

ME, MYSELF AND I
PART 2
SELF-DEVELOPMENT:
A BETTER ME...(LOADING)
#WellbeingWarriors

Compiled by Dr Melissa Barnaschone and Tobias van den Bergh
(Student Counselling and Development)

Two simple truths:

- 1) Life gets better, as we do;
- 2) Everything we require to change and develop is already within us.

These truths are simple but may be difficult to believe and trust. What makes it a difficult mindset to cultivate, is very much to do with the way we tend to think, act, and feel about ourselves, others, and the world. Our perceptions create our realities. So, when we have constant thoughts that we are not okay, that we cannot effectively cope with life's challenges, that we do not have the resources we require to overcome adversity, and we uncritically accept these thoughts as true - our perceived lived reality undoubtedly becomes increasingly strenuous.

Every cause has an effect. When we develop and maintain positive perceptions of ourselves, it influences our behaviour. Conversely, our behavioural patterns or habits can also reinforce or strengthen our perceptions of ourselves. Together, our thoughts and actions continuously contribute to an unbelievable range of emotional and physiological experiences; having a powerful impact on our life. That is precisely why a positive mindset about ourselves (and our abilities) is one of the most valuable and effective strengths we possess. So, to prevent our life's challenges from becoming pain and suffering, we need to look within, and then get to work on developing ourselves.

Quote by Lao Tzu: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

The concept of self-development encompasses anything and everything that contributes to our growth and transformation. Self-development requires conscious and deliberate effort, patience, practice, self-compassion, and focus. It is a continuous and lifelong process towards reaching our optimal potential, wellbeing, and the best version of ourself! This personal growth can be attained by first exploring and understanding our inner world (or realities); referred to as self-awareness ([see Part 1](#)). Then, by creating or adjusting our inner or mental actions and external behaviours, our journey transitions from self-awareness to self-development (Part 2).

Our human potential is limitless, so make the choice now to commit to an exciting and life-long journey of discovery, transformation and growth. The following five actions are tried and tested ways to kick-start your transformational journey.

ACTION 1: A CLEAR SENSE OF DIRECTION

Self-actualisation and lasting happiness can only be achieved when you design your life based on who you are and who you aim to be. It is more important to be true to yourself and focus on what is best for you than to impress or chase the dreams of others. A clear sense of direction, and properly set goals, will elevate the quality of everything you do and help you eliminate everything that you should not be doing.

Quote by Celestine Chua: "Whenever we think we are good, we can be even better."

ACTION 2: LET GO OF THE PAST

Holding on to past hurts, grievances and unhappiness prevents you from moving forward and becoming the better you. Forgiving yourself (and others), letting go, and moving on is very empowering.

Try this symbolic and powerful activity to practice letting go of past hurt:

1. Bring to mind the grievance, event, or person you have difficulty forgiving (this memory might be one that spontaneously and periodically pops into your mind).
2. Write on a piece of paper, the name of the person, the situation, and the difficult corresponding emotion(s) (e.g. hurt, anger, sadness, resent), that you want to unshackle yourself from.
3. Take seven deep breaths, clear your mind, and read what you wrote, reminding yourself of why you want to free yourself from this burden (e.g. "I have suffered long enough; I am willing to work on this until the load becomes lighter" or "I deserve to be happy; I will face and let go of my hurt").
4. Then, set the paper alight at the edges*. Mindfully and attentively observe as the flaming light slowly transforms what you wrote into nothingness. Finally, close your eyes, take a deep breath to focus your thoughts, and repeat the following mantra as many times as necessary: "I will confront my hurts and fears and permit it to pass over me. When these hurts and fears have gone and left me, there will be nothing. Only I will remain and endure."

**Be smart. Do this activity somewhere outside where you won't accidentally start a fire, or singe your hair! We suggest you use a small piece of paper, and not an entire exam pad.*

ACTION 3: CONQUER YOUR FEARS

All of our fears and limiting beliefs keep us in our comfort zone and obstruct us from growing. Henry Ford said that "Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal". Our fears are a reflection of the areas in which we need to grow – identify and address your limiting beliefs, challenge yourself and conquer your fears. You'll be a few steps closer to obtaining your vision.

ACTION 4: BE PROACTIVE & ACCOUNTABLE

You are the designer of your future and not a victim of your circumstance. You are responsible for who you are today and for your own progress in who you are becoming. Own it.

ACTION 5: CULTIVATE A GROWTH MINDSET

Your attitude and [mindset](#) is your pathway to mastery and success. See failures as an opportunity to improve, be open to criticism and embrace challenges. By cultivating a growth mindset, you can develop a constructive attitude, deal better with negative experiences and use your mental processes to your benefit.

Quote by Melissa Barnaschone: “Build yourself into the person that you dream of being and not the person that society expects you to be, as it is okay to live a life that others do not understand.”

As you master these five ACTIONS, be mindful of sidestepping the following toxic mindsets:

- Negative and catastrophising thinking traps
- Blaming others for your circumstances
- Comparing yourself to others
- Not believing in your own abilities and success
- Waiting idly by for things to come your way
- Not asking for help

Self-development, in itself, is an art that takes practice and patience to master. So, invest in your greatest resource and most valuable work of art – you!

Quote by Jim Rohn: “I wish for you a life of wealth, health and happiness; a life in which you give to yourself the gift of patience, the virtue of reason, the value of knowledge, and the influence of faith in your own ability to dream about and to achieve worthy rewards.”