



Special Report

Ten Things to Let Go of to Improve Your Mental Health and Build an Empowered Mindset

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1. Let Go of the Mindset That Causes You to Believe That You Have All the Time in the World, While Keeping You Focused on the Future

"If you want to conquer the anxiety of life, live in the moment, live in the breath." Amit Ray

So much of our thinking is focused on the future, which can bring up a lot of anxiety for people. Understandably, we want to have a sense of the direction in which our life is heading, but when we focus on it too much, we lose contact with the present moment. And that is where our power lies – in the present moment.

Building mindfulness practices into our day-to-day lives can be so helpful in allowing us to gain perspective and keep our levels of stress and anxiety at a level that is manageable.

A common response that people have often sounds like, "I don't have time to add anything extra to my life". They are concerned that mindfulness is going to be another task on their already significant to-do list. The good news is that mindfulness can easily be practiced when you are doing things that are already on your to-do list, including cleaning the house or driving to work.

Let go of the tendency to view the present moment as a stepping-stone to something else. We are creating our future each and every day. Shifting from a perspective of viewing the future as some scary unknown to something over which we have much more control than we have grown to believe is both liberating and empowering.

2. Let Go of the Past, Which Truly, Now Only Exists in Your Mind

"When one door closes another door opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us." ~ Alexander Graham Bell

Many people are ruled by their past, which oftentimes holds them back. Our brain is actually wired to focus on the negative, so will hold on to mistakes we've made in the past – ways that we have let ourselves or others down, ways we have embarrassed ourselves, ways we have been disappointed or hurt, and so on, and so on. It is meant to be a protective measure, so that we do not have to experience that particular type of pain again. But, in many cases, it keeps us stuck and limits our true potential.

Learn from the past, yes. But let it dictate your present and future? Definitely not! We are constantly changing and evolving. It is only our mind that keeps us stuck in thinking we haven't. It loves to put labels on us, "awkward, caring, weak, etc." And any time we venture away from believing those labels, our mind is right there to try to pull us back into line. This is because our mind has evolved to keep us safe, not just physically, but psychologically as well. Anything outside "status quo" feels unsafe, even when it is a positive change that we are making.

3. Let Go of the Things You Can't Control

May I have the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Stephen Covey, in his best-selling book, *The Habits of Highly Effective People* discussed how we have a circle of concern and a circle of influence. Within your **circle of concern** are things that impact you or cause you to feel concerned. This includes such things as traffic, global warming, the actions of others, the weather, etc. They all have effect you in a variety of ways, but you have no direct control over them.

Your **circle of influence**, on the other hand, is any aspect over which you have a semblance of direct control. This includes such things as where you place your attention, the hobbies you have, your level of activity, the friends you keep, etc.

In some cases, you have direct control, whereas other times you may have indirect control, but regardless, you have a hand in affecting an outcome.

While it's completely normal and natural to be concerned about the things going on around us, it's important to focus as much as possible on the things that you can actually have an impact on. This allows us to develop peace of mind and use your energy and attention in more positive and productive ways.

4. Let Go of the Need to Always Be Strong and Never Be Wrong

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." ~Albert Einstein

Mistakes are simply missteps and failure is just feedback. As humans, we have this innate desire to "get it right" and consider "getting it wrong" as being embarrassing, and sometimes, even shameful. Even everyday mistakes are frowned upon and covered up and the concept of outright failure, in whatever way we define it, is terrifying. This way of thinking can hold you back from attempting the things that will make your life rich, full, and meaningful, from reaching your full potential, which lies just outside your comfort zone.

Building resilience means learning from the mistakes we have made and the ways in which we have "failed". It means adopting the understanding that it is through difficult and often uncomfortable situations that we learn and grow and evolve into the best versions of ourselves.

5. Let Go of the Belief That Happiness Comes from External Sources

"Be ever happy inside. You can't change things outside of you, but you can change yourself." ~ Paramhansa Yogananda

Often people are under the misguided belief that happiness comes in the form of material things, other people, or experiences we have. **While it is true that we can gain a deep sense of enjoyment from having, doing, or experiencing things, it does not equate true happiness.** They are often fleeting and leave someone who has this belief constantly searching for the next thing to bring them happiness.

Happiness is an inside job. It is a choice. It is more about your mindset than it is about your external environment.

Practicing radical acceptance is a powerful way to cultivate inner happiness, regardless of what is going on in the outer world. This approach involves practicing acceptance of what is, without resisting, fighting, or wishing it away – all of which require energy. That energy can then be invested in taking action to improve aspects of your life.

6. Let Go of “When-Then” Thinking

“Realize deeply that the present moment is all you ever have.” ~ Eckhart Tolle

When I lose weight, then I’ll be confident. When I retire, then I’ll enjoy my life. When I find the right person, then I’ll be happy. When-then thinking keeps us stuck on needing things to be exactly a certain way in order for us to develop into the people we ideally want to be.

When we buy into this way of thinking, we are constantly in “waiting” mode. We are waiting for the perfect body, the perfect job, the perfect person to appear and, only then, will we be perfectly content. It is a game we play with ourselves that allows us to stay safely inside our comfort zone and take off the pressure of being happy NOW. It sabotages our potential and makes our goals remain in the future.

Choose to be happy now. Choose to embrace what is, while taking action to create a life that is full, rich, and meaningful on every level.

7. Let Go of Preconceived Ideas About How Life “Should” Be and How it “Should” Unfold

Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional.

To me, gaining this understanding, that pain is inevitable; suffering is optional, is powerfully life-changing. We get so caught up in what is fair and unfair about life, how things should and shouldn't be. Any time we use the word “should”, it's usually a pretty good indication that we are operating from an unconscious rule that was learned in childhood.

We spend so much energy, and cause so much stress for ourselves, when we focus on things over which we have no control, on how we think things should be.

We believe that people should act, or not act, in certain ways; we believe that others should think and feel just as we do; and we believe that we shouldn't have to experience difficult things in our lives. Can you see how by having these beliefs, or many more just like them, we are contributing to our suffering?

Developing a mindset of mindfulness, an openness to the full range of our human emotions, which we are going to experience regardless, removed the aspect of suffering from our most painful experiences.

8. Let Go of the Habits and Coping Strategies That No Longer Serve You

“We often engage the defense mechanism of tunnel vision, just to keep ourselves focused on our daily lives. This makes us terribly jaded in our perception of what is really around us.” ~Vera Nazarian

To cope with difficult emotions, throughout our lives we adopt strategies and habits that allow us to avoid or distract ourselves from emotional pain. Initially the strategies and habits serve a valuable purpose, allowing us to feel a sense of security. But quickly, they can become part of the problem.

We are meant to experience the full range of our human emotions, from anger to sadness to disgust to excitement. **When we reject and filter out our so-called negative emotions, we also limit or shut down our access to positive emotions.** Oftentimes we have developed methods of coping with difficult emotions that include habits like distracting, avoiding, suppressing, and projecting.

Our habits continue with us long after that have stopped serving a positive purpose. They become our comfort zone and keep us trapped. Assessing habits on an ongoing basis is an important component maintaining emotional well-being.

9. Let Go of Your Fixed Mindset and Limiting Beliefs

“The problem is not the problem. The problem is your attitude about the problem.” ~Captain Jack Sparrow

Someone with a **fixed mindset** often avoids challenges, believing that they are held back by their natural abilities or lack thereof. They approach life in such a way that they cannot grow or evolve beyond what they believe they are capable of. Examples, “I’m terrible at math. It’s just how I am.”

Someone who has developed a **growth mindset**, on the other hand, believes that they have more agency and control over the outcome of situations. They are open to new things and embrace challenges, confident in their ability to impact the outcome through their effort and dedication. Example, “Failures are just opportunities for growth. I’ll probably get some feedback that will help me move forward.”

A growth mindset can be developed. It is a matter of practicing skills around defusion, mindfulness, reframing, and acceptance. Challenge yourself to try new things – stretch your comfort zone. Remind yourself that you **CAN** do hard things!

10. Let Go of the Belief That You Are Not Acceptable Just as You Are

“You have been criticizing yourself for years and it hasn’t worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens.” ~ Louise L. Hay

We are our own worst critics. Our minds have evolved to highlight everything that is “wrong” with us, as a protective measure. Because our ancestors relied on the safety that came with being accepted as part of group, a part of our brain ensured that any shortcomings we had were broadcast to our conscious mind. Usually on repeat. Sometimes through a bullhorn.

New insights emerge when you realize that those inner voices that pummel us with messages constantly are not truly who we are. They are outdated messages from the past, masquerading as “you”. Accept yourself in this moment, just as you are, while still acknowledging that there may be changes you would like to make.

It’s often easier to offer this compassionate approach to someone else. If this is the case for you, bring to mind a person you love most in this world - what would you say to this person if they were feeling the way you are? Would you do something kind for them? Or tell them how special they are to you? Would you accept them and care for them unconditionally? Okay, now do that for yourself - and remember, you're doing the best you can.

Sure, you may have changes you would like to make. Learning and growing and evolving are all wonderful aspects of our human experience. But practice accepting yourself just as you are, each step of the way.

There you have it – ten things to let go of in order to cultivate a mindset that is balanced, well-adjusted, and focused on building the life you want to be living. You may say it's all easier said than done. Maybe so. But once you start to integrate these philosophies into your everyday life, you will see that the strategies come much more naturally than you might expect.

And the good news is that a growth mindset can be built and developed in so many different ways. Coaching is an avenue to explore if you feel you could benefit from structure, support, and an impartial perspective. If you would like to discuss how coaching in general, and mindset coaching in particular, can help you make positive life changes and learn valuable new skills, I would love to hear from you! You can return to my website to contact me or email info@EastCoastCoachingandConsulting.ca.