

Helen Tosch; Eight Steps to a Better You; Article

Eight Steps to a Better You

Our society is in a slump, it seems. Nearly everywhere I go, I hear people complaining about themselves. “I’m too fat, too skinny, too ugly, too hairy, too old, too *something*.” As a nation, we’re spending millions of dollars on surface improvements like liposuction, Botox, collagen injections, implants, hair color, and nose jobs. While I understand the motivation for these self-improvements, I think we would all be better off if we could fix what is *really* imperfect—our self-perceptions and our attitudes.

A New Kind of Improvement

So today, I would like to propose a new kind of improvement. If we as a society could change our attitudes, strengthen our weaknesses, and learn to love ourselves for the great people we are, I think we’d all be much happier and healthier. I believe the old saying that true beauty lies on the inside. Why? Because I know that self-love, confidence, and happiness will radiate and make anyone look and feel more beautiful. Why not give it a shot? I can’t promise it will be easy, in fact, I guarantee it will be tough. But it won’t cost a thing, and it will be worth the effort. Who knows, after following these eight steps you may be on your way to looking in the mirror and loving the person you see—just as you are.

Step 1: Decide Who You Are

Take a look in the proverbial mirror and have an honest look at yourself. Who are you? What’s great? What could you improve? What *must* you improve? Though it won’t be easy to face yourself with complete honesty, there is good news. There is nothing you’ll see in the mirror that you can’t change your attitude about. This will take time, effort, and a level of candor you might not be used to. If it helps to write everything down, go ahead. Make a list of the good, bad, and neutral. Compare who you are with the person you strive to be. You might be surprised to learn that you have achieved personal goals and have grown without realizing it. Have you learned something new, made someone’s life better, given without expecting to receive? Have you improved your diet, exercised more, read the book you’ve always wanted to read?

As you look at yourself, I’m sure you’ll realize that you possess great qualities. On the other hand, you will most likely have to admit to yourself that no matter how great you are, you could still change for the better. You’re not alone. Everyone has weaknesses, but fortunately, we do have the power to change them. What are your weaknesses? Have you become bitter? Do you complain too much? Are you irritable? Do you gossip? Have you intentionally hurt anyone? Do you hold a grudge? Once you’ve figured out what you want to change, make a point to do so. Change won’t happen overnight, but if you make a consistent effort, you will be able to grow and blossom into the person you want to be. When you do, you will be amazed at how refreshed and yes, beautiful, you will feel. I know you can do it, now you have to believe in yourself and make it happen.

Step 2: Pad Your Bra – Not Your Resume

Don’t try to be something or someone you’re not. It’s easy to say you’re an avid reader because, truthfully, you do love to read. If you had time, you might read a book a week. But you don’t. In fact, you haven’t finished a book in weeks or maybe months. That truth twisting won’t hurt anyone, but it will set a dangerous precedent of the little white lie, of stretching the truth, and of lying—mostly, to

yourself. Trust me. I'm not a liar by nature. I don't lie to anyone, or so I'd like to believe. But when I take a deeper look, I have lied. Has it hurt me or the people to whom I lied? No, probably not. But it did nothing to bolster my self-esteem, and it won't help yours either. You've got enough good and interesting qualities that you don't need to invent others. Be creative, but be honest. And if you don't feel like you're interesting enough, find time to get out there and try new things.

Step 3: Explore the Real You

Evaluate. No. Mutilate. Get into the depths of your psyche and dissect it. Don't get squeamish about what you might find when you cut below the surface, but embrace the exploration, welcome the journey and the chance to find out who you truly are and what makes you tick. What makes you unique? Do you have a heart-shaped mole on your back or a scar with a good story? We are all complex and beautiful creatures, and by digging in and searching for the key to YOU, you're doing yourself and everyone you meet a great service.

Step 4: Make a List of Your Goals and Get to Work

Dreaming is great. Doing is better. Make a list of everything you want to do and why you want to do it. Be honest. If you want to learn about football to impress the gorgeous guy (or girl for that matter) in the next cubicle, write that down. No one has to see this but you. **WARNING:** before you do this, I advise you to make a list of everything you have to do in the next week or so and get to it. To be able to make your own dreams come true, you have to make time and give it your all. To do that, you should have a clear mind. Clear the dust and move forward.

Step 5: Quit Blaming Others for Your Mistakes and Learn to Forgive

I'm not trying to say that your life and your current circumstances are all due to your choices. I know that your friends, family, and others who have touched your life in both positive and negative ways, may have affected your growth and potential. I acknowledge and understand that other people played a role in your life. However, now that you are an adult or are rapidly approaching adulthood, it's time to stop blaming others. **FORGIVE and MOVE ON.** It is one of the most important steps in your healing process. Whether your parents were too strict for your taste, neglectful, abusive, overbearing, intrusive, demeaning, or any other adjectives you would like to fill in the blank, I am willing to bet that 99 percent of them did the best they could with the tools they had and loved you every step of the way. We all know that parents make mistakes. If you're a parent, you know that from experience. If you're not, trust me—they do. However, they don't set out to make mistakes. I don't believe for a minute that any parent wakes up in the morning and says 'what can I do to screw up my child today?'" So, at risk of being repetitive, I'll say: forgive. The anger and resentment you are feeling and the blame you are assigning is only hurting you. It's a weight you don't need; and once you let go of it you'll have taken the first step toward moving on. I'm not insinuating that this is an easy task, but it is a necessary step toward becoming the person you want to be. If you can do it on your own, excellent, but if you need the help of a professional, don't be afraid to seek that kind of help.

Step 6: Give Credit Where Credit is Due

As part of this process, it might be helpful if you also make a list of all of the things your parents did *right*. Were they supportive? Did they pay for your education? Did they always have dinner on the table? Did they go to your school/extracurricular functions? Could you talk to them? Did they give you

the “sex talk”, no matter how uncomfortable they were? Did they hug you? Did they love you, whether they said it or not? What did they do to make your life special? What kind of sacrifices did they make for you? After you’ve thought about what they’ve done, thank them in whatever way you can.

Step 7: Take Ownership and Be Real

This will mean accepting that your choices, actions, and inactions have brought you to where you are today. It’s a difficult thing to do, especially if you’ve made mistakes—life altering or not. However difficult and even soul torturing this may be, it’s freeing at the same time. Because taking responsibility for your failures, whether they were failures of action or inaction, will open the door to allow you to take credit for your successes. And who doesn’t want to do that?

Step 8: Pat Yourself on the Back – You’re Sensational in So Many Ways

Now that the painful part is over, it’s time to take credit for your successes. Make a list of what you’ve done well—the times you’ve given it your all and succeeded. I’d like to make a side note here. I share the opinion with many that any time you give everything you’ve got, whether you win or lose, you’ve succeeded. I know it’s become cliché to say that there’s no failure in trying as long as you put forth the effort, but there’s still plenty of truth to that statement. Personally, my greatest failures, and possibly my only failures, were directly related to my lack of effort. Each and every one of us has succeeded. We’ve been through a lot and we’ve survived. That alone is a success. Congratulations. Remember, each time you take a positive step out of your comfort zone and try something new you succeed. Each time you open your mind to learning, you succeed. Allow yourself a moment to reflect upon how wonderful you are and how amazing you can and will be in the future.

Now it’s Your Turn – Accept the Challenge to Be Who You Want to Be

You can be the catalyst for change. You have the power to transform yourself into whomever you wish. I challenge you to leverage that power and take charge of your life. Let your extraordinary personality shine. Do it alone or share the journey with a friend, but give it a try. These steps forward will take energy and strength, but the payoff will be immeasurable. Will you accept this challenge?