

# Self-Mastery: A Fresh Perspective

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Consider how you spend your time each day, each week, each year. Do you generally devote your time and energy to people and activities that you most value or are you in a routine that doesn't necessarily make your heart sing? Do you say you value one thing, but in actuality find that you put your energy into other things? If you value your health, for example, do you take the time to exercise and insure that you eat nourishing food or do you hope that your health will hold up despite the abuse and neglect that you inflict upon your body?

Most people agree that their two most precious commodities are time and energy. Do you spend your precious time and energy on work that you enjoy, people you really care about and activities that truly satisfy you? If not, you are not alone. Millions of Americans are unhappy in their jobs and an inordinate number of people are taking antidepressants, not to mention anti-anxiety and insomnia medications to treat the symptoms of their discontent.

Your willingness to own up to your mistakes, accept responsibility for the present conditions of your life and allow others to have their own opinions about you can be tremendously liberating. If you are self-conscious about making changes in your life, just remember that whatever others think of you does not necessarily have to be any of your business. As much as you may like to believe that you can control people's opinions of you, you cannot. In fact, attempting to do so is actually a subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, form of manipulation. Practice tolerating other people's difference of opinion; they have a right to their own thoughts and feelings regardless of whether you agree with them or not.

Your choices about how to behave, what to do with your time and who to spend time interacting with, will be most fulfilling when you base those choices on your own core values. Of course, if you are in an intimate relationship or if you are sharing a work or living environment, obviously you will need to take into account the values of others. However, if you thought that a particular career would make you happy and it proved not to be the case, you have a right to change your course. If you considered someone to be a friend but no longer enjoy his or her company, you have a

right to move on if you want to. You have the prerogative to reverse past decisions when they prove to be detrimental to you or your loved ones. Surround yourself with people who inspire you. Engage in activities that make you feel good about yourself. Self-esteem arises out of the self-respect that occurs when you live in integrity.