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| Smiling students chatting in school corridor  Creating a better you | “Your guide has been written, it’s time to turn the pages and see a better you!  Cheryl Lacey Donovan  Crash Course: 7-Day Program to Self-Improvement |

# Life Hack: Creating A Better You!

“Your guide has been written, it’s time to turn the pages and see a better you!

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# The S twins: Success and Self-Improvement

Life is never random; a purpose lies in every part of your story. This includes your life's very high, highs, and sad lows. The instinct may naturally be to hide in a cave, locked, hiding your fears, and crying a river over past issues, failures, and heartaches. The key is to use that as a stepping stone, and a platform for self-improvement and success.

So how does one get on the bridge that links self-improvement with success? By implementing these steps:

1. **Mindset change:** You must be your biggest cheerleader! Jump past the level of failure, and into success. Applaud every step!
2. **Goals:** Set small and reachable goals.
3. **Competition:** Look within and not outward. See yourself and not others as your greatest competition.
4. **Learn:** See everything as a learning opportunity. Learn everyday! See everything as an opportunity to take something from it all. Even the not-so-good.
5. **Smile:** Research shows that smiling makes a person feel good. Smile more.
6. **Support:** Have people around you that you want to become like. You are the sum of everyone around you.

Success doesn’t just happen. For every success story, there is a journey in it full of ditches and bridges. The journey starts when you allow it to begin. The lessons start when you open yourself up to learning and improving. Look around you, the world is your classroom. Class is in session.



# Why?

Your biggest competition in the race of life will always be yourself. The problem is many people spend time looking at the next lane, thinking that person somehow has it better. If you were to sit down, talk to them, and listen to their story, you most likely will prefer your version. It is time to look in the mirror and appreciate the reflection you see.

You are a mother struggling with your tantrum-throwing toddler. You have on your Saturday morning’s best, which is pretty much an oversized hoody, and a pair of jeans. You are trying to stop the child from picking up everything in the store. A pretty lady wearing a crop top, showing some washboard abs walks past you on the phone, she struts along with her 4 inches, and you just wish…

Now what you may not know is she is thinking, I am tired of this life, I wish I had a family at home to go back to. She may have had a few miscarriages even, and just wants a child!

We see a young business entrepreneur saying, “*Wooh… he has it made!*” He looks at himself every morning, “I need to attend AA classes, someday they will see right through me.”

Sounds funny right? We see others, and envy takes over, yet even within that perfection, things still are imperfect. As a result of our poor self-esteem, and lack of self-confidence, we create a cobweb of dark desperation.

I know someone who talks nonstop. And in most conversations, she rambles on and on, without realizing that no one else is interested in the things she has to say. She never listens, or gives room for one to say anything. Now many people tend to avoid the circles whenever she’s around.

One key to self-improvement is to find a wise sounding board. Someone trusted that you can open up and confide in. Find someone open to telling you not just what you want to hear, but what you need to hear. Ask questions like “do you think I am arrogant?”, “Do I always talk too much?”, “Do I talk too loud?”, “Does my breath smell?”, “Do I ever bore you when were together?”. Tell the person to be open and frank with their comments. Open up your mind and heart as well, to receive whatever comments may be as constructive criticism. This is crucial to helping you improve yourself.

The fastest way to stifle growth is with comparison. Learn to accept and love the person that you are right now. Only then, can you start the journey forward.

The best way a spouse can help the other with self-improvement is not by negative criticism. It starts by loving and accepting that person. Creating an atmosphere of love allows them to trust and feel accepted. That act of love will be the biggest motivator to cause them to seek self-improvement.

****Self-improvement and learning the art of loving yourself does not mean going to the mountaintop and proclaiming your greatness. It’s the virtue of acceptance and contentment. Once we start improving ourselves, we naturally start feeling good, content, and happy.

**Constructing A Better You**

So, in what ways can you stay calm, and composed, and maintain self-esteem in a difficult environment? Here are some key steps you may consider as a launching pad.

**Picture yourself as a Dart Board**. Think of everything and everyone else around you as Dart Pins. As they strike, they damage your self-esteem and hurt you in so many ways. Now how can you stop them?

## Dart Pin #1: Work

Beware of the “survival of the fittest theory that may occur in a negative work environment. Some places rather than encourage cooperation, turn into a war zone. It is easy to want to jump in and start a non-ending fight. Stop it! Stay out of this, it will hurt your self-esteem. See others in a workplace as a way of learning. What can you glean from others’ experiences?

## Dart Pin #2: Other People’s Behavior

You can’t change how others act; you can only change your response to how they act. You control yourself and not others. Don’t worry about the behaviors of others, worry about yours.

## Dart Pin #3: Change

Change is painful. It forces us into an unfamiliar arena. It exposes our weaknesses. Gold is transformed by fire. It expands, but it ultimately ends up in the shape that was intended. While change may cause you to hurt temporarily, if you look at it as an opportunity, you will discover new ways to improve. For example, you have a new job role, and much is expected. As you learn to ride the curtails of change, like a wave, it will surely carry you up.

## Dart Pin #4: The Past

Cry if you must about the pain of the past, but don’t remain there. See it as a lesson point. It will eat you up if you stay too long at your pity party!

## Dart Pin #5: Perception

Two people can go through the same experience, but perception will determine their different outcomes. Do not get caught up in the negativities of the world. In every dark area, be determined to find the light, even if you must be the light!

## Dart Pin #6: Determination Theory

What determines who and what you are, is a mix of genetics and the environment. Remember that you do not have to follow the negative patterns that may be in your family. If your parent was an alcoholic, by changing or creating the right environment, you can determine that you do not fall into that same tunnel.

Life is really about choices. You can choose to be happy or not. When you wake up every day, it is important to have affirmations to determine how your day goes. Choose to speak positive words, and determine that no matter what, even if someone says something negative, it will not change that stand. The more you do that, the more natural it becomes. Today you must choose to build your self-esteem. There is no magic genie. God wouldn’t descend from heaven and say– “Michael, I give you the decree to now improve your life”

Let’s face it. Life is rough, especially when negative forces around are bringing you down. Think of life as a battle. There are many wars to be won. Remember to have the right armor of protection, to prevent random attacks. Also, realize that falling does not mean the war or battle is lost. Once you get up, you have another chance to fight again. The more you fight, the tougher you become, and the stronger you become.

Take responsibility for your inadequacies. You can never move forward in your journey if you never admit there is something wrong. What is interesting is that as you are fighting, you move up the ranks in the military. Eventually, you become the commander of the team, the leader. Then you become the go-to person to help others develop their self-esteem. You become a movement. I know, because I have been there.

# B36FFD2E1BWhere Does Your Faith Lie?

I need God, what about you?

Spiritual growth is challenging, especially in a world that seems to take one away with the lure of money, power, and craziness. Technology also plays a key role by giving us easy, fancy gadgets that have taken our minds away from what is important. Somewhere along the way, we lose sight of self-worth and self-meaning. In what ways can we create a balance between the material and spiritual aspects of our lives?

**To grow spiritually is to look inward.**

Your thoughts, beliefs, and motivations. It is important to practice the art of introspection and look within. Yield your mind, and flow with it. Question your motives for everything you do. Learn to hold every thought captive. Reexamine every decision and learn to reach within to gain perspective and great insights into your life goals. Let go of bad and questionable behavior and traits. Once you are honest, you will know, accept, and discard them. It takes practice but also being willing, and courageous to discover the truths that are within you. Forgive yourself for anything negative you may have thought or done, and then move forward!

**To grow spiritually is to develop your potential.**

Religion and science have differing views on matters of the human spirit. Religion views people as spiritual beings temporarily living on Earth, while science views the spirit as just one dimension of an individual. Mastery of the self is a recurring theme in Christian teachings. The needs of the body are recognized but placed under the needs of the spirit. Beliefs, values, morality, rules, experiences, and good works provide the blueprint to ensure the growth of the spiritual being. In Psychology, realizing one’s full potential is to self-actualize.

Maslow identified several human needs: **physiological, security, belongingness, esteem, cognitive, aesthetic, self-actualization, and self-transcendence**. James earlier categorized these needs into three: material, emotional, and spiritual. When you have satisfied the basic physiological and emotional needs, spiritual or existential needs come next. Achieving each need leads to the total development of the individual. Perhaps the difference between these two religions and psychology is the end of self-development: Christianity sees that self-development is a means toward serving God, while psychology views self-development as an end by itself.

**To grow spiritually is to search for meaning.**

Religions that believe in the existence of God suppose that the purpose of human life is to serve the Creator of all things. Several theories in psychology propose that we ultimately give meaning to our lives. Whether we believe that life’s meaning is pre-determined or self-directed, to grow in spirit is to realize that we do not merely exist. We do not know the meaning of our lives at birth, but we gain knowledge and wisdom from our interactions with people and our actions and reactions to our situations. As we discover this meaning, there are certain beliefs and values that we reject and affirm. Our lives have a purpose. This purpose puts all our physical, emotional, and intellectual potentials into use; sustains us during trying times; and gives us something to look forward the to---a goal to achieve, a destination to reach. A person without purpose or meaning is like a drifting ship at sea.

**To grow spiritually is to recognize interconnections.**

Religion stresses the concept of our relatedness to all creation, live and inanimate. Thus we call other people “brothers and sisters” even if there are no direct blood relations. Moreover, Christianity speaks of the relationship between humans and a higher being. On the other hand, science expounds on our link to other living things through evolution theory. This relatedness is seen in the concept of ecology, the interaction between living and non-living things. In psychology, connectedness is a characteristic of self-transcendence, the highest human need according to Maslow. Recognizing your connection to all things makes you more humble and respectful of people, animals, plants, and things in nature. It makes you appreciate everything around you. It moves you to go beyond your comfort zone and reach out to other people, and become stewards of all other things around you.

Growth is a process thus to grow in spirit is a **day-to-day** encounter. We win some, we lose some, but the important thing is that we learn, and from this knowledge, further spiritual growth is made possible.

# What is Your Inspiration?

What inspires you? Pain can be good because it forces some people to make a change. Bad grades can make us realize that we need to study. Debts may lead someone into stepping outside the box and starting their own business. Being humiliated gives us the ‘push’ to speak up and fight for ourselves to save our face from the next embarrassment. It may be a bitter experience, a friend’s tragic story, a great movie, or an inspiring book that will help us get up and get just the right amount of motivation we need to improve ourselves.

With the countless negativity the world brings about, how can you stay on track? Try on the tips, we call the ABCs of life!

1. **Action**. Take action. Avoid negative people, things, and places. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”
2. **Believe in yourself**, and in what you can do.
3. **Consider things from every angle and aspect**. Motivation comes from determination. To be able to understand life, you should feel the sun from both sides.
4. **Don’t give in and don’t give up**. Thomas Edison failed once, twice, and more than thrice before he came up with his invention and perfected the incandescent light bulb. Make motivation your steering wheel.
5. **Enjoy**. Work as if you don’t need money. Dance as if nobody’s watching. Love as if you never cried. Learn as if you’ll live forever. Motivation takes place when people are happy.
6. **Family and Friends** – are life’s greatest ‘F’ treasures. Don’t lose sight of them.
7. **Give more than what is enough**. Where do motivation and self-improvement take place at work? At home? At school? When you exert extra effort in doing things.
8. **Hang on to your dreams**. They may dangle in there for a moment, but these little stars will be your driving force.
9. **Ignore those who try to destroy you**. Don’t let other people get the best of you. Stay out of toxic people – the kind of friends who hates to hear about your success.
10. **Just be yourself**. The key to success is to be yourself. And the key to failure is to try to please everyone.
11. **Keep trying no matter how hard life may seem**. When a person is motivated, eventually he sees a harsh life finally clearing out, paving the way to self-improvement.
12. **Learn to love yourself**. Now isn’t that easy?
13. **Make things happen**. Motivation is when your dreams are put into work clothes.
14. **Never lie, cheat or steal**. Always play a fair game.
15. **Open your eyes**. People should learn the horse’s attitude and horse sense. They see things in 2 ways – how they want things to be, and how they should be.
16. **Practice makes perfect**. Practice is about motivation. It lets us learn repertoire and ways how can we recover from our mistakes.
17. **Quitters never win**. And winners never quit. So, choose your fate – are you going to be a quitter? Or a winner?
18. **Ready yourself**. Motivation is also about preparation. We must hear the little voice within us telling us to get started before others will get on their feet and try to push us around. Remember, it wasn’t raining when Noah build the ark.
19. **Stop procrastinating**!
20. **Take control of your life**. Discipline or self-control jives synonymously with motivation. Both are key factors in self-improvement.
21. **Understand others**. If you know very well how to talk, you should also learn how to listen. Yearn to understand first, and to be understood the second.
22. **Visualize it**. Motivation without vision is like a boat on dry land.
23. **Want it more than anything**. Dreaming means believing. And to believe is something that is rooted in the roots of motivation and self-improvement.
24. **X Factor is what will make you different from the others**. When you are motivated, you tend to put on “extras” in your life like extra time for family, extra help at work, extra care for friends, and so on.
25. **You are unique**. No one in this world looks acts or talks like you. Value your life and existence, because you’re just going to spend it once.

###### Zero in on your dreams and go for it!!!

# D5D3B74933Here Are the Keys

When we look at a certain object, a painting for example – we won’t be able to appreciate what’s in it, what is painted, and what else goes with it if the painting is just an inch away from our face. But if we try to take it a little further, we’ll have a clearer vision of the whole artwork.

We reach a point in our life when we are ready for change and a whole bunch of information that will help us unlock our self-improvement power. Until then, something can be staring us right under our nose but we don’t see it. The only time we think of unlocking our self-improvement power is when everything got worst.

**Take the frog principle for example**.

Try placing Frog A in a pot of boiling water. What happens? He twerps! He jumps out! Why? Because he is not able to tolerate sudden changes in his environment – the water’s temperature. Then try Frog B: place him in lukewarm water, then turn the gas stove on. Wait until the water reaches a certain boiling point. Frog B then thinks “Ooh… it’s a bit warm in here”.

People are like Frog B in general. Today, Katie thinks Jan hates her. Tomorrow, Michael walks up to her and tells her he hates her. Anna stays the same and doesn’t mind what her friends say. The next day, she learned that Carrie and Mark also abhor her. Anna doesn’t initially realize the importance and the need for self-improvement until the entire community hates her.

We learn our lessons when we experience pain. We finally see the warning signs and signals when things get rough and tough. When do we realize that we need to change diets? When none of our jeans and shirts fit us. When do we stop eating candies and chocolates? When all our teeth have fallen out. When do we realize that we need to stop smoking? When our lungs have gone bad. When do we pray and ask for help? When we realize that we’re going to die tomorrow.

The only time most of us ever learn about unlocking our self-improvement power is when the whole world is crashing and falling apart. We think and feel this way because it is not easy to change. But change becomes more painful when we ignore it.

The change will happen, like it or hate it. At one point or another, we are all going to experience different turning points in our life – and we are all going to eventually unlock our self-improvement power not because the world says so, not because our friends are nagging us, but because we realize it’s for our good.

**Happy people don’t just accept change, they embrace it**. Now, you don’t have to feel a tremendous heat before realizing the need for self-improvement. Unlocking your self-improvement power means unlocking the cage of thought that says, “it’s just the way I am”. It is such a poor excuse for people who fear and resist change.

Jen repeatedly tells everyone that she doesn’t have the guts to be around groups of people. She heard her mom, her dad, her sister, and her teacher tell the same things about her to other people. Over the years, that is what Jen believes. She believes it’s her story. And what happens? Every time a great crowd comes over to their house, in school, and in the community – she tends to step back, shy away and lock herself up in a room. Jen didn’t only believe in her story, she lived it.

Jen has to realize that she is not what she is in her story. Instead of having her story posted around her face for everyone to remember, she must have the spirit and show people “I am an important person, and I should be treated accordingly!”

Self-improvement may not be everybody’s favorite word, but if we look at things from a different point of view, we might have greater chances of enjoying the whole process instead of counting the days until we are fully improved. Three sessions in a week at the gym would result in a healthier life, reading books instead of looking at relentless episodes of reality TV will shape up a more profound knowledge, and going out with friends and peers will help you take a step back from work and unwind. And just when you are enjoying the whole process of unlocking your power, you’ll realize that you’re becoming happier

Now for the…

# Crash Course 7-Day Program to Self-Improvement

I seem to have lost count of how many times I've read and heard of celebrity marriages falling apart. Not that I care (and I don't), but it seems strange that we often see movie and TV stars as flawless people, living the fairytale life of riches and glamour. I suppose we all have to stop sticking our heads in the clouds and face reality.

There are many ways to lose your sense of self-esteem despite how trivial it could get. But whatever happens, we should all try not to lose our sense of self.

So what does it take to be a cut above the rest? Here are some of the things you can think about and improve on that should be enough for a week.

**Day 1: Purpose and Direction.**

Are you wandering through life with little direction - hoping that you'll find happiness, health, and prosperity? Identify your life purpose or mission statement and you will have the unique compass that will lead you to your true north every time.

This may seem tricky at first when you see yourself to be in a tight or even dead end. But there's always that little loophole to turn things around and you can make a big difference to yourself.

**Day 2: What are your values?**

What do you value most? Make a list of your top 5 values. Some examples are security, freedom, family, spiritual development, and learning. As you set your goals for this year - check your goals against your values. If the goal doesn't align with any of your top five values - you may want to reconsider it or revise it.

The number shouldn't discourage you, instead, it should motivate you to do more than you can ever dream of.

**Day 3: Know yourself.**

Unmet needs can keep you from living authentically. Take care of yourself. Do you have a need to be acknowledged, to be right, to be in control, to be loved? So many people lived their lives without realizing their dreams and most of them end up being stressed or even depressed. List your top four needs and get them met before it's too late!

**Day 4: Know your passions.**

You know who you are and what you truly enjoy in life. Obstacles like doubt and lack of enthusiasm will only hinder you, but will not derail your chance to become the person you ought to be. Express yourself and honor the people who have inspired you to become the very person you wanted to be.

**Day 5: Live your best life.**

Increase your awareness of your inner wisdom by regularly reflecting in silence. Commune with nature. Breathe deeply to quiet your distracted mind. For most of us city slickers, it's hard to even find the peace we want even in our own homes. In my case, I often just sit in a dimly lit room and play some music as I journal. Other times I fill a tub with water and my detox soak and meditate on the Word.

## Day 6: Honor your strengths.

What are your positive traits? What special talents do you have? List three - if you get stuck, ask those closest to you to help identify these. Are you imaginative, witty, and good with your hands? Find ways to express your authentic self through your strengths. You can increase your self-confidence when you can share what you know with others.

**Day 7: Serve others.**

When you live authentically, you may find that you develop an interconnected sense of being. When you are true to whom you are, living your purpose and giving of your talents to the world around you, you give back in service what you came to share with others -your spirit - your essence. The rewards for sharing your gift with those close to you are indeed rewarding, much more if it were to be the eyes of a stranger who can appreciate what you have done to them.

Self-improvement is indeed one type of work that is worth it. It shouldn't always be within the confines of an office building, or maybe in the four corners of your room. The difference lies within ourselves and how much we want to change for the better.

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