

## **RULES TO LIVE BY**

**1. Get and stay out of your comfort zone.** I believe that not much happens of any significance when we're in our comfort zone. I hear people say, "But I'm concerned about security." My response to that is simple: "Security is for cadavers."

**2. Never give up.** Almost nothing works the first time it's attempted. Just because what you're doing does not seem to be working, doesn't mean it won't work. It just means that it might not work the way you're doing it. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it, and you wouldn't have an opportunity.

**3. When you're ready to quit, you're closer than you think.** There's an old Chinese saying that I just love, and I believe it is so true. It goes like this: "The temptation to quit will be greatest just before you are about to succeed."

**4.** With regard to whatever worries you, not only accept the worst thing that could happen, but make it a point to **quantify what the worst thing could be.** Very seldom will the worst consequence be anywhere near as bad as a cloud of "undefined consequences." My father would tell me early on, when I was struggling and losing my shirt trying to get Parsons Technology going, "Well, Robert, if it doesn't work, they can't eat you."

**5. Focus on what you want to have happen.** Remember that old saying, "As you think, so shall you be."

**6. Take things a day at a time.** No matter how difficult your situation is, you can get through it if you don't look too far into the future, and focus on the present moment. You can get through anything one day at a time.

**7. Always be moving forward.** Never stop investing. Never stop improving. Never stop doing something new. The moment you stop improving your organization, it starts to die. Make it your goal to be better each and every day, in some small way. Remember the

Japanese concept of Kaizen: small daily improvements eventually result in huge advantages.

**8. Be quick to decide.** Remember what General George S. Patton said: “A good plan violently executed today is far and away better than a perfect plan tomorrow.”

**9. Measure everything of significance.** I swear this is true. Anything that is measured and watched, improves.

**10. Anything that is not managed will deteriorate.** If you want to uncover problems you don't know about, take a few moments and look closely at the areas you haven't examined for a while. I guarantee you problems will be there.

**11. Pay attention to your competitors, but pay more attention to what you're doing.** When you look at your competitors, remember that everything looks perfect at a distance. Even the planet Earth, if you get far enough into space, looks like a peaceful place.

**12. Never let anybody push you around.** In our society, with our laws and even playing field, you have just as much right to what you're doing as anyone else, provided that what you're doing is legal.

**13. Never expect life to be fair.** Life isn't fair. You make your own breaks. You'll be doing good if the only meaning fair has to you, is something that you pay when you get on a bus (fare).

**14. Solve your own problems.** You'll find that by coming up with your own solutions, you'll develop a competitive edge. Masura Ibuka, the co-founder of Sony Corp., said it best: “You never succeed in technology, business, or anything by following the others.” There's also an old Asian saying that I remind myself of frequently. It goes like this: “A wise man keeps his own counsel.”

**15. Don't take yourself too seriously.** Lighten up. Often, at least half of what we accomplish is due to luck. No one is in control as much as we like to think we are.

**16. There's always a reason to smile.** Find it. After all, you're really lucky just to be alive. Life is short. We're not here for a long time; we're here for a good time.

by Robert Parsons, Ph.D

## **HOW IS YOUR GOLDEN TRIANGLE?**

The culmination of twenty-nine Australian happiness surveys over twelve years by Melbourne's Deakin University has revealed — if you live within the golden triangle, you're more than likely to be happy.

A loving partner, up to \$200,000 of household income and a social activity that offers a sense of purpose is the new “golden triangle of happiness” according to Deakin University Professor Robert Cummins.

Prof Cummins has also offered hope to Australia's ageing population by saying that life really does get better with age.

“People who are the happiest of the golden triangle group are the elderly with no dreadful conditions like severe arthritis,” he said.

“Happiness tends to rise beyond the age of 55 or 60. I'm not quite sure whether it is because the kids have left home or they're thinking about leaving a dreadful job.”

Prof Cummins explained the three elements:

### **Relationships**

“More important than money is having a good intimate relationship,” he said.

“You only need one person to share your life, and having that person is incredibly important. People who haven't got someone to share their life in an intimate way — where you can share your troubles — are very vulnerable to the bad things that happen to them.

This is extremely consistent across all of our surveys.”

## **Money**

“The magic number is \$200,000 of gross annual household income. It’s not that more money makes it better, it’s that you need a certain amount,” he said.

“How much you need depends on kids and your location.”

“On a national average, mood/happiness rises with a gross household income up until that \$200,000 point and then nothing further happens to it beyond that. Below that mood, happiness goes down.”

“There is a myth that children decrease happiness. That is just not true.”

“It depends on whether you’ve got financial resources and personal relationship resources and particularly if you’re trying to raise four kids on \$50,000, for example, you’re going to struggle.”

## **Activity**

“Having something interesting to do is the third element. People are happier if they are active; in a footy club, in a sewing circle, whatever,” he said.

“If you can combine that activity with social contact and a sense of purpose, then that is best.”

“People who do volunteer work combine those very well. The more active they are and more socially connected the better they are.”

“Chess clubs are not ideal, for example, because they are not very socially interactive.”

Prof Cummins, who is the brains behind the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, has also pointed to an anomaly in international research: Australian widows are the world’s happiest.

“The funny thing that happens in Australia – and it doesn’t transfer to other countries – is that widows are really happy as a group,” he said.

“Generally they are OK financially and it may well be they have a new lease on life.”

“It’s a female thing rather than a male thing because females are so much better at creating socially supportive relationships than widowers are.”

“It doesn’t happen in other countries, particularly in other countries where there is a massive financial hit when the husband dies and the wife is left on her own to earn her own living.”

## **WOODY ALLEN’S LIFE LESSONS**

Many hate Woody Allen. Here’s why. It has become a cliché that nerdy neurotic Jewish people describe themselves as “Woody Allen-esque” on dating services, thinking it will attract women. The idea is that they will then attract some waif-like Mia Farrow-ish (or the 17-year-old Mariel Hemingway in Manhattan) blonde who will love all of their neuroses and want to have sex all the time and will, in the ideal case (the 17-year-old Mariel Hemingway in Manhattan, the 21-year-old Juliette Lewis in Husbands and Wives), be the most mature in the movie and yet still be madly in love with the 30-year-old Allen.

This only happens in Woody Allen movies. And power to him. He made the movies. He can do whatever the hell he wants in them. If Mariel Hemingway wants to have sex with him all the time, then no problem. He wrote the movie! It’s up to you whether you believe it or not.

And people believed it. Manhattan is considered one of his greats – shot in black and white, skylines of Manhattan in every direction which are actually shot from Allen’s penthouse apartment. It was beautiful, and makes you fall in love with Manhattan.

Allen puts out a new movie or two every year. None of them will compete with Star Wars or Harry Potter in terms of gross dollars. But it seems that if his studio gives him \$10 million, his movie will make \$20 million, and everyone is happy and he gets to keep doing what he's doing.

So he's built up a substantial body of work that we can learn from. Why learn? Because clearly he is a genius, regardless of what other opinions anyone might have of him (and I only know him through his work. I don't know his personal life at all). It is interesting to see how he, as an artist and creator, has evolved. To see how his idiosyncratic humor has changed, how he twists reality further to stretch our imagination. He always stands out and stays ahead of the other innovators. And for other people who seek the same, he is worth observing.

## **Here Are Some of the Things We Have Learned From Him:**

### **1. Failure**

Some of his movies are just awful. He admits it. In a 1976 interview in Rolling Stone he says, "I would like to fail a little for the public...What I want to do is go onto some areas that I'm insecure about and not so good at."

He elaborates further. He admits he could be like the Marx Brothers and make the same comic film every year. But he didn't want to do it. It was important for him to evolve. To risk failure. To risk failure in front of everyone. And his movies did that, going from the early slapstick humor of Sleeper to the darker Crimes and Misdemeanors and Match Point.

One of my earliest memories is having a babysitter while my parents went to a movie. Then when they got home I asked them what they saw and they described a movie where a man falls asleep and wakes up in the future where a giant Nose ruled the world. Woody Allen has been there since the beginning for me. And just the other day I watched Midnight in Paris with Owen Wilson (who, despite looking very un-Woody Allen-esque, plays the virtual "Woody Allen" role very well. The movie explores the history of art and

how no art form exists by itself but is always influenced by generation after generation of artists before it, dating back hundreds if not thousands of years).

Woody Allen has also failed spectacularly, in every way we can imagine – personally, and professionally. And yet he’s always pushed forward, trying to surprise us again and again, and largely succeeding rather than giving up.

## **2. Prophetic**

In a Washington Post interview in 1977 he states, “We’re probably living at the end of an era. I think it’s only a matter of time until home viewing is as easy and economical as desirable.” In the past three days I’ve watched three Woody Allen movies on my Ipad. I don’t know if this changed the way he made his movies. But it’s clear he never got himself stuck in one particular form or style that would eventually fail to cater to the tastes of the average audience.

## **3. Flexible**

We admire the entrepreneurs who quickly recognize mistakes and then transition their business accordingly (the catch-phrase lately is that these entrepreneurs know how to “pivot”). Allen typically starts off with a broad outline, a sort of script, but it changes throughout the movie. Specifically he states, “To me a film grows organically. I write the script and then it changes organically. I see people come in and then I decide...it changes here. It changes if Keaton doesn’t want to do these lines and I don’t want to do these – we shift around. It changes for a million reasons.”

The entrepreneur, the entre-ployee. Relationships in general, all shift and change. You set out in life wanting certain things – the college degree, the house with the white fence, the promotions, the family – but things become different. You have to adapt and be flexible. To say only the lines you are comfortable with and evolve into.

## **4. Productivity**

To put out a movie every year or so, plus plays, magazine stories, books. you would think

Woody Allen works around the clock. From a 1980 interview, “If you work only three to five hours a day you become very productive. It’s the steadiness of it that counts. Getting to the typewriter every day is what makes productivity.”

He states later in the interview that when he was younger he liked to get things out in one impulsive burst but he learned that was a “bad habit” and that he likes to wake up early, do his work, and then set it aside for the next day.

Probably the most productive schedule is to wake up early – do your work before people start showing up at your doorstep, on your phone, in your inbox, etc, and leave off at the point right when you are most excited to continue. Then you know it will be easy to start off the next day.

I read in a recent interview that it takes Allen a month to write a comedy and three months to write a drama. On three to five hours a day it shows me he writes every day, he’s consistent, and he doesn’t waste time with distractions (going to parties, staying out late, etc)

## **5. Avoid outside stimuli**

Every day right now I make a huge mistake. I start off with the loop: email, Twitter, Facebook, my Amazon rank, my blog stats, my blog comments. My wife asks me: “Did you finish the loop yet?” And I think it will only take a few seconds but it actually takes about twenty minutes. I probably do it ten times a day. That’s 200 minutes! 3 hours and 20 minutes! Ugh. When he won an Oscar for Annie Hall: First off, he didn’t go to the Oscars. Why get on a plane? (8 hours door to door), and go to a party where he would feel uncomfortable, to win an award he probably didn’t care much about (although it magnified his prestige in Hollywood, the city that paid his bills):

In a 1982 interview with the Washington Post he states that he went to Michael’s Pub to do his weekly jazz clarinet playing although he says “I probably would not have watched anyway” just to see everyone he knows hunched down in the audience waiting for hours to



see who would win. He states that he had “a very nice time” at Michael’s. So for him his pleasure came first. Rather than the anxious watching and waiting.

But then, when he got home, he didn’t even care. He went out the back way of Michael’s so he skipped all the photographers, went home by midnight, had “milk and cookies,” went to sleep. And then he **TOOK THE PHONE OFF THE HOOK**. Who even does that now? In an age where we (or, I should say, “I”) literally sleep with my iPad and phone in the bed. He took the phone off the hook on Oscar night and went to sleep. In the morning made his coffee and toast. Got the NY Times, and then finally opened it up to the entertainment section where he saw he won the Oscar. It’s in this way that his productivity (compared with the lack of productivity many of us suffer now because of the constant outside social stimulants) was kept at a very high point.

## **6. Imperfection**

Allen has stated many times that none of his films was exactly what he wanted. That they were constantly imperfect. It’s almost like he’s the imperfect perfectionist. He wants things just right and he tries very hard to get it that way. But he knows it will never happen.

That said, he doesn’t give up. He states in 1986, “We go out and shoot...again...and again...and again if necessary. And even at that rate, all the pictures come up imperfect. Even at that meticulous rate of shooting them over and over again, they still come out flawed. None of them is close to being perfect.” Ultimately, he says, all his movies prove to be “great disappointments”.

And yet, knowing that he will always experience the same thing, he goes out, stretches his boundaries of where he’s comfortable failing, and does it again. And again. Knowing nothing he will do will be the masterpiece he initially conceived. Nothing comes out exactly how we want it. But we have to learn to roll with it and move to the next work.

I watched Husbands and Wives the other day. It wasn’t a funny movie. It wasn’t a pretty movie. I watched it with my wife and by the end we were thinking, ugh, I hope that

doesn't happen to us in ten years. Meanwhile, the movie itself was jarring. Instead of being shot traditionally it was shot with a hand-held camera. It was edited with lots of jump-edits, where you're looking at a character and suddenly she's an inch over because some small piece of film was cut out. The editing itself became part of the jolting and jarring in the story. It was as if the story was not just being told with the acting and the writing but with the way it was shot and edited.

It reminded me of something Kurt Vonnegut once said. He's usually considered an experimental author. But, he said, to be experimental, first you have to know how to use all the rules of grammar. You have to be an expert first in tradition. It also reminds me of Andy Warhol, who was a highly paid, very straightforward, commercial artist, before he went experimental and started the pop art phenomenon.

Allen says about Husbands and Wives in a 1994 interview (note: Husbands and Wives was his 20th movie): "Confidence that comes with experience enables you to do many things that you wouldn't have done in earlier films. You tend to become bolder...you let your instincts operate more freely and you don't worry about the niceties." In other words: master the form you want to operate in, get experience, be willing to be imperfect, and then develop the confidence to play within that form, to develop your own style. You see this in Kurt Vonnegut too as he transformed from the more traditional "Player Piano" in the early 50s to "Slaughterhouse Five", a novel about World War II that includes aliens who can time travel.

## **6. Showing up**

As Allen famously stated: 80% of success is "showing up". Nothing more really needs to be added there except it might be changed to "99% of success for the entrepreneur is showing up". What do you have to show up for? You have to find the investors, you have to manage development, you have to find the first customers. You have to find the buyers. They don't show up at your door. You show up at their door. Otherwise your business will just not work out. Let's take Microsoft as one example among many: Bill Gates tracked

down the guy in New Mexico who built BASIC. Bill Gates put himself in the middle when IBM wanted to license an operating system. He just kept showing up while everyone else was skiing.

## **7. The medium becomes the message**

I mentioned this in the point above but it deserves further elaboration. The jump-cutting, the hand-held camera, every aspect of the film became woven in with the story. Allen states: “I wanted it to be more dissonant, because the internal emotional and mental states of the characters are more dissonant. I wanted the audience to feel there was a jagged and nervous feeling.” In this he shows not only his own evolution as a filmmaker but what he’s borrowed from the artists before him – not only Godard and Bergman who did their own experimentations, but musicians like Profokiev where the dissonance itself is so tightly wound with the music it becomes a part of the music, as opposed to just the notes being played. This is underlined, in Midnight in Paris, very highly where Owen Wilson, the main character, pinpoints the roots of his own art by going back further and further in time.

My takeaway – study the history of the form you want to master. Study every nuance. If you want to write – read not only all of your contemporaries, but the influences of those contemporaries, and their influences. Additionally, draw inspiration from other art forms. From music, art, and again, go back to the influences of your inspirations, and go back to their influences, and so on.

The facets that resonate with time, even hundreds of years old, will resonate with your work as well. It’s like a law of the universe.

In today’s day and age, we want to transform decades of work into years or even months. Allen built up his career over five decades and kept at it persistently, even when scandal, or a bad movie, or a bad article, would cast gloom over his entire career. But he shrugged it off.

## **So what can we learn from Woody Allen?**

- Wake up early
- Avoid distractions
- Work three to five hours per day and then enjoy the rest of the day
- Be as perfectionist as you can, knowing that imperfection will still rule
- Have the confidence to be magical and stretch the boundaries of your medium.
- Combine the tools of the medium itself with the message you want to convey
- Don't get stuck in the same rut – move forward, experiment, but with the confidence built up over experience.

The same can be said for successful entrepreneurs. Or for people who are successful in any aspect of life. Is Woody Allen a happy man? Who knows? But he's done what he set out to do. He's made movies. He's told stories. He's lived the dream, even when it bordered on nightmare. We can only be so lucky.

by James Altucher

## **WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?**

First, and most importantly for today's day and age, never consider yourself to be a "worker". Never think in terms of getting "employment". Think of yourself as an independent contractor, and even if you get a regular job where you are considered an employee, continue to think of yourself as an independent contractor who just happens to have one client: your boss... or the company you work for.

In that way, you will always have the right attitude. You are there to add value to your boss. Many, especially in the socialist Western world, seem to think that their employer owes them something. They do... they owe the wage and environment you agreed to work under. After that, it is your job to ensure you add enough value to make paying you worthwhile.

Secondly, if your goal is to make a good amount of money in your life, always be learning new skills and always be improving yourself. When we were younger, at every coffee break and lunch break, we were reading or studying to learn a new skill. If you are going to get a small job to pay your bills, one of the best types of job to look for early on is a kind of job where you can even be reading/learning while you work, such as where you are mostly sitting around and not doing much. Parking garage attendant or security guard, for example. Anything where you can be reading and learning new things while getting paid for it.

What you read and learn depends on what you want to do, but one of the best things you can do to give yourself options is to learn another language. Again, the language you choose will be based on your preferences. You already have a big advantage: you speak the international language, English. So, all you need to do is learn a second one and you will open a world of new opportunities. Obvious ones include Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, German, Russian although even learning Cambodian, for example, can open doors if you desire to work or live in Cambodia.

The easiest way to learn a language is to live in the place(s) it is spoken. So, again, look for employment in a foreign country. Instead of spending tens of thousands on tertiary education, consider travel part of your education and either save up or ask your parents to give you some starting capital and do some backpack-style economical travel. It's important to not just have one place in mind, but to go to a number of places and then figure out where you like best... that's because nothing is ever how you think it is. Whatever you've read about or heard about a place is likely mostly wrong.

When you get to a place, try to meet as many people as you can. Be interested. Be motivated and ALWAYS be listening for a way you can help someone. That is all capitalism is... finding the best way to use your abilities to help someone who needs your particular skills the most. Even offer to do a job free for a few days or weeks so you can demonstrate the value you will bring to the venture.

Finding good workers is VERY hard. If you are one of them, there will ALWAYS be opportunities.

**MANY HAVE SAID THAT, TO SUCCEED, ONE MUST SIMPLY:**

- Be on time.
- Finish what you start, at the agreed price.
- Say please and thank you.

This sounds simple, but hardly anyone does it. The most important thing an employer wants from his employee or contractor is trust that he/she will be on time and finish the job. Many people don't even do that... and then wonder why they never seem to get ahead.

And, finally, work to get yourself outside of the system as much as possible. Also, look to make your living via the internet... in that way you can work from anywhere. Plus you can set up your affairs to get paid outside of your home country. Through proper planning, and

getting residency or citizenship in a country that does not tax the form or type of income you earn, you can pay minimal income tax. And you don't have to pay into any of the socialist "services" that you will never see. By not paying into those things and minimizing income tax, you can save large amounts over your lifetime that would have otherwise been paid into the black hole of your government.

That's another reason to look for work in other countries... many won't have the debt or demographics or socialist structures which mean anywhere from 30-70% of your income gets eaten up to pay for things you don't want or never will see. Hong Kong, as example, has a flat 15% income tax, which is much lower than most Western countries.

In short, always be learning, keep your life as mobile as possible, detach yourself from overindebted socialist Western governments, try to earn income in ways that are low tax or not taxable, be on time, do what you say you are going to do and say please and thank you. And you'll be hugely successful in life!

## **ARE YOU FIT FOR A RELATIONSHIP?**

When runners crumple from exhaustion midway through a marathon, do we blame luck or fitness?

When the heavily favoured basketball team loses to the underdog, is it chance or effort?

So why is it any different in romance?

These questions put relationships into perspective for me—they are win or lose affairs. And whether we win depends on our fitness. Luck, fate ... they've got nothing to do with the lasting happiness you were born to control.

Relationships are a lifetime adventure of continual growth through failure and achievement. And with the adventure comes a challenge to be your best in all ways while

helping your partner do the same. In a world so gripped by toxic romance, this concept is almost unfathomable.

But without preparedness, it's impossible. No amount of luck can take the place of fitness.

Are you fit for a relationship?

If marriage is an elite marathon, today we have a bunch of couch potatoes hoping for a pleasure jog.

And we're dropping out like flies.

We sustain all sorts of mortal injuries as couples not from bad luck, but from a lack of fitness. If your conception of a relationship is fluffy, your relationships will be plagued by injuries from start to finish. You'll lose\*.

\*Yes, there is such a thing as losing in relationships. In the world of gold stars for everyone, it seems offensive. But it's the damned truth.

So now is the time to prepare your mind for some questions?

- What do I want out of a relationship?
- What do I have to give in a relationship?
- What do I want to create through my relationship?
- If I knew that relationships were the key to world peace, would I approach them differently?
- Do I seek comfort in relationships, or do I seek challenge?
- In what ways have I prepared myself for a relationship?
- Am I dependable enough for a relationship?
- Am I honest enough?
- Strong enough?
- Happy enough?
- Selfless enough?



- Vulnerable enough?
- Patient enough?
- Persistent enough?
- Do I have faith in love?
- If yes, what have I done to demonstrate this? Would my future husband or wife be secure in the life I've lived up to now?
- Do I seek to give before I receive?
- Have I practiced unconditional love on myself, my friends, and my family?
- Have I grown in character through my friendships? Do I help my friends to grow?
- Have I experienced true intimacy in a platonic friendship?

If relationships were meant for anything other than maximum character development, we wouldn't see our flaws so clearly in them. But world peace is built on every individual relationship, so relationships have to make us strong.

Whatever we hold on to that doesn't serve us, a relationship will bring to the surface. Because of this "mirroring" effect, many people are convinced that love is impossible. But romantic love is only impossible if you refuse to change, to adapt, and grow.

But growing is hard. It means discovering your faults and changing the way you've done things your whole life. It means having faith in a better version of you and never settling for less. It means letting go of the known and embracing uncertainty, which is hardest of all.

Doing all that alone is an insane challenge ... but with another person? Come on.

Still, most people go into relationships with fantasies of sweatpants and Netflix. I'm not an ascetic and I don't think comfort is bad—we need rest and relaxation for balance. But to see relationships as anything less than the greatest challenge of a lifetime will leave you unprepared for the greatest challenge of a lifetime. That's what relationships are.

SO HERE ARE SOME REAL QUESTIONS THAT WILL PREPARE YOU FOR A REAL RELATIONSHIP:

- What five strengths will you bring into your lasting love?
- Is growing in faith, integrity, courage, and virtue a daily practice for you? Is it even on your radar?
- If a relationship requires complete honesty for success, are you able to be honest with yourself first?
- What five weaknesses threaten your relationship?
- Are you prepared to see those weaknesses exposed in a relationship?
- Do you accept yourself fully as you are?
- Are you willing to improve yourself before blaming your spouse?
- Do you think you deserve to be loved despite your flaws?
- Are you prepared to see your partner's weaknesses, and to accept him or her unconditionally?
- Are you willing to be your lover's best friend first so you have the capability to accept unconditionally?
- If relationship fitness meant channeling your sexual desire into the growth of a friendship, would you be willing to delay pleasure?
- Do you have what it takes to last for a lifetime?

## **Conclusion**

If I had asked myself these questions eight years ago, I'd have saved a ton of grief for me and my girlfriends. But I didn't, and my lack of fitness resulted in catastrophic relationship injuries.

I got tired of crumpling before the finish line; I got tired of being so pathetically out of shape and knowing I could achieve more. So over the course of many years I asked myself the same questions you just read. And I realized I had a ton of hard work to do to get fit.

But in committing to the work I revolutionized my life. And when I meet my wife, I'll be prepared for her in body, mind, and spirit.

How about you?

by Daniel Dowling

## **DO YOU MAKE THIS DATING MISTAKE?**

Dating: The Double Yellow Line Between Being Considerate and Being A Tool

The Los Angeles Times published a series of lame dating pieces, and this is one of them. A guy who seems to be a Mattel toy designer has a Tinder date. This is a dead giveaway that he's the sort of man who gets walked on.

“She said she lived in Beverly Hills. I suggested meeting at Urth Caffè so it would be convenient for her. What I didn't say is that I live in Santa Monica and I work in El Segundo, which meant making it to Beverly Hills on a weekday would be absolute torture.”

In other words, he bends over backward — and then some — for a total stranger. To the point where he goes through hours of hell in LA traffic.

It's great to be a guy who's considerate and who goes the extra mile — once you have a girlfriend with an open heart who'll do the same for you.

But you can't just change the behaviour; you have to change what's behind it — probably some combo of dating out of your league and not having fixed whatever makes you feel all “I'm not worthy! I'm not worthy!”

Or this is what happens to you:

“The drive took almost two hours. Still, I found parking and made it to Urth with 10

minutes to spare. When I arrived, however, I got a message telling me she was actually about two miles away, at the SLS Hotel on La Cienega Boulevard. She was there getting her hair done “for tomorrow’s shoot” and asked if I wanted to meet there instead. It was going to be either a 30-minute drive in traffic or a 20-minute walk, so I decided to keep my parking spot and headed on over.

I messaged when I reached the hotel, and she told me she still needed about 10 minutes. I said I’d be at the hotel bar.

Thirty minutes later ... she texted that she was “still getting worked on.”

Fifteen minutes later (about an hour and a half since I arrived in Beverly Hills, and over three hours since I left my job), she messaged that she was on her way down.

She looked good, not amazing, but like her photos. I complimented her hair and went in for a friendly hug. She responded with a light, impersonal and slightly awkward embrace.

She looked at me and said, “You look nothing like your pictures!,” to which I responded “You mean in a good way, I hope.”

She just looked down.

I asked if she wanted to go back to Urth. She said “You’re welcome to walk back and I’ll meet you there,” which I now realize was her first try at an exit strategy.

I suggested we just stay in the lobby for drinks. I began with some small talk, including asking why she’s new to Tinder.

Well, I just broke up with my boyfriend. Actually we broke up last month, but just stopped sleeping together this week. Like yesterday.”

OK ...

Comment:

The guy blames the fact that she's a lingerie model/actress/whatever.

Okay, sure, maybe she's looking for somebody richer or famous-er or whatever, but even if he dates girls who aren't looking for that, his problem will remain. (And no, it probably doesn't help that he's probably dating out of his league.)

But his real problem? It's not that he's a nice guy; it's that he's a pathetic guy who shows women he'll do anything to get them.

As I write in my book, first dates should be three things: Cheap, short, and local. And that's local for all involved, meaning you meet in the middle. You don't haul your ass through a traffic jungle so she won't have to muss her hair behind the wheel.

This says everything about you — none of it good or helpful for getting a woman to do more than take you for a ride and then push you out the car door after you're done paying for as much as she can squeeze out of you.

[www.advicegoddess.com](http://www.advicegoddess.com)

## **SO YOU'VE BEEN BETRAYED:**

### **7 Steps on How to Survive Betrayal (Romantic and Otherwise)-**

by Eileen R Borris

You've met the person who makes you feel so special. It feels wonderful to be in love and now you are married, hoping that this relationship will last your lifetime. Years have gone by and marriage has been good to you – so you thought. You begin to notice some different behaviors from your spouse, which at first you ignore. For a while you begin to wonder if something is going on but you brush it off. After all, the last thing you could ever imagine is that your spouse is having an affair. You don't even want to go there. You begin to piece some things together and your spouse denies everything until the day comes when your spouse gets caught in his/her lies.

For those of us who have experienced situations like this, we know that betrayal runs deep and can be devastating. Trust has been torn apart and the unthinkable has just happened. Your life has just been thrown into a tailspin and probably your anxiety is making you feel sick. You may even want to get back at your spouse for the pain and humiliation you are now going through. Possibly the only thing you can think of is how to get even, so your partner will hurt as much as you do. Is it possible to heal from the pain and humiliation of betrayal? Is it possible to forgive someone who has hurt you so badly?

Betrayal happens to everyone at some point in our lives. Betrayal can occur with a spouse, a family member, a best friend or a co-worker. Most people who experience betrayal saw the signs, but continue to give that person the benefit of the doubt. The reality is that people will fail you. About 25% of all betrayal occurs with absolutely no forewarning. This is by far the most difficult type of betrayal because it leaves you shell-shocked and devastated.

Betrayal is an interpersonal trauma that shatters assumptions about how we view life and

the people close to us. Shattered assumptions leave us feeling as though our reality has been blown apart. When we are betrayed, our feelings alternate between a sense of numbness and feelings of disbelief. We may also find ourselves behaving erratically and not like our usual selves. We feel victimized, and our lives seem to be out of control.

So how do we heal from being betrayed? We begin by developing the skills to deal with strong negative emotions and to talk more effectively about the impact the betrayal had. This may require setting appropriate boundaries with each other, learning how to deal with emotions effectively and expressing how you feel about the infidelity. Next look at both the current and the developmental issues within yourselves and within your relationship that may have contributed to the betrayal. Usually both parties have an idea as to why the affair may have happened, but they are often unaware of the deeper or unacknowledged needs or motives from the partner's past history that may be impacting on current behaviors. Gaining this new understanding often results in an increase in compassion for the partner and tolerance of his or her flaws. Finally, as a couple begins to understand why the affair happened, they need to evaluate the viability of their relationship, the potential for change, and their commitment to work together. This is when the process of forgiveness becomes the focus of intervention. No matter if you choose to stay or leave, because of other circumstances you may always be in some form of relationship. Therefore it is important to heal the emotional rift between yourselves as best you can. This is why forgiveness is so important. Let's now look at how you can heal from being betrayed.

### **Step 1: Face Your Feelings**

While every situation is unique, there are certain things that we can do to lessen the pain. Once the betrayal is revealed, an emotional roller coaster ride begins. You likely will get swept up in an emotional whirlwind of anger, fear and a sense of loss. Realize that you are not going crazy. Others have experienced the same pain and confusion and have survived. Remember that you are not alone. I want to assure you that what you are experiencing is a normal and appropriate response to an acutely traumatizing experience. You're reeling not

only from the loss of the integrity of your relationship, but also from the loss of an illusion – that you're special to your partner, and that the intimacy you thought you shared with that person would last forever. In the face of such shattering news, it would be strange if you didn't feel lost. This may seem paradoxical, but once we acknowledge and walk through our pain, only then does the pain begin to dissipate. This is where a counselor can really help. Talking to someone who listens to you and can be supportive in a healthy way can help you sort out what needs to happen.

### **Step 2: Gain Control of Your Emotions**

As you try to unscramble what has happened to you, both your thoughts and actions may spin out of control. You're likely to become more obsessive, dwelling on your partner's lies, the details of the betrayal and the events that led to it. You may become more compulsive at work and other things you do, pushing harder and more frenetically to diffuse your anxiety. These distractions may serve as a temporary antidote to feelings of anxiety or emptiness, but if you want to put yourself back together, you need to slow down, confront your pain, figure out why the affair happened, and decide what you want to do about it. Instead of hanging on to the "story" of your betrayal, give yourself permission to heal. Look beneath your emotional reactions and ask yourself - what are my emotions really telling me? What needs to change and what can I do to take those necessary steps. You cannot change what has happened to you, but you do need to take responsibility for how you are handling the situation now.

### **Step 3: Ask Yourself "Should I Stay or Leave?"**

Once the betrayal is out in the open, you will need to decide whether to work on rebuilding your relationship or end it. You will need to confront your ambivalence about whether to stay or leave the relationship. Whichever route you take, you need to choose it deliberately and not act on your feelings alone. Feelings, no matter how intense, are based on assumptions that are often highly subjective and may prove to be unrealistic, not useful or untrue. What feels right to you now you may later regret as an impulsive and



unprocessed response that can't be easily reversed. By exploring your options, you will be able to make a thoughtful decision based on your circumstances and needs. "What can I expect from love?" "Should I trust my feelings?" "How can I tell if my partner is right for me?" These are just some of the questions to be asking yourself. A counselor can help you sort out your answers.

Two of your options will take you down a dead end. The first option is to stay together and never address why the betrayal happened or work to assure that it will never happen again. This is a ticket to disaster, creating a larger gulf between you leading to a life of quiet desperation.

The second option is for you to stay together, with at least one of you continuing to be unfaithful, only to have the other continually fighting depression and building up enormous rage. Needless to say, this is a very unhealthy option built on a lot of dysfunction and clearly indicating a lack of self-love. In my experience as a therapist working with couples, I have never known a prolonged affair to do anything but undermine a couple's efforts to seriously address the intimacy defects in their relationship.

This leaves only two viable alternatives. One is the decision to accept what has just happened and make a commitment to work on improving your relationship. The blind spot here is for the hurt partner to go in denial about the relationship because of an unwarranted attachment to the spouse that makes you want to stay together, no matter how dysfunctional the relationship is. What the betrayed person fails to see is how unloving the partner has been, how poorly you continue to be treated, and how nothing you do will change this.

The other alternative is to say goodbye and begin building separate lives. The danger for the unfaithful partner is that you may be drawn blindly to your lover and insist on being with this person no matter what. We may call it romantic love but in actuality it is an intense but unwarranted attachment that the unfaithful partner may feel towards the new lover. Unfortunately this kind of attachment is likely to make the unfaithful partner leave

the spouse, no matter how satisfying your life had been together.

#### **Step 4: Learn From the Affair**

So often we blame our partner for what goes wrong and fail to see the link between our personal, lifelong conflicts and the conflicts in our relationship – between the damage we carry within ourselves and the damage we experience as a couple. In attempting to assign responsibility for the infidelity, hurt partners tend to think, “You were screwing around with someone else. Don’t blame me.” Unfaithful partners tend to think, “You weren’t there for me; you drove me away.” Both of you are likely to insist on your own, perhaps self-serving, contradictory and often oversimplified versions of the same conflict.

Instead of blaming yourself for your partner’s betrayal, appreciate your worth, know you are enough just as you are, and recognize that the betrayal had little to do with you. On the flip side, if you’re stuck in a cycle of intense anger and blame towards your partner, you need to decide if you can start to let go and rebuild your relationship, or if it’s time to walk away and move on. To help you decide whether to stay or go, it is helpful to understand the origins of the betrayal. Most people who cheat and/or betray in some other way suffer from low self-esteem. They may have a high need for acceptance and approval. If your partner fits this description, you need to decide if you can deal with and heal from the betrayal or if you need to leave your partner in order to recover. Either way, it’s essential to stop taking the betrayal personally. Instead, free yourself from the blame game, live in the present, and move forward with productive, positive thoughts.

#### **Step 5: Restore Trust**

One of the most devastating aspects of betrayal is the breakdown of trust. Once trust is broken it can be very difficult to rebuild it and it must be earned back. To restore trust, actions speak louder than words. Feeling safe becomes paramount here. If the person who has been betrayed cannot feel safe, trust cannot be built. The betrayer needs to demonstrate with concrete actions that “I’m committed to you. You are safe with me.” The person who has been hurt needs to open up to the possibility of trusting again and

reinforce the efforts of the other person. You can't punish nor be cold and distant forever, or the partner will give up trying to reconnect. You need to tell your partner what you need to give this person a way back into your life.

When I speak of trust I am not only referring to the belief that your partner will remain faithful to you. I am also talking about the trust essential to you both -- that if you venture back into the relationship, your partner will address your grievances and not leave you regretting your decision to recommit.

While it's easy to fall into the betrayal trap of massive mistrust towards your partner, be aware that projecting your fears will not help you heal. If you plan to stay with your partner, you'll need to focus on rebuilding trust. If you can't forgive, then don't waste time staying in the relationship and trying to make your partner pay for past transgressions. Instead, give yourself the opportunity to pick up the pieces and start again. Start by learning to trust yourself and your life choices. Instead of focusing on your ex and the betrayal (not to mention past relationship disappointments that may be adding up to a mistrust in yourself now), think about all the amazing people in your life who you can trust, including yourself. Make a list of ten terrific choices and decisions you've made in the last few years. Reflect on the people who have kept your confidences, honored their word, and stuck by your side. Soon, you'll be slaying the beast of betrayal and going from victim to victor. Plus, by slowly and steadily rebuilding trust with your partner (or simply with yourself if you leave the relationship), you're better able to let go of fear, doubt, and insecurity.

The process of restoring trust can take a lifetime, but this doesn't mean you will have to struggle with trust issues on a daily basis. Your relationship is likely to feel fragile and tentative for several years after the affair is revealed, but during that time you can expect to experience many reassuring, joyous moments as well. Trust is delicate, and can only be earned over time through commitment and continued effort. With trust comes the knowledge that "I can give myself to you knowing that you won't harm me -- that you'll support me in what matters to me. I can open myself up to love you because I feel safe

with you and valued by you.”

### **Step 6: Find Forgiveness**

Forgiveness has been deemed “ the highest form of love that we are capable of giving.” If this is true, it is no wonder that we have such difficulty forgiving someone who has betrayed us, and even in forgiving ourselves. To aid us in learning how to forgive, it is helpful to understand what forgiveness means and what it’s not. Forgiveness is a voluntary act in which you make a decision to see a situation differently. Forgiveness helps us change the way we think, so instead of seeing a situation through the lens of anger, guilt or fear we see it through the eyes of compassion and understanding. Instead of getting stuck in your own emotional baggage you can now see the situation differently with greater wisdom and understanding. That’s forgiveness.

I like to think of forgiveness as the science of the heart, a discipline of discovering all the ways of being that will extend your love to the world and discarding all the ways that do not. It is the accomplishment of mastery over a wound. Forgiveness is a process through which an injured person first fights off, then addresses, then conquers a situation that has nearly destroyed him or her. On a deeper level forgiveness is about changing the way we think, which includes embracing our humanity and spiritual nature and the humanity and spiritual nature of all human beings.

Forgiveness is not about pardoning. It is about our inner emotional release. Forgiveness is not condoning. We do not have to accept someone else’s behavior in order to forgive. Forgiveness is not reconciliation. We can forgive someone, but it does not mean we have to reconcile. On a very practical level, forgiveness is about lessening your own emotional burdens and healing the pain of your heart. Forgiveness is not about letting someone off the hook. It is about your own inner healing.

It takes a generous spirit to understand that people do not always hurt us because they choose to. Oftentimes, they have no more control over their actions than we, their victims, do. Only from our wisdom and compassion can we recognize that when people harm us, it

is their weaknesses that compel them to act. People who attack us act out of fear to protect themselves. Fear drives us into a hard shell. It shuts the door on our capacity to understand, empathize, and love, while allowing distrust and enmity to guard against being touched from the outside world. To compensate for this perception, we often harden ourselves so that others cannot gain access to our inner selves or discover our shortcomings.

Forgiveness is a process that happens over time. Before we can truly forgive, we need to realize that forgiveness is about our inner healing and not necessarily about behavioral change. Until we totally understand this, we may needlessly deal with resistance about forgiving someone. We heal by remembering, by bringing back into our awareness everything we have kept hidden from ourselves. It takes time to bring these pieces together. This process begins by telling our story and validating our feelings and experiences. Only after time and being in a safe environment can we allow ourselves to feel and express our strong emotions and to explore the issues concerning our pain and circumstances. As we become more aware and accepting of all our emotions as valid messengers about our interaction in the world, we begin our healing. If we are holding onto something, we need to recognize that, despite any other person's role in creating the situation, we are responsible for what we do with our hurt. Forgiveness is about accepting responsibility for our emotional reactions to our hurt.

What may be harder than forgiving your partner is forgiving yourself. Whether you are the one who has been hurt or you are the one who has hurt, looking within yourself and dealing with the guilt of the past is no easy process. Yet, if we do not do this kind of soul searching and inner work, our outer world may be superficial at best. If you have been betrayed, you may be blaming yourself too harshly for your partner's betrayal. You may have contributed to your partner's dissatisfaction by getting buried in your career or in the needs of your children. When you take a look at these issues and take responsibility for them, you will be able to let go of your guilt and move on.

If you are the betrayer, you are solely responsible for your deception and need to forgive

yourself for the harm you have caused by violating your covenant of trust. You may also need to look at the hurt you have caused your children. By taking responsibility for your actions and making different choices, you heal guilt and move forward. Remember that holding on to your guilt is a choice, too. Self-forgiveness doesn't relieve you of responsibility for your words or actions, but it releases you from self-contempt. With self-forgiveness, you bring compassion and understanding of who you are and why you acted the way you did, and reclaim what you most value in yourself.

### **Step 7: Hope and Renewal**

Sometimes you need to take something apart to rebuild it in a stronger, more lasting way. Dr. Erik Erikson, has said, "A crisis can be a turning point; by making you vulnerable it can heighten your potential for positive change. Sometimes it takes the threat of losing something to make you realize its value. Until you feel compelled to leave, you may not realize you are happy where you are and want to stay. Dr. Carl Jung commented, "Seldom or never does a marriage develop smoothly and without crisis. There is no birth of consciousness without pain."

And so it is with intimate relationships. We often enter into them blindly, swept up with passion and an idealized perception of who our partner is. Most of us are totally unprepared for what lies ahead, and ignorant of what is required of us to stay the course. We may think that we know what it takes, but the truth is that most of us are clueless. The affair shocks us into reality. It also gives us the opportunity to try again.

by Wanda White, Ph.D.

## **ARE YOU GRATEFUL?**

by Jeffrey Smith

Most definitions of gratitude or gratefulness seem like last year's faded memories. They associate it with a kind of reverent thankfulness and miss the deeper meaning, power and excitement of what gratitude really means, and what it can do to bring you mountains of happiness and joy.

Gratitude is love. Attitude is a way of being. The attitude of gratitude is a way of living that comes from a place of limitless love for yourself and for others.

This makes everyday living a very happy thing as we attract more good to ourselves and others. Many people refer to this as the Law of Attraction. Gratitude shores us up when difficult life events hit us personally. It is also a powerful tool to bring bliss in the good times.

### **Five Essential Ideas About the Attitude of Gratitude**

It becomes a way of living, day in, day out. It is not a magic lamp that is pulled out in times of need, rubbed, then put back away again to be used later. You have to be genuine. The great news is that people who practice living this way live happier lives filled with abundance.

#### **1. Right Here, Right Now**

Forget multi-tasking. Be in this moment. Be fully present. Do one thing at a time. Be okay with not doing anything. Thinking is highly overrated. Most people are so busy thinking about what is or is not happening, or how much more they have to do, that they don't look around and notice what's happening right now. But there is no past, no future moment. There is only this moment. Right here, right now. We are either happy and embrace this

moment or we are unhappy and wanting for this moment to pass so the next moment will arrive.

## **2. Honour Your Life**

Stop comparing your life to everyone else's. There is only one you and therefore any "standard" of comparison is irrelevant, arbitrary and completely unscientific. The only comparison that makes sense is –are we doing better than we did yesterday? The only person we can change is ourselves. By changing ourselves, we become a better person. Silently, we lead by example. When asked for advice, we don't offer it. Instead, we share our experience. Anyone can argue with an opinion, but no one can argue with what your personal experience has been. Besides, sharing your experience is sharing wisdom. You are not telling them they must do what you have done, but allowing them to draw their own conclusions. If they are wise, they will see to get what you have, they must do what you've done. Whatever the mind focuses on, magnifies. With the attitude of gratitude as our framework, it's easy to keep our focus on our own improvement.

Using the Attitude of Gratitude /To Do List for the five things you're are grateful for each day helps to keep you in this place of humility in action. Writing out your to do list in the three major areas of your life - God/Spirit, Work/School, Home - you'll quickly be able to see what things you already know you can handle on your own and those things you can't. This is why without the list we lose our connection with the Now. By writing them down, we can "set it and forget it", by turning them over to our Higher Power, God, or the Universe, whomever or whatever you choose to call it.

Let's say you have an electric bill coming up. You owe several hundred dollars and you don't have it. You have no idea where you're going to get it either. This is the perfect item to "turn over" to your HP. Put a capital G next to that item for "God" (or use any letter or acronym that makes sense to you). When you write down the description for what the item is, you might want to utilise "Lofty Questions" to give the Universe exactly what it is you're looking for in an answer. A question like "Why did this bill get paid AND I still



have money left over for other things?” In a sense, because the Universe has to answer, the money for the electric bill will be provided and there will be money left over for other things.

Don't believe it's true? Well the good news is that you don't have to believe. I didn't. Just be willing to test it out for two weeks.

### **3. The Law of Attraction**

The Law of Attraction is often misunderstood, because some people get results while others become disillusioned by the notion that it's possible.

Let's start by looking at the definition. The law of attraction is the name given to the maxim “like attracts like” which in New Thought philosophy is used to sum up the idea that by focusing on positive or negative thoughts a person brings positive or negative experiences into their life. Since thoughts, either positive or negative, have energy, we can use our thoughts to make things happen.

Good things are always happening to people who are grateful. Being grateful is synonymous with love and positivity. This higher vibration attracts and returns things that are also of this same vibration. You're happy, living in the Now, things are good, you're putting out this energy, and remarkable things of the same high vibration are jetting their way towards you right this moment.

Gratitude attracts more of that which you are grateful for and deeply desire. Be grateful for all that you have and know that all your needs are already taken care of by your Higher Power. Gratitude attracts exactly what you desire and allows you to receive it quickly.

The trick is to be very specific and to know what and how to say it.

### **4. Be in Love With Now.**

The special key to learning to accept everything that you already have (good or not so great) is to love the present moment – all of it – and you're okay with that. You turn over

everything you can't control to the Universe. You drop resentments and forgive freely, even if the other person harmed you first. This will put you in a place where you feel calm and relaxed, which is the state for seeing, hearing and experiencing life's most precious gifts – a deep connection to “All That Is”. This is a high, spiritual vibration. Animals and children sense it and will be attracted to you. Strangers will respond to you as you say “hello” or “good morning” unexpectedly to them.

## **5. Gratitude and Letting Go**

Just how does one develop gratitude? It's already inside of you. It's not something you need to go out and get. Rather, it's something you have instant access to by connecting to all that is within you. Gratitude is love. The attitude part simply means a way of living. The attitude of gratitude is a way of loving life. Being kind and loving to all.

Being grateful means letting go of all resistance. Gratitude allows you to understand you at a deeper spiritual level, so you have a deeper understanding about the path to come. It doesn't mean that you know everything, but it does heighten your confidence that everything is going to turn out okay and that you can relax, knowing that you've turned everything you can't control over to your Higher power or the Universe and that with Him, all things are possible.

And – how do you know when you've developed your attitude of gratitude? Ask yourself the following questions:

Do you have an increased tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen?

Do you have frequent attacks of smiling?

Do you often have feelings of being connected with others and nature?

Do you have frequent overwhelming episodes of appreciation?

Do you have a tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than from fears based on past experience?

Do you have an unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment?

Have you lost the ability to worry?

Have you lost interest in engaging in conflict?

Have you lost interest in interpreting the actions of others or labelling?

Do you find yourself with a loss of interest in judging others?

Do you find yourself with a loss of interest in judging yourself?

Have you gained the ability to love without expecting anything in return?

## **GRATITUDE MEDITATION**

This meditation is a powerful tool for resetting your day-to-day priorities, and is best done on a regular basis. It is an opportunity to dig deeply into all areas of life where gratitude can be found, acknowledging and savouring each one in order to bring your heart and entire body into harmonious resonance with the cosmos.

It is done at your own pace, and in your own words, loosely following this simple script.

Simply find a comfortable chair somewhere where you can be free of distraction and interruption for at least ten minutes. Relax in the chair, straightening your back if possible, or in whatever manner puts you most at ease. Take a moment to calm your mind and set the intention of gaining the most possible benefit from this short mental exercise.

Close your eyes and relax, at first focusing on developing a smooth calming rhythm to your breath.

Allow yourself to feel thankful for your life and the unfathomable expanse of the universe that supports all life and makes all experience possible.

Feel gratitude for your body and your health, acknowledging your weaknesses, relishing your strengths, being grateful that you have the presence of mind to explore the powerful emotion of gratitude.

Give thanks that this body supports the mind, which in turn gives meaning to the experiences we have and the emotions we produce. Feel thankful that this physical structure, the human body, is both a processor of logic and an instrument of spirit, allowing you to appreciate being who you are, where you are, at such a transformational time on planet Earth, acting as a bridge between the material world and the infinite realms of spirit and possibility.

Now, allow yourself to physically connect with the earth below your feet, feeling its mass, acknowledging that the ground you rest on brings forth all life unto this planet.

Take note and express joy that you have the faculties to manipulate this earth in order to coax additional life into fruition at will with seed and purpose.

Take note of the relationship between the earth and the stars above. Be thankful that you are here, between the tangible and the wonderful, capable of experiencing and appreciating both.

Now move your thoughts to the abundance of life found in nature. Say a peaceful 'thank you' to the plant kingdom, then to all the creatures of the animal kingdom who inspire awe and support us in our journeys.

Allow yourself to sense a deep gratefulness for the inter-dependence of all life, where everything has a role and a purpose which supports the endeavors of something else. Be thankful for the wisdom to appreciate this connection.

Now move your gratitude towards the people in your life and the roles that they play in

helping you to express yourself.

Feel thankful for your family, the two beings who came together to create you, and for the timeless lineage of your ancestry, which has since the beginning labored and conspired to create you, so that you would be here in this moment, exactly right now to fulfill your destiny. Your simple destiny of enjoying life and contributing to the human experience, and then passing the gift of life onto another.

Be grateful for the creativity interwoven into life, for sacred cosmic order and for everyday human creativity. For music, art, sound, breath and shared experience.

Be thankful that you've been given the power of personal will, and for being a creature of intention who can manifest all of which can be conceived of in thought.

Allow yourself to also be thankful for the darkness in our world, for the strife, the fear, the anger, and the sickest aspects of our human nature. Acknowledge how the darkness in the human spirit creates, through contrast, the shattering moments of joy and love that so mark this human journey.

Be thankful that this current of light and dark runs through all cosmic things as the dance of life that brings our universe into being.

And be thankful that your life is charged with this current, and that when your time here is complete you may rest easy in the cosmos for having learned that the meaning of life is, indeed, gratitude.

Now relax for a moment and let this revelation sink into your mind and permeate your physical body. Store the memory of this peaceful vibration away within our physical tissue, so that it may be recalled in times of doubt.

Now, smile softly and open your eyes.

## HOW TO BE HAPPY: 25 HABITS TO ADD TO YOUR ROUTINE

Happiness looks different for everyone. For you, maybe it's being at peace with who you are. Or having a secure network of friends who accept you unconditionally. Or the freedom to pursue your deepest dreams.

Regardless of your version of true [happiness](#), living a happier, more satisfying life is within reach. A few tweaks to your regular [habits](#) can help you get there.

[Habits matter](#). If you've ever tried breaking a bad habit, you know all too well how ingrained they are.

Well, good habits are deeply ingrained, too. Why not work on making positive habits part of your [routine](#)?

Here's a look at some daily, monthly, and yearly habits to help kickstart your quest. Just remember that everyone's version of happiness is a little different, and so is their path to achieving it.

If some of these habits create added stress or just don't fit your lifestyle, ditch them. With a little time and practice, you'll figure out what does and doesn't work for you.

### Daily Habits

#### 1. Smile

You tend to smile when you're happy. But it's actually a two-way street.

We smile because we're happy, and smiling causes the brain to release dopamine, which makes us happier.

That doesn't mean you have to go around with a fake smile plastered on your face all the

time. But the next time you find yourself feeling low, crack a smile and see what happens. Or try starting each morning by smiling at yourself in the mirror.

## 2. Exercise

Exercise isn't just for your body. Regular exercise can help to reduce stress, feelings of anxiety, and symptoms of [depression](#) while boosting self-esteem and happiness.

Even a [small amount](#) of physical activity can make a difference. You don't have to train for a triathlon or scale a cliff—unless that's what makes you happy, of course.

The trick is not to overexert. If you suddenly throw yourself into a strenuous routine, you'll probably just end up frustrated (and sore).

### Consider these exercise starters:

- Take a walk around the block every night after dinner.
- Sign up for a beginner's class in yoga or tai chi.
- Start your day with 5 minutes of stretching.
- Remind yourself of any fun activities you once enjoyed, but that have fallen by the wayside. Or activities you always wanted to try, such as golf, bowling, or dancing.

## 3. Get Plenty of Sleep

No matter how much modern society steers us toward less sleep, we know that adequate sleep is [vital](#) to good [health](#), brain function, and emotional well-being.

Most adults need about [7 or 8 hours of sleep](#) every night. If you find yourself fighting the urge to nap during the day or just generally feel like you're in a fog, your body may be telling you it needs more rest.

Here are a few tips to help you build a better sleep routine:

- Write down how many hours of sleep you get each night and how rested you feel. After a week, you should have a better idea how you're doing.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends.
- Reserve the hour before bed as quiet time. Take a bath, read, or do something relaxing. Avoid heavy eating and drinking.
- Keep your bedroom dark, cool, and quiet.
- Invest in some good bedding.
- If you have to take a nap, try to limit it to 20 minutes.

#### **4. Eat with Mood in Mind**

You already know that food choice have an impact on your overall physical health. But some foods can also affect your state of mind.

**For example:**

- Carbohydrates release [serotonin](#), a “feel good” hormone. Just keep simple carbs—foods high in sugar and starch—to a minimum, because that energy surge is short and you'll crash. [Complex carbs](#), such as vegetables, beans, sprouts and seeds are better.
- Legumes, nuts and seeds are high in protein. These foods release dopamine and norepinephrine, which boosts energy and concentration.
- Refined, microwaved, barbecued and fried foods and sugar tend to leave you feeling down. So will skipping meals.
- Start by making one better food choice each day.

#### **5. Be Grateful**

Simply being grateful can give your mood a big boost. Practicing gratitude can have a significant impact on feelings of hope and happiness.



Start each day by acknowledging one thing you're grateful for. You can do this while you're brushing your teeth or just waiting for that snoozed alarm to go off.

As you go about your day, try to keep an eye out for pleasant things in your life. They can be big things, such as knowing that someone loves you or getting a well-deserved promotion.

But they can also be little things, such as a co-worker who offered you a cup of coffee or the neighbour who waved to you. Maybe even just the warmth of the sun on your skin.

With a little practice, you may even become more aware of all the positive things around you.

## **6. Give a Compliment**

Research shows that performing acts of kindness can help you feel more satisfied.

Giving a sincere compliment is a quick, easy way to brighten someone's day while giving your own happiness a boost.

Catch the person's eye and say it with a smile. You might be surprised by how good it makes you feel.

## **7. Breathe Deeply**

You're tense, your shoulders are tight, and you feel as though you just might "lose it." We all know that feeling.

- Instinct may tell you to take a long, deep breath to calm yourself down.
- Close your eyes. Try to envision a happy memory or a beautiful place.
- Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose.
- Slowly breathe out through your mouth or nose.
- Repeat this process several times, until you start to feel yourself calm down.

If you're having difficulty taking slow, deliberate breaths, try counting to 5 in your head with each inhale and exhale.

## **8. Acknowledge the Unhappy Moments**

A positive attitude is a good thing, but bad things happen to everyone. It's just part of life.

If you get some bad news, make a mistake, or just feel in a funk, don't try to pretend you're happy.

Acknowledge the feeling of unhappiness, letting yourself experience it for a moment. Then, shift your focus toward what made you feel this way and what it might take to recover.

Would a deep breathing exercise help? A long walk outside? Talking it over with someone?

Let the moment pass and take care of yourself. Remember, no one's happy always.

## **9. Keep a Journal**

A journal is a good way to organize your thoughts, analyse your feelings, and make plans. And you don't have to be a literary genius or write volumes to benefit.

It can be as simple as jotting down a few thoughts before you go to bed. If putting certain things in writing makes you nervous, you can always shred it when you've finished. It's the process that counts.

## **10. Face Stress Head-On**

Life is full of stressors, and it's impossible to avoid all of them.

There's no need to. Stress isn't always harmful, and we can even change our attitudes about stress.

For those stressors you can't avoid, remind yourself that everyone has stress—there's no reason to think it's all on you. And chances are, you're stronger than you think you are.

Instead of letting yourself get overwhelmed, try to tackle the stressor head-on. This might mean initiating an uncomfortable conversation or putting in some extra work, but the sooner you tackle it, the sooner the pit in your stomach will start to shrink.

## **Weekly Habits**

### **11. Declutter**

Decluttering sounds like a big project, but setting aside just 20 minutes a week can have a big impact.

What can you do in 20 minutes? Lots.

Take 15 minutes to tidy up a specific area of one room—say, your closet or that out-of-control junk drawer. Put everything in its place and toss or give away any extra clutter that's not serving you anymore.

Keep a designated box for giveaways to make things a little easier (and avoid creating more clutter).

Use the remaining 5 minutes to do a quick walk through your living space, putting away whatever stray items end up in your path.

You can do this trick once a week, once a day, or anytime you feel like your space is getting out of control.

### **12. See Friends**

Humans are social beings, and having close friends can make us happier.

Who do you miss? Reach out to them. Make a date to get together or simply have a long phone chat.

In adulthood, it can feel next to impossible to make new friends. But it's not about how many friends you have. It's about having meaningful relationships—even if it's just with one or two people.

Try getting involved in a local volunteer group or taking a class. Both can help to connect you with like-minded people in your area. And chances are, they're looking for friends, too.

Companionship doesn't have to be limited to other humans. Pets can offer similar benefits, according to multiple studies.

Love animals but can't have a pet? Consider volunteering at a local animal shelter to make some new friends — both human and animal.

### **13. Plan Your Week**

Feel like you're flailing about? Try sitting down at the end of every week and making a basic list for the following week.

Even if you don't stick to the plan, blocking out time where you can do laundry, go grocery shopping, or tackle projects at work can help to quiet your mind.

You can get a fancy planner, but even a sticky note on your computer or piece of scrap paper in your pocket can do the job.

### **14. Ditch Your Phone**

Unplug. Really.

Turn off all the electronics and put those earbuds away for at least one hour once a week. They'll still be there for you later.

If you haven't unplugged in a while, you might be surprised at the difference it makes. Let your mind wander free for a change. Read. Meditate. Take a walk and pay attention to your surroundings. Be sociable. Or be alone. Just be.

Sound too daunting? Try doing a shorter amount of time several times a week.

### **15. Get Into Nature**

Spending 30 minutes or more a week in green spaces can help lower blood pressure and depression.

Your green space could be anything from your neighbourhood park, to a rooftop garden—anywhere you can appreciate some nature and fresh air.

Better yet, add some outdoor exercise into the mix for extra benefit.

### **16. Explore Meditation**

There are many methods of meditation to explore. They can involve movement, focus, spirituality, or a combination of all three.

Meditation doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as sitting quietly with your own thoughts for 5 minutes. Even the deep breathing exercises mentioned earlier can serve as a form of meditation.

### **17. Consider Therapy**

We're certainly happier when we learn how to cope with obstacles. When you're faced with a problem, think about what got you through something similar in the past. Would it work here? What else can you try?

If you feel like you're hitting a brick wall, consider speaking with a therapist on a weekly basis. You don't need to have a diagnosed mental health condition or an overwhelming crisis to seek therapy.

Therapists are trained to help people improve coping skills. Plus, there's no obligation to continue once you start.

Even just a few sessions can help you add some new goodies to your emotional toolbox.

### **18. Find a Self-Care Ritual**

It's easy to neglect self-care in a fast-paced world. But since your body carries your thoughts, passions, and spirit through this world, doesn't it deserve a little TLC?

Maybe it's unwinding your workweek with a long, hot bath. Or adopting a skin care routine that makes you feel indulgent. Or simply setting aside a night to put on your softest jammies and watch a movie from start to finish.

Whatever it is, make time for it. Put it in your planner if you must, but do it.

### **Monthly Habits**

#### **19. Give Back**

If you find that giving daily compliments provides a needed boost to your mood, consider making a monthly routine of giving back on a larger scale.

Maybe that's helping out at a food bank on the third weekend of every month, or offering to watch your friend's kids one night per month.

#### **20. Take Yourself Out**

No one to go out with? Well, what rule says you can't go out alone?

Go to your favourite restaurant, take in a movie, or go on that trip you've always dreamed of.

Even if you're a social butterfly, spending some deliberate time alone can help you reconnect with the activities that truly make you happy.

## **21. Create a Thought List**

You arrive for an appointment with 10 minutes to spare. What do you do with that time? Pick up your cell phone to scroll through social media? Worry about the busy week you have ahead of you?

Take control of your thoughts during these brief windows of time.

At the start of each month, make a short list of happy memories or things you're looking forward to on a small piece of paper or on your phone.

When you find yourself waiting for a ride, standing in line at the grocery store, or just with a few minutes to kill, break out the list. You can even use it when you're just generally feeling down and need to change your thoughts.

## **Yearly Habits**

## **22. Take Time to Reflect**

The start of a new year is a good time to stop and take inventory of your life. Set aside some time to catch up with yourself the way you would with an old friend:

- How are you doing?
- What have you been up to?
- Are you happier than you were a year ago?

But try to avoid the pitfall of judging yourself too harshly for your answers. You've made it to another year, and that's plenty.

If you find that your mood hasn't improved much over the last year, consider talking to a therapist. You might be dealing with depression or even an underlying physical condition that's impacting your mood.

### **23. Re-evaluate Your Goals**

People change, so think about where you're heading and consider if that's still where you want to go. There's no shame in changing your game.

Let go of any goals that no longer serve you, even if they sound nice on paper.

### **24. Take Care of Your Body**

You hear it continuously. Yes, your physical and mental health are closely intertwined.

As you build habits to improve your happiness, make sure to follow up with routine appointments to take care of your body:

- address any chronic health conditions
- see your dentist for an oral exam and follow up as recommended
- get your vision checked

### **25. Let Go of Grudges**

This is often easier said than done. But you don't have to do it for the other person.

Sometimes, offering forgiveness or dropping a grudge is more about self-care than compassion for others.

Take stock of your relationships with others. Are you harbouring any resentment or ill will toward someone? If so, consider reaching out to them in an effort to bury the hatchet.

This doesn't have to be a reconciliation. You may just need to end the relationship and move on.

If reaching out isn't an option, try getting your feelings out in a letter. You don't even have to send it... Just getting your feelings out of your mind can be freeing.