

**- A Self Development Plan For Lazy People -**

# **"How To Develop Your Life So You Can Become, Do and Have Anything You Want!"**

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# The 5 Pillars Of Self Development

Ever made a goal or a new years resolution to improve your life, for example, quit smoking, lose 10 pounds or save money, but other things (usually ourselves) seemed to 'get in the way' of accomplishing them?

We ourselves are our own worst enemies when it comes to making changes in our lives.

**What most of us need is a plan** that we can understand and stick to, through all of the hurdles, temptations and stress that enter our lives.

This Self Development Plan as I explain below, contains five basic elements that you'll need, to help overcome *yourself* and win the battles to take you to ultimate success.

The elements are:

- **Spiritual**

You don't have to be religious to be a spiritual person. When a person has spiritual strength within, they have a built in belief system in themselves that will propel them on no matter what the problem.

- **Habits**

We all have some habits we'd like to rid ourselves of, but some habits are debilitating and affect many areas of our lives in a negative way. For example, smoking is a habit that keeps us away from others and damages our health. Drinking too much can do the same.

- **Stress**

Too much stress in our lives can lead to depression and anxiety and take a toll on our health. Find a way to control stress and you've found a key element toward positive self-development.

- **Relationships**

There are many types of relationships in our lives – family, spouse or love interest, friends, money, co-workers and even food. Until we address the toxic relationships in our lives that keep us from success and positive self-development, we'll be lacking in that part of our lives.

- **Body/Mind**

As you care for your body – so you care for your mind. Without exercise, the proper diet, avoiding chemicals and other contaminants in your life, the body doesn't function as it should – and neither does your mind.

As you take this journey of Self Development, turn inward for answers. You'll find that there are some that you've always known for sure – and some that will be a big surprise. Keep a journal about your progress and setbacks, and learn about yourself in everything you strive to do.

## **Awaken Your Spiritual Guide**

A spiritual guide isn't like a genie in a bottle. But it can be magical when you know how to develop the spiritual guide within so that you and you alone are in control of your destiny.

In Rhonda Byrne's best-selling book, "The Secret," she illustrates how your life experiences are created by *you*. You're the one who controls your thoughts – which ones will make a positive impression on you and which will set you back. The object is to become so absorbed with the positive thoughts that negative thoughts can't enter.

It's completely your choice as to which thoughts you're going to let enter your mind and take control – for minutes, hours, days or for the rest of your life. Your life's spiritual experience depends on which you choose.

Inevitably, negative thoughts will creep into your mind when you least expect it, and that's where practice is key to changing those thoughts back into positive ones that you and you alone will harbor.

### **How to Control Your Thoughts**

Being able to successfully control your thoughts so that you can control your life from within is one of the best ways to awaken your spiritual guide. When you focus on positive rather than negative thoughts, you become a powerful ally to yourself, firmly pointing your destiny in a direction that will help you conquer anything holding you back from success.

When you're truly in charge of creating your life's destiny, you become confident and assured because your mind is nurturing rather than tearing down and preventing you from enjoying life to the fullest extent possible.

In the beginning, it sometimes takes a conscious decision on your part to stop the flow of negativity, but eventually you'll come to the place where the negative thoughts simply "ping" off your mind before they can cause damage.

You may believe that a negative thought has already done its damage by simply entering your mind. But, a thought only damages your thinking process when it's allowed to linger – to become a strong and powerful force in your mind, repeating itself when necessary to keep you under its “spell.”

To lessen the impact of negative thoughts, begin to think of them as separate from yourself. Only when you begin to realize that negative thoughts are foreign invaders and not part of your true thought process will you be able to release them quickly and effectively.

One way to control thoughts, especially negative ones, is to immediately concentrate on something else. Pick up a good book that's hard to put down, put on some music that makes you sing and/or dance or exercise your body to clear your mind. It works almost every time.

Letting a negative thought linger in your mind can be appealing to you – especially when you're in a particularly vulnerable state of mind. When you find yourself entertaining a negative thought, think about the origin of it. Once you know that the thought is from a place of despair, lack of confidence, fear or lack of self-esteem, you can consciously choose to reject it.

Meditation is one of the best ways to control your thought process. As you calm the mind, you can better concentrate on the powers you possess within. These unique powers can “harness the universe” and bring about positive thoughts that will bring you abundance and clarity.

Try meditating at a time when your mind isn't running rampant with thoughts, either positive or negative. Meditation will bring you peace of mind – and you'll find it easier to thwart any negative thoughts that come your way.

### **Actions Speak Louder than Words to Our Minds**

“As ye think, so shall you be,” is an old saying that would be great if it worked. But, just because we think the good thoughts doesn't mean that we'll perform the same actions. Again, it takes conscientious effort to act as we think.

For example, if you're trying to get in shape for the New Year, simply thinking it won't make it come true. You have to give birth to the thoughts and make them come true by keeping a watchful eye on your diet and getting into an exercise program that will turn the dream into a reality.

Use your own inventiveness to think of ways you can act on the positive thoughts that come your way. Also, think about what it would mean if you acted on the negative thoughts that enter your mind. Use your imagination to conjure up ways that will highlight the affirmative things in your life and you'll be that much closer to controlling your thoughts.

We sometimes don't act on positive thoughts because of opinions. Try to keep an open mind about events that happen and people who come into your life. Acting in a positive way toward something or someone you've already formed a negative opinion about can open our minds in a way that helps us to listen and better understand an ocean of possibilities.

## **Joy vs. Sorrow**

We're all periodically visited by joy and sorrow in our lives. What we do with the experiences set apart the survivors from those who let either one overtake them. If you never experience sadness, you're missing one of the great character-building elements in your life. If you never experience joy, you're missing one of the greatest building blocks to success and true happiness.

Sorrow can turn you into a bitter person and ruin what chances you have at true love and abundance of good things in your life. It can keep you from unlocking the door to the part of you that contains your spiritual guide.

Everyone experiences sorrow in a lifetime of experiences. You may be having trouble getting over the death of a loved one or the ending of a relationship. You may have gone through an awful tragedy that has altered your life and the lives of those you love. This is where your spiritual guide can be the most benefit.

Grief is a normal part of life, the same as birth and deaths, but if you dwell on the grieving times of your life, you'll never experience the joy that your spiritual guide has in store for you.

But, how can you be happy most of the time when there are so many terrible things going on in the world? Perhaps you've lost your job and face eviction from your home and are confronted every day by bills you can't pay and phone calls demanding that you do.

It may sound simplistic, but when you feel that sorrow permeates your life and you just can't rise above it – think about times in your life when you felt truly happy. It doesn't have to be a major, money-spending splurge – think about the smile of a child when you read a book to her. Think about taking a walk with your dog and seeing her delight in every smell that came her way.

Those are just a few samplings of the little things that you can think about and do to get your mind off the sorrow you're feeling and back to the happiness that's still available in your life.

You may even want to write down some things you're happy about – a gratitude journal about what's positive in your life. Listening to beautiful music, watching a funny or gratifying movie or reading a good book are just some of the things in your life that you can be grateful for.

Eventually, you'll have to deal with situations like unpaid bills or evictions notices, and you'll experience sadness when this happens. But, deal with them as best you can and then move on.

It doesn't help at all to focus on self-pity or "what ifs," -- only driving you further into a rut. Choose to think about happier times and those to come or you'll continue to live a life without the proper spiritual guidance.

By choosing to focus on happiness rather than sorrow, you're choosing to control your thoughts and when you do that, the spiritual guide that may be laying dormant in your mind will listen and respond.

### **Don't Become Victim to Your Thoughts**

You can become a victim of your thoughts as easily as you can become a victim of identity fraud if you're not diligent about protecting your mind. Just as you're careful to shred documents that could become dangerous if they land in the hands of an identity thief, so should you be especially diligent about letting thoughts enter your mind that are going to make you a victim of negativity.

It takes real effort to reject negative thoughts. It's tempting to succumb and wallow in the self-pity they sometimes bring, so practice "catching" them just as you would catch a ball.

That skill took practice – you probably missed the ball on the first try, but as you practiced, you became more adept. When you find a negative thought about to enter your mind, catch it as soon as possible and give it a good swift kick to the outside.

### **Communicating with Your Spiritual Guide**

Communicating with your spiritual guide is the best way to develop a relationship with this powerful force in your life. When you know the proper and most effective way of communicating, you'll begin to develop and nurture the intuition you were born with. Unless you're constantly engaged in forming a relationship with your spiritual guide, the ability wanes and – just like muscles that are seldom used – it loses its power.

When you don't communicate with family, friends, boss, coworkers and other people in your life, the relationships become weak and you eventually become out of touch with what's going on and problems will ensue.

It's the same with your spiritual guide. Lack of communication can keep you in the dark about what steps to take next on your life's path and will prevent your natural intuitive powers from helping you.

You can communicate with your spiritual guide the same way you would communicate with other people in your life – talk to it. That doesn't mean you should walk along babbling to yourself, but communicate by your thought process. Ask yourself questions and then answer them to get a clear picture of what's really going on in your life.

Be as creative as you can in communicating with your internal guide. For example, when you ask yourself a question, draw from the deep recesses of your mind to gather the information you need to get the answers.

## **Saying Goodbye to Bad Habits**

Before you can stop a bad habit, you have to first figure out why you're doing it. Are you bored, frustrated, anxious, sad or depressed? Are your bad habits triggered by certain events in your lifestyle?

For example, do you overeat when you sit down to watch television or bite your nails when you're nervous or anxious? Only after you've identified why your bad habits are taking over your life (or at least making you miserable and keeping you from enjoying as much of life as you could) can you wage an effective war with them.

To realize the pinnacle of self-development for this year and beyond, you'll need to begin working on the bad habits you identify as being negative forces in your life and start to change them. Begin by writing those habits down on paper. Then, you'll be able to develop the strategies that will help rid them from your life.

The strategies will vary from habit to habit. You may need help from a doctor or counselor to quit a cigarette habit, drinking or gambling. And when you discover that certain triggers are actually causing the bad habit, you may be able to quit it cold turkey by avoiding the triggers.

Remember that old habits die hard, and you may have to endure a few setbacks before you're successful.

### **Knowing Your Triggers**

Triggers that help to promote and prolong bad habits are sometimes difficult to identify. If all you had to do was connect a habit with a situation, place or whatever constitutes a trigger for you, quitting a bad habit would be easy.

Unfortunately, that's why we have so many industries that make their money from bad habits – such as smoking, alcoholism, hoarding or gambling. Breaking bad habits just isn't easy for most people.

Some bad habits are especially difficult to break because they're "hidden." When you experience jealousy and experience it often, it's probably something you think about more than act upon.

But, it's still a bad habit - and one that's most likely affecting relationships and how you interact with others. Once you understand that your subconscious mind is promoting these disastrous thoughts, you can use mind control techniques to oust them - and your subconscious mind will eventually get the message.

The longer you've had the bad habit the longer it may take to get rid of it. Think of it like a diet plan -- the more weight you've put on, the longer it will take to trim down your body. You can also reduce bad habits in stages and gradually train your mind to get rid of the thoughts a little bit at a time until they won't bother you again.

You'll want to avoid "trigger" situations that promote the bad habit for the first days, weeks or even months until you feel that you can handle it on your own. If you've ever begun a diet plan, you've probably avoided your favorite calorie-laden restaurant or having lunch with friends.

It's been proven that the more friends you have at a luncheon, the more likely you are to indulge. Putting yourself in the way of a trigger situation when you're trying to get rid of a bad habit is a bad idea.

After you've built your confidence for awhile and practiced replacing bad thoughts and actions with positive ones, you will have created new behavior patterns that will help you resist temptation. Here are some bad habits that most people complain about and solutions for how to break them:

- **Nail-biting or other nervous habits**

These types of habits are usually caused by stress or boredom. You may grab a cigarette if you smoke or immediately begin to chew on ragged nails or cuticles.

Make it a point to catch yourself at the beginning of these bad habits and immediately do something else. Get up and walk around for awhile, get into a project you've been avoiding - anything that keeps your hands from turning to the same old bad habit.

- **Compulsive shopping**

This habit may get you into some serious financial trouble or you might end up with "stuff" you don't even need or want. The best way to curb a compulsive shopping habit is to make a list of what you need before you go shopping. This might mean that you carefully plan menus, put everything on the grocery list that you need and then *stick to the list!*

If clothing or shoes is your downfall avoid those department stores that make you spend money on things you don't need. If you shop online, avoid those sites where you're apt to go crazy with a credit card.

The same applies to clothing, shoes and accessories as with other things that might tempt you – avoid the triggers for awhile until you build a strong reserve of will power.

- **Gossiping**

Gossiping is one of the most destructive elements of our society. Even if you don't engage in it, you're connected to it if you listen and give it credence. Gossip can crush positive thoughts and leave your energy level severely diminished.

Amazingly, idle gossip can also weaken your immune system. It's a toxic energy that is stressful on your body and mind and has no place in your life. Do you watch gossip shows on television or read gossip magazines?

If so, you're tuned in to the gossip energy and probably engage in it at work and among family and friends. The only way you can exorcise gossip from your life is by refusing to read or listen to it. Don't purchase the supermarket gossip "rags" and if someone begins to gossip in person or on the phone, simply walk away or hang up.

When your emotions tell you that you're listening to gossip, choose the high road and refuse to let the negativity into your life. It may take some will power at first, especially if gossip is a big part of your life, but you can kick the habit.

- **Swearing**

Aristotle once said, "We are what we repeatedly do." What does that say about us if we have a habit of constantly using swear words? Swearing has become so common these days that it may almost seem acceptable.

We hear it on television, in movie dialogues and within the workplace. But swearing is a bad habit that can reduce respect that people have for you and definitely shows a lack of character. It's also immature and gives a bad first impression.

If you want to kick a swearing habit, begin by getting it through your head that swearing is a negative influence in your life and serves no positive purpose. Begin to break the habit by leaving out casual swear words from your speaking vocabulary.

Your speech may sound stilted at first, but take your time and get used to a more "elegant" way of speaking. You'll soon appreciate the difference – and so will everyone else.

When you're having an especially stressful time, whether a day or a moment, try to cope with the problem rather than cursing about it. Think of alternative words to use rather than the usual swear words – and above all, be patient with yourself. Bad habits are hard to break, but if you persevere, you can do it.

- **Hoarding**

Compulsive hoarding can morph into a serious problem that may take medical intervention to eradicate. You've probably seen stories on television that highlight hoarding (a recent program is called, "Buried Alive") – stacks of clutter and even animals living in filthy conditions can indicate a serious hoarding habit.

Some of these people don't see their hoarding as a problem, but if you know you have a bad habit of collecting and keeping items that serve no purpose and want to do something about it, you can probably teach yourself to break the habit by reading some books on organizing. If you think you have a serious compulsive hoarding habit, call a professional organizer that can help put you and your stuff back on track.

- **Bad Financial Habits**

When bill paying time comes, do you find that you're always robbing Peter to pay Paul, juggling finances just to get along and perhaps ending up with lots of late fees? If you answer yes to that question, chances are you're plagued with bad financial habits.

Bad financial habits include overspending, getting yourself into too much debt so that you can't pay your bills on time – or can't pay them at all. What if you lost your job or source of income tomorrow – would you have enough money saved to tide you over until things turn around? You may have the knowledge about what you should be doing, but certain habits are keeping you from realizing your dreams.

Again, knowledge of exactly what you're doing to cause financial problems is key to you breaking the habit. Begin to track your spending and cut out those things that are non-essential.

Leave the credit cards at home and begin to pay them off by paying more than you're required – especially on those credit cards that charge the most interest. And, be sure to pay them on time to avoid late fees.

- **Anger**

An uncontrolled anger habit can denote depression and intense emotional pain. It can ruin relationships, keep you from advancing in your job or career and can cause long lasting depression – even though anger sometimes makes you feel good as you're "getting it out of your system."

But anger is a negative emotion that sometimes has a domino effect such as yelling at your family after your boss yelled at you that day. If anger is causing problems in your life, there are several ways to combat it.

First, take a deep breath before expressing anger at any time. Don't speak during the anger moments. Instead, vow that you're going to think about it first. Remember the old Chinese proverb: "If you are patient in one moment of anger you will escape a hundred days of sorrow."

- **Jealousy**

If you're seeking a path to self awareness and you've developed a bad habit of jealousy, you'll never find complete happiness or become aware of all that you could accomplish if jealousy wasn't a part of your life.

Jealousy is usually an emotional reaction that comes from your own insecurities. Dealing with it means that you quit reacting to scenarios that cause the behavior. Controlling jealous thoughts and behavior is something like controlling a car racing downhill with no brakes.

To avoid the tragedy that's about to happen, you should have avoided the hill in the first place. In order to avoid the hill, you have to change your core beliefs that make you react jealously to a situation.

When you find yourself engaged in a jealous reaction, shift your thoughts so that you can cast the feelings from your mind. If that means immediately doing something else, do it.

If part of your Self Development Plan includes getting rid of bad habits, know that controlling your thoughts is the quickest and best way to do it. It doesn't matter if your habits run the gamut from smoking to laziness to being a workaholic - your every reaction to these habits can be controlled in a good way by first recognizing the origin of the habit and then find ways to turn your thoughts in another direction.

You might be able to eradicate bad habits for awhile, only to find that you relapse in a moment of weakness. Don't give up. Figure out why you relapsed so that you can prevent it from happening again. Above all, don't become discouraged and think of yourself as a failure. Don't slip back into the patterns that formed the habit in the first place.

Eventually, changing your thoughts and your bad habit patterns will become easier and more natural for you to do. Aristotle said that "excellence is not an act, but a habit." It takes just as much effort to develop the habit of excellence as it does to keep repeating the old bad habits.

All bad habits have triggers that come before you actually engage in the habit. For example, for some people a shower might indicate that it's time to wake up, dress and go

to work while for others a nice warm shower might signal that it's time to go to bed. One trigger makes you wide awake and the other makes you sleepy and lethargic.

Whatever good and beneficial habits you've formed are worth reinforcing. The ones you consider bad and that you want to change must be carefully analyzed and then replaced by positive ones.

Many therapists say that the best way to replace a bad habit with a good one is to pledge to abandon the bad habit for only 30 days. Be sure that your plan includes how you're going to replace the habit with new, positive thoughts and actions – then, for 30 days do your best to be consistent. By the end of the 30 days your new habit should be stronger than the old – bad – one.

Work on one bad habit at a time. If you try to do too much, you'll simply become overwhelmed and discouraged. Begin the process of eliminating bad habits by starting with a “small” one – one that you consider do-able. Each time you eradicate a bad habit from your life, you'll feel more in control of your destiny and will be able to more easily master the next bad habit.

Another good way to ensure the success of eliminating bad habits is to tell others about your plan of action. The more help you can get for “your side,” the more support you'll be able to count on to see you through it.

Try to maintain a good attitude while you're going through the process of kicking bad habits. That will get you past a great deal of the frustration and obstacles that come your way.

Keep positive by surrounding yourself with positive friends, do things you like to do, meditate and be forgiving of yourself while going through this time of change in your life.

## **Learning How to Deal With Stress, Depression and Anxiety**

Stress, depression, anxiety – we've heard so much about these mental and physical ailments – that they're detrimental to our complete happiness, stop us from achieving all that we can – and, they can turn into killers.

Medical experts have deemed stress as one of the top causes of strokes and heart attacks. It makes sense. When our body experiences stress, it's attempting to defend itself. That's great if you're running from a swarm of killer bees, but if your body is experiencing constant stress, the system can become overwhelmed and break down.

You can suffer mental and physical consequences from too much stress. Even good experiences can cause stress in your life – and stress can lead to depression and anxiety. Preparing for a future wedding day, even though it's going to be a joyful occasion, can

cause a truckload of stress and when the big day arrives, the stress may come tumbling down in the form of tears, anxiety and even anger.

The thing that sets apart those who can handle stress effectively and those who can't is how each of us reacts to the stress that might come our way. For example, there could be two people working for the same company and in the same work environment.

The company is losing money and may have to lay off employees. One person frets and complains about all the "stress" of having to come to work each day knowing that could be the last. How is she going to pay bills and buy food?

The other person, however, has prepared for a situation where she might be out of a job – perhaps from illness or layoffs. She's put aside a nest egg that can get her through the next few months in case she's laid off. Rather than thinking of how she's going to get by, she's thinking about going into business for herself – or networking to find another job, should she have to.

Each person has the same type of stress, but one is prepared while the other one isn't. Handling stress by dealing with surprises before they happen is a good way to reduce the way stress affects your life.

Other stressful situations aren't so easy to prepare for. For example, the death or illness of a spouse, a child leaving home or a tragic accident can't really be prepared for in terms of reducing the stressful effects it has on your life.

### **Signs of Too Much Stress in Your Life**

Since happy events can also cause stress, it's sometimes difficult to know when a health or mental problem is stress-related or stems from another problem. Since stress leads to anxiety and depression, it's important to know both the mental and physical signs that may signal we're suffering from too much of it in our lives.

Stress, depression and anxiety are so closely linked to both our mental and physical well being that some of the signs are same. Some signs that might indicate that you're suffering from one or more of these maladies are:

- **Headaches**

Nagging or frequent headaches may not be caused from sinus or health problems. They could be a direct cause of stress in your life.

- **Chronic pain**

Backaches, chest pain and other annoying aches in your body may signal a health problem, but they can also be a sign that you're suffering from stress.

- **Nausea and other stomach problems**

Like chronic pain, stomach or digestive problems could be caused by health or diet related issues. They can also happen because of stress and anxiety.

- **Heart palpitations and high blood pressure**

Definite signs that stress could be an issue in your lifestyle.

- **Weight gain or loss**

Compulsive eating problems often occur because we're stressed, depressed or anxious about something. Some people eat more when stressed, but others feel so anxious that they can't eat at all – neither of which is healthy for your body.

- **Constipation**

If our bodies are stressed, our systems don't work the way they should. Food doesn't get digested properly and constipation may occur frequently.

- **Insomnia**

Interrupted or erratic sleep patterns are a leading sign that you may have too much stress in your life. Insomnia can make us lose productivity at work, become irritable and forgetful.

- **Irritability**

Do you find yourself flying off the handle at your children on a constant basis or snapping at coworkers until everyone avoids you? Being irritable when there's no reason is a sign of stress.

- **Losing Focus**

We all forget once in awhile, why we walked into a room or can't focus on a project we need to finish. But, if you find yourself losing focus on a regular basis and becoming highly disorganized, you might be a victim of stress or anxiety in your life.

Sadness and crying can also be signs that you're depressed. Almost any change in your feelings and routine that's causing unhealthful or mind altering stress in your life should be addressed quickly by your health care provider or make changes in your life and thoughts to end the problems.

## **Managing Your Stress, Depression and Anxiety**

If you don't learn to manage stress, depression and anxiety in your life, it could lead to serious health problems. There are several ways to control these difficulties, including more physical activity and relaxation techniques such as meditation. Some methods to control stress are:

*Meditation* – a deep thinking strategy where you let go of surface feelings and go into a deep conscious awareness. Many people use meditation to rid their lives of stress, but they also use it as a pathway to clarity and enlightenment.

Chronic sufferers of pain use meditation to relieve physical symptoms. It's a very powerful method of controlling both your mind and body and done at home, it won't cost you a thing.

To effectively put meditation into practice, find a room that's comfortable and quiet. Don't try to meditate in the middle of the living room while Spongebob Squarepants is blaring out of the TV and your toddlers are running circles around you.

Set the temperature of the room to something cozy to you. Not too hot and not too cold. Have a place on the floor where you can sit comfortably and get deep into thought. Practice some deep breathing techniques and spend at least 30 minutes meditating each day. Maintain good posture in your back as you sit with your legs folded "Indian style."

*Yoga* – a mind-body connection is what yoga has to offer, and it helps you tune into yourself and tune out stress on any level. Hatha yoga is the most beneficial for stress relief (there are many different yoga styles to choose from).

Yoga also engages you in controlled breathing, which quiets your mind and helps your body with a renewed sense of energy and calm simultaneously. As with meditation, you'll want a nice, quiet place where you can practice your yoga poses. And invest in a comfortable yoga mat too.

*Self Hypnosis* – a form of tapping into your mind and realigning the way your mental state is headed. You're not hypnotizing yourself so that you're *not* in control. In fact, you're hypnotizing yourself to *regain* control over your thoughts.

You'll be gently suggesting that your mind take a different thought pattern and by doing this repetitively, you'll help a new habit form so that eventually, your new thoughts replace the old ones and stress doesn't bother you as much.

*Exercise* – it relieves endorphins instantly so whenever you pick up your body and move, your stress goes to the wayside. You don't have to sprint across town to get that "runner's high" either. You can walk briskly.

You can do many forms of aerobic exercise to help your brain release endorphins, which are those "feel good" hormones that help keep stress at bay. In fact, in a 2003 scientific study, scientists found that even swimming released endorphins.

*Counseling* – for some, stress relief may not be found in the form of exercise or meditative processes, but in talking to a trained professional who knows how to help you work through your issues.

For some people, it just helps to have someone lend an ear to their problems and tell them it'll be okay, or give advice on how to better handle a certain situation. Find someone that you trust and then schedule a few sessions until you feel better about things and the stress has lifted.

## **Relationships Are Key for Setting Yourself Up for Success**

Success means different things to different people. Some may equate success with money and things while others may feel successful if they have and maintain great relationships with most everyone in their lives. Climbing the corporate ladder to achieve a pinnacle in a career path is also a measure of success for some people who are driven to succeed.

At any particular time in life, a person may be successful in one or more areas, but very ineffective in others. If you want to be “successful,” you must first define what success means to you. Then, you can begin to work on the areas necessary to fulfill that desire.

You can break down your plan into parts that are easier to handle. For example, if you want to lose 20 pounds, you'll first need to develop a plan and set goals. The plan might include a diet that you know you can stick to, exercise that feels like fun and gathering inspiration so that you can meet all of those goals.

### **Achieving Financial Success**

Since so many people equate true success with monetary worth, let's focus on that. In today's economy, simply paying the bills on time might be a financial goal you're trying to reach.

There are basically 4 key elements involved in achieving financial success – mindset, commitment, education, and action – and you need to build relationships to make all of these work. These elements all work together in solving the mysteries of achieving the monetary success you want from life.

### **Developing a Winning Financial Mindset**

A positive financial mindset is essential to achieve monetary prosperity. If you think poverty, you'll live in poverty – but, if you think wealth and financial success – you'll be much more likely to achieve it. And if you build relationships with people who have a similar wealth-building mindset, it will rub off on you.

Everyone knows that what you spend your emotional energy on is what you reap from it. If you're putting all your time and energy into something that doesn't make you happy – like a dead-end job – you'll grow old thinking of “what might have been.”

Fortunately, there are ways to change your negative thinking and get back on the road to financial independence and even wealth. Every positive step in your life begins with a decision.

If you haven't yet made a decision about what you want to achieve in life, you have no life's purpose and your life's path will reflect that as the days, months and years pass by. Surround yourself with successful people and foster relationships with them. Mentors are important in any successes you might have, so develop those relationships as much as possible.

Focus your thinking on what you want out of life and don't let it go – not even for a moment. Developing a positive mindset takes patience, practice and determination to succeed.

After you've accomplished some of the goals you set for yourself, you'll recognize success and how it feels. The more you've accomplished, the less chance there is of losing your focus.

Educate yourself by figuring out who you want to learn from. If debt is your goal, see if Dave Ramsey's lessons suit your style. If not, try Suez Orman or another debt and finances guru.

Learn about ways to make and invest money and choose methods that you like and excel at. There are no shortcuts to achieving wealth, and you must spend time educating yourself about how to spend your time getting to your ultimate financial goals. The great power of Rome certainly wasn't built in a day – and neither will your financial wealth.

Create a financial plan that includes goals, both large and small. Celebrate the small victories that you achieve and keep them at the forefront of your mind as you move on to the next goal.

Periodically revamp your plan as you take action. Things change – like the economy and unforeseen hurdles in your life – and rather than abandoning a successful mindset, you must work hard to keep it.

Document everything about your thinking and goals so that you create a path that you can refer to when you need it to reaffirm goals or become motivated. Documentation is also important so you can have a paper trail of everything you do. It's smart financial planning to protect yourself with documentation.

Remember to have fun along the way. Enjoy life as you're planning for your financial future so that you won't become bored or jaded about the whole plan.

## **Relationships Can Be Tricky**

To be successful in any relationship – whether with a friend, family member, spouse, love interest, co-workers, mentor or boss – you have to work at them to be successful. You won't keep a friend for very long if you let the relationship become stagnant, so you must keep in touch at least periodically.

If you become so engrossed in your career or job, the relationship with a spouse or family members can suffer. So, balance is the key for keeping a relationship intact and thriving. Some entrepreneurs get bogged down in this manner because they're building a business solo – with a goal of spending more time with their family.

Unfortunately, they spend years trying to increase their level of success, so they dedicate too much time to cultivating their income and not enough time enjoying the fruits of their labors with those that they love.

Make sure you take time each day to tell those you care about why they're special to you. And think about it yourself as a way to feel grateful each day. Don't focus on the negative aspects of your spouse – think about that you *do* love about them.

## **Taking Care of Your Body and Mind**

When you take care of yourself, mentally and physically, it naturally attracts the right people to you in your life. You wake up every day feeling good about yourself. Others feel good about you, too.

So let's attack this portion of your self development plan in two parts. First, we'll talk about the mental portion and then we'll talk about the physical development options you have!

### **Improving Your Mental Outlook**

Sometimes all it takes is a simple switch from being a glass half empty kind of person to a glass half full personality. Which one are you now? You can do several things to start looking at life in a whole new way.

First, buy a gratitude journal. They have some amazing ones that include inspirational messages or quotes on each page to give you a springboard for your thoughts. Write down things you are grateful for at the end of each day so that you get a good night's rest and wake up feeling serene.

If you prefer, keep your gratitude journal with you at all times and keep track of the little things you feel grateful for. It can be something as simple as, "a young man gave up his

seat on the bus for me when I was feeling tired.” Or, it can be something big like, “my boss told me he was so impressed with my performance that he’s giving me a 10% raise!”

Work on finding gratitude out of negative situations, too. It’s hard, but this is the first step in helping you turn your life around and make it one of wonder and amazement rather than disappointment and frustration.

For example, if your girlfriend breaks up with you, write down something positive about it, such as, “Chelsea broke up with me when I wasn’t ready to end the relationship yet, but I am grateful that she didn’t draw it out longer and that I’m now free to find the one true love of my life.”

One thing you should do with your gratitude journal that not many people remember to do is reread it from time to time. Make a special time, like on Sundays, when you review the previous week and remind yourself of all of the things you have to be grateful about.

Positive affirmations are another method you can use to create a good mentality. Positive affirmations can be used for stress relief, but also for building self esteem. Each person will have different ones, but you basically make them your mantra for living life!

You can say them in front of a mirror, whisper them to yourself whenever you need a boost throughout the day, or mentally recite them as you lay in bed waiting to fall asleep. The key is to engage in some sort of positive talk with yourself each and every day.

With positive affirmations, you’re making statements, such as:

- I nourish my body with the right kinds of foods.
- I deserve prosperity in my career.
- I give love in a healthy relationship and receive it from those closest to me in my life.
- I believe in myself and my abilities to achieve my goals.
- I am at peace tonight.
- I choose to live my life freely, without restraints so that I can enjoy all that life has to offer.

Visualization is yet another method you can employ to achieve happiness. Visualization is when you picture life the way you want it to appear as if it has already happened. But you try to do more than just a 2D image in your mind.

For instance, if riding along the coastline in a convertible would relax or inspire you, then you would imagine that scenario as if you’re looking out of your eyes, not looking *at* yourself. Imagine the wind in your hair, the scent of the ocean breeze coming off the sea. Focus on vibrant colors and even how the steering wheel feels in the palm of your hands.

## **Enhancing Your Physical Appearance and Health**

For some people, the need for self development may lie in a health aspect of their physical being, while others simply want to be more personally satisfied with their appearances.

If you want to look better for yourself and for those around you, then you might try some of these options:

- Assess your current weight and see if you're at a healthy BMI. If not, devise a workout and diet regimen designed to help you reach those goals.
- Update your look with a new haircut. Some people have the same hairstyle they had a decade ago, and once they allow the stylist the freedom to bring them up to date, they feel years younger.
- Take care of your nails. When you go to shake hands with someone and your bitten nails and cuticles are the first thing you present to someone, it doesn't reflect well on you. Manicures are not expensive, and you can easily learn how to take care of your hands at home.
- Moisturize your body. It's the largest organ you have – your skin – and yet we abuse it with suntans and harsh chemicals. Every day, moisturize your face, neck, and the rest of your body and soon you'll appear younger and more refreshed.
- Go for a makeup lesson. We sometimes get in a rut with the way we do things. Go to a makeup counter at a department store and have them give you a makeup lesson. You may feel fresher once you learn that you've been applying your eyeliner too heavily or that your stark red lipstick is making your fine lines show up whereas a more muted color gives you a flawless appearance.
- Update your wardrobe. You don't have to spend a small fortune, but every once in awhile, add a new piece of clothing to your wardrobe that's current and timeless in nature. Shop when things are sale and buy clothes that fit you well.

If health is your main concern, then you'll want to address any issues that you've neglected lately. Some people put off going to the doctor – especially if they're just run down and tired all of the time.

Schedule a well check up with your physician to rule out any thyroid problems, diabetes and chronic fatigue issues. You want to make sure that your iron levels are up to par, too, since that can cause a depletion of energy.

Some report a more healthful feeling when they adhere to a holistic strategy like Tai Chi. Tai Chi is a rhythmic movement that helps you achieve a sense of peacefulness. The goal

is to focus on the present and not on stressful situations that occurred earlier or that you're worrying will happen soon.

You could look into herbal supplements to help you with stress, depression, and energy, too. Certain herbs like cayenne, Siberian ginseng, gotu kola and Ginkgo biloba helps with energy levels and in staving off depression.

Always check with an herbal expert before using herbs on your own or combining them with your current medications, since they can have adverse reactions in certain combinations.

## **Putting Your Self Development Plan to Work for You**

As you embark on this journey to better yourself, you're going to encounter a lot of friction. Sometimes with yourself and sometimes with others. You may second guess yourself about some of the big changes you're making, and it'll be hard because you'll be getting out of your comfort zone.

Sometimes you'll be moving along content in your journey and someone will chime in with their opinions about what you should or shouldn't be doing and telling you how to do it better.

Be grateful that they care enough to provide you with their insight, thank them, and then continue on your path as you see fit. You don't need to engage in an argument with someone who isn't aware of every element you're dealing with in your life.

Work on one self development goal at a time. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to look perfect, have an optimistic attitude 100% of the time, rake in tons of monetary wealth and make everyone like you in one day.

Pick the area you feel needs the most work and chip away at it until you've mastered it to your own personal satisfaction. Then move on to the next most important goal you have in mind and work on that.

Don't be afraid to admit one tactic didn't work for you and then try something else. For example, you might try counseling and end up feeling awkward talking to a stranger. Then you try self hypnosis and you feel more in touch with yourself than ever before!

You may choose to share your self development journey with others. This is fine as long as the person you're sharing with won't turn the tables on you whenever you falter. For example, if you tell your mom that you're going on a diet to lose 20 pounds, and then she raises an eyebrow when you have a brownie at a family get together, or scolds you, it can hamper your results.

Becoming a better person means you need to first think about what kind of person you want to be. Don't set unrealistic expectations of yourself. Make your goals doable and easy at first and work on the harder issues as time goes on.

Soon, you'll feel great about the life that you're living and the person that you've become. And you can spread the word to others who are in the same boat about how you changed your life and achieved the kind of success you've always wanted.

To your success,

*Stuart Stirling*

My blog: <http://www.StuartStirling.com>

Free IM Tips Newsletter: <http://www.AccelerateMyEbiz.com>



**About Me:** I'm an Aussie living in Japan with my lovely wife Keiko. I started teaching people how to be successful online in 2006.

I specialize in marketing strategy, copwriting and email marketing. I enjoy driving race cars, watching movies and eating spicy food (but not all 3 at the same time :).

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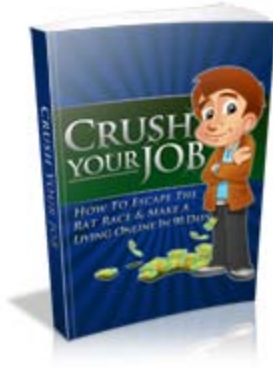
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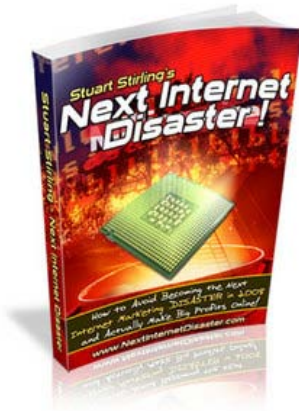
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