



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ENSURING YOUR SUCCESS 5 TIPS TO KEEP YOU FOCUSED

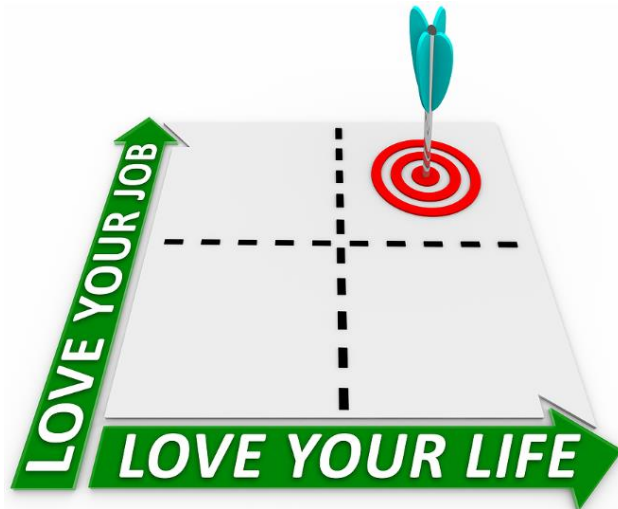
There is an art to the approach you take to organizing and executing what's required to be successful in life.

If you aren't methodical about what you choose to do, when you do it, and how quickly, your goals won't matter.

This Ebook contains actionable steps you can take to design your life, stay focused, and continually make strides.

In It You'll Discover:

- Techniques for making strides in your personal and professional life.
- How to spontaneously drive yourself toward your best life every day.
- Use design thinking to chart your course at any stage of life.
- Find your core values - 4 Steps to better decision-making skills.
- Simple changes to our daily habits to put you on the fast-track to happiness.



How to Stay Focused and Achieve What You Want

Creating [goals](#) keeps you productive, but it is important to make sure you don't overload yourself with too many or unrealistic ambitions.

What's more, wanting to do something is step 0. Step 1 is getting started, and that doesn't happen without a calm mind and a view of what lies ahead.

The steps beyond are all about creating a setting that ensures persistence. It can be very easy to lose track of priorities, and fatigue and [stress](#) are enemies of progress.

If you're committed to making strides in your personal and professional life this year, you should focus on using productivity tools. They simplify your thinking, streamline processes, and save time.

Organizing what lies ahead can also ensure your efforts are aligned equitably among your goals. So use these three techniques to improve your chances of success.

The Science of Writing Things Down

There are distractions all around us. The information and general inputs are ever-increasing. Responsibilities, distractions, and to-dos accumulate by the hour, but the length of a day, along with brain capacity, remains the same.

For certain, you cannot rely merely on yourself to sort everything you need to get done in a day or even in a moment. Using a capture tool can be very helpful.

Rather than a traditional to-do list, a capture tool is a dumping ground for the to-dos that come to mind throughout the day. Before closing up shop in the afternoon, you organize those items into your calendar to the best of your ability and toss the list.

Science proves that this helps in a few ways. First, the act of writing something down [frees](#) your [subconscious](#) of its hidden efforts to track the task. Second, science shows that just writing something down causes your brain to process them into the first stages of organization.

Now in a digital world, why am I advocating for the ole pen and paper? Well, third, throwing out the list provides psychological closure to the day. Finally, turning the page to a blank sheet and putting tomorrow's date on it is the symbolic action that pulls you into the next day.

So why not use a smartphone? The psychological effects of points three and four in the previous paragraphs are missed, and anyone who has a phone knows that they are Petri dishes of distraction. So do yourself a favor. Go back in time, and get yourself a nice pad or diary book.

Prioritizing Your Tasks

Not having an organized calendar is like not having goals at all, and the items that go into that calendar should have some higher level of priority. But priority is dangerous business at the end of the day, when you will be tired and inclined to delete valuable items in haste.

So as soon as you start your next day, give the calendar entries you made the day before a sanity check. This will allow you to sort your priorities with a clear mind and will give you a nice view of the day ahead to set the stage.

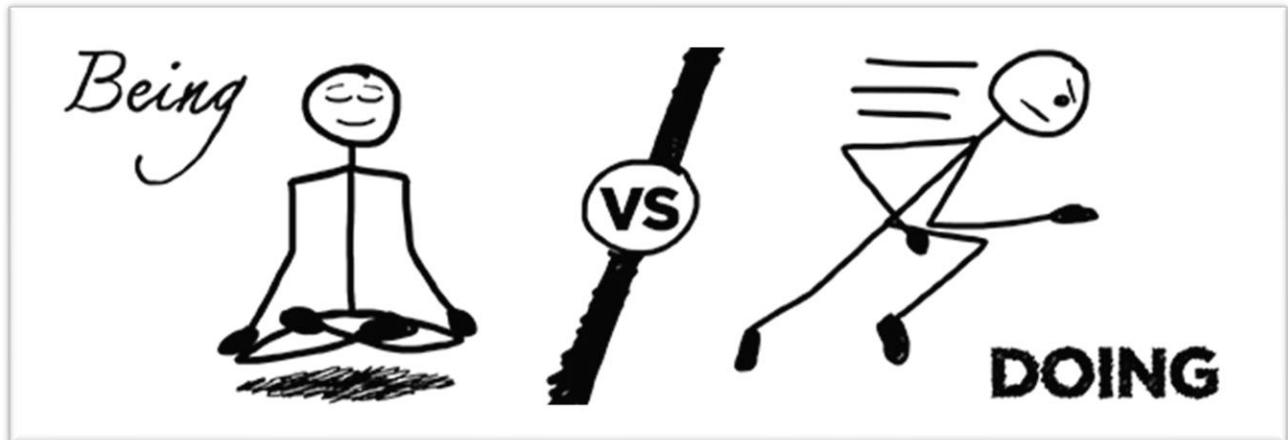
Be realistic with your time. It is much better to work slow and steady than to torture yourself with the stress of always being behind, which makes you prone to error.

If you get to a scheduled item and can't fit it in, immediately reschedule it. Don't let it get lost in the past. And don't torture yourself over a postponed or incomplete task. This self-belittlement is more behavior that will give you disdain for the journey and cause error-prone stress.

It also helps to take a sanity check over your calendar at the beginning of each week. Look for things that have been lingering—for instance, that have been postponed three times or more. [Ask](#) yourself about them:

- Does this need to be done this week? Punting a task into the future, when genuine, is a way to prioritize.
- Do I need to be the one to do it? You'd be surprised at how much great help you can find from colleagues or independent contractors on Upwork.
- Does it need to be done at all? Many tasks end up on your capture tool when you are in a frantic huff that make no sense at all when clear-minded.

Employing the tactics already stated here will likely help you to avoid a lot of toil and stress, but always working is a perfect recipe for eventually halting your efforts.



Creating Balance

A [Deloitte survey](#) revealed that 77 percent of respondents had experienced [burnout](#) in their current job. Burnout is synonymous with complete stasis and a perfect foundation for disease and lower life expectancy. I am the biggest proponent of getting things done you may ever find, but remember what they say about too much of a good thing?

Another secret enemy is a cluttered workspace. A messy desk is not only a [detriment](#) to how others see you but how you view yourself. Achievement requires you to mentally puff your chest out and lead with your chin. Keep an organized workspace.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed and disorganized when you have a messy work area. Take time to clear off your space so you can focus on what's in front of you and what you're working on. [Fresh air](#) and movement are also important.

Sitting in the office all day isn't good for you physically and slows you down mentally. Reminding yourself to take a break (which may feel unproductive) will increase your [attention](#) and ability to get things done.

And if you are one of those who absolutely can't leave the office for whatever reason, walking while working has been shown to improve cognitive function by [60 percent](#).

There is an art to writing a book, getting a promotion, or becoming a top [sports](#) competitor. What we fail to realize, however, is that there is an art to the approach we take to organizing and executing on this art that is needed to accomplish these things.

Someone can sit in front of you and give you every task you need to accomplish whatever you want in life. But if you aren't methodically about what you choose to do, when you do it, and how quickly, it won't matter that you know what to do.

The Powerful “Why”

I see turnarounds. People transform before my eyes. That’s my profession, and I am absolutely blessed to have it. Clients ask me how I create turnarounds, and I have had very few answers. [Coaching](#) is one of those near effortless things for me, and it is our natural talents that are often so hard to dissect.



I was tired of not having the answers, however, so I have embarked on the arduous journey of picking apart something that is so natural to me. This piece is about my first finding on that journey.

I am in the frighteningly small minority of people who have a clear, thoughtful, articulated, and powerful “why.” I have experienced its sheer power, and because of that, it’s where I start with most clients.

Having them establish this powerful “why” is the grease that oils the machine of coaching—and ultimately of clients’ achievement. It is the thing, for example, that enables me to pick up the phone to call executives of multi-billion dollar companies without a thought.

And it is the single most important thing. It is that mighty a force. At the risk of sarcasm, why? Because with a powerful “why” as your onboard compass, you make the spontaneous right decisions every day.

I have seen clients within weeks of coming to me conflicted, confounded, and confused:

- Walk into their boss’ office, make a clear, articulate statement of their worth, and double their salaries.
- Courageously step away from a job that no longer served them in an effort to pursue more meaningful work.
- Kick strong unproductive habits to create more fulfilling personal and professional relationships.

And they so often tell me how surprisingly easier and natural it seems after we have gotten to “why.”

That is because they are on the spontaneous right path to the right destination. You can't know it until you experience it, and my immediate mission with clients is to start moving them toward that magical place.

Without the help of a professional, it may take you a bit longer, but here is how you can do it yourself. Keep in mind that my powerful “why” is to “Have a positive impact on at least one person and one animal every day.”

1. Make a list of people who have done at least one thing that truly moved you and the thing(s) that they did? When I worked through this, I came up with two categories of individuals. There was a cross-section of life/business coaches and psychologist like [Marshall Goldsmith](#), [Martha Beck](#), and [Daniel Goleman](#). There were also groups involved with animal welfare like [Best Friends Animal Society](#) and [PAWS](#). My instincts also drove me to put down movie characters that moved me, and this helped greatly.
2. What do they have in common? There may be more than one category of things that these people and their actions have in common, but be specific. In my case, there were helpers of humans and those of animals, but what they had in common was helping.
3. Devise this commonality into a powerful one-sentence “why” for living (ensuring it has the words “every day” in it), write it down 100 times over 100 days, and carry your card around everywhere you go. Buy small index cards. They usually come in a pack of 100. Before you go to bed every night, take out a new card and rewrite your powerful “why.” Put each new card in your pocket or a place in your purse where you'll see it often throughout the day.

If you need to consult the volumes of scientific research about why writing visions and powerful “whys” repeatedly and carrying them with you will ingrain them in your [subconscious](#) over time, by all means, Google away.

Or you could take one minute each night to see yourself spontaneously investing the right amount of energy in the right actions to get you to the right place within 100 days. Count on it.



Passion, Purpose, and Reinvention: Designing Your Life

What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" – Mary Oliver

You are a highly intelligent, dynamic and creative being (yes, you!), and the idea that you have just one purpose and path in life is, well, absurd. In fact, going through transitions and asking yourself what's next is a sign that you are [fully awake](#).

When a client expresses a desire to change careers, my mission is to start moving them toward that new destination. They'll often find reasons to abort the mission, declaring things like, "I'm too old, too busy, or too inexperienced for that position." It is normal for insecurities to surface amid a significant life change.

Unraveling them and [reframing](#) the negative thought patterns from which they originate is where I step in.

One of the first steps to changing your life is cultivating self-awareness. And the questions we ask ourselves often shape our self-perception. If [fear](#) and self-doubt are holding you hostage, you've probably asked yourself questions like, "I'm too old, aren't I?" or, "I'm not smart enough for medical school, am I?"

The Ultimate Guide to Ensuring Your Success – 5 Tips to Keep You Focused

Reframe your thinking by instead asking yourself, “What careers have my experience and expansive knowledge primed me for?” and “How will I succeed in medical school?” This approach allows you to move forward instead of looking back.

If you are asking the question, "I'm too old, aren't I?" remember there is no rule book which defines the age for slowing down. For some, it's 75. For others, retiring just isn't for them.

Wherever you are in life, refuse to wait on changing the things, even your [career](#), that do not fulfill you.

Dave Evans, co-author of [Designing Your Life: How to Live a Well-Lived, Joyous Life](#), sat with me for a conversation and asserts, “You have become a much richer version of yourself [who's] not done yet, by the way.

You're not getting older. You're getting bigger,” He is a young 65 and says, “There's not enough money in the world to get me to go back and be 35.” So, if you are 55 and still holding onto the you from decades ago, let her go.

You won't abandon your dream of being a psychologist – you just won't be the 30-year-old version. In fact, your life experience will probably make you a better one.



So, where do you begin? *Designing Your Life* provides two possible paths you can take. Be open to each option, and identify the things you love about your present role to help guide you:

Option 1: “Relocate” the person you are now. For example, you are ready to leave health care and pursue a more meaningful career working for a non-profit organization. Relocating yourself means choosing a similar role to your current one, but for a new, exciting cause.

Option 2: Choose an entirely new line of work. It may be a career you've always dreamt of pursuing, or it could be one that only recently sparked a passion. You may need to go back to school or retrain, and what a fun adventure that would be!

Experimentation is an essential part of design. So, it only makes sense that Stanford engineering professors Bill Burnett and Dave Evans apply the same system to their life design program.

It also makes the journey a lot more fun. Here's how experimentation can lead you to discover new passions and a new path:

1. **Get curious.** A widespread problem I hear from clients is, between juggling work and their personal lives, exploring new interests feels impossible. Start small. Take ten minutes to write down what piques your curiosity at work. Evans asserts, "a [function] of a job is to allow you to ask an interesting question and to learn something." And the simple act of being curious and learning for the sake of being a more multi-faceted person will take the pressure off. Don't you feel more at ease already? By setting the bar low from the start, you set yourself up to immediately clear it. This mode also requires a shift in mindset from, "I have to find my passion," Evans says, to "I want to learn more about myself and the world around me." You could make your goal to read one or two articles each day on a subject that intrigues you.
2. **Talk to people.** If reading articles unearths an interest in marine biology, create some positive momentum. Search for local marine biologists on LinkedIn. Read their bios, and if what they do remains of interest, connect with them to ask if they'd like to meet for coffee. Surely, you can find 30 minutes in your day to meet with someone in your area code. Most people enjoy helping others who admire their work.
3. **Try stuff.** Once you have honed areas you wish to explore further, get active! "We're looking for the strategic opportunistic intersection between what is animating to you and what's available and useful to the world," says Evans. "Let's get those things together and see if we can somehow get a win-win to happen here." Take a creative writing course; volunteer at a non-profit; take guitar lessons; attend networking events. Remember that, just as important as the experience is making sure you reflect on them. Journal about what you're learning and what you find interesting. This [self-reflection](#) forces you to get real on how/if you are benefiting from these experiences. This process will allow you to drop any activities that don't invigorate you. Moreover, if in five months, becoming a marine biologist loses its appeal, you can rule out [fear](#) as the culprit.
4. **Tell your story.** The more you dive into new, exciting activities, the more compelled you will feel to form a sort of tale of discovery that you share with others. "You start telling content-rich, generative stories of these learning reflections you're having by being an active person in the world and curating your curiosity, and you will find that the thing starts feeding on itself. It becomes a self-perpetuating engine," according to Evans.
5. **Repeat.** If you are in pursuit of continued learning and growth, experimentation should become an integral part of your life.

Staying accountable to the above steps is a two-step process:

1. Keep the mantra front-and-center, "Get curious, talk to people, try stuff and tell the story," Evans advises.

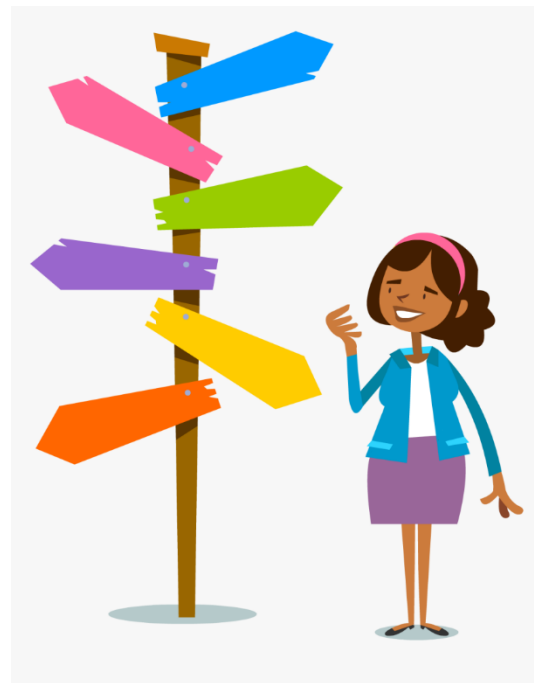
2. Find an accountability partner. Anecdotal research shows that when we know someone is going to ask the question, “How is it going so far?” we are 50% more likely to follow through. “It’s just the idea that what you’re doing by having a pending report, a pending confession of what I’m doing, keeps it at the top of your mind like the top of your e-mail inbox, and it doesn’t not happen,” says Evans.

You may ultimately discover that a career change isn’t the right move, but a great benefit of exposing yourself to [new activities](#) is to rid yourself of the doubts and what-ifs.

Then again, taking that writing workshop may motivate you to start blogging on the side. Volunteering at a homeless shelter may unleash the advocate in you.

A former client of mine is a brilliant chief technology officer who is also in a band. Whether your next transition is big or small, make sure that it enriches your life and feeds your soul. Find what makes you tick, get out there, and do it as much as you can.

Four Steps to Better Decision-Making Skills



Despite the rise of machines and robots, the fate of all companies large and small rests on the shoulders of humans. Despite talk of an invasion of machines, humans deploy them.

And I believe that until we get to [artificial superintelligence](#), the competitive essence behind the world's most admired companies will align with the pitfalls and greatness of their leaders.

Humans can be eager, learned and principled. They can just as easily be complacent, ignorant and emotional. Specifically, in times of uncertainty and stress, people do not always have the greatest track record for mental agility and resolve.

With the average 10-year success rate of small businesses being at about [one-third](#) and black swans

attempting to plant daggers into our economy every several decades, it is easy to see that humans tend to pass on the waves that they can ride the longest and ride the "good" waves way too long.

Indeed, it is easy to conclude when observing humans that judgment is one of our weakest points. Yet turnaround stories like [Apple, Delta and Netflix](#) tell us that good judgment in the

face of crisis and risk-taking is a true competitive advantage. It's something that should be studied and learned by the world's most ambitious leaders.

So how do you adopt good judgment if you don't feel you have it? Well, it is less a four-step process than a four-dimension persona that you should attempt to adopt over time.

1. Risk-Taking

Do you remember the first time you drove a car? You slowly put the key in the ignition until you felt the key snap into its slot so it could be turned. Then you slowly turned it, hearing the starter and waiting carefully to hear the engine come alive.

You then shifted into gear. I could go on for pages on the thoughts involved in driving a car for the first time. But today, what do you do? For most of us, we simply start the car, back out of a parking space and go on our way without investing a shred of thought in the activity.

2. Financial Goals By The Decade

Day-to-day business requires this kind of agility so that when the day-to-day is interrupted, there is sufficient bandwidth to exercise judgment. You can't break into a new industry or pull a Fortune 500 company out of a tailspin if you are treating each step like you did on that first drive.

Luckily, people are very good at habituating repetitive behavior. This is a superpower. So make a daily habit of wandering into the unknown. Do that, and when you are pushed into uncertain waters, you will have the facility to employ judgment with a calm mind.

3. Patience

Indeed, to exercise judgment one must be centered and measured. Really, what could be more obvious? Well, wait.

One thing that might be more obvious is that to exercise good judgment, you must take in enough information to be able to judge. This is the difference between two types of judges: sound judges and snap judges.

You must surveil your environment to collect enough data — maybe deeply considering [five key questions](#) for sound decision-making — to know and assess the options available and their consequences.

Conversely, being able to see what is going well to be able to do more of that thing is also necessary to beat your competitors. All of this takes time. And taking that time requires patience.

4. Humility

If things are going well within your areas of responsibility as a leader, it wasn't only you who got you there. After all, you're a leader who led other people to achieve the objectives someone else or you created.

On the other hand, if things are going badly, you likely have traits that need to be modified, people you trusted whom need to be coached (or even cut loose), and, plainly, decisions you made to which you will have to fess up.

What's more, you might need to turn to others and admit your current quandary. If you are not able to admit to yourself that you have mistakes, you cannot wipe the slate clean to make the good judgments to get yourself out of the pickle in which you got yourself.

And if you are someone so devoid of humility that you can't admit to your mistakes, allow me to offer the following:

The more mistakes you allow yourself to make, I believe the better leader you become.

5. Core Values

What are your organization's core values? How about your own? If you don't know them, engage in a deliberate exercise to find out. Knowing your core values and studying them at least once per day is an incredibly powerful way to exercise the judgment that will automatically get you closer to your goals.

For example, what if you face the unmistakably tough choice of whether to declare bankruptcy? If one of your organization's (or your) core values is maximizing shareholder value, you might engage in one more round to seek efficiencies or try to work better deals with your suppliers.

On the other hand, if your core value is to enhance employees' lives through the wealth they take home, as tough as it is, bankruptcy might be the proper path after all. These dividing lines make judgments a much easier endeavor than in their absence.

Life requires you to put in the work to harvest the fruit. Stasis is a fine tightrope upon which you can only balance for an instant. In every decision and action, you are either moving forward or backward.

Develop and always move forward. Find your core values. Go out of your way to take risks. Have the strength to be humble and be patient. There, you will find the magic of naturally good judgment.

13 Easy Ways to Be Happy Every Day



Do you find yourself just going through the motions? Has “Different day. Same story” become your mantra? Then right now—not tomorrow or next week—is the time to start changing your story. Fortunately, there are quick, simple and no-cost ways to do just that and effectively bring about lasting [happiness](#):

1. Get seven to nine hours of sleep. Getting enough sleep is critical to having a happy, productive day as the alternative can lead to reduced alertness and logic and general health issues such as [obesity](#) and a lesser ability to maintain healthy relationships. Try taking a warm shower just before hitting the sheets, getting your phone out of sight,

or trying the reverse psychology method. If the [insomnia](#) still won't quit, then try one of these other science-backed methods.

2. **Wake up 15 to 30 minutes early.** If you're a serial snoozer, you may scoff at this one. But, assuming you adopt the seven to nine hours per night rule, waking up earlier should be within reach. Imagine a morning that doesn't involve running around like a crazy person and struggling to get out of the door on time. Waking up 15 to 30 minutes early will allow you the presence of mind to get a positive start to your day. You'll see a difference in your attitude immediately.
3. **Meditate.** This one is huge. Meditating for five to ten minutes upon waking is simple and has immediate benefits including heightened inner clarity and focus for the rest of the day. Starting your day with [meditation](#) also sets positive intention, allowing you to detach from habitual thought barriers and keep you in the moment. Studies also show that meditation helps prevent [stress](#) and [anxiety](#), thus squashing frustrations that limit your ability to tackle your [goals](#). These five techniques will help you discover the meditation style perfect for you.
4. **Declutter.** Many of us fill our homes and office spaces with things we think we need. The truth is accumulating stuff ultimately harms your mental, emotional, and physiological well-being. The good news is reversing these effects is as simple as clearing the clutter! By spending a few minutes at a time removing the items collecting dust, your mood and happiness will effectively improve. And it doesn't have to be an overwhelming task. Simply commit to one area at a time—perhaps your desk space or closet. And instead of tossing everything in the trash, donate items to a local cause or put them on Craigslist!
5. **Learn something new.** While taking on new challenges may sound counterintuitive to creating happiness, learning something new boosts your well-being. Focusing on making progress puts us in a state of flow, which has been shown to foster happiness. Learning also builds your [self-confidence](#) and keeps you sharp. It has never been easier to expand your mind with so many free online courses. If getting active is your goal, check out the free classes offered through your local recreation center. Meetup.com is also great place to start!
6. **Walk it out.** Research shows that 30 minutes of walking a day helps to adjust your [nervous system](#), thus reducing [anger](#) and hostility. If devoting 30 minutes every day to walking is difficult, you can take small actions to increase your steps. Park your car in one of the furthest spots from your office or start drinking more water—having a million benefits in and of itself—to increase your trips to the restroom! There is no shortage of ways to get your steps in.
7. **Disengage from social media.** It's easy to tune out on Instagram and Snapchat during downtime, but research shows that too much social media use can be harmful to your mental health. Instead, use that 15 minutes productively by reading the news, playing a brain-boosting game or listening to a fun, or thought-provoking podcast. You'll take true joy from the activity and, at the same time, become a better version of yourself without changing a thing.

8. **Perform a random act of kindness.** There is a range of research linking [generosity](#) to better health. fMRI technology, shows that giving activates the same parts of the brain that are stimulated by food and [sex](#). Giving back is truly a win-win. The recipient benefits, and you feel better knowing you've positively impacted someone's life. Consider donating to a cause you're passionate about, volunteering at the local soup kitchen, or giving up your seat. The best part? Kindness is contagious.
9. **Surround yourself with happy people.** Motivational speaker Jim Rohn famously asserted that you are the average of the top five percent of the people with whom you spend the most time. So, find the most positive, engaging people with whom to interact. This easy switch will motivate your level of happiness, sense of achievement and could even open new doors in your professional or personal life.
10. **Don't gossip.** Partaking in gossip may feel like a positive and perhaps necessary release, but it only causes stress and unhappiness. Plus, when was the last time gossip helped anything? Next time you have the urge to complain about a friend or co-worker, pause for ten seconds, and shift that negative dialogue to one of positivity. Search instead for something genuinely nice to say about the person. If you simply cannot, say something nice about a different colleague, or discuss the weather—if it's pleasant. Just steer the focus away from the negative!
11. **Spend time with a loved one.** While catching up with family and friends via phone or e-mail is always encouraged, studies show that physical interaction is far more beneficial to your overall health and happiness. Think about how good you feel after grabbing lunch with an old friend, having a home-cooked meal with your partner, or hiking with your kids. There is nothing quite like it. So, aim to schedule face time (not FaceTime) with a loved one at least three times a week. For those new to an area or wanting to expand their network, you can find dozens of groups online, from book clubs and [sports](#) teams to foodies. You'll instantly and easily connect with people who share your interests and hobbies!
12. **Journal.** Though this tip can appear unrealistic for many, it doesn't have to be a big production. Simply commit to writing just 50-words at least three times a week about anything. You'll be surprised how far this small goal will take you. From stretching your [IQ](#) and creating [mindfulness](#) to boosting your self-confidence, forming this simple daily habit effectuates a myriad of mental and emotional benefits.
13. **Practice self-care.** When you take care of yourself, you experience a number of benefits, including reduced stress and anxiety, increased [positive thinking](#), and boosted immunity. Take time out every day to do something that will bring you joy, such as exercising, cooking a great meal, or reading. You'll be amazed at how simple acts of self-care improve your mind, body, and soul. As you can see, there are so many ways to shake up your day, and get out of boring routines. Now, like anything else, success is in acting. So pick one, and let the fun begin!

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