

HAPPY NEW YOU!

IT'S A BRAND NEW YEAR!



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"I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something."

- Neil Gaiman

The beginning of a new year is a time of hope and enthusiasm. Even if you just completed a challenging year, it's natural to entertain the possibility of something better. It's common to start the year with several lofty resolutions. ***After all, it's exciting to contemplate a life with more money, greater love, and fewer pounds.*** A Paris vacation sounds nice, too!

Sadly, few resolutions are ever realized. Health clubs are packed with new members for a couple of weeks. Half of those new members are never seen again after two weeks, and 95% are gone within a month.

We quickly forget our resolutions.

This year can be different! A systematic approach can make all the difference.

If you've failed to make meaningful changes to your life, you're in luck! In this report, you can discover a process that's guaranteed to work if you're diligent. Where will you start?

Evaluating Your Life

A very famous golf coach once said that it's impossible to create a good golf swing without evaluating a client's current situation. ***Likewise, how will you know where to go if you don't know where you are?*** It's not possible to develop an intelligent and effective plan of attack without evaluating your current situation.

➡ **DETERMINE THE LOW-RATED AREAS OF YOUR LIFE**

- ▶ It's the deficiencies in your life that limit your happiness. ***You're not unhappy because:***
- ▶ You live in a 3-bedroom ranch instead of a 7,000 square foot mansion.
- ▶ You're not married to a supermodel.
- ▶ You don't own a \$200-pair of shoes.
- ▶ You drive a Honda Civic instead of Mercedes.
- ▶ You don't have a million dollars in the bank.

- ▶ You don't have the body of a Greek God or Goddess.
- ▶ You only have five friends instead of 20.

You can certainly be unhappy because:

- ▶ You live in an unsafe part of town.
- ▶ You're alone.
- ▶ You can't afford appropriate clothing for yourself or your children.
- ▶ You drive a car that might not survive the drive to work.
- ▶ You don't have enough in savings to cover any emergencies.
- ▶ You're 50 pounds overweight.

That's not to say you can't make any part of your life spectacular. However, ***dealing with the most challenging aspects of your life first will result in the greatest return on your time.*** Focus on these low-rated parts of your life.

Finding a few friends can do more to enhance your life than buying a sailboat if your social life disappoints you.

Try this 3-step process to determine the parts of your life that would make the biggest difference for you if you were to change them:

1. **Think about your average day and record your thoughts.** A few examples might include:
 - ▶ “My alarm is going off, and I can’t stand the thought of getting out of bed.”
 - ▶ “I’m afraid I won’t make it to work because I can’t afford gas until I get paid.”
 - ▶ “I have to sit alone at night because I don’t have anyone to spend time with.”
 - ▶ “I only have two pairs of pants that fit because I’ve gained so much weight.”
 - ▶ “I hate my job.”
 - ▶ “I wish I could go back to school.”
 - ▶ “I’m tired of my girlfriend/boyfriend.”

2. **Complete this exercise with a weekday, weekend day, and holiday.** Try to cover all the bases. Your dissatisfactions during the week might be different than those you face on the weekend.
3. **On a scale of 1 to 10, rank each item.** A “10” is perfect. It couldn't be better. A “1” is as bad as you can imagine.

You don't need a personal jet to be happy and fulfilled.

The low-rated areas of your life are weighing you down.

Examine your life and rate the various aspects on a 1-10 scale.

“Make New Year's goals. Dig within, and discover what you would like to have happen in your life this year. This helps you do your part. It is an affirmation that you're interested in fully living life in the year to come.”

- Melody Beattie

➡ CHOOSING AREAS TO ENHANCE

Focus on the low-rated areas of your life. Improving a “5” to a “10” will mean less to you than improving a “2” to a

“10.” We’re all limited by the amount of time we have available to us. ***Focus your time and energy on the aspects of your life that will provide the greatest benefit.*** Spend your time wisely.

Determine which area of improvement will provide the greatest benefit:

1. **Create the “10” version for each item rated less than five.** Design a version that you’d be excited to add to your life. Once it feels right, see if you can make it any better. A few examples from the previous list:
 - ▶ “I wake up feeling refreshed. I can’t wait to start my day.”
 - ▶ “My car is reliable, comfortable, and I feel proud to own it.”
 - ▶ “I have plenty of good friends and an active social life that bring me joy.”
2. **Put your revisions in order of preference.** Consider which of your new 10’s would add the most to your life. ***Imagine your life with the corresponding changes***

and trust your gut. Which would have the biggest impact? Put your list in order.

- ▶ Where do you feel the most pain in your life? What causes you the most stress? Many psychologists believe that we're naturally happy. It's only the negative parts of our lives that make us unhappy. So you don't need anything in order to be happy other than to be free of the bad stuff!

It is human nature to turn to our strengths and avoid our weaknesses, but this is a mistake in certain circumstances. ***The weakest parts of your life limit your happiness and sense of well-being.*** Ensure you're prioritizing your focus.

Address the low-rated parts of your life first. When these have been conquered, you can turn your attention to other areas.

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

- George Bernard Shaw

The Process of Change

Changing your life is rarely like repairing a broken fence. It's not a single event. Changing your life requires ongoing effort. Your habits create your life. ***The little things you do on a consistent basis determine your outcomes.*** Changing your habits is a priority, but there are several other components to creating a new life.

Successful change requires several steps:

1. **Decide what you want.** The previous activity accomplishes this requirement. You now know which area of your life you want to change.
2. **Create a goal.** Your goal is a target. An effective goal is:
 - ▶ **Measurable:** How will you know you attained it if you can't measure it?
 - ▶ **Time-bound:** Without a time limit, you'll take your sweet time and never reach your goal. A time limit creates a sense of urgency and focus.

- ▶ **Specific:** “Losing weight” isn’t an effective goal. “15 pounds” is specific and effective.
 - ▶ **Reasonable:** You won’t even get started on a goal you don’t believe you can reach. ***Only push slightly beyond your comfort zone.***
 - ▶ **Desirable:** All goals should be desirable. Why waste your time on anything less?
 - ▶ Now create a goal based on your number one priority. An effective goal might be, “On or before March 31st, 2016, I will have lost 20 pounds.”
3. **Prioritize the goal. Read and write your goal each day.** Twice is ideal. Review your goal once in the morning and once before bed. How many times have you started on a new goal only to realize you’d completely forgotten all about it? Reviewing it daily will prevent that from happening again.
 4. **Develop habits that will result in success.** You don’t become rich, poor, fat, skinny, lonely, popular, unpopular, or an expert overnight. Your daily habits have a huge impact on your results in life.

5. **Deal with discomfort.** Any change is uncomfortable. Actually, any *significant* change is uncomfortable. And that's the key. Keep the amount of change in your life relatively small. ***A series of small changes are as effective as a significant change, but the small changes are much easier and comfortable to implement.***
 - ▶ There are many ways to decrease the amount of discomfort felt when altering your life. We'll explore several later.
6. **Measure your progress.** It would be difficult to reach a weight loss goal if you never stepped on the scale. Regular evaluation of your progress ensures that you're on the right track.
7. **Adjust your approach.** If you're not making sufficient progress, that's a sign that you need to change your approach. That seems like simple common sense, but most people either continue with the same actions or give up. Both guarantee failure. Steer your ship.

It looks simple when you list the steps and it is simple. However, it's easy to lose focus, become uncomfortable, or give up. If change were easy, we'd all be living the life of our dreams. There are several steps to making lasting change.

"It seems, in fact, as though the second half of a man's life is made up of nothing but the habits he has accumulated during the first half."

Fyodor Dostoevsky

➡ HABITS

1. **Habits take time to develop.** It's common to read that a new habit takes 30 days to become ingrained. It actually depends on the person and the habit! Studies have shown that it can take as long as 7 months to develop a habit. Be patient.
2. **Willpower isn't what it seems.** You might admire the willpower of someone that works out every single day. But it doesn't require any willpower to hit the gym if you have the habit of working out.
 - ▶ Willpower is great for developing new habits. ***However, it's insufficient for consistently taking an action you don't enjoy.*** Use your willpower for habit development.

- ▶ Willpower is limited. If you find that you're struggling too much, more willpower isn't the answer. ***The solution is to reduce the demand on your willpower.***
3. **Focus on the habit of getting started.** If you want to go for a walk each day, the first step might be to put on your walking shoes. Let that action be your focus.
- ▶ It's not just a cliché. Getting started really is the hardest part. If you can put on your walking shoes and get out the door, you're walking.
4. **Have a trigger.** Think about the habits you already have. You wash your hands after using the bathroom. You turn on the evening news after putting the kids to bed. A preceding action or event triggers most habits.
- ▶ ***An effective trigger happens on a regular basis.*** Using the restroom, starting your car, going to bed, and eating a meal can all be effective triggers. Find something that happens every day and makes sense for the habit you're seeking to develop.

5. **Start small.** If you want to write a novel, creating a habit of writing 1,000 words per day might be too much. Set a goal to write for at least five minutes after putting the kids to bed. Is five minutes too much? Then set a goal of writing a single word! Interestingly, if you write a single word, you'll probably end up doing much more.
 - ▶ A very small goal might not seem to accomplish much, but you're creating the habit of getting started with the activity. ***When you're consistently taking that small step, you can begin increasing the demands you make upon yourself.***
6. **Reward yourself.** It seems silly to reward yourself for writing one word, doing one pushup, or saying "hi" to a stranger. However, it's a wonderful start. Reward yourself for even the smallest accomplishment! Tell yourself that you're doing a great job or do a little dance. Whatever feels good to you is a viable option.
 - ▶ Ensure that your reward is intelligent. Giving yourself a cookie for taking a long walk might be counter-productive!
7. **Work on one new habit at a time.** Starting a diet, sticking to a new exercise routine, learning French,

and beginning a meditation practice is too much all at once. You'll end up right where you started. Wait until you've shown some success with one habit before introducing another. Define success as performing the new habit at least 90% of the time that the trigger occurs.

- ▶ **A 90% success rate is excellent.** The difference in results between 90% and 100% is quite minimal. Interestingly, a 70% success rate provides little in the way of results. Strive for at least 90%. Try following a diet 70% of the time and notice the results!

Anyone could look in your home and accurately determine your housekeeping habits. Once glance at your body reveals your eating and exercise habits. Your habits are evident for all to see. **Create new habits and your life will change.**

"Times of transition are strenuous, but I love them. They are an opportunity to purge, rethink priorities, and be intentional about new habits. We can make our new normal any way we want."

- Kristin Armstrong

➡ DEALING WITH DISCOMFORT

Whether you're starting a new diet, increasing your social circle, or going back to school, you're bound to experience at least a little discomfort along the way. This is completely natural! Discomfort is a part of change.

Deal with discomfort effectively:

1. **Understand that discomfort is a misguided defense mechanism.** Scientists believe that the discomfort experienced during change serves to keep us alive. Your brain is worried about life and death. Your happiness is secondary. It views any change as potentially life threatening.

Imagine that 10,000 years ago:

You're hiding under a bush from a tiger and consider making a run for it. Under the bush, you're still alive. Running out in the open could be hazardous. Most of us would freeze and stay under the bush where it's safe.

You decide to stroll up to the beautiful woman in the next tribe for a little flirtatious fun. You might take a rock to the head from a foreign tribesman. Many

social psychologists believe this to be the reason why men are uncomfortable approaching beautiful women. Your discomfort protected you 10,000 years ago. Now it's harming you.

- ▶ ***If your life isn't at risk, your discomfort may be misleading you.*** Take discomfort as a sign to evaluate the situation. Respond in a reasonable manner.
2. **Welcome discomfort. *If you're uncomfortable, there's a chance that something meaningful will happen.*** Where are you most comfortable? On the couch watching television? Has anything great ever happened when you were doing the same things you always do?
- ▶ When you're uncomfortable, things have a chance of changing for the better.
3. **Be mindful.** If you're uncomfortable, you're thinking about negative outcomes. But if you'll just stay focused on how delicious your grilled-cheese sandwich tastes, you can't be worried about the future.

- ▶ A good rule of thumb: Your mind should be focused on your surroundings, your breathing, or your current activity. If your mind is focused on anything else, you're not really living. ***Life can only be lived in the present.***
- 4. **Learn to meditate.** Meditation is simple, but it's not easy. There are many books and videos on the subject. Spend some time learning how to control your mind.
- 5. **Exercise.** A good workout can rid you of nervous energy. If you're feeling stressed, go for a run, hit the gym, or pull out the tennis racket. Notice how much better you feel afterwards.
- 6. **Toughen up.** If you're used to giving into uncomfortable feelings, you can do better. Try sticking with your discomfort for as long as you can. Notice that you're still fine. ***In time, you'll be able to handle discomfort much more effectively.***
- 7. **It's just a few chemicals.** A few stress hormones and neurotransmitters don't have to dictate your actions. These compounds can alter your pulse, blood pressure, and feelings of anxiety. But the effects are harmless. Remember that your brain is trying to keep

you alive. Anxiety is just a feeling in your body. You've survived much worse.

8. **Focus on the result rather than the process.**

Thinking about your diet might make you miserable, but thinking about the results is exciting. Keep your mind on the prize when you're feeling down.

- ▶ This is true for anything you don't feel like doing. Avoid thinking about how awful it will be to clean the garage. Think about how great you'll feel when it's over.

Discomfort can be embraced as a positive sign. It means that you're changing your life. ***The only way to eliminate discomfort completely from your life is to never try.***

Discomfort can be managed and minimized, but it's a part of being human. You can choose to make progress in spite of feeling uncomfortable.

"I love discomfort. I mean, my whole life is discomfort. One reason I can never retire is that the idea of just sitting on the beach totally comfortable is not a desideratum in my life. I like ambiguity, I like conflict, I like uncertainty."

- Alan Dershowitz

Putting it All Together and Developing a 12- Month Schedule

It's challenging to go from writing one word each day to completing a novel, losing 30 pounds, finding a romantic partner, and financing a trip to Egypt. The first step is simple, but creating a cohesive plan is a little more challenging! How can you do it?

1. **Remember that you prioritized the list of changes you'd like to make.** That's the first step. You simply work your way down through the list. ***When you're successfully working toward one goal consistently, it's time to add in the next priority.***
2. **As a rule, you can add in a new priority each month.** If a habit takes longer than a month to become automatic, that's okay! Continue to focus on that one habit until it becomes automatic. Even 3-5

changes over the course of a year would be very significant.

Imagine if you:

- ▶ Found your perfect partner
 - ▶ Found a your perfect job
 - ▶ Got in great shape
 - ▶ And had one great adventure.
 - ▶ ***When was the last time you had a year this good?***
3. **Create a rough schedule.** Find a calendar and make some notes on it. Avoid tying yourself down, as it's impossible to predict your progress. But get a rough idea of what you can accomplish in a year.
 4. **Set priorities. Choose the few items you're absolutely committed to accomplishing this year.** Four items equals one per quarter. What will you have accomplished by March 31st, June 30th, September 30th, and December 31st?

- ▶ Maybe you have a goal that will require 12 months, but what milestones will you have reached by these target dates?
5. **Stay focused on your habits.** Getting in shape is little more than 2 habits: eating and exercising effectively. Learning to speak Russian requires studying the language regularly. Many successes aren't complicated if you focus on the proper habits.
 6. **What have you accomplished in the last year?** If you're like most people, not much. A few changes are a huge improvement over your past results. ***Avoid overwhelming yourself.***
 7. **Visualize the new you.** Imagine how you'll look, think, and feel at the end of the year. Get excited. ***Keep coming back to this picture when you're struggling.***
 - ▶ If you think about how much you hate eating oatmeal every morning, you'll never make it. If you're focused on how great you'll feel at the beach this summer, the year will fly by.

8. **Reward yourself handsomely for significant results.** If you reach your quarterly goals, do something nice for yourself. You've earned it!
9. **Be patient.** A year can seem like a long time to wait. Focus on today. Tomorrow will come. ***Stringing together enough good days is the key to success.***

"What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals."

- Zig Ziglar

Conclusion

The New Year is upon us. This can be the year you create a new you, even if you've failed to create meaningful change in the past. If nothing in your life seems to be working, there's good news. It doesn't take as much to enhance your life as you might think. ***Just a few changes in your daily habits can bring about incredible results.***

It's important to prioritize the changes you'd like to make. There's only so much that can be accomplished in a year. Why waste your time fooling around? Determine the most important changes and get busy!

Develop the habits necessary to reach your goals. Many of your current habits have shown themselves to be inadequate. New habits provide new results. The real work is in developing those habits. Running isn't hard. Putting on your shoes and getting out the front door is hard.

Be patient with yourself, but get started today. This could be the year of a new you!