

10 POWERFUL WAYS TO PRACTICE SELF-REFLECTION IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE



Introduction

Here's a brief scenario for you to consider. Jeff, a young career professional, comes home from work, has dinner, watches some TV then sits back and spends a few minutes reflecting on his day. His self-talk runs along the following lines: "What a crappy day! Everything that could possibly go wrong did... Not my fault, though; my coworkers suck. They can't follow instructions or do anything right. Not to mention my monster boss! I hate my job... I need to look for a new one... life sucks!"

His thoughts are interrupted by the phone ringing. It's a friend calling to chat. "Are you busy with something right now?" the friend asks. Our hero replies, "Nah, just sitting back and doing some self-reflection. Life really sucks, man!"

If this is the general idea about self-reflection, it's no wonder that so many people think life sucks! This scenario is just so wrong. It's not self-reflection in any way, shape, or form. Thankfully, real self-reflection is completely different and it's good for you.

Let's be honest. We're good at analyzing the flaws and weaknesses of others and blaming circumstances that we see as out of our control. However, we're hesitant to confront our own shortcomings and mistakes. We avoid confronting our emotions and fears or identifying patterns in our behavior that could be holding us back. Therefore, self-reflection is a powerful game-changer.

What is Self-Reflection?

Self-reflection is the process of looking into yourself to better understand your thought process, behaviors, strengths, and weaknesses. It's not a negative exercise by any means but an honest exploration of yourself, which makes you aware of some negative issues that need to be addressed.

Self-reflection is an intentional process, meaning that you don't do it randomly on the bus home from work or as you're walking down the street. Of course, you could do that in theory but it would probably be more of an aimless jumble of wandering thoughts rather than deep introspection. There can be too many distractions and interruptions.

Making the intention and making time for self-reflection is essential. This prepares you mentally for an exercise in deep, honest thought and gets your brain into focus mode. You should never be rushed or open to distractions or interruption. Think of self-reflection as a form of meditation and you'll get the idea.

Like meditation, self-reflecting should take place in quiet, relaxed surroundings. There's no set time limit. The exercises can be as long or as short as you choose. Daily self-reflection may only require a few minutes while weekly or monthly self-reflection may take some time. Some people also find it helpful to keep a journal where they jot down their key thoughts and findings but this isn't mandatory.

Why is Self-Reflection Important?

The simple process of immersing yourself in honest introspection has some amazingly powerful benefits which include:

- It leads to greater self-awareness and a better understanding of why you're where you are in your life right now. More importantly, it helps you identify what you need to be doing to get where you want to be.
- It allows you to identify and set clear goals.
- It helps you assess your goals regularly and modify or change them if you need to.
- It helps you recognize your priorities and the obstacles that could be causing you to lose sight of them.
- It helps you get in touch with your emotions and identify those that could be holding you back.
- It allows you to identify your weaknesses and work on them.
- It helps you recognize your limitations and how they can be overcome.

- It enables you to acknowledge and take responsibility for mistakes.
- It gives you more control over your life and the direction in which it's heading.
- It's a great way to reduce stress and release repressed emotions.
- It brings inner peace and mental tranquility.

So, how exactly do you practice self-reflection? Just follow these 10 powerful methods. They'll ease you into the practice and develop it into a consistent habit. Over time, you'll master the art of self-reflecting and be able to practice it on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

10 Powerful Self-Reflection Practices

1. Find what works for you

The first step is to decide when, where and how often you want to self-reflect. Every day or a couple of times a week is fine, and so is weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly. You could choose a combination of shorter weekly reflections and a longer one monthly and so on. There are no set rules for beginners.

Schedule a time as you would for exercise or meditation to begin incorporating the practice into your lifestyle. Schedule a time but no duration. Don't use a timer or an alert or set a time for when you need to finish. Ideally, then, your scheduled time shouldn't be squeezed in between two pressing appointments or tasks! Give yourself ample time to reflect at leisure without feeling pressured.

Next, decide where you want to practice self-reflection. The two keywords are quit and comfort. It could be at the end of the day when you're lying relaxed in bed. It could be early in the morning over a cup of coffee. You may prefer to do it outdoors

while taking a nature walk or sitting on the beach. You could even create a special nook in your home with a comfortable chair or mat where you feel secluded and relaxed.

Play around with different times and places to find what works best for you. Decide if you'd like to self-reflect to soft music or soothing nature sounds. If so, find some tracks that you like and download them to your phone. Listening to music through headphones will block out noise distractions so you might find this helpful as well.

Deciding on the best time and place for self-reflection doesn't mean it's set in stone. You can alternate between different times and places depending on your schedule so that the process doesn't become a dull routine. It should be an enjoyable, relaxing exercise that leaves you refreshed and at peace with the world!

2. Answer relevant questions

A great way to start your self-reflection is by answering the important questions that have arisen, or pertinent questions about where you are in your life. When you begin to make this a habit, remember to ask the right questions rather than

ruminate about ones that are negative and usually just bring you down. That's not self-reflection!

Some examples of wrong questions to avoid are:

- Why am I always down on my luck?
- Why was my coworker Sally so short with me?
- How come I'm not earning as much money as John?
- Why am I so fat?

These types of questions are judgmental and don't help you address an issue. Let's reframe the above four questions so that they become relevant and answerable:

- Are my goals realistic and achievable? Do I need to revise them to understand why I'm not achieving my desired outcome?
- Was there a misunderstanding today? Should I speak to Sally and ask why she seemed offended? Do I communicate well with my coworkers?
- What skills can I develop to be able to get ahead and earn more?
- What steps can I take to lose those extra pounds I gained over the holidays?

Asking questions is a very powerful technique because it fires up your brain (which loves to be challenged and stimulated) to

try to find answers to them. The answers may or may not come immediately but they'll certainly come!

Another great benefit of asking relevant questions is that over time, you build an extensive mental database of answers. These answers will serve you well in similar situations. For example, what steps you need to take when you gain weight.

Here are some examples of relevant questions to get you started.

- What new thing did I learn today/this week/ this month and how can I use it to my benefit?
- What are 2 things I can do to improve my friendships?
- What are three things I'm truly grateful for?
- When was the last time I stepped out of my comfort zone?
- If I could turn back time and do one thing over today/ this week/ this month, what would it be and why?
- What did I do very well today/ this week/ this month?
- How many things did I do to get me one step closer to my goal?
- How often do I work on my self-growth and learning?
- When was the last time I read a good book?
- When was the last time I spent quality time with my family?

- What 3 things can I do to take better care of my health?
- Who are the most important people in my life right now?
- Do I wake up each day filled with hope and optimism?

To identify issues in your life and to be your best in all that you do, you need to ask questions like these. The above examples are just to show you the type of questions you should be asking. Use them but make sure to customize more questions that resonate best with your personal situation.

3. Reflect on your worries and fears

Worries, fears, and anxieties are an inevitable part of life and are unavoidable. The key is learning to control them and not let them take over your life. Allowing worries and fears to stew and magnify in your mind can paralyze you into inaction.

Confronting your worries enables you to put them into perspective by reflecting on them honestly and realistically. It helps you pinpoint the root cause and how serious it is. More importantly, self-reflection allows you to find ways of addressing worries and overcoming fears.

Worries and fears come in various shapes and forms. They could be financial (this is typically the biggest), health-related, lack of job security or worries related to relationships. We worry about the future, our children, and our loved ones. Worries change from one situation to the next but often there's always something on our minds.

Start your reflection with the question: "What are my worries/ anxieties/ fears right now?" Answer the question briefly and honestly. For example, "I'm worried about my child's poor academic performance" or "I'm worried that I might lose my job."

Reflect on the worry and rate it on a scale of 1-5 in terms of how pressing it is. 1 would be mildly pressing but still worrying and 5 would be very pressing. Next, reflect on why it's pressing. In other words, what the potential outcome would be if the fear or worry isn't addressed. Be as honest and as realistic as possible.

For example, let's say you rated your worry about meeting payments on a bank loan as a 5. Interest rates have gone up and you're already struggling to make the payments as it is.

Next, reflect on why the issue is worrying you. In this case, you're afraid of being forced to take out more credit and get deeper into debt.

At this point, don't let your imagination run wild and imagine your house being repossessed or other gloom and doom scenarios. Just identify the worry or fear, decide how pressing it is and why. Next, reflect on possible solutions that will ease the worry. Finding solutions is much easier when you don't fire yourself up into a panic with horror scenarios!

For example, you could consult a financial advisor who'll help you set your financial affairs in order. You could make a list of assets you could liquidate if necessary. You could consider borrowing from a sibling or friend or sticking to a stringent budget till you get back on track.

Once you've identified possible solutions, choose the best one and act on it. Right away, you'll experience peace of mind because you're taking positive action. And as the wheels start turning and your solution starts taking effect, your worry will diminish then disappear.

4. Reflect on your priorities

A lot of people mistakenly think that priorities are the same as goals. But goals, especially long-term and life goals typically remain unchanged and short-term goals like passing an exam or acing a job interview rarely need to be modified. Priorities do change, sometimes from day to day and even from one hour to the next.

Priorities are key tasks or actions that are crucial to navigating the pitfalls of daily life, helping you function at your peak and propelling you towards your desired goals.

It's recommended that you review your priorities each time you self-reflect to keep them top of mind. You may find that the order of priorities has changed, where a priority A becomes a priority B and so on. New priorities may also have arisen and these need to be ordered in terms of importance.

Here's how you self-reflect on priorities: Ask yourself, "What is my one top priority at this time?" Your answer might be caring for a sick child and nursing him or her back to health. It could be studying for the end-of-term exams. IT could be meeting an urgent deadline.

Having identified your priority A, you can now organize other priorities that are less important but also need to be addressed. Priorities aren't always related to your long-term or life goals. An ill child is a priority that will cease to exist once the child is better. It's not related to your life goal of starting your own business. However, acing the end of term exams is a priority related to your life goal of becoming a doctor. Just be aware that priorities need to be addressed as part of the journey to achieving your life goals.

5. Assess your relationships

Healthy relationships are vital to our emotional and mental well-being. They foster our self-confidence and self-worth and give us purpose and passion to achieve our goals and enjoy life. During times of hardship, strong relationships provide us with encouragement, support and love so that we find the resilience to keep going.

It's therefore very beneficial to reflect on your relationships occasionally and assess where they are going, how important they are to you and how you can make them better. This includes personal relationships as well as friendships and even workplace relationships.

A word of warning: There's one type of relationship that doesn't require reflection. This is a relationship that's abusive, destructive, or overly dependent. Get out of it immediately. Just end the relationship before it causes you severe emotional damage. This includes relationships with people who are bitter haters who find something wrong with everything. Being around them will destroy your optimism and positivity.

The best way to assess your relationships is again by asking questions. Here are some examples of questions to ask in order to reflect on this very important part of your life:

- Who are the most important people in my life right now?
- How would my partner/family describe our relationship?
- How would my friends describe our relationships?
- Am I open and honest in my relationships?
- What 3 things can I do more of to improve my relationships?
- Do I find it difficult to express my emotions with certain people in my life? Who are they and why?
- Do my coworkers like being around me?
- What 3 things can I avoid doing or saying that would be better for my relationships?
- Am I a good listener?

Again, come up with your own question about specific relationships in your life to assess the strong points and identify

specific issues. Take full responsibility for your part of the relationship rather than throwing blame on others. Reflect on yourself first and if the other party in a relationship is at fault, consider a one-on-one conversation to point this out.

6. Reflect on your health

All of us are health conscious to varying degrees. Everyone wants to stay fit, look good and live long active lives. Wherever you stand on the health scale, reflecting on your physical and mental wellbeing from time to time is very useful.

First, mentally list the things you do that are beneficial for your health, such as going for regular medical checkups or getting enough sleep. You can do this in writing as well if you enjoy keeping a journal. Next, list the things you do that are harmful to your health - don't worry, most of us have a pretty long list! It might be smoking, going on fad diets, or indulging your sweet tooth too often.

Now, go over the 'good' and 'bad' lists. Add more health-promoting things you could be doing to the good list, or what you could be doing better. From the bad list, pick two unhealthy habits and make the intention to break them.

Reflect on your current diet and eating habits and make a mental or written list of foods you should be eating more/ less of. Are you eating three regular meals a day? If not, why? What can you do to correct this?

Reflect on three good things you did for your health recently as well as three things you should have avoided. Identify specific issues like frequent colds and flu, fatigue or recurring headaches and make the intention to get these checked.

Don't overlook your mental health either! This includes clarity, focus and memory. Do you suffer from mood swings, depression, or brain fog? Most of these issues are related to diet or sleep habits and are indications that you need to eat healthier and sleep better. They could also be due to the lack of exercise so reflect on that one a little bit as well.

There's no 'best' way to reflect on your health, so just do what works for you. Ask questions, create lists, or make resolutions. Just remember, you owe it to yourself to take good care of yourself because oftentimes we tend to neglect our health under the pressure of our hectic lives.

7. Practice mindfulness

Learning to be mindful will up your self-reflection and really help you hone in on what's important. The practice of mindfulness means being always present and being grounded and focused on what's happening in the moment. It also involves paying attention to what's happening without judgment and without letting feelings impede your thinking. Or in other words, there's no right or wrong way to think of a given situation while it's happening.

You can see how self-reflecting mindfully can really help you focus on what matters. Firstly, you don't allow emotions such as fear or anger to run away with you and impede your rational introspection. Secondly, being present means you don't revisit the past or jump ahead to the future. You simply reflect on what's going on in your life while being grounded, nonjudgmental and present.



Mindfulness also spills over into other aspects of your life and can help you experience dramatic improvements. Here are some additional benefits of mindfulness:

- It improves overall brain health and cognitive function. You'll experience improved clarity, focus and memory and less brain fog during the day.
- It's good for your health! Studies have shown that people who practice mindfulness report having more energy, vitality, and overall optimism.
- Mindfulness is a great way to keep your stress levels down because it helps you gain more control over your emotions.

- It helps you express emotions calmly and rationally.
- It fosters tolerance, acceptance, and compassion as well as gratitude.
- It improves relationships.
- It ups your productivity and efficiency.

The best way to develop mindfulness is through mindfulness meditation and mindfulness exercises. YouTube offers a huge variety of these so do your due diligence and start growing this amazing quality!

8. Don't dwell on the past

There's a difference between briefly revisiting the past and dwelling on it. It's common for past experiences to come up during self-reflection and these could be positive or negative. The goal should be to review the lessons learned from both and move on.

The goal isn't to dwell on the past so that it overshadows the present. You might find yourself too often reliving memories of good experiences and past successes and longing for 'the good

old days'. Instead, let them motivate you to seek opportunities for greater success and happiness.

Most people, however, spend too much time dwelling on negative experiences such as childhood traumas, painful breakups, and embarrassing failures. Reflecting on these creates a flood of negative emotions like guilt, anger, bitterness, and fear of moving forward.

You can train your brain to stop dwelling on the past by being alert to your thought process. When you find your thoughts drifting back in time, tell yourself that the past is out of your control. You can't go back in time and do things differently. What you can control is the present and you can take action to shape a better future.

When you send these thoughts to your brain consistently, you'll find that you begin to dwell on the past less and less. Naturally, practicing mindfulness is another powerful way to release the past and stay present in the here and now.

9. Make it a ritual

Self-reflection should never become a dreaded task or a dull routine. It should be something you look forward to like a visit to the spa or a relaxing meditation. It's a great form of self-nourishment and self-empowerment that you should get pleasure from.

Make self-reflection an enjoyable ritual with a few simple tweaks. Start by creating a relaxing ambiance. Designate a comfortable quiet space where you won't be disturbed. Light candles or diffuse a few drops of your favorite essential oil and make sure you have a comfortable chair or cushions.

When outdoors, pack a lunch or bring a thermos of coffee or tea. Consider various ways to practice self-reflection outdoors when the weather permits. A pretty park or quiet beach are ideal spots. Practicing self-reflection while stargazing on a warm night is an amazing experience. Try alternating between indoor and outdoor self-reflection to maintain your enthusiasm and pleasure.

Consider preceding your self-reflection with a warm bath or a favorite snack. Have everything you need at hand such as headphones for listening to music, your journal and pen, and a cup of cocoa or herbal tea. Once you start your self-reflection;

you should ideally not break your thought process by getting up to fetch things.

Making self-reflection a relaxing ritual will not just make it something you look forward to, it will develop a habit that serves you well for the rest of your life.

10. Visualize the future

The keyword here is 'visualization'. Studies indicate that consistent visualization keeps your brain fired up so that it generates ideas and behaviors that propel you towards your goals. Visualizing the future is very different from worrying about it or planning for it.

When you visualize your future, you create scenarios where you have achieved all your goals and dreams. You're exactly where you want to be in life. The resulting flood of positive emotions tells your brain that this is something that makes you happy. It will then work overtime to guide your thoughts and behaviors towards that future outcome.

It's simple. Just close your eyes and imagine that you're running a successful business or that you've become a best-selling author or whatever your life goal may be. Be as imaginative as possible and experience the scene with all your senses. This includes colors, smells, conversations, and other people who are sharing your success.

Naturally, visualization is a great way to end a self-reflection session on a very positive note. Do feel free to practice visualization as often as you want to – the more, the better!

Additional Questions for Self-Reflection

The best way to practice self-reflection is by asking questions. Here are some additional questions you can personalize and

use. They cover different areas of life and can help you better understand and assess where you are.

Personal traits and qualities

- What quality or talent makes you unique and special?
- What would you say is your biggest weakness or flaw?
- In addition to your life goal, what is your biggest goal for this month?
- Do you have all the skills, assistance, and resources you require to achieve your current goals?
- What skill/skills do you need to hone or acquire to achieve your goals?
- Are there any issues or people that you're avoiding? If so, why?
- What was your biggest personal success/achievement this month?

Career-related questions

- What was your biggest contribution to your team this week/month?
- What was your biggest career achievement this week/month?
- How would your supervisors and colleagues describe your work ethic?

- How would you describe your relationship with coworkers?
- What one thing could you have done better at work this week/month?
- What is the biggest obstacle to your career advancement now?

Questions related to relationships

- What can you do to make your partner's life easier?
- How would your children describe you?
- Would your friends describe you as loyal and supportive?
- What can you do to achieve a better work-life balance?
- How can you express more love and appreciation to family and friends?
- What would your partner say is your biggest flaw?
- Are you always putting the needs of others before your own and neglecting yourself?
- Do you express your emotions openly and honestly to the people closest to you?
- What is the one thing you and your partner argue most about?

Conclusion

Self-reflection is too important to be practiced randomly - or not practiced at all. If practiced consistently, it can dramatically

turn your life around and shift your mindset about the way you perceive yourself and others.

Self-reflection helps you assess your goals and relationships, identify your priorities, and confront your fears. It shows you what you should be doing more of and what you should be avoiding in order to achieve your dreams. It highlights weaknesses and strengths in your character that you may not have been aware of. In short, self-reflection can help you achieve your personal greatness.

You don't need to look any further than yourself! Everything you need to be your best is within of you, waiting to be explored and discovered. With these 10 powerful steps, you can make self-reflection a lifelong habit that will guide your life and actions from one brilliant success to the next.