

# Tips to assist personal development and improve work performance

Reaching full potential requires an 'always on' approach based on constant self-awareness. According to strategic HR consultancy, The Fresh Group, there is a growing tribe of people in South Africa with a common goal: to maximise their potential and performance in work and in life.



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In response to this need, The Fresh Group shares tips for 'self-improvement in 20 seconds'.

When you're battling to get started, getting back into shape is hard. Frankly, it's far easier to choose not to do it! The feeling of dread before the first session; the pain of the session itself; the double-dread of the second session now that you know what you're in for. The doubt. The temptation to quit. Then, slowly, the gains are noticed and the motivation levels bump upwards. And then some excitement builds, and then a bit more, until you're self-motivating with clear goals, good energy and a sky's-the-limit outlook.

But let's get back to that first session.

The truth is that you have to make an agreement with yourself simply to put your head down and not look up until you've broken the back of the limiting behaviour pattern. That's the only way to do it, because engaging with the pain will just kill your motivation levels.

And it's the same with breaking any other tough pattern. Smoking and bread spring to mind. You sometimes just have to commit in a very intense way to defeat a habit. Anything less simply won't get it done; anything too subtle or sophisticated won't work.

It takes pure brawn to bust down the door - and you'll know when it's needed. Power up.

## Scare yourself

Pushing yourself to the 'learning edge' is not a natural thing to do. The edge is the place where you don't feel comfortable, where you ask yourself: "Why be scared rather than safe?"

The answer is: because it's at the edge where great learning takes place, due to lack of familiarity. And the real problem is not being scared - it's that the line between safety and stagnation is a fine one.

As you read this you will realise if you're being pushed enough, or if you've settled into an overly comfortable routine. Here's what to do if you're in the latter camp:

- Name it for yourself, first;
- Tell someone about it, preferably your line manager, as once it's in the open, action is bound to follow;
- Don't make the edge 'boring scary'; rather find something that'll really inspire you and do that;
- That butterfly feeling in your stomach that will return when you're on the edge is the feeling you're after.

## Development is a momentum game

Just as in cricket, in which one wicket falling often leads to another in quick succession, one step forward in your personal development journey makes the next that little bit easier. The universal truth here is that we all want to feel good about ourselves. We are hard wired to feel happy.

But if we make bad choices along the way, we can get ourselves stuck in joy-limiting situations. We're lucky that our default mode is to move away from these positions and toward better ways of being that lead to more joy.

So, just take one step. Once single step and the next will follow, and the next. And then you're off to the races.

## Be (a bit) hard on yourself

As much as personal development requires affirmation, belief, positivity, the dream of a better self and what one day might be - it also requires discipline. Specifically, the discipline to finish. To finish the process. To get your growth over the line. To take that step and take it for good.

So if you're not finishing, at least do yourself the favour of being honest about it and call it for what it is: a half-step or a half-attempt.

Maybe a noble effort, but an incomplete process nonetheless. And in that unfinished business lies your learning as it's revealing something about yourself:

- Do you want it enough?
- Is it the right thing to be working on?
- Are your motivations right?
- Are you willing to take some pain in exchange for some gain?

These are tough questions, which are well worth asking.

## The most important quality check you can make

Considering a job change? Here are some important pointers to bear in mind. Sometimes it's not about the job title, the salary, the city, the package, the career path or the perks. A good rule of thumb when making big decisions in your life is simply to put yourself in good environments, run by good people.

Get those two things right and all the other stuff seems to fall into place and take care of itself. So look around you and work out: what's the quality like?

## Personal growth needs a ring fence

There's a reason for the proliferation of movements such as, '100 days of happiness' and '40 days of abundance'. If you haven't heard of them, these are initiatives people are taking to manifest certain things in their lives. And they're getting good results, I might add.

It's because there's a finite time to this kind of programme, allowing people to get their teeth into it knowing that it's not forever. And this has an impact on motivation, and also on resilience which is required to stay the course and keep on track.

There's an inconvenient truth that personal development needs full-time, always-on attention, but let that go for now.

If you're working on something in your life, ring-fence it to make it more palatable and go for it. It's an easier path forward so why not take it? Life's hard enough!

## Know when it's time to let go

Do any of the following scenarios sound familiar?

- You've been angry about something for a long time;
- So much water has passed under the bridge that you can't remember what the battle is about; and/or
- You're lying awake at night feeling bitter and running through scenarios about what you're going to say to someone when you get the chance.

If you're in a state like this, then you're holding on too tight. You've given your power away to the situation and it's got the better of you. Perspective has been lost.

Releasing it, forgiving, getting over it will feel like a breath of fresh air and a lightened load. Give yourself that gift. At long last!

## A most worthy challenge

Go for 24 hours without complaining once. Neither in thought nor in words. Just 24 hours.

If you choose to do this (and you always have a choice), you may find that:

- Negativity is more prevalent than you expected;
- Turning that trend around takes focus, attention and restraint;
- Things feel lighter once you start to change your thinking.

And the fabric of your life may just shift.

## Be gentle, for they wage great battles

When someone has annoyed, irritated or angered you, there's a tendency to judge, or to be upset, or to confront them. But, remember, below the surface, we as human beings are all just trying to get by. Trying our best, putting one foot in front of the other, giving it a crack, trying to find a way through this complex maze that we call life.

It won't appear this way, however. So be careful and remind yourself that everyone is struggling with their own demons and handling them in different ways - some of which might be pleasing to you, and some of which won't.

Think twice before you have a go. You never know what lies beneath.

## Respectfully, you're not that important

It's great to work on yourself. It's great to think about how you can be better, more successful, more skilful, more influential; richer, faster and more efficient.

These are noble pursuits and worthy of your time, attention and energy. But, there's a balance to be maintained.

Excessive self-focus leads to narcissism, a lack of perspective, over-emphasis on your own interests. 'Everything in moderation, including moderation,' as they say. The point is this: it's not really all about you. You are just one part in a magical mystery of life, where everyone is kind of just getting on with getting on.

So, keep it real, work on yourself, try your hardest and chip away at life. But just remember that there's a lot out there beyond you that is just as important as what you're working on within yourself.

And the funny thing is that this will make you an even better you, which is probably what you were striving for in the first place.

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