

FAROOKH SENSEI



**IGNITE**  
*Your*  
**SPARK 1.0**

# **IGNITE YOUR SPARK 1.0**

FAROOKH SENSEI

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## EDITOR'S NOTE: FROM THE NASREENIOLOGY DESK

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I once wrote, “*Stay away from the bank of people who discourage you to write for the simple reason that it has always been ideas, rather than swords, that have changed the world for the better.*”

I have had the pleasure of editing Farookh’s books repeatedly over the last 5 years. Through his perspectives, I have unwittingly been able to change my own world for the better. I suspect then that I am a micro sample of a greater book reading community whose lives have improved as a result of his lessons.

You see, I am a product of a “*spark*,” ignited over and over again by my humble but powerful mentor Farookh Sensei. If I am a reknowned book specialist today, working on the ideas of powerful and influential authors, it is because he helped me uncover a dormant talent through his selfless work.

This is not a fan club message. This is a reality check for you, a message that I am choosing to convey, because I know that when you apply the lessons from this book, you too, will “*spark*.”

Here’s a clue for you. When something that you read in this book resonates with you, act immediately. Use pen and paper or your mobile phone and tablet to make lists immediately. Implement them one by one. Tick them off as you master them. Take note of how you have changed and how your life has improved. Most of all “*spark*” at whatever you do. Please ensure though, that you spread the flame all around. You see, one of the most powerful things I have learnt through Farookh is the spirit of sharing for the purpose of developing others.

I am in the business of creating talented and powerful authors that shine more than I ever have by sharing what I continue to learn. I encourage you to do the same because whilst we all want to prosper financially, we all should also endeavour to prosper with the blessings that come from sparking change in the lives of others.

Ignite your spark, is filled with “*sparks*” of enlightenment, designed to elevate you to heights only you can define a limit to. I also once wrote, “**One teacher, one idea, one book, one iota of self-belief can change an entire world for the better. All it takes is one and that is the Power of One.**”

IGNITE YOUR SPARK

You have a choice. You can choose to read Ignite your spark, simply let it inspire you and count it as a great read, or you can use the book as your “*power of one.*”

Keep smiling, shining, and rising

*Nasreen Variyawa*

Nasreeniology Pro Authoring



# AUTHOR'S NOTE AND INTRODUCTION

---

Dear Reader,

Farookh Sensei is my name and inspiring and motivating others is my game. It has been this way for the longest time and over the years I have done it in so many different ways, bringing a variety of dynamic messages to my audiences. What a journey it has been!

From the good old working days, to opening up my own business, I have inspired others through Leadership Masterclasses, books, Ignition: the talk show, online courses, daily quotes, motivational talks and seminars and now, even daily blogs on LinkedIn.

Through the journey, I have shared so much of information and at the same time, have learnt so much. The more I learn, the more I find myself sharing. I suspect that this is one cycle that will never break because nothing gives me more satisfaction than teaching others how to be the best that they can be.

It brings me great pleasure to collate the ideas I share on my blogs with you in this wonderful compilation I have called Ignite Your Spark, I am so excited that I can share this with you so that you can refer to it whenever you want to read something that will make a difference to the way you feel, think or speak. I know that I do the same whenever I need to ignite my spark from time to time. I pick up something from my mentors, watch something inspiring or listen to someone knowledgeable to reboot my energy, ideas, and commitment towards helping people grow.

I have also always said, *“Smart people don’t change their circumstances. They change themselves to get their circumstances changed,”*

Had I not done the same with my own self and life, I probably would not be who I am today. The spirit of wanting the same or better for you is what drives me towards my purpose of helping others to achieve their goals in the shortest time possible.

This book is an invitation to do join me by becoming inspired and motivated, changing yourselves and then encouraging and motivating others to do the same.

Thrive and help others thrive too.

Farookh Sensei

# 1

## 7 SIMPLE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR LIFE MORE PRODUCTIVE

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Time is the one factor that no one can beat. No one can create time. Everyone is limited to 24 hours each day. **You can only make the most of the time you have each day.** How well do you use your time? How much do you accomplish each day?

Imagine how your life would transform if you were significantly more productive. How would that affect your bank account and your life overall?

**The power to be more productive is within your grasp:**

### **Know your goals**

It's hard to be productive if you're not 100% clear on your objective. That means knowing what you're trying to

accomplish over the next hour, day, week, month, year, or even several years out.

Each time you decide how you're going to spend your time, you're either making progress toward something important or you're not. Even if you're making progress, are you sure you're making progress toward the right thing?

### **Have a plan**

Try a little experiment. For the next week, avoid going to bed until you've made a fairly detailed plan of what you're going to do the next day. Plan out your day instead of waking up in the morning and trying to figure it out on the fly.

Notice how much more you get done. You'll be hooked on living your life this way.

### **Stop wasting time**

When you sit down to work for an hour, how much time do you actually spend working?

After you subtract out the time you spend daydreaming, checking your phone, reading an email, using the restroom, getting a drink, staring out the window, and having a quick chat, you're probably doing a lot less than an hour of work.

Set a timer for an hour and decide to spend the entire time working. You'll be stunned by how much more productive you are.

### **Get help**

You don't have to do it all alone. Delegate. Ask for help. You can get a lot more accomplished with another set of hands. Avoid being embarrassed to ask for assistance when you need it.

Be especially motivated to ask for help with things outside your area of expertise. You can save a ton of time this way and perform at a much higher level.

### **Get an early start**

The most productive people tend to get up early and get busy early. Consider getting out of bed earlier and accomplishing something worthwhile while the rest of the world is still asleep.

The momentum this creates is hard to believe. It's not easy to get out of bed earlier, but it's a power tactic.

### **Improve your ability to focus**

Staying on task is an important skill. A lack of focus leads to wasting time. You can only become good at focus if you practice. Set a timer and focus 100% for 10 minutes. Once you can do that consistently, shoot for 15 minutes. See how much you can improve over time.

## **Identify the most important tasks**

You can be working on the right thing but fail to make significant progress. There are plenty of things you can do to get in shape or to market your business. However, some of those tasks are much more effective than others! Spend your time on the most relevant tasks.

Productivity is about using your time as wisely as possible. This requires knowing your goals, creating a plan, and focus. Identify the most important tasks based on your goals and spend most of your time doing those things each day. Anyone can be productive, but not everyone will be productive.

What are you accomplishing?

# 2

## HOW YOU CAN TAKE MORE BREAKS AND MAKE THEM MORE EFFECTIVE

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By now, you may agree with the research about how taking breaks helps you to reduce stress and be more productive. However, you can still wind up reaching the end of your day and realizing that you forgot about the downtime.

Granted, it's difficult to step away if you're performing surgery or putting out house fires. However, most of us have some leeway to catch our breath at work and at home.

Before you spend another day toiling nonstop, consider these suggestions. Find out how to take more breaks and make them more effective.

## **Taking More Breaks:**

### **Plan your schedule**

Put breaks on your calendar instead of expecting them to happen spontaneously. Block out time for rest, just like you would do for a meeting.

### **Experiment with timing**

There are many theories about how long a break ought to be. Two popular strategies call for taking 5 minutes off every 25 minutes or 17 minutes off every hour. Test different options until you find what works best for you.

### **Use technology**

Various programs and devices can help you. Set an alarm on your watch or download an app for your phone.

### **Create a trigger**

You can also jog your memory offline. Tie a purple ribbon around your wrist or put a banana next to your laptop. Each time you look at them, you'll remember to pause.

### **Contemplate your purpose**

Strengthening your intentions increases the chances that you'll follow through. Spend a few minutes before bed thinking about why you want to take more breaks.

## **Keep at it**

It takes time to form a new habit. With enough practice, you may automatically recognize when you need to take a break.

## **Making Breaks More Effective:**

### **Move around**

Use your breaks to get some exercise. Stand up and stretch in between phone calls. Take a lunchtime yoga class. Put on some music and dance when you're doing your taxes at home.

### **Go outside**

Appreciating nature can energize and relax you. Go for a walk around the block. If you can't leave the building, look out a window.

### **Rest your eyes**

Do exercises to relieve eye strain if you've been on your computer most of the day. Roll your eyes clockwise and counterclockwise. Rub your hands together until they're warm and press them gently over your eyes.

### **Take a nap**

If you're sleep-deprived, you may need something more intense. Some companies like Google and Nike even offer sleep pods and nap rooms.

## **Be social**

Do a little networking during your downtime. Visit a coworker's office for a chat or invite a new hire out for coffee.

## **Eat light**

Healthy snacks can help you refuel. Keep supplies like nuts and yoghurt in your desk and office refrigerator.

## **Meditate briefly**

Even a few minutes of meditation can have a profound impact on your mood and performance. Close your office door and gather your thoughts. Ask your employer to offer a mindfulness break in the conference room after lunch for anyone who wants to participate.

## **Help others**

Performing acts of kindness will make you more cheerful and motivated. Put your housework or expense reports aside for a few minutes. Call an elderly relative or buy doughnuts for the office.

## **Think positive**

Your break time activities can be anything that gives you a boost. Maybe you like watching and sharing funny cat videos. Maybe you like learning to speak Hungarian or playing the harmonica.

## IGNITE YOUR SPARK

Take care of your health and accomplish more by taking regular breaks. You'll feel happier and increase your concentration.



# 3

## TOP 10 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

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Have you ever wondered what makes your most successful friend so successful? What about your least successful friend? What's their problem? What's the difference between those that thrive and those that struggle?

There are several differences, and they're quite obvious if one takes the time to look.

If you understand the differences, you can examine your situation and gain insight into why you might not be as successful as you'd like to be.

**See how successful people do things differently than unsuccessful people:**

### **Their lives are defined by their goals**

Unsuccessful people's lives are defined by their fears. Most people live their life in a way that avoids their fears. Successful people make decisions based on accomplishing their goals, not avoiding their fears.

### **They apply their time toward long-term objectives**

Unsuccessful people are motivated by day-to-day concerns. The average person is only concerned with making it through the next week. Successful people take action each day that will provide benefits months, years, or decades in the future.

### **They seek success**

Unsuccessful people seek comfort and base their decisions accordingly. A successful person moves toward success, whether the route is comfortable or not.

### **They take responsibility**

Unsuccessful people have an endless list of excuses for their mediocrity. Successful people assume responsibility for everything that goes wrong in their lives. When you take responsibility, you have the power to change your situation. Blaming others is a form of powerlessness.

### **They continuously improve their results**

A successful person wants to be better than they were yesterday. Average people maintain average results and are satisfied with this level of performance.

### **They read books**

Unsuccessful people gravitate toward TV and other non-value-added forms of entertainment. Reading the right books is one of the most effective ways of boosting your knowledge. Would you rather learn something new or waste your time?

### **They are comfortable with failure**

Successful people might not like a failure, but they can deal with it. Average people avoid failure at all costs. This is similar to the previous point on fear. An inability to deal with the fear of failure is one of the things that makes unsuccessful people unsuccessful.

### **They have a plan for the day**

It's not possible to get the most from each day unless you have a plan for it. Average people wake up and let the day decide for them what might happen. If you don't plan your day, you're avoiding success.

### **They surround themselves with the right people**

Successful people spend time with others that help them to become better. This could be a mentor, someone they could

potentially do business deals with, or simply someone they believe has the right connections.

### **They have positive, effective habits**

Good brushing and flossing habits lead to healthy teeth. Good exercise and diet habits lead to health and fitness. Good habits lead to high levels of success. What do your habits lead you towards?

As you can see, there are clear-cut differences between successful and unsuccessful people. How many of these items can you identify with? What changes would you like to make?

Which one you decide to be is up to you. Are you committed to progress or comfort? Do you have a plan for your time that maximizes your effectiveness, or do you like to fly by the seat of your pants?

The choice between success and mediocrity is up to you.

# 4

## 10 SIMPLE WAYS TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE

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Being thankful to someone and showing them how grateful you are may seem like a small thing, but it can have a massive impact on someone's life.

Can you imagine a world where everyone was grateful for the things that were done for them? Even a simple act of kindness, like a smile, for example, could brighten someone's day and make them want to help again in the future.

You can make your life - and the world - better by expressing your gratitude!

**Apply these methods to show your gratitude:**

**Send a note saying thank you**

Sometimes it is nice to read about how thankful a person is.

Taking the time to write something down rather than just sending a text message makes it more personal too.

### **Give them a hug**

You can only do this where appropriate, but if you're feeling grateful about something, it's okay to give your family or close friends a hug. Of course, not everyone will be receptive of a hug, so ensure that you know how they are going to react beforehand.

### **Offer a free favour**

Even if it is something small, do something nice for someone without expecting anything in return. Think of what the person wants or needs and do your best to help, even if it is just making a cup of coffee or doing a small chore

Actions speak louder than words, and this simple act will show how grateful you are.

### **Give a little gift**

A bouquet of flowers or a box of chocolates won't cost much, but the act of giving them shows that you've thought about the person and that you are grateful for what they do for you.

### **Be happy for their achievements**

Show someone how pleased you are with their achievement. A nice handwritten card or some flowers would be a nice thought.

### **Write a list**

This will only take 5-10 minutes but will show just how much you care. Sit down with a pen and paper and make a list of 10 or more things that you love about someone. Mention the things that they do for you that you are grateful for. Send that list to them.

### **Give them public acknowledgement**

Not everyone will love being made a fuss of in public, but for some, public praise would be appreciated. This works especially well if you're the boss and those you wish to offer gratitude to are your employees.

### **Just be there**

Always be available for those you care about, even when things are not going well for you. When you are supportive of others, you are showing how much you care and that you're grateful for the times they were there to support you.

### **Surprise them with kindness**

This works especially well with your partner. Surprise them with a lovely dinner or clean the house when they go out shopping. These simple tasks will mean a lot to someone, especially if they are busy or stressed with very little spare time.

## **Look for the good in every situation**

You may not always feel grateful for the things that are going on in your life. Especially if you feel as though things are going wrong. However, now is the time to be most grateful.

Look for those little things that are going right for you. Focus on these positives and be grateful for them. They can help take your mind off any negatives.

Notice the little things that others do for you, even in unpleasant situations. Let them know that they made a positive difference.

You don't have to make grand gestures to express gratitude. Even the smallest act can show someone how thankful you are.

# 5

## 5 METHODS TO SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE

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We only have so much room in our lives. Whether it is our mental space, physical space, or calendar space, everything we do, everything we buy, and everyone we spend time with takes up this space.

When you simplify your life, you will have more time, space, and energy to do the things you want to do!

**Apply these methods to simplify your life:**

### **Declutter your house**

The environment you spend time in has an effect on how you feel, both physically and psychologically. If you're wasting time looking for misplaced items or feeling overwhelmed when you open a cupboard, a change is in order.

Once you start to organize your belongings, you'll start to feel more productive and energetic. Start with one room and then ask yourself whether you feel better or not.

### **Lose those negative mental habits**

Negative mental activities, such as feeling sorry for yourself or dwelling on the past, can carry a lot of psychological weight and leave you feeling drained.

You can clear this mental clutter by focusing on healthier thoughts, for example, gratitude, self-compassion and realistic self-talk.

If you catch yourself thinking negatively, stop yourself by taking a deep breath and reminding yourself that it isn't helpful. Then, switch your thoughts to something that makes you feel happier.

As you practice this technique, it becomes easier and easier until focusing on the positive becomes a habit.

### **Cut out toxic people**

We all have that friend or family member who only sees problems and never any solution. These negative people can take up valuable space in your life.

Avoid cutting people out of your life just because they are going through a tough time. However, it is important to set boundaries too.

Even if you don't spend too much time together, if the time you do spend together leaves you feeling exhausted, then sometimes the best thing to do for your mental health is to sever your ties.

### **Take control of your money**

When you don't control your money, your money begins to control you, instead. When that happens, it takes up too much space in your life.

Decide to take charge of your finances, create a budget, and stick to it. Once you have done this, making future financial decisions will be much simpler, and you won't be spending as much time and energy worrying about your money.

### **Prioritize your time.**

Time is your most valuable resource. When you consider how much of your time you spend complaining, scrolling through social media, or just waiting for something to happen, you'll find that you've been wasting many precious moments.

Instead of letting timewasters take up your space, make a schedule and do the things that matter most to you!

Make time for yourself to go for a walk, play with your children, or watch the sunset. Many simple things in life make up some of our most valuable moments. Don't let the clutter cut these precious experiences out of your life!

Life can be complicated at times, and while it may feel as though simplifying things is overwhelming, the effort to make these changes will be well worth it.

Start by subtracting one negative thing from your life each day. Get rid of some stuff you no longer need, try to clear some mental space, and make a little room in your calendar for yourself.

As your life becomes simpler, you won't have as many stresses, and you'll find yourself enjoying your life again - a joy that you may have lost little by little as your life got more and more complicated.

Simplify your life and bring back your joy!

# 6

## **WHY YOU NEVER HAVE ENOUGH TIME AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT**

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Are you always wishing you had more time available to you? The truth is, you probably have plenty of time. You're just not focused, and you're not using your time wisely.

Everyone receives 24 hours each day. There's a reason why some people are accomplishing much more than you are and are still able to be on time for all of their commitments.

**These reasons could be why you never have enough time:**

### **You fail to prioritize**

What's the most important activity you must do for you to accomplish your objective? If you're not asking yourself this question regularly, you're not getting the most bang for your

time and effort. It's easy to stay very busy but fail to accomplish much.

Ask yourself, “What is the most important thing I need to accomplish?”

Then ask yourself, “What is the best way for me to accomplish that?”

### **You waste time**

This could be due to procrastination. It could be due to inefficient work habits.

Choose to avoid wasting time, period.

### **You're disorganized**

When you're not organized, everything takes longer than it should. You spend time looking for a pair of clean socks, your car keys, searching for files on your computer, and trying to pull off things at the last minute.

Disorganized people never seem to have enough time, and they're frequently late with their work.

Make an effort to organize your life and yourself. There are many resources dedicated to organization. Use them.

### **You have too many distractions in your life**

It could be low-quality social interactions, TV, needlepoint, your baseball card collection, noisy kids, clutter, or your prize-winning rose bushes. Having too many things in your life takes too much time.

Remove the things from your life that are unnecessary. Minimize the distractions you can't remove, like your noisy children!

### **You don't start your day early enough**

Most of us do little in the evening. That time is largely wasted just lying around the house or staring at your phone. That's why so many highly successful people skip the evening hours by going to bed and waking up extra early.

Your brain tends to shut down by the late afternoon, whether you started your day at 9:00 AM or 5:00 AM. Give yourself a few extra productive hours by getting up early and going to bed early.

### **You fail to track your time**

Track how you spend your time each day. Switch tasks when appropriate so everything receives the time it requires.

Keep a simple journal and make a record each hour of how you spent the last 60 minutes.

## **You don't have a plan for your day.**

Your day shouldn't be random or determined on the fly. To get the most out of your time, it's necessary to have a plan for the day.

Make a detailed plan for your day before you go to bed. Spend your day executing that plan as well as you can.

## **You're not focused**

You've been told to "focus" or "concentrate" since you started kindergarten. Too bad the education system never taught you how. If you sit down to work on something for an hour, how many minutes is your attention truly focused on that task?

You probably have plenty of time to accomplish everything you need to do each day, but you just need to focus at a higher level. Practice meditation. Practice focusing on whatever it is you're doing. Focus is built through practice.

Make the most of your time by prioritizing, removing distractions, and learning how to focus. You have all the time you need if you're willing to make the necessary adjustments to yourself and your life.

You have 24 hours each day. Ensure that you're using them wisely!

# 7

## 4 WEEKS TO FREEDOM: THE ROAD TO FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

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Financial independence is highly desirable. Yet, for some reason, it seems to elude many of us. You've likely tried your hand at many different approaches, yet none have been able to give you the anticipated results.

The good news is that financial independence can be achieved. *By making certain adjustments to your life, you'll find yourself starting to build financial independence.* So put aside your plan to work harder or put in longer hours and read on to find the answers you've been searching for.

**Following these steps will lead you to financial independence:**

**Eliminate the word “credit” from your vocabulary**

Having a good credit score can open up opportunities for you. But living in the credit culture also puts you in a stressful situation.

*If you're seeking financial independence, start by doing away with credit.*

You probably have a few credit cards in your wallet. Get rid of them! If that makes you nervous, only keep one for emergencies. Just ensure the credit limit is somewhat in line with the amount of cash you've saved.

If you're unable to purchase something with cash, it probably means you can't afford it. Live within your means.

Avoid borrowing for frivolous expenditures. Those are usually the hardest loans to repay.

**Treat needs and wants differently**

Take a look at your life. How many of the things you have or do can be considered necessities?

*If you're honest with yourself, you'll realize you're piling on unnecessary expenses focusing on your wants rather than your needs.*

Making a list of the things you require for survival is a necessary step for financial independence.

Everything that didn't make the list can easily be eliminated from your expenses each month. Why put that amount of burden on yourself? It's time to give your finances a break.

*The things you do to maintain a calm existence can be added to your list of necessities.* For example, your yoga class may be necessary because of the physical and emotional benefits. But you can reduce the monthly expense by purchasing a yoga DVD and working out at home.

### **Tap into your skillset**

Are you working in a field that you love and that maximizes your skills? If you think about it, you'll realize that you're most productive when you're doing something you like or are good at.

Think about your current job. Is it bringing out the best in you? *Or, can you earn more and increase your productivity in another field?*

Perhaps you can pursue a transfer to another department at your current place of employment. Or maybe you want to move on to something completely different.

### **Save money at all costs**

Even if it's a dollar at a time, put aside money for your savings account each month. *Learning to save helps you develop an understanding of its importance.*

One way to save is to request a salary deduction each month. That amount can go to an investment account, which limits your access.

Many companies have 401(K) or 403(B) accounts that can get you started with a savings plan. Look into what's available at your place of employment.

*After reading this, you'll likely realize it's much easier than you think to make some simple financial adjustments. Give yourself four weeks of this routine and then assess how it's going. You'll feel encouraged by the positive results!*

# 8

## THINKING OF QUITTING YOUR JOB? BE CERTAIN YOU'RE PREPARED

---

We've all been there. Your job can get you down. Everyone has daydreamed about walking out and never looking back. *There are things you can do to make the period after quitting your job smoother and more successful.* Creating a financial challenge might be worse than suffering through a job you don't enjoy.

Before quitting, make a plan and be sure all the necessary pieces are in place first.

### **Consider these items before quitting your job:**

#### **Make a budget**

This is a short-term, no-thrills budget. It includes items like your rent or mortgage, utilities, food, insurance, and car payment.

Eliminate all the non-essentials. This is the amount needed each month to survive.

*Look at all of your expenses and determine which are indispensable and which can be eliminated for a while. Then take another look and be sure.*

### **Investigate your health insurance options**

Medical coverage is expensive. The coverage is expensive because healthcare is so expensive. Having coverage is also the law at this time. There can be expensive tax consequences if you don't have qualifying coverage.

Be sure to check out the federal health care website. You might qualify for subsidies you never expected.

### **Rollover your retirement account**

Your employer-sponsored account will need to be transferred to an account you can manage yourself. If you're taking another job with a 401(k) plan, you can have the money transferred to that new account.

*If you're self-employed, you have many retirement account options available to you. You might find you're in a better position than you were before you left your job. Your options can vary, depending on whether or not you have employees.*

## **Save at least six months of living expenses**

If your business idea fails or you can't find another position quickly, this money will keep you going for at least six months.

## **Have an idea of how you'll earn money**

Six months can go by quicker than you think! Ideally, you'll have another job lined up if you're planning to work for someone else again.

If you're going to work for yourself, have a detailed plan of how you're going to generate income. Do you have the resources to put that plan into effect? What is your back up plan? Can you drive your uncle's fish delivery truck until your business takes off? Would you be willing to work part-time until the situation improves?

## **Get advice**

Speak with someone that quit their job and see what advice they would give to others about the experience. You might gain some insight into what lies ahead.

## **Quit gracefully**

*You might want to let your boss have it, but this approach often backfires.* It's impossible to know how your actions will affect you in the future. Maybe you and your boss will cross paths again. Perhaps your current company will have a perfect job opening in the future.

Give at least two weeks' notice and leave uneventfully. Nothing has ever been gained by upsetting someone.

Are you ready to quit your job? *Walking away from your job goes more smoothly if you prepare in advance.* Avoid being hasty. Take your time and put all the pieces in place before you walk away from a regular paycheck. You might be frustrated with your current situation, but being unemployed is a substantial risk. Ensure that you're ready to take the plunge.

# 9

## 6 ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENTS THAT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE TOMORROW

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Do you feel like your life could be happier? A better tomorrow could start with something as simple as your attitude. Our perspectives have a huge effect on our overall level of happiness. They can affect our success as well.

*Over time, attitudes become habitual.* Because of this, they can take a bit of effort to change, but such work is well worth your time!

**Try these techniques to bring greater happiness and success into your life:**

**Start each day by making a mental list of things you're thankful for**

You can do this while you're lying in bed just before you get up,

in the shower, or while driving to work. This simple mental exercise will adjust your focus to the good things that you already have.

### **Love life, not stuff**

Do you feel that having more possessions will make you happy? What usually happens is that, after you acquire something, it never seems to mean as much to you as you thought it would. After the newness wears off, you're back to wanting some more new stuff! So the joy in most new possessions is temporary, at best, and leads to more "wanting."

- *The quality of your life itself is what will bring you the most happiness, not the quantity or quality of your stuff.*
- Spend some time each day doing what you love.
- Build meaningful relationships that uplift you.
- Take action to create a life filled with what truly means the most to you.

### **Be patient**

Our society has trained us to be in a hurry and expect immediate gratification. However, *some of the great things in life take time to bring to fruition.*

Enjoy the *process* of creating the life you desire. Each day will bring you one step closer. Being impatient tends to push your goals farther away.

### **Believe in yourself**

Life is much more pleasant when you have faith in yourself. Remember: You've *already* done things that are much more difficult than just about anything you may still wish to accomplish. So you know you *can* achieve your future plans.

Consider learning to walk. How many times does a baby fall before they finally can stand up unassisted, let alone walk? And we keep learning more over time. Even a 10-year old doesn't walk as well as a 30-year old. It takes many years of practice.

How many times are you willing to fall and get back up now? *When you believe in yourself and expect success, you're more likely to succeed.* Your upbeat attitude will lead you to seek solutions to your challenges until you reach your goal.

### **Sometimes being smart is sufficient**

We often believe that everything worthwhile requires a lot of work. However, many times, approaching challenges by working smart instead of working hard can save a lot of time and grief.

Sit down and reflect on your situation from the perspective that there's a simple solution to each challenge. You might be surprised how clever you can be if you make an effort to find an easy but satisfactory solution.

### **There's no such thing as failure**

Each time your plans fall short, analyze where they went wrong, learn from the experience, and continue moving forward.

When you "fail," all you've done is discovered an ineffective way of trying to do something. That's all. The knowledge gained only makes you more capable in the future.

Adjusting your attitude and making the changes permanent will take some work, but this effort pays off. *Your attitude affects your perspective, what you notice, and what you fail to notice.* So by adjusting your attitude, you can shift your whole reality!

Examine the attitudes you already hold that may be limiting your life and happiness. *What perspectives and beliefs would serve you better?* Use the above ideas to start the process of adjusting those ineffective attitudes today for a happier tomorrow.

# 10

## CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE, CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

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When your life goes in a direction that you'd rather not experience, it's often hard to deal with the challenge. You try many different ways to get yourself on the right track, but nothing you're doing seems to work. Does that sound familiar?

If it does, you've undoubtedly noticed that having the ideal life isn't always easy to come by. *However, enjoying a fulfilling life has very little to do with how your cards are dealt, but rather how you play them.*

As the saying goes, "Life is 1% what happens to you and 99% how you deal with it." How you deal with life's situations ultimately determines your quality of life.

*The attitude you display in any circumstance will inevitably impact the outcome of it.* But you're probably wondering, "How

else am I supposed to react to a negative event than to feel negatively about it?” Let’s take a look at an example and how a change in attitude can improve your situation:

### **The Traffic Scenario**

Let’s say you’re driving and you’re about to come upon an amber light, which you’d rather not stop at because you’re late. So you speed up and run through the red light instead, and end up being stopped by a police officer, who is now writing you a ticket.

You’re angry and annoyed because you’re late for a meeting at the office. Your anger overflows and you suddenly start to shove the police officer. As a result, you get a second ticket for assaulting an officer. *Your negative attitude has resulted in receiving two tickets instead of one, and you’re still late for the meeting!*

Let’s look at how a change in attitude could have impacted the outcome for the better:

- Leaving home a little earlier would have bought you enough time so you wouldn’t have to speed through the light in the first place.

- Stopping at the yellow light would have resulted in a two-minute delay instead of the 20-minute delay you experienced with the police officer!
- Accepting your wrong-doing and acknowledging it to the police officer could have resulted in leniency with the first offence. You might have gotten off without a ticket at all.
- Containing your anger would have prevented the ticket for the second offence.
- You're now down at least \$200, which you were planning to use to complete your credit card payments. A more positive attitude would have saved some money and enabled you to follow through on your credit card payment plan.

That example clearly shows how a change in attitude can significantly change the outcome of a situation you're thrown into – or one which you've created all on your own! It is instinctual to want to respond to the tone of a situation with an equal tone. *But when that tone's negative, you'll almost always end up being worse off.*

*The minute you start to change your attitude towards life's challenges, you'll start to feel accomplished at the end of a challenge as opposed to feeling conquered by it.*

When you remember that you have the power to choose your reaction, you'll have the power to determine the outcome of a situation!

If your ultimate goal in life is to be truly happy, stop and take a look at how much control you have over most outcomes. Once you have stopped long enough to realize that only you can determine how happy you feel, you'll automatically start making the choices and attitude adjustments that will help you achieve that happiness!

# 11

## DEVELOP A POSITIVE MINDSET WITH THIS 21 DAY PLAN

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It's easy to let disappointments change your overall mindset. When things seem to go in every other direction except the one you want, you probably feel like giving up. However, keep in mind that challenges and obstacles are only temporary. With a positive mindset, giving up won't be an option for you!

If you want to be a high-achiever, your only option is to eliminate negative thinking. *You're only as successful as the effort you put into making positive changes.*

You can achieve a changed mindset in as little as 21 days. As you read on, you'll see that all the tools you need are in the palm of your hand.

## **Commit to making these changes for 21 days:**

### **Confront your disappointments**

Avoid sweeping disappointments under the rug, even if you'd rather not face them. When you ignore them, the feelings that come along with being disappointed continue to linger.

You owe it to yourself to free your mind. *Latching on to disappointments holds you back from pursuing other opportunities.*

Look at each challenge as a stepping stone to becoming more successful later on.

### **Reflect on your achievements**

*Spend a moment each day making note of your achievements.* Even include the smallest ones you can think of. Remember that the greatest architectural structures are built with the smallest morsels of stone.

When you stop to think about it, you realize how many little things cause you to smile each day. Those small accomplishments mean a lot, even if the impact doesn't seem far-reaching at the time.

Avoid allowing disappointments to diminish the joy of your achievements. *You deserve every good thing in life.* Remind yourself of that every day.

## **Centre yourself spiritually**

Spiritual balance is important to ensuring inner peace. This leads to positive living. When you're at ease with what's happening in your life, it's difficult for disappointments to take control of you.

Spiritual peace is the glue that holds this unpredictable world together. It's what allows you to be more accepting of situations at the end of each day.

*Take time each day to connect with your inner self. Pay attention to the emotions. Allow yourself to achieve emotional healing.*

## **Surround yourself with positivity.**

Positive influences help to build your new mindset. *Make a special effort each day to see and converse with people who bring only the best to your encounter.*

Having your family and friends around can remind you of how beautiful life can be. Their support can make a world of difference in your life.

The basic idea is to make these adjustments every day for 21 days. It takes 21 days for habits to form, whether good or bad. *Your aim is to form positive habits and use them to build a happy life.*

On day 22, you'll realize how much you yearn to do everything you practised for the last 21 days. You'll find yourself wanting to implement your new standards of positive living. And that's when you know that you've created a positive thinker with all the promise in the world!

# 12

## 3 HABITS THAT IMPROVE FOCUS

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Unless you're a Buddhist monk, you encounter distractions from time to time that minimizes your effectiveness in getting your work done.

The internet is especially disrupting with email, messages, status updates, and more. But distractions also include co-workers, family, and our wandering minds. *It seems that we dawdle our lives away five minutes at a time.*

The big question is how to defeat this tendency. How can you make use of the Internet constructively without falling victim to its distractive qualities?

**Turn these strategies into daily habits that help you become more efficient and effective:**

### **Use time limits**

When we set a time limit, we improve our ability to focus. It

almost becomes a game of 'beat the clock'. Ideally, you should use a timer and limit your work periods to around 25 or 55 minutes – with a 5-10 minute break in between tasks. If a task is going to take longer than 55 minutes, break it down into smaller chunks.

Having a time limit also forces you to do the most important parts of any work. If you only have an hour, you're going to have to decide what's most important. This is much better than deciding to simply work on something until it's done. Decide how long it should take, and then set the timer.

If you have any sort of attention challenge, using a timer can increase your ability to keep your mind on the task at hand. The time flies by, and you'll get more done. You're likely to even find it relaxing since you'll be focused on what you're doing instead of thinking about 20 other things.

*Research has shown that the most productive schedule for most people is:*

- 50 minutes of work
- 10-minute break
- 50 more minutes of work

- 30-minute break (You might not be able to get away with a 30-minute break at work, but it's a good time to get up, walk around, and get a drink.)
- Repeat

### ***Time your breaks***

If you decide to check your email or do one of those other tasks that seem to magically go from 5 minutes to 30 minutes or more, using a timer will serve as a reminder. It will also force you to only check on the most important things.

### **Close everything that can be closed**

Everything on your computer that isn't necessary for the task at hand should be closed down. If you don't need the internet, shut it off. That includes all your email, notifications, games, and blogs. Close your door and unplug the phone, if possible.

Nothing is going anywhere – it will all still be there when you're done. *One of the keys to being more effective is eliminating the things that make us less effective.*

### **Insert a pause, as needed**

When you first implement these habits, there will be times that you will have an incredible urge to check your email, Facebook, or Twitter.

Before you succumb to the urge, take 10 seconds and pause. Take a long, deep breath and ask yourself if you want to waste your time on something that is largely meaningless, or if you'd rather accomplish something worthwhile.

The ability to focus has been largely lost for many of us. However, these easy habits, which anyone can do, can go a long way toward improving your focus and effectiveness at any task.

It's likely to be challenging at first, but you can do it. *You can get more done, in less time, by learning to improve your focus and avoiding the things that waste your precious time.*

Put these three habits into play starting today. You'll be impressed by how much more you can get done!

# 13

## THE 4 STEP GUIDE TO MAKING TOUGH DECISIONS

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When it comes to making decisions that take you out of your comfort zone, it can be emotionally trying.

The only way around those decisions is to be untrue to your beliefs. And that's an approach you most likely want to avoid. Your conscience is bound to eat away at you if you go that route.

**Instead, apply this process to help you make those tough decisions with confidence:**

### **Weigh the alternative**

When a tough decision looms overhead, you know there is always an alternative. It's probably easier to go with that alternative and save yourself the stress. But at what cost?

*If you are honest with yourself, you'll realize that the tough decision may be the best decision from a moral standpoint. It is hard to go wrong when you go the moral route!*

Avoid making decisions that you know may rest on your conscience forever. Those make it difficult to live with true peace of mind.

### **Consider the outcome**

Usually, difficult decisions work out for the better in the end. But what you're worried about is those who may not be pleased with the decision. The toss-up is between two glaring options. Do you continue in a less than favourable situation? Or do you decide to make a change for the better?

### ***A great way to justify making a hard decision is to look at the outcome***

Do you see yourself in a more positive situation after you make this decision? Can you envision life being less stressful?

Always remember what you're trying to achieve in life. Make your decisions based on *your* goals, whether big or small. *Avoid living according to the goals of others if you want to be truly happy.*

## **Limit the advice you take**

In some scenarios, the advice is very helpful. However, in others, it can easily cloud your judgment. *When making a tough decision, go with your gut.* It's usually correct if you're aligned with your conscience!

When you start to hear several different opinions, you can get confused. Of course, you can be courteous to everyone offering their suggestion. You may want to respectfully listen to everybody who's trying to help. But listen with one ear!

It's possible to hear the advice and not take it to heart. It's also possible to weigh everybody's feedback and filter the ones that aren't helpful.

## **Think outside your comfort zone**

Remember that life in general tends to be uncomfortable. While you would prefer otherwise, it's a reality you just sometimes have to face. When you prime your mind to think of discomfort as the norm, those tough decisions become easier.

Nobody likes to be uncomfortable, especially for extended periods. But that's what you'll be if you avoid making the tough decision when it's necessary for your well-being.

*If you know something is right, aim to block out all the noise and listen to your conscience.*

You may end up losing friends for the decision. But you may gain so much more as a result, too. Consider peace of mind, a clear conscience and genuine happiness. These can all be yours when you decide to do what's truly best for you.

So, focus on the task at hand, and what accomplishing it can help you achieve. If the result of your decision better your situation and supports your goals and conscience, then you can be confident that you've made a wise decision – even if it was tough.

# 14

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

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We've all been there. It's easy to get stuck when none of your options stand out. One job has better hours and more interesting work, but the other possibility offers a better salary. The best options may be less than obvious.

*Unfortunately, failing to make decisions in a timely matter can have negative repercussions.* With more time, you can develop more elegant solutions. When time is short, you're limited to just a few options, none of which may be very good.

**Keep these ideas in mind when you're unsure of what you want:**

### **Know your values**

Those who are well in-tune with their values have a much easier time making decisions. It's much more challenging to make a

choice when you're unclear and lack a stable view of yourself and what's important to you.

### **Have goals**

When you know exactly where you're headed, most of the options can be eliminated quickly. Does a particular possibility bring you closer to reaching your goal? *The more your decisions are based around your goals, the more likely you are to accomplish them.* Keep your goals fresh in your mind.

### **Collect the information you require**

Wise decisions require good information. Most of us either fail to gather enough information or we're forever stuck on this step.

Knowing yourself and your goals can dramatically reduce the amount of time needed to navigate your information-gathering efforts.

### **Examine your fear of failure**

It's common to shun actions that may fail. Ensure you're not basing your decisions too much on the likelihood of success.

*Avoid allowing a little uncertainty to prevent you from fully living your life.*

### **Keep the long-term in mind**

Many individuals are shortsighted. Prepare a foundation for the future. You may choose the easier option today to straighten

things out down the road. However, it's generally harder to change course once you've gained momentum.

### **Consider the risks**

Managing risk isn't just for investments. All decisions carry some element of risk. Consider what's at stake before making a final decision.

### **Set a deadline**

We're all used to deadlines, whether they relate to a project at work or choosing a vacation destination. *Give yourself a reasonable deadline and stick to it.*

### **Choose**

If you're still stuck after applying all the other suggestions, just choose something. All the options are likely to produce a similar outcome. Pick one and begin taking action. *Failing to choose is choosing to fail.*

No progress can be made without a clear and committed decision. Even flipping a coin is infinitely more effective than failing to decide. Be confident and make a decision!

When you fail to decide what you want, you're ultimately stuck with the simplest option available. *If you don't decide your life, outside forces will decide it for you.* Avoid putting yourself in this situation.

Suppose you need to find a new apartment to rent. With a 3-month deadline, you have far more options than you do with a 7-day deadline. If you wait too long to decide what you want, you lose flexibility, and your options are greatly restricted. Make your decisions intelligently and quickly. Your life will be more rewarding and less stressful.

# 15

## 5 EASY ACTIONS THAT DEVELOP YOUR INTUITION

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Intuition is a tool that all of us have. Some people suggest that it's mystical power. Others would suggest that it's merely our subconscious trying to tell us something. Regardless of the source, we all have that little voice that tries to tell us things from time to time.

As we get older, we often learn to ignore that little voice. We turn to logic and focus on being practical. *But we've experienced a lot over the years, and there is some part of our brain that has accumulated a tremendous amount of wisdom.* Listening to that little voice can be a good thing.

**Apply these techniques to develop your intuition:**

**Meditate for a few minutes each day**

One characteristic of intuition is that it has a soft voice most of

the time. It can be challenging to notice it if our minds are busy with other things. Meditation is a great way to clear the mind and make room for our intuition to come shining through.

*A simple technique to clear your mind is to simply count your breaths and attempt to stay focused on your breathing.* Avoid letting your mind wander.

### **Record your dreams**

Our dreams can be full of useful information. Many psychologists believe that we work out our challenges in our sleep. It's difficult for most of us to remember our dreams. Studies show that we average 5 dreams per night, and most of us are lucky to even remember one.

After you get in bed, tell yourself that you want to remember your dreams in the morning. Keep thinking this to yourself until you fall asleep.

Keep a notebook and pen near your bed. A voice recorder can work well, too. As soon as you wake up, start writing. Dreams tend to fade from memory quickly.

Review your dreams and see if there might be any information you can use in your life.

## **Follow your intuition**

*The surest way to shut down your intuition is to never follow it.* Start using it in situations that have minor importance. It could be as simple as taking a walk and asking yourself which way you should turn at each intersection or fork in the road.

Show your intuition that you're listening and responding. You'll be more likely to hear from it in the future.

## **Busy your mind**

Many people find that their best ideas come while their mind is busy, but not too busy. Some examples commonly cited include, walking, driving down the highway, mowing the grass, taking a shower, and listening to the rain. Think about the times you've had great ideas. Try to put yourself in similar situations more frequently.

## **Keep a journal**

Take a few minutes each day to write in a journal. Sometimes, putting things down on paper opens a floodgate of ideas and inspiration. Study what you've written. You're likely to find insights you haven't considered.

Keep your journals in a safe place, so you'll feel more comfortable with being honest and thorough.

Being in touch with your intuition can help you identify and solve the challenges in your life that are causing stress. It also releases your imagination and creativity. ***Your intuition is a great resource, but it's important to nurture it.*** Start with smaller things. When your intuition has proven it's reliable, use it to make bigger decisions.

Intuition is a tether to the subconscious. It's your ultimate source of wisdom and creative energy. Make life easier and richer by utilizing all of your resources.

# 16

## HOW TO MAKE GOOD DECISIONS FAST

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Do you ever feel like you're pressured into making decisions before you're truly ready? It's always a good idea to weigh your alternatives and calmly make your decision. Sometimes, though, you may not have a lot of time on your hands, and in these situations, *you can speed up your decision-making skills* instead of throwing yourself into a panic.

**Apply these techniques to help you make good, quick decisions:**

### **Calm down**

If you're feeling pressured into making a fast decision, the first thing to do is calm down. If you aren't in a position where you can think clearly, then it will be more difficult to make a good decision.

*Take a few deep breaths to aid in clarity of thought and help you become less stressed.*

### **Avoid running in circles**

When time is of the essence, you might find that your mind begins to run in circles. Break your decision down into the vital parts and focus on the benefits of each alternative one at a time.

### **Take the time you need**

Most of the time you won't need to make decisions in a matter of seconds. You may need to make a decision quickly, but allow yourself time to go over your options.

### **Make a list of options and alternatives**

You can write the steps down, or keep a list in your head. Do what works for you. Consider the outcomes of the available choices, as well as alternative ideas.

### **Consider your feelings and the feelings of others**

Sometimes it's good to just follow a gut feeling even if you don't have much to back it up. *Explore your initial feelings about the decision.* Also, take the time to consider the feelings of the other people involved.

### **Ask for help**

Most of the time you don't have to be alone with your major decisions, and if you need to make a decision quickly, it'll help

to get another pair of eyes on the situation. Ask for help from someone you know and trust.

### **Narrow down your choices**

See if you can quickly cross some alternatives off of your list of possibilities. Your decision will be easier if there are fewer choices.

### **Think on your feet**

Strengthen your ability to think fast. This takes practice, confidence, and a firm belief in yourself. As you become more accustomed to thinking on your feet, *you'll automatically stop second-guessing yourself in tough situations.*

### **Make your decision**

If you've arrived at a conclusion but you're still hesitating, then you haven't made your decision yet. Have confidence and go with whichever alternative seems best based on the information you have.

*Remember, many day-to-day decisions aren't permanent.* If your information changes drastically, or things don't go as planned with this decision, you may be able to change your decision to a new one based on the new circumstances.

As long as you practice these tips, *you'll improve your decision-making skills*. It may take some work, but the ability to make quick and wise decisions is just around the corner.

# 17

## ARE YOU BEING GUIDED BY YOUR INTUITION OR YOUR EGO?

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It's not always easy to tell if our choices are coming from the right place. *However, if you follow your intuition, your life is likely to be enjoyable and meaningful.* Follow your ego and you might be successful in many ways, but you're likely to find yourself wondering why you're not as happy as you think you should be.

Learning to determine whether you're being guided by intuition or ego can make a huge difference in your life. While there are no hard and fast rules to make the distinction, there are tendencies that can serve as a guide.

**Consider these differences:**

**Ego-based decisions are grounded in fear and self-preservation.**

If you decide to go to medical school primarily for reasons of

financial security, that's ego. If you decide to not ask out the beautiful woman that lives on the corner, that's ego.

**Ego-based decisions typically have emotion connected to them.**

A choice made from a place of intuition just feels "right" and often comes out of the left field. You might be mowing the grass and be hit with the idea of becoming a dog breeder. The resulting battle in your head is your ego fighting back.

**Ego-based decisions consider external results.**

Are you writing a book to have a bestseller, or are you writing a book because you're fascinated with the idea of writing a book? Are you taking an action to gain certain results, or does the action itself provide sufficient satisfaction?

**Ego-based decisions involve rationalization.**

Your ego is wonderful at convincing you that its choice is the right one. *"I'll never get that job. Imagine how disappointed I'll feel when it doesn't work out. People like me are destined to only be supervisors, but there's nothing wrong with that. I can still have a decent life."*

It's just a rationalization based on fear – fear of success or fear of failure.

*The ego tries to justify itself with facts, figures, and logic.*

Intuition doesn't require these tricks to compel you. If you're using logic to convince yourself of a course of action, you can bet that's your ego squawking.

### **Intuition doesn't judge**

A thought or decision arising from intuition doesn't involve judgment statements about right or wrong, good or bad. Intuitive thoughts feel calm, relaxed, and peaceful. There's a universal truth to an idea that arises from intuition.

### **Is the expected gratification coming from within or is it external?**

Would you make the same choice if no one would ever know? Would you purchase that BMW if no one ever knew you owned it? Or do you simply love German automobiles and love the idea of owning a precision car? Are you driven by money and admiration or by personal satisfaction?

### ***While the ego can be very limiting, that doesn't necessarily mean that it's wrong***

Remember that the ego's motivation is largely based on self-preservation. Your ego believes that it has your best interests at heart. Ignoring the ego can be challenging. It uses fear to influence you. It's only natural to avoid fear and seek comfort.

The trick is to realize when fear is holding you back from something bigger and better. *Sometimes fear is keeping you from doing something foolish.* Think before choosing which voice to follow, use these tips to help you make a decision that will bring you true happiness.

# 18

## FAST-TRACK YOUR CAREER WITH PERSONAL BRANDING

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In today's world, it's important to take your personal brand seriously if you want others to take *you* seriously. Try out these tips for understanding the importance of personal branding, defining your brand, and marketing your brand for greater career success.

### **Understanding the Importance of Personal Branding**

**Your personal brand helps you to:**

**Prosper as a free agent. *Your brand is your reputation.***

It's the way others see you. If you're like most people, you may be switching jobs and employers regularly. Your brand is an asset you can take with you wherever you go.

### **Chart your direction.**

Your brand will help you to establish goals, priorities and action plans. Even while taking care of daily obligations, you'll have a bigger picture in mind.

### **Serve others.**

Self-promotion can go too far, so it's easy to think that branding is somehow vain or self-absorbed. *In reality, your brand shows the positive impact you can have on other people and the world around you.*

## **Defining Your Personal Brand**

**These tips will help you create an outstanding personal brand:**

### **Take an inventory.**

Take a good look at yourself. Write out your strengths and weaknesses. Identify your passions. Think about what you're good at and what you like to do.

### **Distinguish yourself from your colleagues.**

There are plenty of talented and dependable people in every field. *Pinpoint your unique selling point.* Maybe you're a gas station owner who maintains the cleanest bathrooms in town.

**Talk about benefits. *Let your target audience know what you can do for them.***

Explain how you can boost profits by increasing sales or saving money.

**Summarize your mission in 10 seconds or less.**

Be prepared to capture people's attention quickly. Let them know what you do in 15 words or less. You can tell you're on the right track when they ask for more details.

**Ask for feedback.**

Survey your family, friends, customers and colleagues to find out what they think of you and your abilities. Show your appreciation for constructive criticism so they'll keep sharing it with you.

**Stay updated.**

Review your mission statement every six months. Make new action plans so you're always getting closer to your goals.

**Marketing Your Personal Brand**

**Use these strategies to expand your reach:**

**Increase your visibility.**

Post fresh content on your website or blog regularly. Stay active in social media. Look for opportunities to teach classes, give presentations, or write articles in your field.

### **Build buzz.**

Collect samples of positive feedback you get in the workplace. Assemble testimonials from happy clients and encourage them to make referrals. *Word of mouth is often more effective and certainly cheaper than paid advertising.*

### **Tell your success stories.**

Craft brief anecdotes about your accomplishments that showcase your skills and make you proud. Rehearse telling them so you sound natural.

### **Monetize your contribution.**

Numbers sound convincing. Try to quantify the value you can deliver. For example, if you're pitching your IT services to a small business owner, discuss how much money they can save by signing up with you for monthly maintenance visits that reduce the risk of expensive repairs and downtime.

### **Put together a dream team.**

It's difficult to go it alone. *Cultivate your network.* Help others to market their brand and they're more likely to do the same for you. Team up with complementary partners. Exchange services like cooking meals for a friend who cuts your hair.

Branding used to be for cattle and big corporations, but now everyone is in on the act. *Take charge of your personal brand*

to achieve more career success and guide your life in a direction that is meaningful for you.



# 19

## A PROVEN PROCESS FOR MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

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It's hard to think of a challenging area of your life that didn't become challenging due to poor decision-making. *Wiser decisions lead to a more successful and lower-stress life.* When you make effective decisions, your life is more enjoyable and satisfying.

**Master the art of decision-making and enhance the quality of your life by following this process:**

**Decide what you're trying to accomplish.**

What is the result that you're hoping for? To maximize your income? Strengthen your relationship? Minimize the financial or emotional cost? Advance your career? Be clear on the desired outcome of your decision.

### **Make a list of your resources.**

Imagine you had to make a home repair. You'd determine which tools you had available for the job and then make a plan based upon those available tools. You might also purchase new tools.

What resources do you possess that apply to following through on your possible options?

### **Brainstorm possible choices.**

*Avoid judging your options too quickly.* Make a long list. You can evaluate them later.

Consider the odds of success. Discard any solution with a poor chance of success.

### **Consider the time and money involved.**

For example, an above-ground pool costs much less than an in-ground pool. A pet parrot requires more time and attention than a cat.

### **What are the risks?**

What can go wrong and what are the ramifications? A pet bird is harder to get rid of and can live five times longer than a cat. Birds can also be much more expensive, so more money is at risk.

### **Is the upside worth the risk?**

Some options are riskier than others, but the greater potential rewards are often worth the extra risk. *How much do you stand to gain?*

### **What are the long-term implications?**

Who will be affected by your decision? What does your decision mean 10 years from now? What will you gain and sacrifice in the long-term?

### **Can you trust yourself to follow through?**

A good decision that you can't complete is no better than a poor decision or no decision at all. Sometimes the solution with the best likely outcome is too challenging to implement. Do you have the skills and the stamina to follow through?

### **Keep your values in mind.**

Many options are unacceptable due to your values. Keep your values in mind and you'll be less likely to regret your decision later. What's important to you?

### **Avoid taking too much time to make a solution.**

There have been several studies on the differences between "satisfiers" and "maximizers". A satisfier looks for the quickest, easiest solution that meets their criteria. That doesn't mean they settle. It means that they accept the first solution that satisfies their needs and run with it.

A maximizer continues searching until the best possible solution is found.

*Studies consistently show that satisfiers are more successful and happier than maximizers.* Avoid spending more time than necessary searching for a solution.

Making good decisions is important. *Most challenges in life could have been avoided with wiser decisions.* Most people take too much time to make decisions and they make decisions poorly. And, even worse, the surest way to ensure that you never make any progress is to never make any decisions.

The most successful people make wise decisions, decide quickly, and follow-through. Improving the quality and speed of your decisions may be the fastest path to a more satisfying life.

# 20

## 16 HABITS TO KEEP YOU MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY VITAL, EVEN AS YOU AGE

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We all want to stay vital in our golden years. The lifestyle choices you make today play a major role in your future wellbeing.

The number of people 65 or older is expected to double between the years 2000 and 2030 according to U.S. government statistics. Get ready for a long and active life. Start now to make these 16 practices a regular part of your daily routine.

### **8 Habits to Keep You Physically Vital**

#### **Eat more fruits and vegetables.**

*One of the most powerful changes you can make in your diet is to fill most of your plate with healthy fruits and vegetables. They're*

low in calories and packed with essential nutrients. Choosing a variety of colours is an easy way to meet your dietary needs.

### **Switch to healthy fats.**

Get about one-third of your calories from healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, and seeds. Fatty fish like salmon is also a good source of omega-3s that lower the risk of heart disease and other conditions.

### **Start the day with breakfast.**

*A hearty breakfast makes it easier to resist junk food all day long.* Plus, your body needs to refuel after a long night's sleep.

### **Exercise daily.**

Train for cardiovascular health, strength, balance and flexibility. Find a variety of activities you enjoy so you'll stay motivated.

### **Watch your weight.**

Excess weight can drain your energy and increase your risk for diabetes and other serious health issues. Lose extra pounds gradually rather than resorting to crash diets.

### **Clean up your environment.**

You can control some of the substances you're exposed to. Use safe cleaning products like vinegar and wash the pesticides off of produce.

**See your doctor.**

Give your health team all the information they need to help you. Schedule regular checkups and follow their recommendations.

**Sleep well.**

Aim for seven to eight hours of good quality sleep each night. Go to bed at the same time and take naps when you need to catch up.

**8 Habits to Keep You Mentally Vital**

**Think positive.**

Look on the bright side. Express your gratitude. *Show compassion for yourself and others.*

**Nurture close ties.**

Stay in touch with family and friends. *Consider getting a roommate if you feel isolated living alone.*

**Make new friends.**

Reach out to people with similar interests. Join a book club. Invite a new neighbour to join you for coffee or shopping.

**Volunteer your services.**

Get involved in local groups or professional associations. Join the welcoming committees or help plan the annual fundraiser. Tutor children or work in a community garden.

### **Laugh more.**

Lighten up. Watch cartoons with your children. Look for the humour in confusing IRS instructions or surprise snowstorms.

### **Manage your finances.**

Financial pressures can interfere with your wellbeing. Consult a financial advisor if you need guidance with money matters. Save regularly even if you can put aside only modest amounts.

### **Learn something new.**

Stimulate your brain. Teach yourself a foreign language or learn to draw. Play word puzzles or trivia games. Take dance classes or sign up for adult education courses at a community college.

### **Deal with stress.**

Practice relaxation methods that work for you. Good choices include deep breathing, warm baths, and listening to instrumental music. Turn to your faith tradition for teachings on coping with adversity or read inspirational materials.

Look forward to getting better as you get older. Celebrate your growing wisdom and all those senior citizen discounts that lie ahead. Keeping yourself in top condition will help you lead a longer and fuller life.

# 21

## 8 WAYS TO MOTIVATE YOURSELF WHEN YOU JUST WANT TO BE LAZY

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There are going to be days you don't feel like doing much of anything. The occasional lazy day is fine, but when they become a regular occurrence, something needs to change.

**Successful people do a good job of motivating or inspiring themselves to take action each day.**

Whether this is just luck of the draw or a learned skill for those lucky few is debatable. However, there is no debate that anyone can learn to be more productive.

**Try these techniques to motivate yourself and increase the odds of success in your favour:**

**Be more willing to fail.** Maybe you're not being lazy. Maybe you're procrastinating because you're afraid of failing. Fear of

failure will take the wind out of your sails and begin the process of rationalizing reasons for not doing anything at all. Embrace failure as a regular part of life.

**Remember that life is short.** Life is short, but it's long enough, as long as you don't waste time. You can get a lot accomplished between now and the end of your life, but only if you respect your time and make the most of it. It's easy to put things off until tomorrow, but there are only so many tomorrows left.

**Consider the long-term cost.** What is the cost of waiting or not taking advantage of the opportunity before you? It's easy to see the enjoyment of sitting on the couch for another day. It's not as intuitive to think about what being lazy will mean a year or more from now.

**Consider the benefit of getting something accomplished.** What will you get from going to the gym every day for the next year? What will happen if you don't go? What do you get from taking action right now? Focus on that instead of the short-term pleasure of being lazy.

**Ask yourself what you could accomplish today.** What could you get done today? How would you feel about yourself and your day if you did get a few meaningful things accomplished? **Make a list of things you'd like to get done and then follow your list.**

**Use a timer.** Spending four hours cleaning out the attic isn't too appealing but seeing how much you can accomplish in 15 minutes is intriguing. A timer will give you a specific endpoint and focus your attention. You might decide to reset the timer and give it another go after the first round.

**Create goals.** Having a few short-term goals and long-term goals can make it easier to motivate yourself. It's not easy to go to the gym just for the heck of it. It's easier to go to the gym if you have a goal of losing five pounds this month, or 50 pounds this year, or looking great for your class reunion.

**Use books, quotes, or movies for motivation.** Maybe you have a certain movie scene or song that motivates you. For someone else, it might be a favourite quote. YouTube is full of inspirational videos that only take a few minutes to watch. Start and end the day with something that inspires you to take action.

One thing that separates successful folks from mere mortals is the ability to get things done consistently. **It's important to know how to motivate yourself each day.** Use the most of each day and avoid wasting too much time. Life is short, so make the most of it. There's nothing to be gained by being lazy.



# 22

## 5 WAYS TO REPROGRAM YOUR THOUGHTS

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Our thoughts are tricky things to control. Our beliefs and habits are often hidden from us, but these are two of the things that have great influence over our thoughts. **Your thoughts influence your actions.** If you want to change your behaviour and results, it's important to gain control over your thoughts.

This has been a battle for thousands of years and continues to be a great challenge. Fortunately, psychology has grown considerably over the last 20 years on this important topic. Now, you can learn to reprogram your thoughts if you're motivated to do so.

**Use these techniques to gain control of your actions by reprogramming your thoughts:**

**Affirmations.** Affirmations are essentially thoughts that you

**choose for yourself.** You can listen to them, read them silently, or read them aloud. Affirmations require a lot of repetition and emotional involvement, but they can be highly effective.

- Create affirmations that support the pursuit and achievement of your goals.
- Create affirmations that address your weaknesses.
- Create a schedule for exposing yourself to your affirmations.
- Be patient. Expect that it might be several weeks before you begin to see results.

**Learn.** Increasing or altering your knowledge in many areas can have a huge impact on your thoughts.

- **Philosophy.** If you view yourself or the world differently, your thoughts will change. Take a brief look at Stoic and Buddhist philosophy, for example. These viewpoints are vastly different than how most people view the world. Become a student of philosophy and you'll learn a lot.
- **Success.** There's a lot most of us could learn about success. Goal setting, willpower, perseverance, and communication are just a few topics. Learning more

about these types of topics will change the way you view success, and your thoughts will change, too.

**Ask yourself questions.** Questions change your focus and thoughts. Asking yourself questions like, “What’s good about this situation?” or “What are my greatest strengths?” or “What should I be working on right now?” will change your thinking.

- Use questions to redirect your attention and thoughts. **This is one of the easiest ways to change.** Develop the habit of asking the right questions.

**Visualization.** Visualize something negative and notice your thoughts. Now, visualize something positive and notice your thoughts. Compare. There’s no doubt that visualization impacts your thoughts and beliefs. Use this to your advantage:

- Visualize achieving your goals.
- Visualize completing the tasks you need to do each day.
- Visualize yourself being the type of person you want to be.
- Visualize yourself mastering a skill you want to learn.
- **The period of time right after awakening and just before falling asleep can be especially effective.**

**Attack limiting beliefs.** Your beliefs largely create your thoughts. Eliminating negative beliefs and adding positive beliefs will drastically change your thoughts. Take a negative belief and apply the following process:

- Where did I get this belief? Is it my own? Did someone else give it to me?
- What is the belief based upon? Is the source valid? How do I know it's true?
- What is this belief costing me? What would happen if I believed the opposite instead?
- Am I willing to let go of this belief for a month and see what happens?

You're not as easy to program as a computer, but **you're more programmable than you think!** If you're struggling to manage your behaviour and get yourself to do the things you know you should be doing, try reprogramming your thoughts.

Many of our thinking patterns are purely habit and very challenging to alter. But challenging doesn't mean impossible!

# 23

## ARE YOU WORKING SMARTER OR JUST WORKING HARDER?

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Most of us tend to work harder, rather than smarter when we need to get more done. This is fine in the short-term but working harder isn't smart over the long haul.

**It makes more sense to work smarter because it saves time and can be applied 100% of the time going forward.** You can't consistently keep increasing the intensity or duration of your work. There are limits.

But, there's always a way to work smarter!

**Use these strategies to work smarter instead of harder:**

**Focus on what is most effective.** One way of working smarter is to identify and concentrate on the tasks that are giving you the

best bang for your time. At any moment, you could be performing one of a variety of tasks. How certain are you that you're spending your time most wisely?

- We often gravitate toward tasks that are easy or comfortable. Ensure that you're using effective criteria when deciding how to use your time.
- We're all skilled at wasting time in our own way. Eliminating this downtime is one of the ways to work more efficiently.

**Review your actions daily.** Review your day and decide if you used the day as well as you could have. Look for ways to improve. Look for ways to waste less time. **Become just a tiny bit better each day, and the difference in your results will astound you.**

**Avoid the belief that grinding harder is always the solution.** We often associate greater success with greater effort. But working harder isn't always the answer. Sometimes it makes more sense to sharpen your axe than it does to swing it harder or for more hours each day.

**Review your results.** If what you're doing isn't working well, continuing down that path is silly. Figure out what works and what doesn't. Choose your actions accordingly. To fail to review

your results is like trying out a new diet but never weighing yourself.

**Ask yourself, "What is the logical outcome of how I spend my day?"** While you're reviewing your day, ask yourself what would happen if you repeated that day for the next five years. Construct a day that will logically lead to the destination you desire.

**Set time limits.** One way to force yourself to work smarter is to limit how much time you're going to give to a task or to your workday. Strive to get more done in the same amount of time. The only way to make regular progress is to alter your approach. Working harder will only get you so far.

**Continue to learn.** The more you know, the smarter you can work. What do you need to learn to work more efficiently? What knowledge will allow you to do a better job without spending more time? Ensure you're learning the right things.

- Seek out the experts in your field. Learn what you can from them. **Avoid trying to figure out everything on your own.** There's no reason to reinvent the wheel.

While we admire someone that can grind, it's not an effective long-term strategy. Avoid the temptation to just lower your head and grind through to the finish line regularly. **It's much more intelligent and efficient to learn how to work smarter.**

Once you learn a better way of doing things, you can continue using that knowledge forever.

# 24

## 6 HABITS THAT PREVENT HAPPINESS

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While there are a lot of habits that will help to bring happiness into your life, there are also plenty of habits that will chase happiness away from you.

**Some of the things we do each day make it very unlikely that we'll experience happiness.** You're probably doing at least a couple of these things and never considered the negative impact that they could be having on your life.

### **Avoid these habits that can rob you of happiness:**

**Unnecessary spending.** One of the greatest stressors in life is financial issues. Happiness is harder to find when you're up to your eyeballs in debt. General financial pressure is one of the greatest causes of misery and divorce.

- Clutter is another barrier to happiness. When you spend too much, you have too much stuff. It's always in the way and serves as a constant reminder that you spent more than you should have.
- **Think about the reward you gain by spending and find a less destructive way to accomplish the same thing.**
- If you want to make happiness a real possibility in your life, keep your spending under control.

**Postponing your life.** We're always waiting for something to happen before taking action. Whether it's waiting for the first of the month to start a diet, or waiting for the kids to leave the home before starting an online business, we always have an excuse to wait.

- There will never be a perfect time to take that big step. Manage your circumstances as well as possible and get started today. **Time is the one thing none of us can ever get back.**

**Blaming others for your challenges.** When you blame others, you lose control. It's not easy to accept responsibility for all of the unpleasant things in your life, but what other choice do you have? No one else is going to fix it for you.

- Even if you've been used and abused, you are still responsible for dealing with the aftermath. Accept the challenge and move forward.

**Not staying grounded in the present.** Most people have a bad habit of dwelling on past mistakes and tragedies and worrying about the future. The past is over, so leave it there. Good choices today eliminate most future challenges. Focus on making the most of today, and the future will take care of itself.

- Pay attention to your thoughts for an entire day. Notice how much time you spend thinking about the past or the future. Think about how that impacts your effectiveness and your happiness.

**Holding a grudge.** If someone has wronged you, you might be making a good decision by not trusting that person again. However, holding on to the animosity is pointless. You just make yourself unhappy and less effective. **Once it's over, learn what you can from it and forge ahead.**

**Focusing on challenges instead of solutions.** It's easy to feel overwhelmed if you focus on the unpleasant things in your life. Rather than do that, spend your time, energy, and focus on finding a way to make things better. You'll feel better and be much more successful.

It's easier to be happy if you stop doing the things that prevent happiness. We all pick up some bad habits along the way. The important thing is to recognize them and eliminate them.

**Allow yourself to be happy by letting go of your anti-happiness habits.** You'll find that happiness isn't as challenging to achieve as you thought.

# 25

## **BOOST SELF-CONFIDENCE WITH THESE 8 SURPRISING ACTIONS**

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Who couldn't use a little more self-confidence? **Self-confidence can often be in short supply, but there are many ways you can get it back.** When your self-confidence is lacking, take control of the situation and make yourself confident again. You can accomplish a lot more with self-confidence than you can without.

Once you know how to create confidence, you become a powerful person.

### **Self-confidence is yours for the taking:**

**Make a short to-do list and accomplish it.** Many experts advocate starting with the toughest task first, but if your self-confidence is in the basement, this might not be the best option.

Try doing a few of the easier tasks first. Show yourself that you can be productive and successful.

- **Each time you make a plan and execute it, you have more confidence in yourself.** It doesn't matter whether it's following through on your plan to go to the gym or to clean out your sock drawer. Make a to-do list and get it done.

**Keep your biggest goals to yourself.** Revealing your big goals to others can be enough to make you consider quitting. You'll be on the receiving end of a lot of negative comments that will make you question yourself and your goals.

**Improve your posture.** How you use your body affects how you feel. **If you sit and stand tall, you'll feel more confident.** Think about someone you know that always seems to be confident. Notice how they move. Try to mimic their movements and posture. Notice how much more confident you feel.

- Movies can be a great source of inspiration. Think of a confident movie character and watch how they use their body. Practice standing, sitting and moving the same way.

**List all your positive qualities.** There are plenty of things you can admire about yourself. Even if you have to call your mom

for inspiration, make a list of all your positive qualities. It won't take long before you feel a little confidence welling up inside of you. Keep the list handy for future reference.

**List all your past accomplishments.** Take a stroll down memory lane and relive your past accomplishments. It's easy to feel confident when you recall those times you were at your best.

**Remove those things from your life you've been tolerating.** We tolerate too much. Get the riff-raff out of your life. This includes people, items you no longer need, the rattling muffler on your car, and everything else that annoys you.

- **Tell yourself that you deserve better and then make it happen.**

**Do something you're good at.** What are you good at? Whatever it is, you feel better after doing it. Try to spend time each day doing something that you know you're great at. Your self-confidence will increase.

**Exercise.** Exercise provides more than just health benefits. It boosts your willpower, stamina, and self-belief. Exercise also reduces anxiety. All of these things can't help but boost your self-confidence, too. It's important to try to get at least a little exercise each day.

It's probably not possible to feel confident 100% of the time, but you can come a lot closer than you think. Even in challenging circumstances, you are the same. **Self-confidence is always right there; you just have to see it.** These simple actions are an easy way to find the self-confidence you've temporarily misplaced.

# 26

## 5 KEYS TO MANAGING YOUR UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

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It never seems to fail. You're trying to concentrate on your work, but your mind wanders off to a completely unrelated topic. Or, maybe you're about to go on a first date, but all you can think about is how horrible your last few dates have been. These are examples of unhelpful thoughts.

**Unhelpful thoughts can be distractions or be destructive.** Neither is helpful.

Your mind is a terrible thing to waste, and if you can't manage your thoughts, you're not using your mind to your advantage. Imagine how powerful you would become if you could ignore or replace your negative thoughts! You could accomplish more and get greater enjoyment from your life.

## **Use these strategies to manage thoughts that don't support you:**

**Maintain space between yourself and your thoughts.** It's important to remember that you don't have to engage with your thoughts. You don't focus on every person, tree, and car you pass when you're driving down the road. Most of these things pass through your awareness without you pursuing them further.

- You can do the same thing with your unhelpful thoughts. **Allow them to simply pass on by.**
- Your thoughts are simply something that you experience. You are not your thoughts. If something doesn't serve a purpose in your life, ignore it. What is the point in dwelling on it?

**Understand that it is your brain's nature to produce random thoughts.** The thoughts you experience says little about you. It's the nature of your brain to produce thoughts. It's always going to give you something to think about.

- Occasionally those thoughts are useful. Frequently, they're frivolous. Sometimes, your thoughts can be quite disturbing. Understand them for what they are and then move on.

**Meditation is a helpful tool for understanding the nature of your mind.** The first thing you notice when you attempt to meditate is the random and restless nature of your mind. **Focus on your breathing.** When you find yourself fuming about your boss, wondering what happened to your high school friends, or making a mental grocery list, simply redirect your attention back to your breathing.

**You can focus your attention on a thought of your choosing.** You can think about anything you choose to think about. You can think about riding a flying bicycle, eating a lemon, or what you need to accomplish today.

- When you're experiencing an unhelpful thought, you can decide to think about something more useful. **Recognize that you have the power to direct your thinking as you see fit.**

**Apply logic.** Poor thinking leads to poor decision making. When your thoughts are leading you astray, put your logical mind to good use. Ask yourself what a sensible person would do in this situation. What is a logical, intelligent decision for your circumstances? What would you advise a friend to do?

Are negative or distracting thoughts getting in your way regularly? You're not alone. The human brain loves to stay

active and will wander from one idea to another if you fail to take control of it.

**The key is to focus your attention on what you intend and avoid getting too involved with your random thoughts. Just allow them to pass.**

If you've never meditated before, this can be an excellent way to learn how your mind works and how to deal with random, intrusive thoughts. Most importantly, remember that you are not your thoughts. There's no reason to take them personally.

# 27

## 9 THINGS MENTALLY STRONG PEOPLE DO THAT MENTALLY WEAK PEOPLE DON'T

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There are many ways to categorize people: short and tall, intelligent and simple-minded, athletic and clumsy. One way to classify people is mentally strong and weak.

It's easy for you to think of someone that's mentally strong and another that's weak. We all know what that means, but have you considered the actual differences between these two types of people?

The differences are real and significant. **There are many things that mentally weak people either can't or won't do.** Can you guess what these things are?

## **Mentally strong people consistently demonstrate these behaviours:**

**Get started.** Mentally strong people do a wonderful job of getting started. They are aggressive starters.

- There are a few mentally weak people that are good at getting started, but most quickly run out of gas. The average mentally weak person does a decent job of planning but never takes the first step when it comes time to take action.

**Finish.** Getting started is only part of the battle. Mentally strong people are also good at crossing the finish line. Are you one of those people that seems to give up before you complete anything significant? If so, you're not as mentally strong as you could be.

**Do the hard things that need to be done.** To be successful at anything substantial, it's necessary to do some difficult things. These difficult things might require a few failed attempts, learning something challenging, or simply doing something uncomfortable.

- **Mentally weak people avoid these types of activities as much as possible.**

**Embrace change.** Strong people make the most of change. Weak people avoid change or are paralyzed by it.

- Change is a wonderful opportunity for growth and progress. Strong people take advantage of change while weak people are harmed by it.

**Take risks.** Calculated risks are a part of creating massive success. Mentally strong people can avoid taking foolish risks or playing the game of life too conservatively. **They find the optimal middle ground.**

- Mentally weak people either give in to foolish urges and risk too much, or they are too conservative.

**They don't resent the success of others.** Strong-minded people are comfortable, or even happy when others are successful. Weak-minded people are jealous or resentful of those that do well in life.

**Persevere.** Mentally weak people give up far too quickly and easily to ever achieve much. **Those with stronger minds manage to persevere until they are successful.**

**They say, "no" quickly and easily.** Some people have a hard time saying no. However, mentally strong people can say "no"

when needed and don't lose any sleep over it. They're able to stay on track when it comes to their goals.

**Delay gratification.** The most successful people can delay gratification for years. The inability to delay gratification is a serious weakness. If you need to feel good or be rewarded right now, you'll struggle to ever accomplish anything significant.

Mentally strong people have many advantages in the world. **They get more done and are more effective at dealing with obstacles.** They're able to refuse requests that are too inconvenient. They persevere when the average person would simply give up. They also leverage change to their advantage.

**In short, mentally tough people can do the things that mentally weak people won't do.** This is a huge advantage. It's exceedingly difficult for a mentally weak person to compete with someone much stronger mentally.

Look at the list above and see where your mental toughness lies. You can learn to be tougher, and the results in your life will improve along with your toughness.

