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Best You Well-Being



Why you need to be nicer to yourself



Best Health

Updated: May 14, 2015



Turn your self-sabotaging behaviour around so you can be a better friend to yourself. Here are a few tips from the experts

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Source: Best Health magazine, May 2015

Be aware

Emily Blake, a Montreal-based psychologist who specializes in treating anxiety disorders and depression, suggests asking yourself ‘What is most important to me in this situation?’ to help foster self-awareness. ‘Awareness provides us the freedom to choose how we want to be in each and every moment,’ says Blake. To further heighten self-awareness, she recommends just **breathing and noticing your thoughts and feelings**, including any uncomfortable ones that may arise when you think about pursuing what you really need or want.

Start a journal

Terry Estrin, a Vancouver-based psychologist, suggests writing down all your thoughts before going into a challenging situation. ‘It’s a way of downloading all the negative messages and getting them out of your head,’ he says, adding that journalling is a great way to ‘look back over the geography of one’s life and learn from it.’ **Journalling helps us understand and cope with our emotions, and over time patterns may emerge that give us greater insight into our behaviour.** ‘Journalling can help us become scientists in an observational study of ourselves,’ explains Estrin.

Meditate

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helpful,' he says. If you're new to meditation, keep it simple (you can even start with a book like *Meditation for Dummies* or a free meditation recording from iTunes). 'Meditation puts us into the observer role, so we begin to observe patterns of thoughts and habitual actions and begin to react in a more mindful, intentional way,' he says.

Confront fear

'Each time you do this, it takes you up a notch in terms of what you're able to tolerate,' says Estrin. He explains that everyone wants to be comfortable, and we're often limited by the belief that life must be comfortable. As such, fear is not only bad; it's unbearable. 'When we take a run at fear, we often find ourselves feeling exhilarated, liberated, alive,' says Estrin. 'By doing the very thing we fear, we become open to a world of new possibilities.'

Treat yourself with compassion

While we often help others instinctively without questioning whether or not they deserve it, we aren't always so generous with ourselves, according to Blake. **'Self-compassion is about treating yourself with loving kindness because you need it,** removed of the obstacle of deservedness, which may trigger fears of selfishness,' she says. 'Self-compassion says 'All humans deserve kindness,' and you must include yourself in that circle of compassion.'

Balance self-care with challenging yourself

Chances are, you treat your best friends with kindness while rooting for them to do their best. Be the same way with yourself. 'Some people stay in their comfort zone but miss out on opportunities, while others push themselves to the point of burnout,' says Blake. Try to strike the right balance between being gentle with yourself while taking on challenges that will help you realize your full potential.

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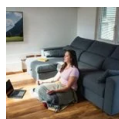
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