



Taking Control Of Your Life Resource Pack

Taking Control Of Your Life

Taking control of your life isn't always an easy thing to do, but if you're willing to put in the time and effort, then it's possible to achieve almost anything you want to. This article shows you some of the key things to think about and remember in order to achieve whatever you would like to this year.

You are responsible

A lot of people forget that the only person who can control your life is yourself. Others can give you guidance or help to motivate you, but ultimately if you want to change yourself for the better you need to make the decisions and put in the effort, because it will always come back to you. Sitting around waiting for others to do the work will leave you in exactly the same place as you are now.

Example: You aren't doing well in school and you're feeling down. Only you can talk to your teacher or another student and try to get help for what you're struggling with. If you don't talk to someone, you'll never be able to get the support you need to tackle the problem.

Face your fears

Sometimes you fail because something is holding you back – you might have feelings you're afraid to deal with, and you might prefer to avoid the situation instead. When you're planning your life it's important to look at yourself critically to find out what's stopping you from succeeding, and work out how you can overcome these issues before you start. This allows you to learn from your mistakes so you don't keep facing them over and over again.

Example: When friends call you to hang out, you usually always turn them down. Because of this, you've started feeling alone and like an outcast. Try to figure out why you're turning them down.

Set goals you have control over!

It can sometimes be easy to accidentally set goals you really want to happen, but that you might not necessarily have the most control over, and this can leave you feeling upset and demoralised when you don't achieve what you wanted to. Ensure that the goals you're setting are completely under your control – sometimes it can be as simple as rewording your goal to make this the case.



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Example: Instead of setting your goal as "Get a job", which you might struggle with in the current economy, it might be better to set it as "Apply for ten jobs each week". This will leave you satisfied with meeting your goal, even if you don't have any luck in your job search!

Realistic, realistic, realistic!

It's very easy to come up with common goals that sound like a good idea, but which you're probably not going to do – and which will cause you to lose motivation as you see time slipping away without success. So it's better to go beyond these idealistic goals and think of things that are unique to you and which you can actually achieve. Being realistic about your goals is key.

Example: "I will never smoke again" may be a difficult promise to keep, so it may be better to say "I will reduce how much I smoke, so I can quit eventually".

Break it down into steps

While it is important to keep the end point in mind, sometimes it can be overwhelming to look at the big picture, so break down what you want to achieve into smaller steps, order and prioritise them so you can succeed. If your steps are too large it may feel as if you aren't making any progress, so small goals allow you to see how well you're doing more often! Make sure each step is precise so you know when it has been completed. We have provided an action plan sheet to help you do this effectively.

Example: You want to find a job but you aren't sure where to start. Make a list of the steps you need to take (putting together a resume, looking for open jobs, applying, etc). You can break it down even further and write the steps you need to do to produce a resume.

Give each step a priority

While you might have to do some steps in a certain order, for many goals there might be many options for which order you complete them in, and sometimes the very fact you have so many steps can stop you from doing anything at all. Have you ever had so much to do, that you just didn't know where to start, so you ended up on Facebook instead? Well one solution to this is setting priorities. You might like to use letters or numbers to assign priority, for example A-E or 1-5, so that you know where to direct your time to first.



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*Example: Take dog to the vet for vaccinations - A.
House train dog! - B.
Teach dog to say "I love you!" - D.*

Starting small doesn't mean you can't dream bigger

While starting in small steps and taking it slowly is a good way to ensure you're not overwhelming yourself, never forget the end goal, that big change you want to make. Small changes lead to bigger changes, and it's always good to keep in mind your greatest ambitions, to keep yourself motivated and with a clear direction of what you're heading for.

Example: You struggle with self harming urges, and you manage to avoid self harm for a week; give yourself credit for that accomplishment! You can dream bigger by aiming to avoid self harm for a month next.

Take care of yourself

You're always going to come up against challenges – such as stress – while enacting a change in your life. So it is important to take care of yourself and seek support from others when necessary.

Example: You're constantly feeling depressed and frustrated because two of your friends are mad at each other and keep using you as the 'Monkey in the middle'. Let them know how you're feeling and pull yourself away from their situation so it doesn't drag you down.

Take a break

When you always keep up a fast pace it's only a matter of time before you can't take it anymore, so remember to include breaks in your plan – a few days to relax, time with friends and family and other things to take your mind off what you're hoping to achieve. If you allow your goal to consume your life it will eventually wear you out.

Example: You're frequently staying up late every night to get things done and it's affecting your daily routine. Know when to let yourself sleep so you have energy during the daytime.

Learn to have fun

Sometimes we focus so much on the serious aspects of life – our school, our



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work – that we forget how to enjoy ourselves and we forget how to be happy. Try to do things that you enjoy more often to boost your mood – take up a new hobby or interest, visit new places, watch movies or listen to music. Take time out from your busy schedule just to enjoy being you rather than worrying about everything else going on in your life.

Example: Laughter is the music of the soul, so why not spend some time bonding with your friends over an hilarious stand-up performance?

Avoid exaggerating if it's not true

When you exaggerate the difficulty of a problem you're facing, it immediately makes it more difficult to overcome. Using 'absolute' words results in you losing motivation and makes you quit before you've even started. Instead, try to use more constructive words when thinking about your problem.

Example: "I NEVER succeed." makes it sound impossible to improve the situation, so instead try "I RARELY succeed." or "I STRUGGLE to succeed." to more constructively look at your problem.

Be willing to see the positives

Things go right and things go wrong; often it's somewhere in between. So be sure to pay attention to the positive aspects of any given situation, to congratulate yourself when things go right rather than focusing exclusively on the negatives. However, don't completely ignore the negatives; look at them as an opportunity to improve in the future, by thinking of ways that you can avoid them or minimise their effect on you.

Example: Embrace the positive by noticing small things, like someone smiling at you as they pass, a neighbor saying hi or the weather being nice.

Example: Be realistic about the negatives. Your Mom yells at you because you forgot to put the dishes away. Don't take it as "My Mom hates me" or "My life will never get better". Parents get frustrated and things will blow over.

Reach out to people in need

While you may be struggling with your own situations, remember that many other people may be struggling with theirs too. If everybody helped out everybody else just a little bit the world would be such a nicer place, so be sure to reach out to others in the same way you would like others to reach out to



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you. There are many things you can do – some that might just take a few moments of your time. Why not try to smile at somebody or offer them a complement to make their day a little brighter? If you've got the time to go further, then why not try volunteering for a charity, hospital or other place that matters to you?

Example: You walk into class one day and see someone who you normally don't talk to sitting on their own. Try going over, saying "hi" and asking them how they are.

Don't 'lose sight' of you goals

Literally! Keep them written down and with or near you as much as possible so you can keep checking them to make sure you're on track and it's always fresh in your mind. Being continually reminded of the plans you've set makes it harder to avoid them.

Example: Pin it on your wall, tape it to your computer screen or have it on your desk.