can listen to the advice of loved ones, but employ the actions that seem appropriate to us – we know ourselves better than anyone else. Self dialogue is also important in that it encourages us to listen to ourselves, to follow our intuition and our "gut" feelings.

A thousand random thoughts enter our minds at any given moment, the ones that affect us are the ones we attach meaning to. We have to be picky with the ones we attach a meaning to. We have to be choosy with what actually carries weight so that we can make healthier and more rational choices in our lives.

If we take the time to challenge our thoughts and explore them, we are more likely to have a clearer and more keen sense of intuition and make decisions that are more conducive to our own happiness.

Focus On the Present

It's impossible to move forward successfully while looking backward the whole time. It's good to learn from the past, but we have to believe the future holds new and different experiences. Talk about plans and goals, not regrets or even nostalgia about the past. It can be difficult to be optimistic when we're feeling uncertain, but even if we don't feel full of hope, we can keep our eyes up and prepare for the next unknown chapter.

Although focusing on the future can give us hope, motivation, and some courage, it is important to even do this in small doses. Most importantly, and above all, it is important that we remain in the present. The current moment and day is what deserves our attention. Sometimes we get so caught up in the past and even the future that we forget to focus on the love or attention our loved ones need in a given moment.

Everything requires balance. Spend a reasonable amount of time remembering the past so that you can plan your future. Our past shapes us, but we shouldn't dwell in it. However, spend the most time remaining present, enjoying your present moment. If for any reason the present is unbearable or makes you unhappy, that is a big sign for something needs to change!

One surefire way to be happier in the present is to find gratitude in even our worst moments. Every experience teaches us, helps us grow, and brings us closer to unconditional, fulfilling, and sensational love.

Let People In

Trusting a stranger sounds crazy, but that's not the goal. The first few steps of weeding out what is and isn't wanted, and focusing on potential new experiences will ensure only a few desirable individuals are being allowed past our wall.

Steadily we can give these people more of our trust and test the waters. Without this crucial step, a relationship can't go anywhere. This requires a level of vulnerability that may feel uncomfortable, but in the end pays off, even if it just turns out to be a learning experience. Which again brings us back around to gratitude. Life at it's best.

The same cycles will continue to occur, we will go from love to vulnerability to love to sadness to hurt to love and back around again. In the end, its a right of passage as a human to experience pain and love over and over again. You will go through these inevitable experiences either way.

However you have two choices, you can go through them with the eyes of gratitude in a pleasant way, or you can go through them kicking in screaming making them far more painful and hurtful than they need to be. When you choose to experience your lessons in the best way possible, you are more likely to not go through them again, because the lesson has been complete, you have then learned.

Don't Fear Failure

Things don't always work out – this is why some of us have put up walls in the first place. But heartbreak is not the end of the world. And if we plant our feet and plan accordingly, we don't even have to be destroyed when a romantic interest doesn't stick around. Muscles grow by tearing and being rebuilt, and the heart is the most important muscle in the human body.

As humans we are naturally social creatures. Most of us prefer not to be alone (though there is nothing wrong with wanting to be alone) and should not feel we have no other choice. Often if relationships haven't worked out before it is because we haven't found the right person, and locking all potential partners out of our lives isn't going to help that.

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU ARE ONE STEP CLOSER TO LIVING A LIFE THAT YOU LOVE

STILL HAVE SOME WORK TO DO?

If you feel like you need more assistance on the journey to your most fulfilling and happy life, we urge you to consider seeking support.

Loving Life Today and our team of trained therapists, counselors, massage therapists, yoga instructors, and clinical sexologists are here to help you succeed. Contact us to learn about our complete **LIFESTYLE RECOVERY PROGRAM** that can accelerate your path to a more fulfilling, healthy and happy life.

Learn More About
Loving Life



Loving Life Today
to be living life tomorrow

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