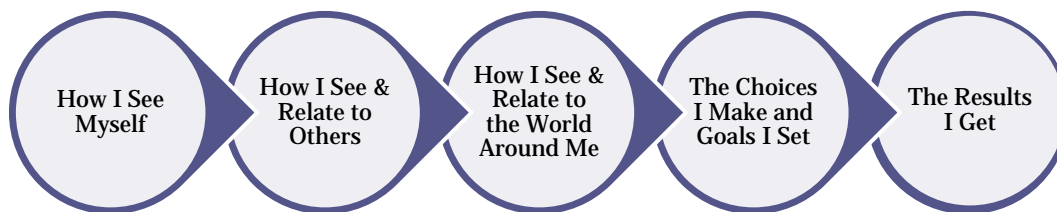


Steps to Personal Change

How we see ourselves impacts others and our ability to excel as leaders. Negative self-image limits us from operating at our best. As a result, it is a leadership responsibility to actively cultivate a healthy self-image.

There is an old proverb that advises us to “judge a tree by its fruit.” In other words – looking at the tree doesn’t necessarily tell us if it’s healthy. But, looking at its fruit will. If the results in our personal success, relationships or organizational goals aren’t what we want – we need to look at the roots of the tree – which is self-image.

Here is how it works:



How I see myself (and the all the history behind that) directly impacts how I see other people and relate to them. My interactions with others shape or reinforce my interpretations about “how the world works.” My sense of “how the world works” impacts the kinds of choices I make and goals that I set. All of this adds up to determine what kinds of results I can expect.

To turn this around and get different results in relationships, finances, organizational growth or accomplishment, I can’t start in the middle. I must start with me.

Changing My Self-Image

Fortunately, changing how we see ourselves is possible. Try following these steps for 21 days and experience the difference. Research suggests it will literally re-wire your brain and help you become more positive, optimistic and happy. If you only focus on Steps 1 & 2 you’ll see significant benefit. However, Steps 3 – 5 will help you “anchor” the change process and gain traction faster.

Step 1: Change your Mirrors

“You are the average of your five closest friends.” – Jim Rohn

This is the most difficult step and is also the one that will have the greatest impact. The mirrors I'm referring to are the relationships closest to you. We know that children need social interaction to develop both physically and mentally. In fact they will die, or interrupt their development, without interaction. It's in those relationships that we first "see" who we are through the eyes of others. For some of us this was a positive message. For many it was a mixed message. For others it was an overwhelmingly negative message. As adults, though, we can choose our relationships.

A number of years ago I realized I was stuck. I was stuck relationally, professionally and spiritually. I didn't like it. I looked around me and noticed that most of my social relationships were also stuck. I didn't fully understand this principle at the time; however, I knew I wanted to surround myself with people who were moving in a positive direction; specifically, people who enjoyed their marriages, were thriving professionally and were flourishing spiritually. So, I started to shift who I spent time with.

Not coincidentally, that shift in relationships coincided with my getting married, transforming my business model, and breaking out of spiritual "doldrums."

- Who are your 5 or 6 closest friends? Are you content with their average?
- Are you attracted to healthy people? Why or why not?
- Who are one or two people who exhibit qualities you'd like to grow in, that you can begin building relationships with?
- What will be your next step?

Step 1 is a must if you want to change your self-image. The remaining steps are all much easier:

Step 2: Begin a Daily Routine

The most successful people I know have a daily routine that they follow. Some spend a lot of time in this routine. Most do not: usually no more than 15 – 30 minutes. This routine is a daily practice of re-centering or re-calibrating ourselves. It's like working out in that the results may not be immediate but they don't fail when we keep at it. Here is the daily routine I follow. I purchased a journal and, daily, I follow these steps. (The time suggestions are just guidelines for minimum effectiveness)

- 1. Meditation or Prayer (5-15 minutes).** If you aren't accustomed to this, it's a process of stillness and reflection. This is a time to become quiet, still and expectant. I'm a Christian and have found a guided prayer app called [Pray As You Go](#) to be very helpful as I focus, calm down and reflect. I have also found another app called [Stop, Breathe & Think](#) to be a great resource.
- 2. Write Three Gratitudes (1-2 minutes).** I begin each day with a list of three things that I am grateful for. I encourage you to think of new gratitudes each day and, also, write them down. It helps make them more real to you. As you do this, your perspective will

begin to change. Don't overthink this. I've been grateful for coffee more than once! Over time, I've also become aware of more meaningful, as well as other simple, things I'm grateful for.

- 3. Yesterday's Wins (1-3 Minutes)** I list three things I accomplished, or did well, the previous day. Even if it was a lousy day, I make a deliberate choice to identify three things I did well. This starts to help me see my impact and become intentional about it.
- 4. Today's Wins (1 -3 Minutes)** I write two things I intend to accomplish today. I've found that if I choose more than 1 or 2, none of them get done. This isn't a To-Do List. You can write a To-Do List (I do) and keep it elsewhere. This is about prioritizing the most important goal for the day. It reminds us "what today is supposed to be about."
- 5. Appreciation (1 – 5 Minutes)** I think of someone and write down something I appreciate about him or her. Then I send them a very short text or email telling them why I appreciate them and/or thank them.

Step 3: Listen to/Read encouraging biographies, podcasts, etc.

So much of general media is negative and critical. Regardless of political persuasion there is a strong tendency to take on and champion a "victim" (us verses them) mentality. It's mentally and attitudinally toxic.

Instead, immerse yourselves in the stories or words of other people who've accomplished acts of significance that bring tremendous value to others. This is a powerful way to shape the messages we surround ourselves with. It shapes our perspective of what's possible and gives us insights into how it's possible.

- What inspirational figure could you read about? What do you hope to learn from their story?
- Is there someone who's positive and inspires or motivates you who's producing recordings or podcasts that you can listen to? What do you hope to learn from them?

Step 4: Check Lists

This is basic and easy to do. I begin my week by writing a list of all the things I need to get done. Then I create a separate list of what I need to accomplish, or at least begin, that day. Then I prioritize what needs to get done first (like creating this tool). At the end of each day I can see my progress and assess what needs to happen next to accomplish my goals for the week. This regular, visible sense of accomplishment can be important, particularly when your work is with people and less visible. Seeing your accomplishments helps bolster your self-image.

- What 3-5 things do you need to accomplish?
- What are the top 1 or 2 things on that list?
- What will you do next to make sure those top 1 or 2 get accomplished?

Step 5: Focused Skill Development

Skill building definitely helps. As I coach people through challenging processes, I've often observed an almost visible difference in someone's self-image as they build their skills. Pick one specific skill to grow in, block out time and work on it until you've achieved mastery. This could be as simple as learning to quickly prioritize (Step 4), or joining Toastmasters, or taking cooking classes. It's up to you – but the process of intentionally growing and achieving a skill will help shape your self-image.

- What is one skill that you can begin to block time out to master?
- What is the next step you need to take to make sure this happens?

Self-Image Transformation

As you can see, transforming how you see yourself is within your grasp. I've experienced it and many others have experienced it.

Which of the steps above do you think will have the greatest impact on transforming your self-image? Will you take that step?

When is the best time of day you can set aside at least 15-20 minutes follow your Daily Routine? What do you need to do to remind yourself and protect that time?