

Beyond Happiness Self Improvement Through Self Discovery

A step by step approach to (re)discover who you are, and start leading a happier more fulfilling life

The William J Cole Co.

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We must begin at the beginning.

Have you ever read a self-help book? How'd that work out for you? If you're like most people, it probably started off great. You finished the book feeling inspired and ready to make big steps to transform your life. You probably started implementing new routines, and noticing major improvements. But then, after a couple weeks you may have started to slow down a little bit, and miss a day here and there. And then, all of a sudden, life got in the way. Within a couple months, you forgot most of what you read and moved on. Or worse, you remember most of what you read, and feel guilty for not being disciplined enough to make it work.

Self-help books and systems often fail, and leave us feeling like failures for not achieving big results. And yet, that section of the book store is constantly filled with new best sellers, each one filled with the latest research and data, boiled down and distilled into easy step-by-step processes that will "change your life."

As a high achiever, you've likely read your fair share of self-help books. Some are better than others, but I'd bet that very few, if any, have actually changed your life. It's more likely that you'll take bits and pieces from several sources, use what works, and discard the rest.

One problem is that self-help systems typically operate in a vacuum. They work for a limited time in a limited situation. Here's the formula: Describe a universal problem that most people can relate to, paint the picture of an ideal future that most people want to achieve, then lay out the instructions to achieve transformation. Seems simple enough, right? It works as long as life doesn't throw too many curve balls and you stay disciplined.

But life will throw curve balls. Even if you've got a solid foundation, life will come in and knock you off your game. But let's face it, you started on this journey because you wanted transformation... So chances are good that you *don't* have a solid foundation. Ironically, the key component that's left out of most self help systems is... the "self." We jump straight to the destination; straight to our picture-perfect ending.

It's important to "begin with the end in mind." (Stephen Covey) But you can't start with *only* the end in mind. Every GPS needs the destination, of course. But it also needs an origin. That's what makes self discovery so important. That's why self discovery must be the starting point. We must begin at the beginning.

You'll never *find* what you're looking for if you don't *know* what you're looking for. Going Beyond Happiness begins with self discovery.

Self discovery begins with...

Self Knowledge

Know thyself - Socrates

Favorite Things

Think deeply about the things you like most about yourself. What characteristics do you have that you're proud of? Be mindful to list things about *you*, not about your life. Don't list your kids, your friends, your job... If you love those things, that's great! But it's not what we're looking for here. Really focus your thinking on who you are. Simply by taking the time to consider the things you like, instead of focusing on all the things you want to change, you're sending a signal to yourself that you are worthy and have value. In addition to helping you identify the things about yourself that don't need to be "fixed", it's a confidence booster. Use the space below to start your list.



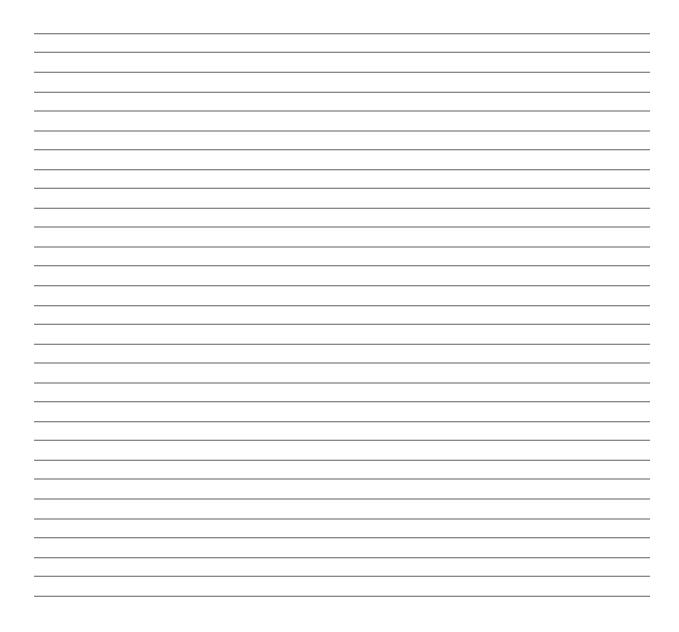
Strengths

The same principle applies here. We're often so preoccupied with improving on our weaknesses that we miss out on our strengths. There are some great strengths finder tests out there. You can find some free tests online, but I recommend looking at some of the more reputable, science-driven options outlined by PositivePsychology.com <u>here</u>. Take one and remind yourself just how talented you really are. Even before you take a test, you can start listing your strengths in the space below.



Personality

There are dozens of personality tests out there. And while some of them may not be very comprehensive, there are a few that will help you to gain a better understanding of yourself. You may have also heard of the <u>DISC</u> profile or the <u>Enneagram</u> assessment, and I like both of those. Regardless which direction you go, it's important to know that many psychologists today agree on the "<u>Big Five</u>" personality traits, and your individual personality depends on the degree to which you align with each of those traits. Many psychologists also believe that 50% of our personality is genetic. The other 50% is influenced by your upbringing and lifestyle. Knowing where you start on these deeply ingrained traits will help you see what's possible to change or improve. Even before taking any tests, use the space below to describe your personality.



Self Awareness

Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate. - Carl Jung

Core Values

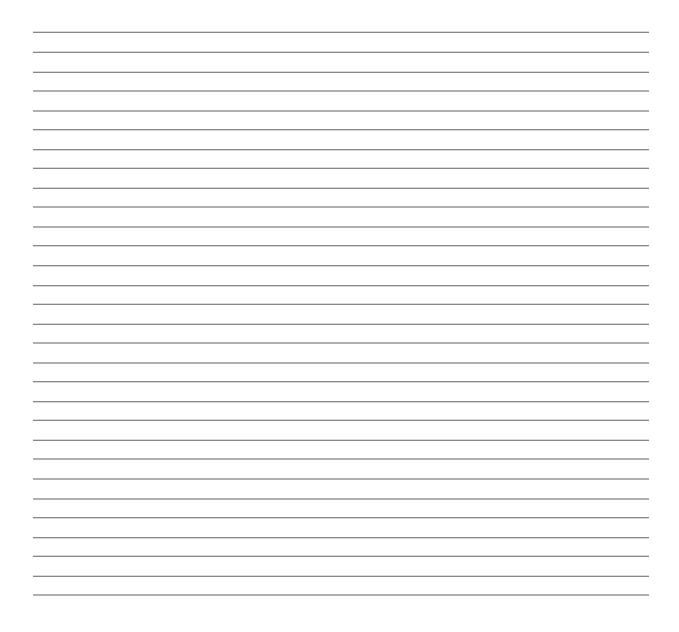
There are rules that you live by right now, and you're not even aware of them. Subconsciously, there are some character traits that you value more than others, there are priorities that take precedence over others, and there are values that guide your decision-making. But have you ever taken the time to actually identify those traits, priorities, and values? By writing these items down and laying a foundation for ourselves, we establish values that will guide our decision making. This is helpful when times are good, and critical when we face challenges. Use the space below to start drafting your core values.



Relationships

Life is filled with relationships: the relationship we have with ourselves, our family, friends, other loved ones, colleagues, and the larger communities we are a part of. It even goes beyond human relationships. We have relationships with food, our home, our work, our clothes, nature, time, cities, and so much more. We have interactions with anything and everything. That's why it's so important to identify the people, places, and things that occupy the greatest spaces in your life. To whom (or what, or where) are you devoting your energy? Which relationships enrich your life and which ones are a drain?

Here's a tip: You just finished establishing your core values, and now you can start building a life on that foundation. Relationships are all around us, so start by identifying the relationships that align with your values. Take an inventory of your relationships in the space below.



Finding passions

It may be easier said than done, but finding your passions is a powerful catalyst for building a happier, more fulfilling life. A mentor of mine describes it this way: "Passions aren't simply the things you love to do. They are the things you can't stop yourself from doing." It's like an addiction that draws you in, and fills you up. You do these things--or, at the very least, you *want* to do these things--whenever you get the chance. You're filled with anticipation before you get to engage, and you're in the zone when you're busy engaging in these passion activities. Sometimes it's a part of the work we do, but more often it's a hobby or even a side-hustle. Whatever it is for you, becoming aware of those passions and bringing them to the world is powerful. Use the space below to list your greatest passions, then schedule more time for them.



Self Acceptance

Friendship with oneself is all important, because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world - Eleanor Roosevelt

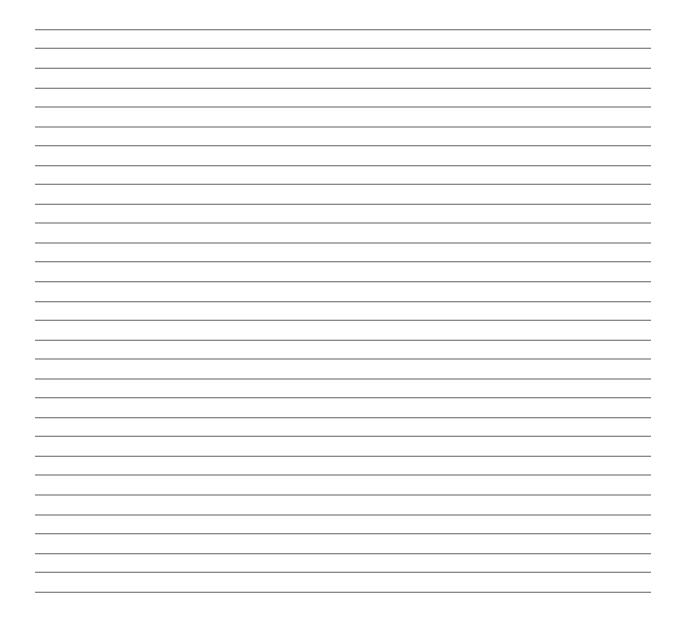
Acknowledgement, not Judgement

The first step is to look in the mirror and be honest about what you see. Who are you right now? When was the last time you took an honest inventory of yourself; your skills, strengths, values, and place in the world? And can you acknowledge those characteristics without judging yourself for them? Maybe some of those strengths aren't quite as strong as you'd like them to be. That's okay. Beating yourself up about it doesn't make you any stronger. The goal here is to find your starting point. It's neither good nor bad. Acknowledge and *accept* who you are right here and now. No judging. Use the space below to write a letter of acceptance to yourself.



Finding Commitment

It's important to spend time on the self knowledge and self awareness steps before jumping here. This is where those steps really come alive and get implemented. Having acknowledged who you are, let this be the first healthy step in realizing who you might become. If you've taken the time to establish your core values, you've essentially drawn yourself a road map. Who you are right now--with your skills, strengths, and personality--will evolve and grow based on your priorities. And your priorities are found in your core values and your willingness to stick to those values in your daily life. Commit to being a person who lives by their values. Use the space below to write a commitment letter to yourself. Or describe what it looks like to live according to your core values. How does it differ from the way you live now?



Reframing Motivation

Have you ever seen someone take care of an old car? I don't mean your uncle's 1998 Toyota Camry that he keeps fixing up just enough to brag about getting another year out of it. I'm talking about a 1953 Corvette. It's got a pearl-finish paint that looks so good, you'd think it was just put on yesterday. The chrome is polished so fine that it might even shine in the dark. White wall tires, a chromed and polished engine, and a leather interior that's been totally restored all come together to present one of the most beautiful cars ever produced. Or in this case, reproduced. Even though that Corvette might look brand new now, it's almost 70 years old. At some point, it probably looked its age–a little worn down by the normal wear and tear of life. But then, someone put a lot of love into that old car. Someone saw everything that it could be, poured themselves into it, and brought it back to life. In the space below, write about your motivation for self improvement. Challenge yourself to find motivation that stems from love and appreciation–like the owner of that Corvette–rather than looking at yourself as a project to be fixed.



Self Improvement

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change - Carl Rogers

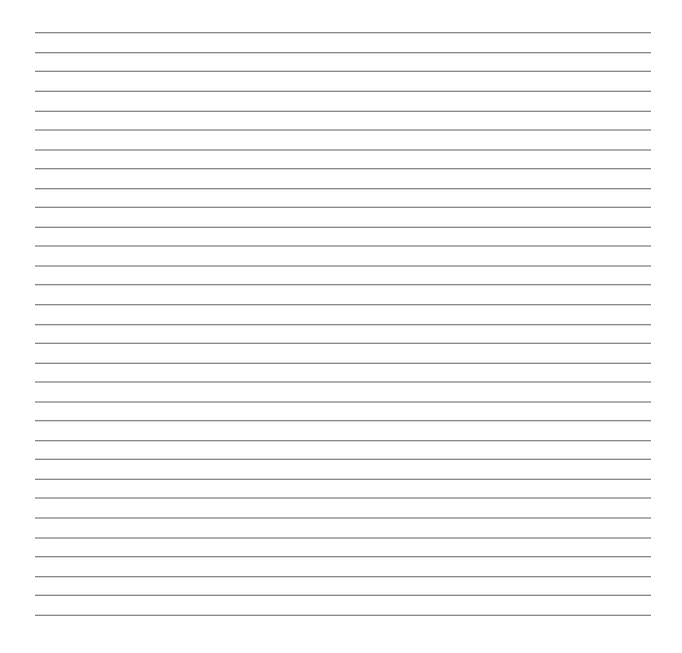
Craft Your Vision

By now, you've done the hard work of self discovery that will unlock the magic of self improvement. You've uncovered your strengths and skills by delving into self knowledge. You've established core values and meaningful relationships by exploring self awareness. You've acknowledged and embraced who you are right now by navigating self acceptance. You have the rare opportunity to see the best version of yourself through the eyes of someone who loves you. Take a moment to envision your life five or ten years from now. Imagine that you're utilizing your greatest strengths and passions, and you're living a life guided by your values and convictions. Use the space below to describe your vision for the future of your life.



Acknowledge the Gap

You did something that most people never do: you created a roadmap for your life that has a destination *AND* an origin. Lots of people set great goals for themselves, then they imagine how they'll transform their lives. Some folks even come up with a plan. But most people never take the time to figure out where they're starting from or take inventory of all their resources. You've done that. The GPS has all the info it needs. Point A is who you are now. Point B is who you'll become as you fulfill the vision from the previous step. How big is the gap from Point A to Point B? Use the space below to identify some key areas of your life where you'll begin filling in the gap and moving toward the best version of yourself. Start drafting your plan.



Start small, but start NOW

It's easy to get caught up in the moment. Maybe you never realized how great you are, and you're seeing yourself for what seems like the first time. Or maybe you're fired up by this vision you've crafted for yourself, and you just can't wait to get started. You're filled with ambition and motivation, and ready to take on the world. That's great! Jump in and get busy! The most important thing you can do is to start taking action NOW. Don't wait for the timing to be "just right." Don't wait until the new year, or next week, or even tomorrow. You've crafted a vision of your life and of the best version of yourself. Start moving toward that today. But take care not to jump straight into the deep end of the pool. Self-help systems fail time and time again because people try to do too much, too fast. They try to change everything all at once, and life just doesn't work like that. It's more of a turn-dial than a light switch. Start small, and keep the progress rolling. It's better to be consistent than to be fast. Use the space below to outline the small actions you'll take right now to move you toward your goals.

