



Making Peace with Yourself

For many of us, the greatest battles of life are those we have with ourselves. Many of us are very critical of ourselves. While it may be helpful to be aware of weaknesses, it can also be paralyzing. Worrying about our limitations and imperfections will keep us from accomplishing what we can do.

Do not save up memories of mistakes. Haul off old trash. If you find yourself returning to past mistakes or painful experiences, consider whether there are lessons to be learned. If you have processed the past for insights, haul the rest to the dump. It does no good to pull trash along behind you.

Notice what is working right. Don't compare your talents to those that other people have. Don't minimize your talents. You have your own combination of talents. Enjoy them. Develop them. Use them to make life better for people around you. Be glad for the talents you have.

In fact **our greatest weaknesses are almost always tied to strengths.** The person who thinks she is weak may be tender or sensitive. The person who thinks he is stubborn may be strong and decisive. The person who thinks she is indecisive may be creative or open-minded. We can make wise efforts to manage our weaknesses while enjoying the strengths that they are connected to.

Challenge yourself in areas of weakness. If you have trouble meeting people, prepare yourself to ask simple questions such as, "What are your hobbies?" If you have trouble getting certain chores done, try doing them when you are fresh and energetic.

Use mistakes as an opportunity to learn. Do not dwell on mistakes. Do not be afraid to try. When you make a mistake, apologize as needed and say to yourself, "One more lesson. I am glad I know more today than yesterday."

Many of us fill our lives with nothing but obligations. We do what we have to do but we never make place for the things we love to do. If you want to be peaceful, be sure that you **regularly do some things that energize your life.** Do you love poetry? Carry a book of poems to read in your spare time or scribble your own poems on scraps of paper. Do you love to be with friends? Make a luncheon date to be with people you enjoy. Do you love to learn? Get a library card and use it. Do you love nature? Make time for nature walks, imagine beautiful places, or collect leaves.

The challenges of life can make us anxious and fearful; or they can teach us to be wiser and happier. Life will get better and better if we learn from our mistakes.

Applications:

Notice your thoughts.

How often do you think about your mistakes? How can you change the way you talk to yourself so that you see room for growth while being supportive and encouraging of yourself? Think of things that a perfectly loving person might say to you. Practice saying them to yourself.

When something goes wrong do you tend to blame yourself or others? Blame almost always causes trouble. When something goes wrong again, be prepared to say something like: "I didn't do that very well. I think I have learned something that will help me do it better in the future."

Make a list of lessons you have learned in your life - some of the things you have learned from your hard experiences and your joyous experiences.

After reviewing the ideas in "Making Peace with Yourself," discuss your ideas with a trusted friend. What does he or she see as your gifts? What growth have you shown? What are your opportunities for new growth?

If you find yourself unable to overcome feelings of fear, anxiety, or sadness, you might benefit from reading a book on many of the ways that we keep ourselves miserable - and how we can change that. A good book (although quite long) is David D. Burns' *The Feeling Good Handbook*. If you still feel down, it might also be useful to talk with a doctor or counselor who helps people deal with continuing feelings of sadness or depression.