

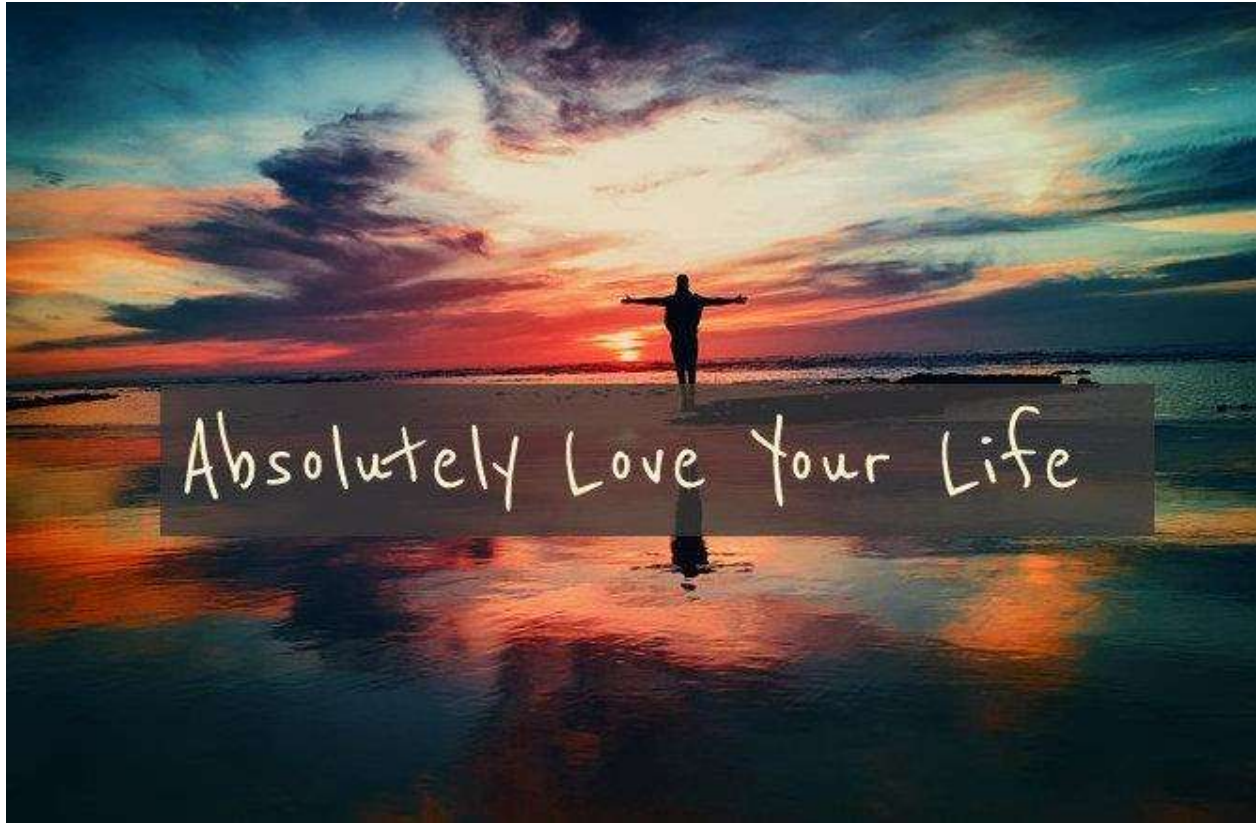
11 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR LIFE



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11 Ways to Improve Your Life



Improving your life is not as difficult as you think. Here are 11 steps you can take that will improve your life if you choose to incorporate them into your daily routine.

It may seem overwhelming initially, but the first step in changing anything is to first notice your awareness of whatever it is you want to change. The second step is to decide to focus on making that situation better. With new, consistent focus and actions geared towards improvement, you will begin to see changes. When you feel you are faltering and falling back to your old ways, remember this...

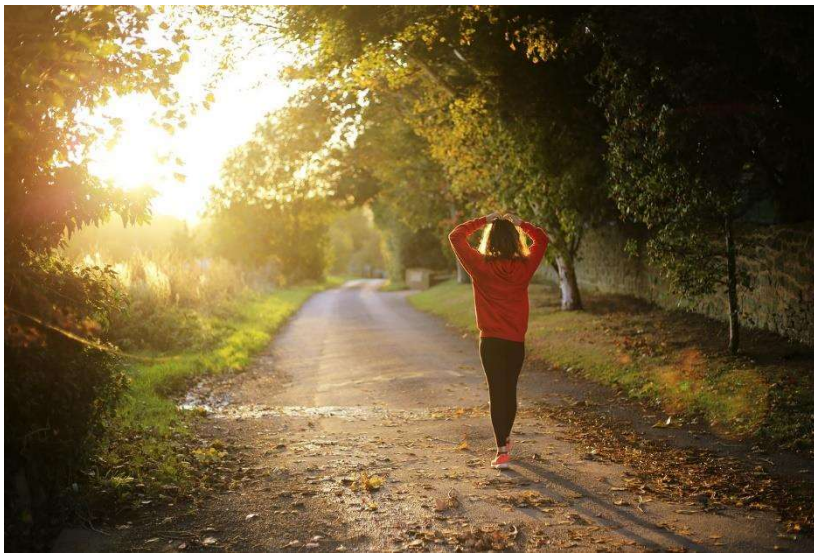
Energy Flows where Focus Goes and Results Show

Here are 11 steps you can take that will improve your life if you choose to incorporate them into your daily routine.

1) Start noticing what and why

Start noticing what you do each day and why you are doing it. Are you going through the motions of life without even paying attention? Are you doing things you don't enjoy because you're obligated to them? Life is too short to waste time on things that aren't important to us, but most people spend way more time and energy doing things they feel they **MUST** do, which leaves them little time to do what they would **LOVE** doing. If you find yourself unhappy or unfulfilled, it is a sign from the universe suggesting you are ready for a change. Start exploring ways you can spend more time doing things that engage and excite you. Spend time daily doing something that brings you joy.

2) Improve your health



Frequently you hear the phrase "If you have your health, you have everything!" It is so true, because if you don't have good health, it can make everything else in life seem harder to achieve.

Yet so many people abuse their health daily without thinking twice. They smoke, drink too

much alcohol, eat unhealthy food and gain weight to the point of becoming obese. They worry about circumstances out of their control and are in constant state of stress. Their bodies run out of energy and everything becomes overwhelming so they complain about the bad hand of life they were dealt and how there is nothing they can do about it.

If you find yourself relating to this, know that you DO have the power to change. Decide you are going to commit to live a healthy lifestyle. There are lots of resources for you to begin improving your health, our society is obsessed with reading about and discussing how to be healthy. Do your research and empower yourself with knowledge. Focus on eating a clean diet of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, fish and whole grains. If food comes out of a package or from a drive-thru, eat it only occasionally or simply avoid it.

Exercising has a way of making you feel good. It will also improve your outlook on life and your emotional health, increase your productivity, and give you some clarity on your life purpose.

Our bodies were meant to move! This stagnant, couch potato existence is very detrimental to our physical health. Get up and take a walk!! The American Heart Association recommends getting at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise to maintain your health. If you are overweight and out of shape, start small and increase your time and distance each week. Focus on cardio to burn fat and strength training to build muscle. Find a few types of exercise you like to do and mix and match your workouts. Most important of all, stick with it.

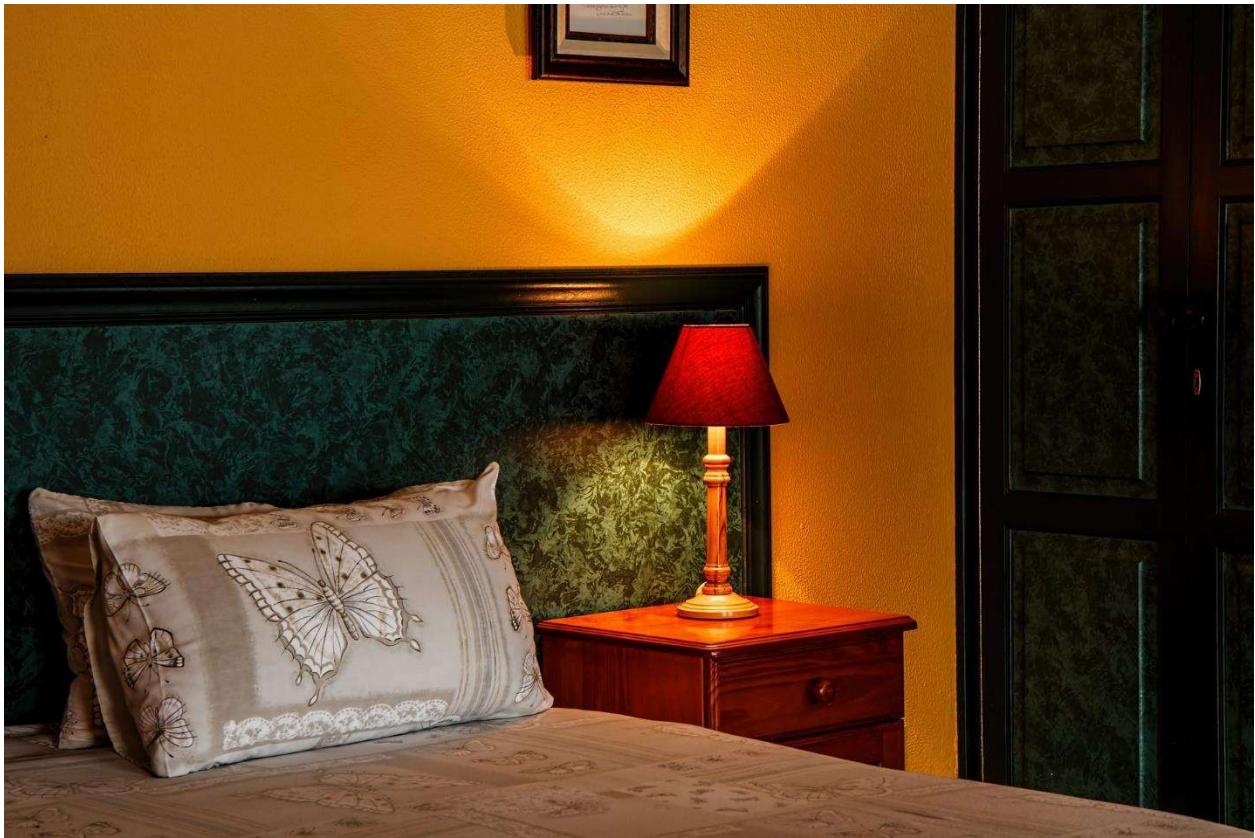
Oh... and the excuse of not having the time to exercise won't work either. You have more time than you know...make getting healthy a priority and you will find the time to exercise.

3) Get Enough Good Sleep

When we sleep, it is a time when our body recharges itself. Repairs are made to muscles and bodily systems; the mind and body are busy all night trying to get you ready for the next day. But what happens if you don't get 7 to 8 hours of quality sleep? You start out the day with a half-full tank of gas instead of a full one.

If you aren't getting enough sleep, begin to pay attention to your evening routine. Start setting the stage for a good night's sleep in advance. Turn the lights down and the electronics off at least an hour before bedtime so you can begin to relax. Take this time to read, do meditation or a gentle yoga routine. Have a cup of warm chamomile tea or a cup of golden turmeric milk.

How is your sleep environment? Notice the firmness of your mattress and the texture of your bedding. Check the temperature of your bedroom. If these things are not optimal for your comfort, do what you can to improve them. Adjust the amount of light coming in through the window with a blind if possible and use a fan to muffle any noise from outside.



If you find yourself awake at night worrying, decide to change your way of thinking. Get a journal and begin to free-write your thoughts on the issues that are causing you stress. Get them down on paper and brainstorm any ways you can think of to fix the issues. If you can't fix or control the outcome of something, remind yourself that worrying does no good and will not affect the outcome anyway. Choose to let worry go and rest assured knowing you will be able to deal with any situation that may arise.

4) Live in Gratitude

Create a daily practice of taking time to appreciate everything around you and all the abundance you have in your life. When you pay your bills, feel gratitude for the income you have and for the source of that income. When you are walking outside, pay attention to your senses. Smell the air, listen to the birds sing, feel the heat of the sun on your skin. Revel in the awesomeness of nature and the miracle of all life.



You could spend time meditating about the things you are grateful for at the end of each day. Another idea that is more powerful is to write down thoughts and gratitude in a journal each morning or evening. If you aren't a journal person, create a "grateful jar" out of a decorative glass jar with a lid and a "Post-it" pad, or just keep a simple notebook on hand near your bed stand or desk to make your daily list. There is something about the act of writing on paper that can create more impact on our awareness and learning. As you consistently practice gratitude, it soon will become second nature, which will improve your quality of life on all levels.

5) Be Goal Oriented Always

Having a goal ties in with living a purposeful life. Some people flounder in the sea of life the whole time they are here on earth without ever accomplishing anything. Creating goals to strive for gives you a purpose for getting up in the morning and a focus for each day.

Being a goal-oriented person keeps you more in tune with your life and can help you have more sense of direction. Goals can also create feelings of personal power, since achieving a goal creates a feeling of confidence and a positive sense of self. Instead of feeling reactive and powerless, you can choose to be proactive and in control by always having a goal in mind that will lead you to bigger and better things in life.

If you have made goals in the past but haven't been able to achieve them, you may have been trying to do too much or didn't have a clear enough idea of what you were trying to accomplish to begin with.

Try again using the SMART method:

- **Specific** – State your end goal in detail so you are clear what it is that you want to accomplish.
- **Measurable** – How are you going to gauge whether you are making progress?
- **Attainable** – Are there things that could get in your way and prevent you from reaching your goal? Clear the roadblocks before starting.
- **Realistic** – Can you achieve your goal? Do you have all the assets and resources that you need to be successful?
- **Time-sensitive** – Set a timetable with an ending date when you plan on being at your end goal. Set smaller mini-goals or mileposts in between so you can track progress. Celebrate each accomplishment with a reward. Just make sure the reward does not sabotage the goal.

Here is an example of a NOT SMART goal: "I will lose a lot of weight this year and get in shape."

There are a lot of questions here...how much weight? By when? What do you mean by "get in shape?"

Here is a better example of a goal using the SMART method successfully: "My goal is to lose 40 lbs by January 1st. (for this example, that is 5 months from now.) I will measure my calorie intake so I am on track to lose 8 pounds a month. I will also walk two miles 4 days a week for the next 5 months."

The ultimate goal: losing 40 lbs in 5 months - is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time sensitive. The explanation of how it will be done gives a plan to follow to stay on track and begin to see results quickly.

6) Choose to be Happy



Yes, happiness is a choice! The mind is a powerful thing and when we decide to be happy, we can learn to approach life with a more positive mindset.

The only true power any of us has is our attitude and the way we react to our circumstances.

You can find a way to look at any situation in a positive

frame of mind, even the most tragic, if you choose to.

For example, instead of looking at losing your job as a terrible thing, consider the opportunities you are now free to pursue.

Instead of being devastated by a break-up, acknowledge that at this time, the two of you are better off going separate ways, and use your new freedom to really learn to love yourself so you can be a better person for the next relationship.

Choosing to be happy will absolutely enhance the quality of your life. As you rewire your way of thinking, you will notice more things to be happy about, which will create even more reasons to be happy!

7) Keep a Stop-Doing List

Many people keep a to-do list, but not many keep a stop-doing list. Yes, this is just what it sounds like, but once you start doing it, you will be amazed.

We all have things we do and know we should stop doing and we all have habits that are unproductive and waste time. By becoming aware of the habits and actions we don't like doing, and consciously retraining ourselves to NOT do them, we are creating more time and energy to do things we want to be doing.

Some ideas for things you could put on the stop-doing list include always hitting the snooze one too many times and being late every day, eating a bowl of ice cream every night before bed, spending too much money eating out during the week, etc. You get the idea.

8) Connect with People

Human beings are social animals, and we generally like to be in the company of other people. Despite this, there are often reasons we divorce ourselves socially from others, which can cause feelings of loneliness and isolation if we make this the norm.



While it is sometimes overwhelming and scary to think of reaching out, it can be beneficial to you, and to those you reach out to. Multiple study results all show that people are happier when they are around other people, especially positive-minded ones.

If you aren't comfortable connecting with others "on purpose," you can get to know other like-minded individuals by volunteering for a cause you are passionate about or taking a class on a subject that interests you at a local college.

There are many online groups for specific interests now as well, so if being online is more your thing, check out Facebook groups. You can connect on social media, call on the phone or meet in person and all these ways will help you feel more connected.

We are all unique individuals, with gifts, talents and ideas just waiting to be shared. When we connect authentically with others, we can create meaningful relationships, which leads to stronger, vibrant communities and causes that could change the world for the better.

9) Make Life-long Learning a Habit

We are never too old to learn something new. Learning keeps your mind sharp and healthy longer than if you stagnate and don't engage your thinking. Start looking at life as a great adventure and learn something new each day. In doing so, it'll keep your mind sharp and healthy and you'll feel more vibrant and connected to a higher source.

We lead busy lives, but every day is a chance to change a dull routine. Strive to begin focusing on your interests and begin to pay attention to what you feel drawn to do. Take the time to be curious and delve into learning as much as you can! Have you always wanted to learn to dance? Take dancing lessons! Are you interested in learning another language? Check out your local community college to see what language classes they offer.

By focusing on finally doing something that you have always wanted to do, you are shifting your frequency to a higher one. Higher frequencies that vibrate from hope, optimism and enthusiasm are more in tune with happiness than the lower vibrations of boredom or frustration.

10) Let Go of Stress

Surprisingly, some stress is ok, and even good for us. Physiologically we need stress to survive as a species. However, what used to be an occasional response by our ancient ancestors when in a "fight or flight" situation has become an all day, everyday event for many of us.

Experiencing chronic stress is damaging to our health both mentally and physically. When under stress, the body releases a hormone called cortisol. Cortisol is released to reduce potential pain from a perceived injury that may happen from an attack. Think “adrenaline rush.” It also helps to increase awareness and sharpen our senses when we are in danger and choosing either to stand and fight or to run.

Since we are no longer hunter gatherers living in the wild, this stress response isn’t as needed, but our brain doesn’t know this. In our current way of life, the brain reacts to the minor everyday stressful situations by dumping too much cortisol into our systems too often.

This chronic cortisol condition wreaks havoc on our bodies. Constant stress has been linked to many health conditions such as diabetes, weight gain, anxiety and depression, and more. In addition, always being in a state of stress makes living a happy life very difficult.

Decide now to reduce the amount of stress you are under. The first step is to just physically relax and start to breathe! Loosen your shoulders, close your eyes and count slowly to ten as you breathe in and out. Practice this every few hours until it becomes a habit. Do it longer if you feel like it!

Take a walk, stretch and spend time in nature regularly. All these simple things are amazingly effective at alleviating stress.

Next, take time to notice what stresses you, and then measure if your reaction to certain stressors can be shifted by making changes in your routine or lifestyle.



For example, if you are always stressed in the morning trying to get everything ready for the day, get up 30 minutes earlier so you can alleviate that rush factor.

If you are generally always rushing and trying to do too many things, start taking time each week to plan of all the things you need to do. Prioritize them in order of importance, write them down and make a "to do" list for each day. Refer daily to the plan, starting with the top priority actions first and check off items as you get them completed. Anything that doesn't get done each day gets written down for the next day.

As you get used to living by a plan, you should start noticing you are less reactive and rushed. You have begun to live in proactive mode, which helps reduce stress immensely!

Sometimes stress can be caused by something bigger, such as a relationship or your job. Decide you are worthy of living in a more positive situation and explore ways to make the job or relationship less stressful and more to your liking. If you conclude that nothing can be done to "fix" the stress, perhaps it is time to consider changing jobs, or ending the relationship. Endings can and usually do bring new, better beginnings.

11) Let go of the need to control

Many people lead frustrating, unhappy lives simply because they waste a lot of thought and energy on people and situations they have no control over. If you notice you are one of them, stop!!! Nobody has ever benefited from worrying about what might happen and trying to control all situations.

Begin to adopt the mindset of letting go control and rest assured that you will survive and even thrive in any and all situations that come about. Trust your ability to know what to do IF something happens and stop worrying or waiting for the worst to happen. Take that time instead to appreciate the small, wonderful things going on in your life.

Do something you enjoy and focus on living in the moment, because deciding how to feel and what to do at this very moment is really all we ever have control over.

The best thing each of us can do in any given moment is be the best person we can be, do our best in any situation and help each other as best we can.

There you have it, 11 ways you can improve your life. If you are feeling completely overwhelmed by circumstances and don't know where to start, just start where you are. Look over the list and find one or two you can do right at this moment.

For example, if you are worrying about something that may or may not happen, stop. Become aware of this very moment...right NOW you are sitting here reading this and everything is okay. You are not in a fight or flight situation, so take a deep breath and relax. Begin to practice doing that each moment...living always IN the moment.

Begin to realize that you have more control over the kind of life you want to live than you currently believe. It takes awareness, focus and some mindset shifts to get to a quality of life that you choose to have, and it takes regular practice to sustain and continue to improve even more. Remember, energy flows where focus goes, and results show. You only have one life to live, so you might as well live it well, and be happy.

