

SEVEN WAYS TO MAKE YOURSELF HAPPIER

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Self-criticism has its uses; on the whole, it's better to be a bit too self-critical rather than not self-critical enough! But when that voice in your head goes on and on about your _____, you do need to challenge it. Let's face it, if _____ else were as constantly and savagely critical of our behaviour as we ourselves can be, we'd tell them to back off! Remind yourself that you're doing your best and you're only human. And tell that voice that you'd be able to take its _____ more seriously if it had ever acknowledged some of your good _____!

Be kinder to others, too. It's easier to _____ if you remember that generally people 'know not what they do'. We often judge people harshly to make ourselves feel better, but it actually sucks all the joy out of our _____.

DON'T COMPARE YOUR INSIDES WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S OUTSIDES

This is often one of the main reasons we're so hard on _____; we think other people are managing their lives so much better than we are. But you never know what's really going on behind the persona that other people _____, and you've probably seen the shock others often show if you reveal to them how you really feel inside. Appearances can be so deceptive! You might think all those _____ people in that meeting at work wouldn't be singing your praises now if they'd known how anxious you were feeling at the time, after a _____ night worrying about it all. Well, what if those other people were _____ exactly the same - would you have known?!

HAPPY PEOPLE, DON'T HAVE MORE. THEY JUST APPRECIATE WHAT THEY HAVE

Consumer _____ encourages us to focus on what we don't have. It can be good to have our expectations raised, but there is a formula that states that _____ = reality minus expectations. If constant advertising makes us wish we had things that we have no realistic chance of getting, the end result is unhappiness.

They say you don't miss what you don't know. If only you hadn't seen that sold- out pasta dish on the restaurant's 'Specials' board! It wouldn't have occurred to you then to feel dissatisfied with the dish you ordered! _____ like to tell us what we're missing and the satisfaction it would bring us if only we had it. It might, but then again, it might not. Remember, it's all _____, don't let it distract you from the pleasures of the real things you do have.

STOP PROCRASTINATING

How many things are there in the back of your mind that you need to do, but haven't done? How long have you been _____ to fix that broken door, or reply to that email? Notice what a nagging burden these 'must-do's' are at some level. No time to do them? But how long would some of them really take?! Been too tired? Well, feel how tiring it is to have them _____ over you, and remember the energy lift you get when you finally cross something off your do-it list. Just do it!

Are there big _____ in life you've been putting off? Maybe you're afraid you'd regret them, but we regret failing to do things more than we regret having done them; at least we then learn from things going wrong, which is better than agonizing over what might have _____ if we had done something. And anyway, our worries about negative outcomes are usually exaggerated. Let yourself be pessimistic, and _____ the worst that could happen. Wouldn't you get over it?

WHERE IS YOUR MIND?

How much of the time is our mind _____ on the past or future, rather than the here and now? Even looking forward to something a lot, which seems positive, can take us away from the potential happiness of the present moment. As the _____ Hélène Grimaud puts it, Waiting for anything to happen, worrying that something may, or wishing that something had not happened, or will not happen, steals from every _____ moment we are living in now... and now ... and now... forever.

Try a simple _____ exercise for becoming present. Sit upright and relax your body, from your feet to your head. Then, listen to the sounds around you. You'll find yourself either _____ to the constant chatter in your head instead, busy with the past and future, or really listening to the sounds and _____ still, and present.

LIFE ISN'T MEANT TO BE EASY

People often complain about their _____ as if they shouldn't exist, as if having a problem is a reason to be unhappy. The Road Less Travelled, by M. Scott Peck, begins with the line, 'Life is difficult. It sounds gloomy, but Peck explains that once we fruly accept the fact that life is difficult, it stops being so, because we see problems as natural and actually as _____ for growth. It's the people who won't accept this that make their lives miserable. As Peck says: 'Most do not fully see this truth that life is difficult. Instead, they moan more or less incessantly, noisily or subtly, about the _____ of their problems, their _____, and their difficulties, as if life were generally easy, as if life should be easy.