



Steps to Personal Development

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I've just received an email from a reader who tells me that, after wasting many years on "normal" living and "normal" people, she is now determined to take the necessary steps to find peace of mind, contentment, happiness and success. Her use of the word "normal" refers to many of my articles and videos which explain that, in fact, so-called normal people are crazy. Years of research, when taken together, confirm just how crazy normal people are. In essence, the normal person's life is controlled by their subconscious mind's preference for dwelling on the past and the negative. The past in question is each individual's unique set of mental programs, installed when they were young and impressionable – what generally might be referred to as their formative years.

The child mind absorbs everything – that's we say children are like sponges. Unlike the adult mind, a child is completely open-minded, fully in tune with the moment, fully alert to everything and anything that is taking place. However, what most captivates the open mind are the events that make an impression on how we feel about ourselves. Consequently, the things done for us or to us that make us feel good or bad about ourselves are photographed – what psychologists call snapshot learning – and installed deeply in the subconscious mind. In adult life, the subconscious uses these key reference points to make sense of what is currently taking place – and, in the process, makes nonsense of it because, obviously old photographs are irrelevant to the present moment. However, it is these old photographs that control our behaviour and reactions in the here and now and, as a consequence, we reactively go through our adult lives without really either experiencing what is happening nor acting appropriately. In this way, our lives become ongoing self-fulfilling prophecies based on the self-beliefs that we have held dear since our formative years. As such, the subconscious mind controls the normal person – not the other way around. A sure and certain definition of what it is to be crazy.

But anyone can leave this nonsense behind. It doesn't mean abandoning who you think you are – it means abandoning the knee-jerk reactive behaviour that stops you being so much more. In order to stop reactive behaviour in its tracks, we need to stop giving our attention to these latent programs. As I said, this is not to deny their existence, it is simply a question of choosing not to waste our energy on them. This is achieved by diverting our energy to the actual reality of the present moment. In much the same way as a child experiences the reality of the here and now by fully

engaging all five senses, we, as adults, must relearn how to use and pay attention to our five senses. Obviously, if we find ourselves under pressure, in a situation in which our old programming makes us feel uncomfortable or inadequate or stressed out, these are not the times to begin to start that process of relearning. We have to train our minds before we play on the field of the game of life.

In other words, you need to devote quiet time to relearning the importance of, and what it feels like to experience the reality of the present moment through, our five senses. This retraining can utilize formal meditation. However, many people have preconceived notions of meditation that make it difficult for them – and, indeed, many can't find the time to formally meditate. Therefore, I suggest that you start each day with just five minutes simple training. Find somewhere quiet to sit, close your eyes and simply listen to what you're hearing – the fact that you are paying an abnormal amount of attention will give you the impression that someone has turned up the volume! Alternatively, give yourself a short break – it could be a coffee break – during the morning to simply see, feel, hear, smell and taste where you are. However, retraining an entrenched adult mind is not easy, so you're going to have to take that coffee break on your own, where you won't be disturbed by normal colleagues intent on the negative gossip that is part and parcel of the normal coffee break!

These are simple steps that will lead to a heightened level of awareness and, indeed, self-awareness. They are simple steps on the road to effective, efficient, happy and content living. And every such step counts – no matter how small. And, if, like my reader, you believe that you have wasted too much of your life on wallowing in normality, so what? That, too, is in the past – there's little point in beating yourself up about it, or wishing that you had seen the light sooner. And if, like many of my clients, you find that, having taken some of these simple steps towards an abnormally happy and successful life but find yourself lapsing back into normality, so what – the minute you've done whatever you think you shouldn't have done, that's in the past too!

The point is that, in reality, life is lived in moments – each a new and unique opportunity to be the very best you that you can be. If you fail in some moments – as we all do – so what, the next moment presents you with the opportunity of a fresh start. And, speaking of opportunities, you will find that as your awareness develops, you will become more alert to the opportunities that, perhaps, have always been staring you in the face but, because your eyesight was shrouded by the subconscious fog of outdated photographs, you never actual saw what was staring you in the face! Life is full of opportunities for better living – open your eyes – see, feel, hear, smell and taste the wonderful reality of now.