

Three Simple Keys to Improving your Wellbeing

Conscious Napping uses guided visualization as the perfect tool for helping you think differently, change habits, feel better and improve your outlook life. At the root of all of this are three simple keys for improving your life:

1. Understand Your Emotions - They are the Solution to What you Want and Need

Emotions drive behavior. You use logic to confirm what you are feeling and to get what you need. Emotions speak to what you *want*, not to the more logical what you 'should' do. They are a powerful driver of your habits and actions. Emotions also create physical sensations in your body to give you a clue of what you might be 'feeling': Heart palpitations when you are fearful; tears when you are sad. They can also play a role in chronic pain because the brain processes physical and emotional pain in the same way. Did you know that 25% of people who suffer from chronic pain have never had an injury, surgery or illness?

Chances are you have been led to believe that expressing negative emotions is bad. While *how* you express them may not be effective or appropriate, the emotion itself is never a bad thing.

All emotions are good! They are simply indicators, like on the symbols on the dashboard of your car. They are indicators that something needs attention, that something is out of alignment within. If the oil light comes on and you pull into the gas station and put gas in your car, the car will still run for a while. But eventually it will break down and you will have wished you put that \$10 quart of oil in when it told you it needed it, because now your repair bill is \$1500! Unresolved emotions can cost you in many different ways.

You have an internal GPS system of sorts. It is a system that tells you that you are off course of where you want to be, and it will guide you back onto the right road if you listen to what it needs. Emotions are an indicator of how well you are aligned with what you want and who you are.

Emotions have nothing to do with being factual. They are all about your perception of what is happening. For example, you may be surrounded by friends and family who love you, but you still feel lonely. Loneliness is a feeling that is saying you need to be connected to someone. It is not the same as being alone. Your internal GPS is urging you to reach out to someone so that you can feel connected, back in balance, on the right road again.

To prevent you from putting gas in your car when the oil light is on, you must understand what the GPS is telling you, then make the correction you need to get back on course. Let's examine a few more negative emotions that you may feel from time to time.

Anger lets you know that you perceive something to be unfair. How do you make it fair?

Guilt is when you believe you've done something unfair to someone else, or to yourself. Is an apology needed? Perhaps to yourself?

Stress is telling you that you feel things are unmanageable, that you have too much to do. Find some help or take some unessential things off the list.

Boredom, a perfect excuse to distract in unhealthy ways, is telling you that you need a challenge. There's hundreds of ways to satisfy boredom!

Sadness is letting you know that you've lost something or someone of value in your life. What do you need to fill the void?

Fear indicates a need to feel safe, and secure in yourself. It is at the root of most negative perceptions we feel. For example, inadequacy is a thought we think - "I'm not good enough." What is really at the root of that thought is fear. Fear of not being accepted, of not living up to other's expectations, of what will happen if you fail. Fear is an indicator that you need to be comfortable and secure in what is happening in your current situation.

Frustration occurs when the distractors you've always used to help yourself feel better stop working. It's time to quit ignoring what you are really feeling and find a resolution for the emotion you identify.

If you are totally frustrated, exhausted and tired of feeling that way, you may experience some normal depression. This your internal signal that it's time to step back and take a rest, then come back to it when you've had time to recover and get more creative with your solutions to satisfy those emotions you are feeling.

Allow yourself to notice that your internal GPS is feeling negatively about something. Define what the emotion is. Find a solution to satisfy it. Don't expect to go from hopelessness to joy, as it's too big of a jump all at once. Find a thought that is a bit better and focus on that. Once you feel that shift, then find the next best thought and the next best thought, and continue working your way up the emotional ladder one rung at a time. Once you get back to neutral and start feeling satisfied with where you are, you can proceed more quickly to finding the joyful thoughts!

2. Forgiveness - the Quickest Way to Freedom

Anger and resentment are like drinking poison and hoping someone else dies.

You may be carrying around these negative feelings for others long after the person who wronged you has forgotten about it. When you continue to think about what has angered you or made you feel resentment, *you* are the one who is actually continuing to cause harm. In thinking about it again and again, you keep the hurt and anger alive inside of yourself. Anger is exhausting. It keeps you stuck in the past, preventing you from moving forward.

Forgiveness is the quickest way to freeing yourself from this self-imposed bondage. But “Wait!”, you say. What happened was really wrong and hurtful. Forgiveness doesn’t mean you forget or condone what was done. It doesn’t mean you have to like the person or invite them back into your life. It is simply a means to let go and get on with your life. Forgiveness sets you free from the offender and from your past! It’s your way of taking back control over how you feel, over your life and how you live it.

This may be one of the most important exercises you can do: Put yourself in a quiet place. Close your eyes and imagine a movie screen in front of you. Take the remote control and start the movie. The faces that appear on the screen are meant to be forgiven. Pause on each face and take as much time as you need to tell that person how they hurt you and how it has affected your life. Say what you always wanted to say to them. Then tell them you are taking back control by never thinking about it or them again. You are strong and you are moving on!

And before you end the movie, put yourself up on that screen. Say what you’ve always wanted to tell that mistake-making part of you who has hurt you. Tell that mistake-making part of you how your life has been affected by what’s been done. You may even find that the mistake-making part was really trying to protect you. Then, perhaps most importantly, forgive yourself. Completely.

Now notice how *free* you feel!

3. Practice Gratitude - the Simplest Path to Feeling Happier

Research has shown that a daily practice of gratitude can raise your level of happiness and improve your health and sense of wellbeing. It’s so easy and only takes ONE minute! It’s recommended that you do this activity before you engage in anything else, as it will set a positive tone for the day (Ok, maybe after a bathroom break and a sip of coffee, but *definitely* before checking email or social media, or looking at your calendar or to-do list for the day.)

Set a timer for one minute. Write down all the things that come to mind that make you happy and that you are grateful for in your life. Don't make this a list of things that you feel you *should* be thankful for, but what you *really feel* grateful about.

Once you've become practiced at one minute of gratitude a day, take this practice to the next level. Actually recall the *specific* feeling you had at the time you are thinking about. Allow yourself to experience it again in your mind and body. Perhaps you are feeling happy, proud, optimistic, loved, confident or downright joyous. Revel in that wonderful feeling, and imagine putting that feeling in a file that you can pull out and recapture at any moment. You can also vary this exercise and recall a specific wonderful feeling, then the various instances when you felt the same feeling. Give gratitude for each of those moments and for the feeling itself.

So what if life doesn't feel very good at the moment? Even more reason to identify things that *are* good in your life. Even when life is presenting something you don't want, it can help you realize what you *DO* want. Recall an incident in the past that at the time felt hopeless but that you made it through. These instances in life can provide your richest opportunities to grow and learn. You've always come out on the other side of it, and become wiser for it.

If this is difficult, look at the "what is" in your life, where you are now, and think of ways you *could* be grateful for the "what is". Here's an example: Let's say your car is parked in a lot and when you return to it, someone has backed into it. This is most certainly not a pleasant or desired experience, but you can still find something to feel gratitude about: You have insurance to cover the damage. You could be grateful they left a note. You could enjoy the nice rental car you will be using for a couple of days. You'll have a new bumper or perhaps a new paint job. You get the idea.

After you've practiced daily gratitude for a couple of weeks you may find that it starts to happen organically. For instance, you might be driving in your car and notice the cozy feeling of the warm sunshine, or smiling happily at the eagle that just flew overhead, enjoying your car that gets you where you want to go, or how relaxing and freeing it is to take mass transportation or an Uber ride.

Because your brain is hardwired to look for danger, it is easy to see the negative in your life. Looking for the positive takes a little effort in the beginning, but developing it as an everyday habit has great rewards. After a short time, you will most certainly have your ability to effortlessly find things to be grateful for on your gratitude list!