

*The magic is within you*



VIVIAN MCKINNON

# *Happiness through self care*

**How to love yourself more.  
A simple plan to care for your  
body, mind and spirit**



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## Introduction

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Life would be that much easier if you loved yourself.  
Too many people live with low self-esteem.  
Too many other people are simply *indifferent* toward themselves.  
When was the last time you were asked "Are you looking after yourself"? Can you honestly say that you are?

Too often, we place too much pressure on ourselves, or we expect too much of ourselves. We are constantly working hard toward our goals, and we beat ourselves up if we are anything other than perfect in that pursuit.

Is it any surprise we are often over-tired, malnourished, dehydrated and depressed

What a difference it would make if you spent time *looking after* yourself. If you surrounded yourself with friends who loved you, if you gave yourself a break every now and then, and if you told yourself you were doing great.

What if you really loved who you were, and you were satisfied with what you had?

Simple: you'd be content. You'd be healthier, happier, and more fulfilled. And that feeling would emanate from you and affect everyone you interacted with.

How do you get from here to there?

In this book, we will see that this requires a two-pronged assault. We need to change our thinking and the way we consider ourselves, and we also need to change the way we look after ourselves. What we eat, how we spend our time, and how we control our environment.

I liken this to looking after yourself the way a mother might look after her children. That means not only taking care of yourself physically by grooming, feeding, and making sure that everything else is done right – but also taking care of yourself emotionally. When you're down, a good mother will tell you not to worry, and that you're great. If we treated ourselves like this and internalized that kind of affection, the world would be an easier, kinder place.

## HAPPINESS THROUGH SELF-CARE

Each chapter in this book will tackle one of these aspects, and by the end we'll have a blueprint of self-care that will nourish your health, and your soul! Enjoy ...

Love from

*Vivian xxx*







## Chapter 1: Self-Care Using CBT and Mindfulness

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First, we start by changing the way we talk to ourselves. And this begins with mindfulness and CBT.

CBT, or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, is a popular approach in clinical psychology and it is going to be one of the many tools in this book for transforming the way we view ourselves.

Where once every counsellor you went to was using psychodynamic principles to treat patients, today a lot of people are using CBT (or an integrative approach). While studying with many of today's great thinkers and doctors, this book has CBT at its core, CBT still represents a powerful tool that the NHS in

the UK and many others use to to quickly and cheaply improve the lives of millions of patients. The ‘quickly and cheaply’ parts are also crucial as they mean that anyone can apply the principles and see immediate benefit, improving their self-esteem with no need to spend tonnes of money and time on counselling.

Obviously if your symptoms persist you should seek professional help, but until then you can try some DIY to see if CBT is what you need to improve your self-concept.

## A Brief History and Explanation

Essentially, CBT is composed of two concepts – behaviourism and cognitive psychology (as the name might suggest).

Behaviourism is the old school of thought that states how we learn to associate an event with an outcome to such a degree that we can begin treating the event as the outcome.

For example, in Pavlov’s famous experiment using dogs, he taught his canine subjects to salivate at the sound of the bell by getting them used to hearing the bell while they ate.

This applies to your self esteem, in that you can end up having physical reactions to conditions where you’re put under pressure. For example, you might find that in social situations you find yourself trembling or sweating as through your perception you’ve learned to associate them with leading to embarrassment or humiliation. Alternatively, you might find yourself feeling depressed or lethargic when you’re attempting something new if

you've failed several times in the past. Here the bad outcomes act as 'reinforcement', instructing you that your ambitions are doomed to failure. This is a learning mechanism that we've evolved which normally helps us to avoid making mistakes and which is generally adaptive in most situations. In modern society however there are times when it's misplaced and can be psychologically damaging.

Behavioural therapy to cure such associations involves 'reassociation'. This would mean teaching yourself to learn that putting yourself out on a limb can lead to positive outcomes too. You might achieve this by going to lots of social settings that you know you'll enjoy, or by trying lots of new things that you think you'll be good at.

You should also make sure you surround yourself with positive people who will compliment and encourage you rather than put you down. This way you will also be getting constant reinforcement that you're a worthwhile and capable person. Since behaviourism though, psychology has moved on realising that there is a conscious aspect in many of our problems. This is the crucial contribution that CBT makes by introducing a cognitive aspect to our brain and to our anxieties.

In the case of problems like low self-esteem, the cognitive aspect could be negative ruminations where you think about how



everything will go wrong, negative self-talk or talking yourself out of doing things.

**Please note** - For trauma recovery and growth I would use a completely different approach (see my other Ebooks). I would include elements of CBT but primarily i would use a more somatic and psychosensory approach

In these cases I undoubtedly rest my practice alongside many of the more cutting edge approaches available today such as Havening, Compassionate inquiry and Internal Family systems, but for self care CBT and Mindfulness is a great starting point, hence why it's the focus of this book.

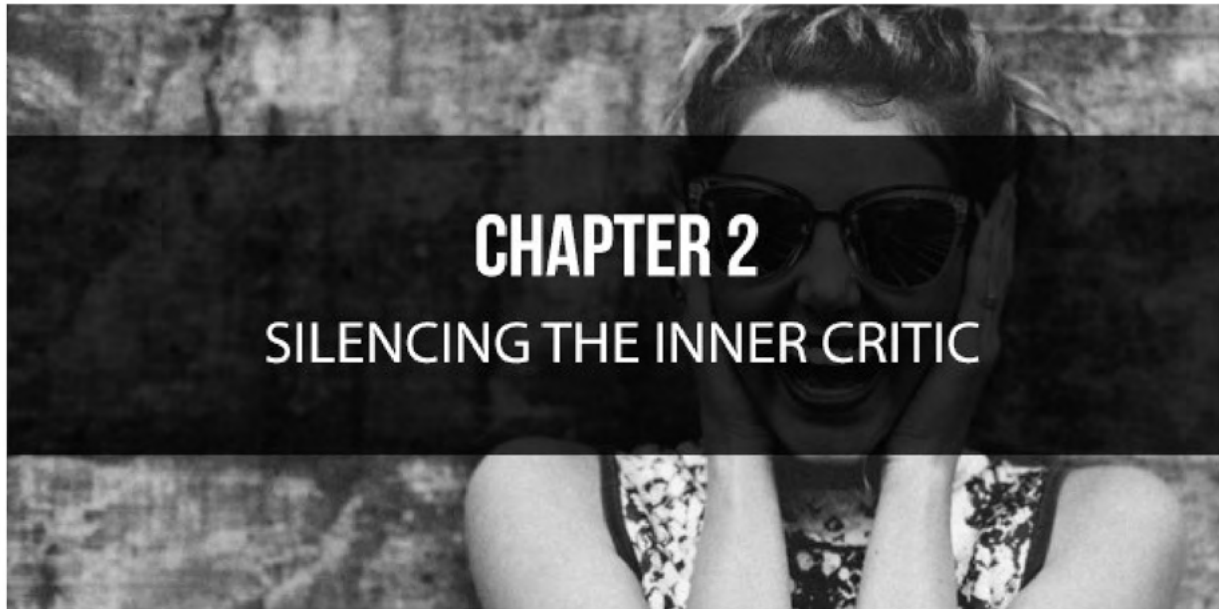
In the next chapter, we'll look at how to silence the "inner critic" for greater peace and internal happiness.

Although please remember the inner critic was established to keep you safe by reviewing your previous experience, personal and through TV, other people, the news etc ... once silenced it means you have created safety within your own skin and the critic no longer needs to work so hard, this is a great place to be as it means that "Part" doesn't have to work so hard and you are free to explore your world and the contents of it



## Chapter 2: Silencing the Inner Critic

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People with low self-esteem, low confidence and high anxiety will often describe how they have a ‘little voice’ in the back of their head constantly telling them they’re going to fail or they are not good enough. Other concepts in CBT are ‘over generalisation’, whereby you assume that because you’ve failed at one task you are going to fail at all tasks, and ‘false hypotheses’, where you incorrectly predict that you’re going to fail at your tasks.

We will be employing CBT techniques in order to help overcome this self-doubt.

## Mindfulness



CBT practitioners then have devised various methods that you can use to combat these problems. One of the most commonly used of these is actually borrowed from meditation and is known as 'mindfulness'. Here you are instructed to find a quiet place and to sit down with your eyes closed. Much like in meditation you are then instructed to reflect on your inner thoughts.

This doesn't mean that you should attempt to clear your mind however, instead you are instructed to merely 'watch' thoughts as they pass by without engaging in them, or judging them, you are invited to merely observing the content of your mind as you might watch clouds passing in the sky.

This way you can identify the kinds of things you are thinking and in



particular any destructive thoughts you might be having. As you get better at this you will be able to drop into this headspace throughout the day, even during activities when the inner voice begins to heckle, the mind will naturally begin to and intervene; spotting the negative and damaging thoughts and seeing them for what they are.

Most negative ruminations are illogical and even if they aren't they certainly do more harm than good, so learning to spot them and then put an end to them is a valuable skill. Similarly, to aid in this culture of mindfulness, you are asked to keep diaries of your thoughts and activities – then to read them back and see how anything you've written previously could be disruptive to self



## Positive Self-Talk

You can also counter these negative thoughts with positive ones, utilising 'positive self talk' to reaffirm your worth. Here you should make sure to focus on your good point, and to remember compliments you may have received in the past. Instead of telling yourself you're fat constantly, replace this with reminders about your nice eyes or straight teeth. You'd be surprised by how affective this can be.

## Hypothesis Testing

You are also requested to practice ‘hypothesis testing’, where you are encouraged to test your false thought process hopefully realising that these thoughts are unfounded. For example, if you are scared to speak in public because you are concerned that you will stutter and fail, then I would encourage you to actually try speaking in public to find out if this is in fact the case. More often than not you will find it isn’t. This also works to prevent over generalisation and again as a way to counter any negative associations you have developed.

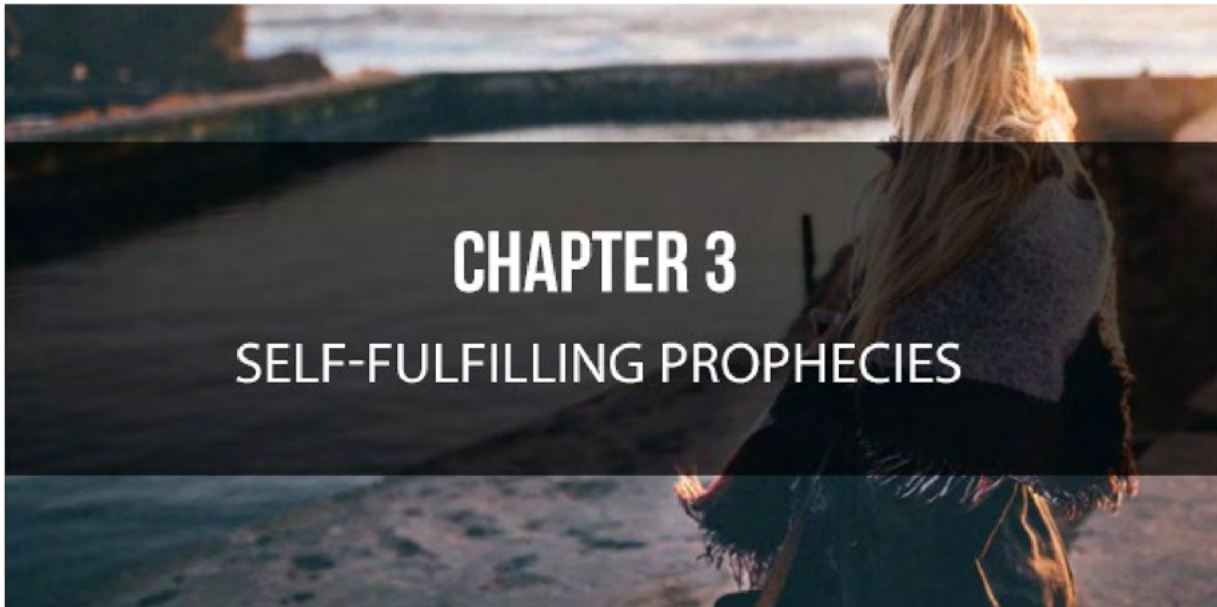
So, if you’re suffering from low self-esteem then you might want to try applying these principles to your life. Make sure you continue to go out and to challenge yourself, even if you genuinely are less than skilled at what it is you want to achieve this is the only way you are going to improve.

Becoming reclusive will only give you more time to ruminate and send you into a downward spiral. Similarly, surround yourself with positive friends and colleagues and try to focus on the good aspects of what you do. Support yourself with positive self-talk and try to catch yourself having negative thoughts and sit with them, pretty quickly they will disappear.

If this doesn’t work after a while, then it’s perhaps time to seek help from a professional who can talk you through the process.



## Chapter 3: Self-Fulfilling Prophecies



A self-fulfilling prophecy describes a phenomenon by which what you believe to be true can actually become a reality by the fact that you actually believe it or that other people believe it. If this sounds complicated then imagine an example. Say you're a boy at school who has an older brother who recently had the same teachers and proved very successful.

By this fact alone, the other teachers and pupils will assume that this new boy will achieve great grades too. This confidence and expectation will in turn rub off on him and he'll start to see himself as someone who has great academic ability.

(This is also a perfect example of how influences outside of our control can shape who we are – and why it is so important that we take matters back into our own hands!)

This example can have a polar opposite too where the younger brother rebels to show his unique character



As you're probably aware, you tend to like things that you do well in and so by thinking you're good at academia you will then start to enjoy it more, and put in more time as a result. This is why sports psychologists use the 'sandwich' technique when giving criticism; that's positive, negative, positive.

This way they can get across their advice without damaging the esteem of the sprinter or gymnast. Therefore, you need to try and constantly increase your own self-esteem and closely control how you perceive yourself in order to increase your success.

## The Law of Attraction

How you perceive yourself also speaks volumes to other people as you will reveal your self confidence in subtle ways – the way you walk, the way you speak, the way you dress and the way you act.

If you act as though you deserve respect then you'll start to believe it yourself, and ultimately respect yourself more in the process, and if you start to believe it then so will others.

This actually goes deeper than abstract opinions however and can even be used to generate wealth and success.

For example, by dressing well and wearing nice things you will attract more of the same into your life. If you project an image of being wealthy (however that looks for you) then others will begin to think you're rich and successful. This internal and external confidence means that your boss is more likely to give you a promotion (this is why they say you should dress for the job you want, not the job you're in). It also means others will

be more likely to trust you in business and that other equally as successful (again whatever that words means for you) people will gravitate towards you (like likes like).

Even the gifts you receive will be more meaningful or expensive on average as you generally tend to spend more time or money on gifts for people who are more authentic and aligned to their purpose.

If you act confident with the opposite sex then they'll assume you're in high demand and as such will find you more attractive. So dressing well can make others believe you are successful and can make you feel successful too.

When I was doing my exams I overheard many of my friends chatting about putting on their best clothes to make themselves feel good while doing them – this was good advice but really they should have been taking this kind of care all the time.

You don't have to just look the part though – act the part, believe in your innate capabilities and over time by mimicking the actions and behaviour of someone successful you'll start to pick them up as habits.

Wish you spoke more clearly and slowly? They forcibly put that voice and manner on and over time you will develop it as your normal behaviour.

When i first moved to Northern Ireland from Scotland i had to do this to be understood, now when i go home people comment on my "Posh" accent .. always makes me laugh.



## Chapter 4: Looking After Looks

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One of the biggest reasons many people suffer from low confidence is that they're unhappy with a physical feature – or indeed all of their physical features. If this describes you, then you should be pleased to know that there is a lot you can do about your physical features, and there's a fair chance you're not maximising your potential. Here's how to play the hand you're dealt and get yourself looking like a million dollars.

### It's the Little Things – How to Feel Taller

Firstly, appearance needn't necessarily mean your face, and for many men in particular low confidence can stem from not being as tall as they'd like to be. Even if this isn't a particular source of contention for you, adding a bit of extra height will automatically help you to feel more confident.

But it's impossible to make yourself grow taller right?

Well yes and no.

Basically, rather than actually growing taller yourself, you can make yourself appear taller by investing in insoles that increase your height. If you type into e-bay 'tall insoles' you'll find several products along the lines of what you're looking for. These only cost a small amount and can be easily slipped inside your shoe then adjusted to be taller or shorter up to around four inches.

Four inches of extra height if the shoes you're wearing allow it, take you from a short-ish five nine to a fairly tall six foot one. If you combine this with fairly large shoes you can be really rather tall.

For women the same can be true of high heels, and as an added bonus these also make women stand up taller and improve their gait and stride – you can't shuffle in heels.

For men bulking up will also make you more imposing and as you generally fill up more space you'll feel confident (more on this in an upcoming chapter). Try eating large amounts of protein along with regular exercise and work in particular on your chest and shoulders to create a more sporty silhouette.

Men who are conscious about their weight should make sure to do a lot of Cardio Vascular exercise and avoid fatty foods to



getting yourself feeling leaner and more toned will massively improve your mental health too.

Likewise, for women, toning your abs and tightening your behind can make you feel sexier, for you, from the skin in, and again improve your silhouette. To help you along the way we also have the option of some fabulous underwear that helps to flatter areas and plumps out the bits that need plumping.

Girdles and corsets are the best known but you can also get pants that support your bottom. Girdles also exist for guys and while it may be a bit embarrassing, they can at the same time make you feel more confident when you're out and about – no one need ever know! If that's what floats your boat ..

GO FOR IT I say.

## How to Beam

You know what also makes a huge difference to the way you feel though? Posture.

In the last section, we saw the power of feeling taller or bigger. This can make you physically take up more space, which in turn can drastically increase confidence.

But simply by pulling your shoulders back and holding your chin up, you can have a very similar effect. Not only that, but this has a physiological impact on your mood, which helps you to feel more positive.

## Putting Your Best Face On

Inserting additional lifts into your shoes might all be a bit extreme though, and if it's just your facial features you're concerned about there's still a lot you can achieve without resorting to surgery.

Firstly, make sure you get a haircut somewhere nice and one that fits the shape of your head.

The squarer your jaw the more rounded a cut you'll need and vice versa as a general rule. If you're male you also need to think about facial hair, and while this is generally a fashion mistake it can sometimes really improve your looks – just look at Rowan Atkinson in Mr Bean compared to the same guy in Blackadder. And dying your hair is not exclusive to women, sometimes it is good to see if another color suits you better.

If you're a woman you have the benefit of being able to enhance your features with make-up. This means using foundation to cover up spots and blemishes and blusher to bring a bit more colour to your cheeks. Often those who are a little shy will try to dress and apply makeup minimally so as not to draw attention to themselves.

However, this attempt to 'hide' in plain sight can cause all the same self-fulfilling prophecy effects that we have previously looked at. In other words, you shrink away, and people assume that you don't want to be seen.

If you get professional advice on how to do your makeup you can maximise and accentuate your good features.

If you don't know where to start a professional from any of the make up houses or counters will tell you not only which colours suit you best, but also what your best features are.

Normally, you will be told to focus on either your eyes or your lips, depending on which is your stronger feature, and then apply the heaviest amount of makeup here to draw the eyes to your most attractive and glowing features

So if you have nice lips you might be advised to use some bright red lipstick to make them look fuller and more inviting, while if you're strongest feature is your eyes you might be recommended to use a heavy eye shadow or eye liner to make them stand out. Generally, it's best not to go too heavy on both as you can end up looking like a painted doll or as though you're just trying too hard, and while your colours should be bold they shouldn't look as though you're wearing face paint – natural looking colours that suit your skin tone are to be advised.

Prefer a more natural look? That's fine too – but that doesn't mean not using any makeup at all. It just means being more subtle, and carefully highlighting your best features.

## Grooming

Both men and women should also make sure they groom properly. For women that means removing any stray facial hairs and moisturising regularly to keep the skin looking radiant. For men, that again means moisturising to be rid of dead skin as well as trimming their nasal and ear hairs.

Alternatively, a nicer set of glasses or a cool pair of sunglasses can improve your face and make you look intelligent or cool depending on your desired look.

Spend a little more on the things that you use to decorate and adorn your face.

Basically the take home message is not to give up on your looks, regardless of your age. As a woman in her 50's i have a better self care (skin care) regime than i have ever had.

As long as you put effort into your appearance and ask friends for honest advice, you'll look better and feel better about yourself no matter what age you are.

There's nothing wrong with cutting a few corners or using a few sneaky tricks to improve the way you look and if you look good, you feel good.

It's not even just about the way you look that's important – it's also about the way it all supports you to feel.

It may not involve make up or hair colour, it's just about taking the time to look after yourself. Doing so is a physical reminder that you *do* care about you present, both to yourself and others

This is also a great chance to unwind, and the feeling of blending in a lovely moisturiser, or running a razor over your skin and opening up those pores can be extremely cathartic – like you're letting go of the day's stresses.



If you have some extra cash why not spend a little more on a high-tech bathroom, or invest in a walk-in shower, or even a float tank! You can buy home set up and have the ultimate in self care every day.

Floataction involves 25cms of body temperature water and half a tonne of Epsom salt, you get in , you lie back and all your worries, aches and pain just melt away .. the ultimate in self care, look up [www.hydro-ease.co.uk](http://www.hydro-ease.co.uk) for more information.

Spa breaks are also highly recommended for both men and women. Having someone attentive to your needs, being pampered, being surrounded by a serene and calm environment and coming away smelling and looking great... these all make a huge difference to the way you look, feel, and present yourself!





## Chapter 5: Taking Care of Your Health

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One sure fire way to improve your self-esteem is by exercising. The obvious reason for this is that you'll improve your physique which will make you stronger and more capable. You won't feel as physically threatened by other people, you'll win respect from others who are impressed by your commitment to creating your new shape, you'll find that you become a font of knowledge for anyone who wants to do the same, you'll feel healthier and be better at physical activities, and you'll be more attractive to the opposite sex.

Not bad right?

That's not all exercise is about however. If you train regularly you'll soon find that it affects you in ways that you wouldn't have expected. Training your body is something you can do regularly

that has a visible and practical effect. Over time you will see that you're directly controlling an aspect of yourself. Every time you go to the gym you come away a little bit better than you were before you go in and that's one productive thing you've done that day. Even more, when you're in the gym, trying to run an extra mile on the treadmill or lift an extra 10kg on the bench press, you're testing yourself and coming out better.

I joined the gym many years ago but never really seen a difference, then in May 2021 i got a personal trainer, best money i spend every month and the greatest results, i now just maintain through regular attendance and the commitment to being the best i can be.

When you are challenging yourself and overcoming it on a daily basis – over time you'll learn that you can do the same in any aspect of your life. Working out is a truly life affirming activity that can help you to grow both mentally and literally physically.

Working out will also increase your mood, and so your self-esteem, in other ways too. The actual act of working out causes your body to release the feel-good hormone serotonin. On top of that it also leads to neurogenesis, the birth of new brain cells. In short training will lift your mood and improve your cognitive performance both immediately and over time.. Cant get better than that huh?





## Getting Started With a Fitness Regime



To begin training then you need to assess your current condition. If you're currently overweight you need to be doing large amounts of CV (that's aerobic exercise such as running or sprinting) and cutting your caloric intake. If you're currently very thin you need to do the opposite – using fewer repetitions of a heavier weight while increasing the amount of protein you eat (that's meats and dairy products).

You can even take either a protein shake or a weight gainer to supplement your diet. Similarly, to lose weight you need to train more regularly – about five times a week, but to get stronger and



larger you need to train more heavily and less often to give your muscles time to recover and build.

To begin with you can train using a simple full body routine. While ‘split’ routines and the like are more conducive to training when you’re more advanced, to start with you need to get your body used to training.

Each session should last about forty minutes, and each exercise should consist of three sets – that means you lift the weight however many times, take a rest then repeat for three sets. Once you begin to see progress start reading into the process in more detail and learn the tricks and techniques used by the pros.

The most important thing though is that you find a program and then stick with it. Even if that program isn’t perfect, it will bring some results simply due to the fact that you’re doing *some* kind of training. That also means it’s much better to do something very simple two or three times a week, rather than being too ambitious right away. Adherence is what really matters here.

## Nourishing Nutrition and Sleep

Nutrition can make a huge difference to the way you feel about yourself and to your mood in general. That’s partly because your diet will impact on your looks and your energy levels, but also because it can directly influence your mood.

Foods that contain vitamin C for example will improve your mood because they provide an influx of serotonin – vitamin C being used to *make* serotonin. Likewise, foods high in tryptophan will do the same thing.

Almost any food will trigger a release of dopamine, which is a reward hormone. Conversely, if you *don't* eat regularly, you will have high cortisol leading to stress and anxiety.

Foods high in zinc, magnesium, and vitamin D (among others) can all help to increase testosterone production, which in men *and* women is closely linked with enhanced mood, energy, and drive.

Conversely though, foods that are high in processed sugars can cause low level inflammation. This is modulated through the release of pro-inflammatory cytokines, which can also affect the brain. Ever wondered why you feel sad and low energy when you have a cold or stomach bug? Brain inflammation is quite possibly the answer!

Simple sugars and processed foods (especially acellular carbs) can also negatively impact the 'gut microbiome'. This means that they can feed the bad bacteria that live in our guts and starve the good ones. That in turn has a big impact on mood and energy, seeing as these bacteria release numerous neurotransmitters and hormones, and play a big role in energy metabolism.

Sugary foods also spike the blood with sugar and insulin, which then quickly dissipates. This results in a 'crash' where blood sugar is low and cortisol is high again.

Of course, processed, simple sugars also typically don't contain healthy nutrients (hence the term 'empty calories') which means you don't get all the hormone and mood support you get from the good stuff.

So if you want to feel good, then you need to eat well. Treat yourself yes, but do so by using fruits, vegetables, yogurts, and other healthy treats. That way, you'll feel better in the short term AND the long term.

## Sleep

Sleep is just as important. Sleeping poorly will cause your physical appearance to deteriorate, as well as your mental health and your mood. Bad sleep causes bags under the eyes, bloodshot eyes, blotchy-red skin, and the deterioration of hair and nails over time. It also leads to weight gain.

In the short term, poor sleep will leave you with low energy, and will increase stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. You'll be wired, anxious, and fraught.

The solution is to sleep longer, and to sleep better! Consider this a crucial aspect of your self-care, that will help you to look and feel your very best.

Here are some key tips to consider:

- Get at least 7/8 hours every night - this is non-negotiable!
- Drink 1.5/2 litres of water every day
- Float at least once a month
- Aim to go to bed at the same time each night. Our bodies love predictability.
- Find out your own 'chronotype' by experimenting. What times work best for you to sleep and wake up?
- Take a hot shower or bath before bed
- No technology 1 hour before sleep. Read a book and try to stay calm. This is 'winding down' time.

We can also use a little CBT to fall asleep faster.

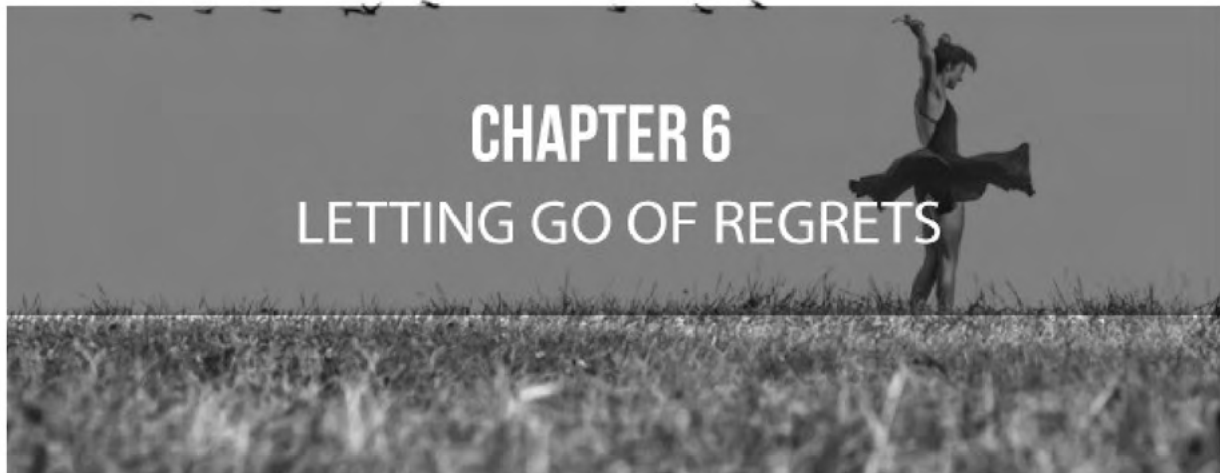
Instead of worrying about not getting enough sleep or trying to *force* yourself to sleep, instead focus on just enjoying the relaxation. The irony is that when you do this, you fall asleep much faster!





## Chapter 6: Letting Go of Regrets

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Regretting the past is something that we all know we shouldn't do – and that we all know is pointless – and yet we all still also have a tendency to do it.

Unfortunately, regretting mistakes is something that is largely out of our control. We are programmed you see to learn from mistakes because in the wild it would have helped us to avoid making similar mistakes in future. We regret touching fire pretty much as soon as we try it, and thus we are very unlikely to do the same thing twice.

But in our evolutionary history our mistakes had a tendency to be much more clear cut and avoidable in future. The mistakes we make today tend to be more complicated and dwelling on them tends to be less useful.

Let's take that guy or girl you liked ten years ago for instance. They were giving clear hints of interest and wanted you to make a move, but you were too shy. You've moved on since then and you're happily in a new relationship, but it doesn't stop you from *regretting* that past mistake. Which is really just a bit infuriating.

Likewise, you might have made a mistake in your career once. Maybe you lost an important document which lost the company thousands, and that led to you being demoted. Or maybe you made a mistake when you shouted at your friend in haste. These are mistakes you can't 'undo' and that you knew were wrong at the time – no future victory is going to erase them and they'll keep playing over and over again in your head until you go mad.

Or will they?

## Do Regrets Fade With Time?

If you're reading this chapter, it's probably because you're struggling with some regret whether it was a small recent mistake or a big screw up, then you're probably hoping that I'm going to tell you it goes away. I wish I could, but unfortunately I *regret to say* that the evidence isn't quite so clear cut.

According to one study by Gilovich et al., published in *Psychological Review*, some regrets will heal over time, but others will be less likely to.

That's because there are two types of regret: regrets of commission and regrets of *omission*. Regrets of commission are regrets about things you did, while regrets of *omission* are regrets about things you did *not* do.

Guess which ones we regret for the longest time?

That's right – we regret the things we *don't* do for longer and in fact those regrets tend never to heal (though I can think of at least one example in my personal history that largely goes against that).

This seems like a clear message to 'grab life by the horns' as it were and to 'do more stuff', but again it's probably a little more complicated than that...

That Which Has Been Done...

The first thing I noticed when thinking about this study was that chances you didn't take tend to be easier to rectify than those you did. 'That which has been done, cannot be undone', and yet 'that which is not done *may yet* be done'. In other words, if you're regretting not doing something still... then an obvious solution is to simply *do it now*. Pick up the phone and get talking to the one that got away!

The other point to consider is that the whole concept of 'paths not taken' is one that is somewhat arbitrary at best. The reason we regret the things we don't do most is no doubt because we never

find out. We have an idealised version of how those things would have turned out in our heads so we regret not living that possible reality. Meanwhile the things we *did* do we got to see in the cold light of day – thus they tend to be considerably less interesting.

Let's say you always wanted to move to Australia as a child. You choose not to because you are afraid, you don't have the money, you think it's unwise *etc.* and thus you spend the rest of your years wondering what it would have been like and regretting your decision not to.

You may have done many other miraculous things your life – whether that's getting married and having children, being there to support your family or winning the Nobel Peace Prize... the problem is that you *know* what that was like and it was imperfect. Thus the 'undone' things always seem more interesting. Likewise the mistakes you make you live through and so you decide they could never have been that bad.

And what you also must realise is that it's actually completely required that you do turn down *some* of what life has to offer. Very often in order to experience one thing we must *necessarily* turn down something else. There are billions of options open to you every single second and yet you will always just choose one of them. That's an infinite undone-to-done ratio.

This might sound depressing – as though you'll never be happy with what you decide – and it's very much a case of 'the grass is



always greener'. But in reality what I'm saying is that the grass always *seems* greener on the other side. It's not, and what you've done is probably perfectly remarkable and worthwhile in its own right: you just have to learn to see that.

Every decision you make, or have made, is the right decision for you at this time with the resources you have

But Will it Pass?

If you can reframe the way you look at your roads 'untaken' then, you might find that you can overcome that feeling of regret. But would they fade over time as time went on even if you never managed this, or does the study prove that they will never go away?

To be honest, the research seems to suggest that our regrets won't completely fade – and particularly when they're related to things we didn't do.

But I heard a nice way of looking at this recently when watching VSauce on YouTube. In an episode titled 'Mistkaes' (get it?) the presenter Michael paraphrases a friend of his. That friend told him that past mistakes were like carvings in a tree. They don't grow with the tree – they don't even get higher. Nor do they tend to fade and in fact in some cases they can get darker.

However, while the marks don't change, the tree *does* and over time it grows to become significantly huger leaving the marks as a relative 'dot' in the bark. In other words, the carving that once took up a big proportion of the tree is now just a tiny mark on a huge tree – just a very small part of that tree's history.

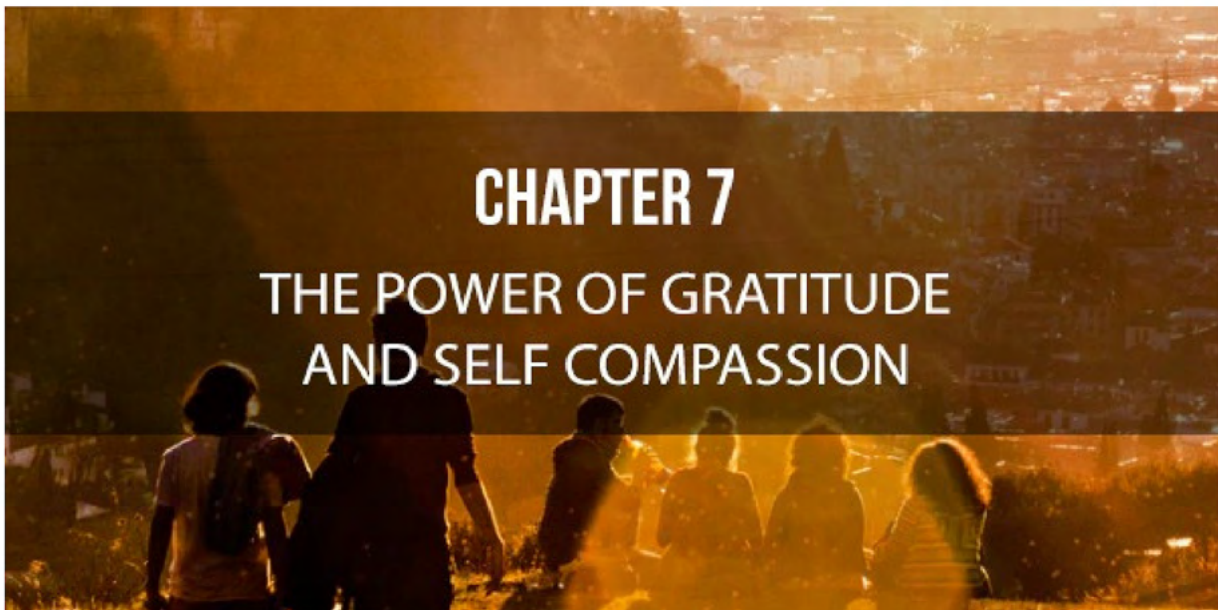
Your mistakes are similar. They might not go away, but as you build on them and have more experiences you will find that you can grow through them. They're a part of who you are and actually you shouldn't want that any other way – however they are an increasingly insignificant part of who you are. The key is to accept them and grow anyway. Mistakes are our way of finding the things that don't work, ultimately leading us to the things that do!





## Chapter 7: The Power of Gratitude and Self Compassion

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There is a specific type of regret that is particularly hard to let go of: the kind where you blame yourself.

Thus, one more powerful tip for being happier, calmer, and more fulfilled? Occasionally just cut yourself some slack. Most of us are extremely harsh on ourselves: more so than we ever would be with anyone else. We expect too much, and we don't allow for simple mistakes or slips. In short: we demand perfection and we rarely give ourselves a break. This is our internal attempt to "prepare" us for the big bad world.

When was the last time you said something you wished you hadn't, or you didn't finish as much work as you wanted to?

And how did you spend the rest of that day? Most likely, you spent it regretting your shortcomings and feeling stressed. Perhaps you let it eat at your self-esteem, or you felt you didn't deserve nice things.

Even if it was just cheating on your diet, you may have beaten yourself up something rotten!

Now ask yourself: how would you have reacted had someone *else* told you those same things? You'd no doubt have given them a break and been kind to them. So how about you be the same with yourself?

This is another example of mindfulness – of being mindful of the kinds of things you are thinking, and how those things affect your mind and your mood. Are your thoughts healthy and encouraging? Or are they actually quite damaging?

One way to change your thoughts from a CBT perspective, is to try using mantras. Combine this with post-it-notes around your home that contain those notes in order to improve your mood and remind yourself to think more positively.

For this to work well, those notes should be things that you already believe are true to some extent. So if you feel that you are intelligent, then write a note reminding yourself of that.

And if you feel that you have a sexy butt... write that down too and stick it in your bathroom or on your bedroom mirror.



One more very important reminder that you should write in capital letters and place where you will see it *the first moment you wake up?* "I am giving it my best"

### BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Journaling can help to. Write down three things you did well today, and any compliments that people gave you. You can then read these back from time to time! This has a huge impact, seeing as for most of us, an insult has a much bigger impact on our self-image than a compliment. This practice forces you to skew that balance.

### Loving Kindness Meditation and Gratitude

You can also *practice* being kinder to yourself with something called 'loving kindness meditation'. This is a form of meditation that involves spending time cultivating a feeling of kindness toward yourself. Bask in that feeling, and let it really sink in. Focus on this sensation and try to maintain it for 10 minutes at a time, a few times a week. It's truly transformative in the way you see the world. You will find many of these meditation on you tube or even a great app for meditations of all kinds is Insight Timer

Finally, consider cultivating a gratitude attitude. This means focusing on the things you have, and the things you are happy with. This not only makes you more positive, but it brings you into the present moment and helps you to feel better about the things that you have accomplished already. It's a perfect way to combat those feelings of regret!

In that journal, you should also write down 3 things that you are grateful for at the end of every day. This will force you to reflect on how much has gone *right* and how much is good in your life.

Some days i write about the things that often people forget about, or even take for granted like clean drinking water, the ability to run and walk, other days its about recognising my ability to be courageous and speak my truth then some days its something as simple as hearing my children's laughter.

There is so much to be grateful for... even after trauma and adverse events, its all about how you see yourself and how present you can be with the moment you are in, all too often our head zooms us back to the past or pushes us into the future, leaving us feeling depressed (in the past) or anxious (in the future)

You are not what happened to you, you are unique and magnificent just as you are.





## Chapter 8: Say Goodbye to Social Anxiety

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Social anxiety can sometimes have the power to cripple the lives of many people and can make it impossible for them to speak in public or even interact with others in large social settings. While some people experience it to this kind of devastating effect, many more find they have social anxiety to a lesser degree which can make them feel unconfident in the work place or among friends. It can then prevent them from fulfilling their potential in their careers, their personal and more importantly their love lives.

Often social anxiety comes down to a feeling of that you are somehow inadequate or that what you say isn't worth as much as what others say. People opt not to speak because they worry that what they say will be 'stupid' or lead to them being rejected in some way . At the same time they worry that they might stutter or stumble over their words and so not get their point across properly

That people will figure out that they're nervous and get bored waiting for them to t-t-t-t-talk...

One quick and easy way to improve the clarity of your speech as well as your vocabulary is to talk more slowly. The slower you talk the more time you'll have to think about the next thing you're about to say. It will also help you to project your voice more and you'll instantly sound clearer, deeper and more confident.

## How to Become Socially Bulletproof

However, if you're in your own head and worrying about stuttering then you'll find this hard to do as you naturally speak more quickly when you're nervous. Ironically, it's worrying about getting a stutter that will give you a stutter. So how do you get out of your own head enough to slow down and speak more confidently?

As we discussed at the start of this book, in cognitive behavioural therapy, patients are told to use what is known as 'hypothesis testing'. Here you test the results of doing whatever it is you're anxious about in the hope that you find your concerns are unfounded. Interestingly though, it may actually be more useful if you find that you do say something stupid or stutter outrageously. The reason for that is that you'll this way test the worst-case scenario and learn in the process that there's nothing to be worried about. When teaching gymnasts to backflip on a crash mat, teachers get them to purposefully land badly on their neck or back in order to teach them that they will be okay and eliminate



the fear (because again, it's being worried about backflipping that will make you pull out and hurt yourself mid-way).

One way you can test this is with strangers. Strike up conversation in a shop, bar or a coffee shop and don't worry at all about what you say or how you say it. In fact, try talking as strangely as possible about as dull a subject as possible. You'll never see them again so it doesn't matter and it's just an experiment. What you'll find though, is that they treat you just as anyone else. Politely and without drawing attention to your faults. That's human nature.

You see everyone is too busy worrying about how others see them to be able to judge everyone else. You see they are worried about how you'll react to what they say. If you needed any more proof that you're just as valuable and valid a human being as they are – there it is.

We are all seeking the same thing - CONNECTION

Some of us were modelled connection and nurtured through it in childhood, some of us witnessed it in others and copied the blueprint they shared, while others gave up their authenticity to achieve it so when considering being "self" there is a huge fear, as the belief is if I be myself no one will like me, at the roots of all social awkwardness is the fear of rejection based on the knowledge that you keep rejecting yourself - Accept yourself and you'll find your attention and personal energy is a lot more open to recognising when others are doing the same.



## Chapter 9: Changing Your Environment

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The advice in this book can largely be split into two categories: the aspects that look at helping you to change your psychology – to appreciate things more, and to be kinder to yourself, and the aspects that tell you to look after yourself *physically*.

This option fits somewhere in that later category, though it is a little different again: changing the environment *around* you. Looking after your mind, your skin, your hair, and your health will all help you to feel happier and better. You'll look healthier, and you'll have a glow that only comes with inner confidence and self-satisfaction.

But what about the environment around you? This is what gets overlooked so often, but people like Marie Kondo demonstrate how important this is to your overall happiness and satisfaction.

In fact, changing your environment can impact on your psychology in numerous ways and you can tap into any of these to be happier and healthier. Here are some things to consider.

## Awe and Wonder

Here's one amazing example of how changing your environment can lead to a happier you: awe and wonder.

Imagine being primitive man and reaching the summit of a mountain. Imagine seeing valleys stretch out for miles in front of you, and you having never seen anything like it. This sheer scope and incredibly beauty would leave you basking in awe and wonder.

What's actually happening is that you are being forced to reconsider your place in the world – and that in turn is resulting in large amounts of literal rewiring in your brain. This process occurs alongside a cascade of hormones and neurotransmitters, which lead to the feeling of spiritual nourishment we are all familiar with. When was the last time you saw something truly remarkable that changed your perspective? Whether it's seeing a newborn baby, looking through a telescope or going for a hike, try to find moments of awe. It could make your problems seem suddenly very small.

Tip: Going on a holiday or trip and changing your environment can also help you to overcome habits – as our environment contains triggers that make habits hard to kick.

## The Healing Power of Nature

Another amazing way that the environment can change your feelings is by spending time in nature. This is where we evolved, and a lush natural environment once signalled an abundance of food and resources.

Thus, going for a walk in nature can have a similar effect on us now – triggering a reduced heartrate and sense of calm. In fact, many great thinkers claim that going for “nature walks” was what helped them to come up with their best ideas.

Why? Because we are more creative when we are relaxed!

For me personally its the sea

## Your Home

Finally, don't underestimate the negative impact that a disorganized and untidy home can have on your mental state. If you can tidy and organize the space around you, then you can trigger huge changes in your mood, efficiency, and more.

Keeping things just a little more minimal is one of the best ways to do this, and that often means reducing clutter. This also means removing the things that you don't absolutely love – that don't bring you the most joy – which means the remainder will be only the things that create very positive emotions.

While you should cut down then, you should also improve quality. We've already discussed how investing in a better bathroom can



help you to take better care of yourself. The same is true of your living room, where a plush couch can make a world of difference. And it's true of your bedroom, where a beautiful picture can make you feel wonderful.

Money doesn't buy happiness, but treating yourself to lasting items that surround you and make you feel amazing is one way to lift your spirits every single day!

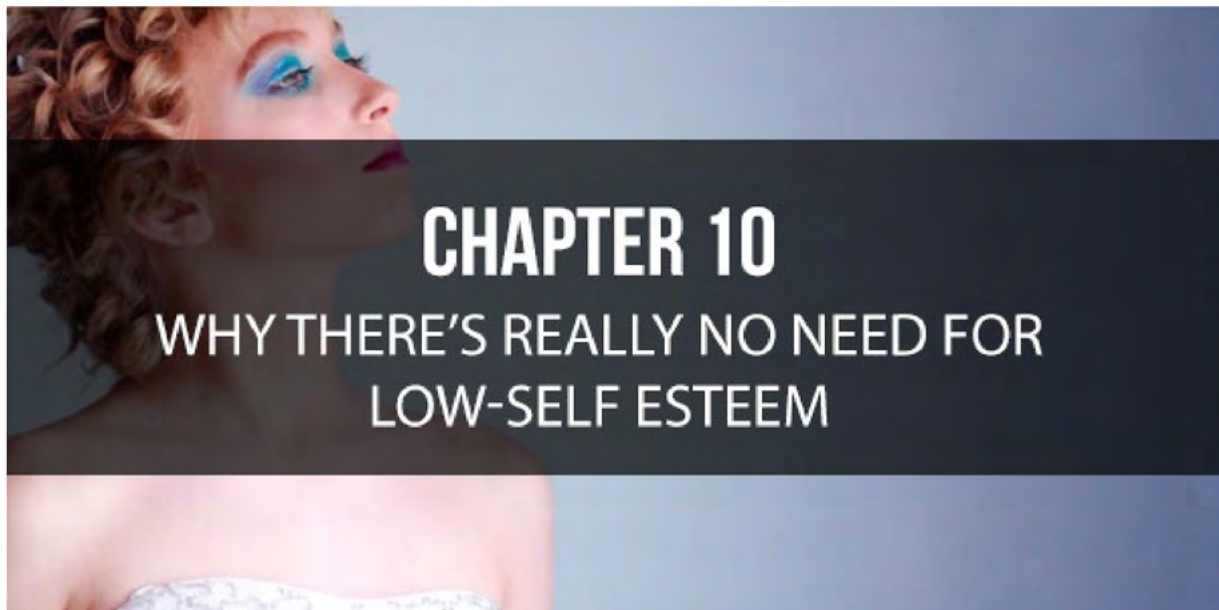
It may be bits and pieces you have gathered from the beach or the forest that you keep in a box, it may be crystals, photographs whatever it is that can evoke memories of self connection.

If you can create it in your mind you can make it happen, that goes for both negative and positive, the most powerful nation in the world is the imagination, put it to work wisely for the best results.



## Chapter 10: Why There's Really No Need for Low-Self Esteem

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I know a lot of people who have almost non-existent self esteem, which I find both upsetting and difficult to understand. I've been practicing and sharing these self-care tips for years! Let me tell you, it's certainly better than wallowing in self-loathing. The thing is as well that these people have so much going for them that it defies all logic.

One of my good friends is admired by all our female friends, has got an amazing job working with celebrities and oozes charisma. A lot of people would swap their lives and bodies for his and yet he tells me all the time that he doesn't see himself as at all successful and doesn't 'like' himself and struggles when in the company of beautiful women.

I'm not among those people who would swap lives however as I'm perfectly happy with mine. That doesn't mean I don't admire features in him, but I realise that other people probably admire features in me. I, like them, have been given all the tools I need to be able to become whatever I want to be.

So rather than wishing I was more like someone, my time would be much better spent actually working towards becoming more like them in that area. To study their excellence as recognised by me.

I can pick the best assets of every person I admire and mimic them, and once you've learned those skills you'll appreciate them far more.

Want to be fitter? Get a gym membership.

Want to be more charismatic? Spend more time with other people and develop your posture and conversational style.

See these set-backs not as something to get upset about, but as challenges. Imagine you're in the film Rocky – a montage starts and you train until you're great at the things you want to be great at. I used to wish I could trade my life with celebrities who'd already found success and love – but the thrill is all in the chase. You're a work in progress and if you work your way up to the top you can enjoy it properly with the sense of perspective that it required to get there. The minute you start working towards a goal like this you have purpose and a goal and you're not a 'nobody' anymore. You're a work in progress with grand dreams...

So there truly is no 'need' to be unhappy with yourself. If you're unhappy with an aspect of yourself, then change it. But the other reason I can't grasp the concept is that I wonder who these guys are measuring themselves against, or what counts as being 'successful' or 'worthwhile'.

## YOU ARE ALREADY GOOD ENOUGH

The thing is, no one knows what the point of life is, so how can anyone tell you you're not doing it right? Someone who's earned no money might consider themselves a failure, but if they have lots of friends and family and have lead a full life then who can tell them that? So long as you pursue what you enjoy it doesn't matter if you're 'successful'.

Furthermore, no one should judge anyone else on their behaviour because they can't really know what's going on in that person's life. If you're acting unusual perhaps you have good motivation too? Perhaps there is method to your madness? Or perhaps you're experiencing trouble in your personal life. The real point is not to defer to the approval of others and not to let it control you. Only you can judge the value of what you do. Follow your own beliefs in your own way and you will be successful in your own eyes.

## Conclusion – Your Blueprint for Self-Care

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That's the theory. Hopefully along the way you have learned a little about the importance of self-care and self-love, and perhaps what has led to low self-esteem and stress in the first place. But now it's time to take that theory and turn it into something practical. From all we've learned, here is your blueprint to a happier and more fulfilled you:

- Use mindfulness to better understand your self-talk
- Place mantras around the home reminding yourself of your best qualities and to 'be kind' to yourself
  - Look after your appearance – spend time, money, and effort on how you present yourself TO YOU
  - Try loving kindness meditation
  - Get a float habit
  - Drink 1.5/2 litres of water every day



- Look after your health by exercising regularly in a way that is light and sustainable
  - Have a grooming regime and enjoy the process as much as the outcome!
  - Get 8 hours of GOOD sleep every night
  - Eat nutritious food
  - Spend time with people you love
  - practice the things you aren't confident in
  - Clear and tidy your home
  - Seek out moments of awe and wonder
  - Surround yourself with beautiful items that you love
  - Keep a journal and use it to write things that you are grateful for, and things you have done well/people have said about you that are flattering

Take all these steps every day, and you will be sure to enjoy feelings of self-love and contentment. Everything good will grow from there!



VIVIAN MCKINNON