

## 7 Steps to kill off negative thinking

---

### Step 1 - empty your head

---

Sit down and write a list of all the things that you already know you DO NOT want in your life this year. Keep asking yourself the question 'what else don't I want?' until you have exhausted everything you can think of.

*"I did this exercise with a young lady who was finding it difficult to meet the 'right' person, so I had her write down everything she could think of that had annoyed her, irritated, or that she wanted to avoid about anyone she might date in the future. She started slowly with obvious things about physical appearance, eating habits, and personal hygiene, but then got into her stride as she recalled plenty of both minor and major past disappointments. Her list eventually ran to twenty-seven A4 pages!"*

### Step 2 - polarise your list

---

Take each item on the list and ask yourself 'what is my own personal polar opposite to this?'. Each time you identify your polar opposite to an item be sure to scribble over the old thing that you don't want, so that you are left with a list of only those things that you DO want.

*"It's crucial that you recognise that each of us attaches our own meaning to words, and that this meaning is almost always subtly different to someone else's. Which means that when we look for a polar opposite, that too will be different from another person's idea of what it should be. For example, the young lady in question had listed in her 'DO NOT want' column that her new partner be 'short'. Other people might say that the polar opposite to this is just 'tall', but hers was that the new beau in her life must be more than 'six feet tall'. Interestingly her polar opposite to 'boring' was that the new person be 'conversant with geo-politics' - each to their own. eh?"*

### Step 3 - categorise your desires

---

It's likely that your list is somewhat jumbled, simply because it was produced without any structure. All you need do to create some order is look through your list and see what emerge as 'themes'. Some will be general and obvious, like for example 'physical characteristics', but some may be more specific to you. Notice what they are and start to group things together.

*"On another occasion I was using this technique with a man who was wracked with indecision about his career, and the effect it was having on his loved ones. He assumed that the major categories were going to be about career choices, income and providing for his family. However, to his surprise there emerged themes about avoiding the mistakes of his father, issues around personal health, and even achievements outside of the workplace, that until then he hadn't considered relevant. It's hard to know what you really want until you're sure about what you want to avoid."*

### Step 4 - prioritise your needs

---

Take the categories you've identified and now list them in order of priority. Ask yourself 'what MUST I have?', rather than what do I want, because it will help determine need rather than simply desire.

*"The young lady that started with a long list of no-no's came to realise that although physical characteristics, a sense of humour, and financial stability were all important, the category that turned out to be most important to her was all about emotional certainty, trust, and reliability. After the exercise she reflected that those were the kind of things that she previously hadn't thought about until after a new relationship had been formed. At that moment it was if a light-bulb turned on in her mind that wouldn't allow her to make that same mistake again."*

## Step 5 - use your imagination

---

An artist doesn't start a painting with no idea what they're going to paint. They have a picture in their mind before the brush caresses the canvass. While the final masterpiece may differ from their initial imagined outcome, it all had to start with something. Without knowing what a finished work might look like it'd be difficult to even begin.

*"The same is true with your personal masterpiece; it may be a career choice, a relationship search, or a life decision, but the principle is the same, - you must start with an end in mind even if it is a little 'fuzzy'. The young lady was able to imagine the kinds of things she'd be doing with her new partner, and the man making career decisions found it easier to picture the kind of life he was leading after making better choices. Therefore, you too must use your imagination and see in your mind's eye what your future could look like."*

## Step 6 - raise your head

---

There's no point forging forward if you don't look where you're going. There are always potholes and pitfalls so you need to see them before they swallow you up. Don't make a long term plan, just plan to deal with what's on your landscape right now.

*"People are forever using the word 'strategy' as an excuse for 'clarity'. A business might need a particular strategy to develop over a few years, but a person already has one; it's called doing the best you can, making the most of who you are, and recognising every opportunity before it fades away. You already have a strategic plan but in most cases you don't plan your tactics in the immediate future to provide clarity about your actions. Think about the week ahead and look up at both your list of priorities and your calendar of 'things to do', - and by putting the two together make a plan about what to do for the best, by being at your best."*

## Step 7 - jump right in

---

The more you do, the more waves you'll make, and the more impact you'll create. Turn your weekly plan into a week full of actions and activity that collectively take you closer to your list of priorities. Get used to doing things 'your way'.

*"You'll find that once you've become used to reviewing each week ahead of time and making decisions that take you closer to the outcomes you need and desire, the less attention you'll pay to your list. In fact, I suggested to the young lady seeking a new partner that after a couple of weeks she put the list away and forget about it. I knew that she wouldn't be able to stop thinking ahead and making better decisions once her priorities had been imprinted on her mind. After all, they weren't new, but had merely been made clear, so were already in her mind. All the exercise did was help them be 'on her mind' without necessarily having to think about it."*

Do the exercise using the seven steps and then start noticing how much more positive your thinking becomes.

*"By the way, she found her new partner, and yes he is over six foot and does have some interest in politics, but most of all he is solid and reliable. The man made career choices and was successful at home and in business, simply because he was clear about the things that mattered. It turned out that all he needed to do was get on with achieving both rather than spending his time stressing and worrying about it. Funny old world, isn't it!"*

Martin Goodyer