

Healthy Lifestyle: First Steps To Embracing Self Improvement by: Kathryn Beach

Do you avoid mirrors and pictures of yourself because you don't like what you see? Do you just put your nose to the grind and follow your routine, day after day, without thinking about anything besides what you're doing at the moment, and maybe what else you need to accomplish today?

Don't worry, you aren't alone. I would guess that most people are like that. But how do you think they are doing? How are you doing? The best measure of your success is your own feelings. The best way to assess the health of your lifestyle is to take a step back.

My favorite tool for taking that first step back is meditation. The goal of meditation is to silence the tapes in your head, but you don't just tell them over and over to shut up, you find something totally different to focus on. Try it for just 10 minutes right now. Light a candle in the quietest part of your home and find a comfortable sitting position where you can watch the candle flame. This can be cross-legged on the floor, on a pillow, or in a comfortable chair. Anywhere you can sit comfortably with correct posture for 10 minutes.

Now just look at the candle and let your mind relax. If too many thoughts crowd into your mind one after another, concentrate on your breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Allow your chest to fill with air, expanding fully, then release.

Another thing you can focus on is the muscles in your body. Contract and then release your toes, your feet, your ankles, your calves, one part at a time. Just choose a focus that works for you, and do it for 10 minutes. Whenever a thought enters your head, name it -- "I'm thinking about doing the laundry later" -- then let it go. Refocus.

If the time goes quickly and you want to continue, do it for 10 minutes more, or longer. Otherwise, stop at 10. Before you jump up and get on with your day, take a moment to recognize how you feel. Name how you feel. Do you feel relaxed, renewed, more able to focus than before you meditated, happy, peaceful, content... give it a name, and then state it as an affirmation. Stand in front of a mirror, look yourself in the eye, and say "I AM content with myself and at peace with my life," or "I AM relaxed and ready to take on any challenge."

Now take a moment to take a few steps back from yourself, as if you were looking at a picture of your life from a distance. See exactly where you are, your surroundings, your activities, your duties, your thoughts. Now squint your eyes (in your imagination) and look at your life as if it was an impressionistic painting. What colors do you see? How do you feel about your life? Are you living a healthy lifestyle?

Where do you want to go to change this picture of your life?

Every time you meditate and do the following steps, imagine that your mirror image and the picture of your life are becoming ever closer to what you wish they could be.

And when you finally step back into your daily life, when you're scheduling your day, make sure that everything you do is working with you, not against you, as you become this evolved person in this new healthy lifestyle.

It's all about attitude. You choose whether you wash your dishes resenting the chore or appreciating the opportunity to create a clean, healthy, pleasant kitchen.

Know that you can make the changes necessary to creating a healthier lifestyle. Start living your life as if it truly were your own!