

STOPPING OLD PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR

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Let's say you've just become acutely aware that one of your negative behaviors is one that you learned long ago and you want to stop it, but you keep doing it over and over. Most likely, the old patterns you've been using were learned from your parents or others in your early life. When you demonstrate those old patterns, you're really demonstrating someone else's truth. You haven't yet discovered your own truth, so you use their methods and tactics. Admit that their methods are not your best choices, and that you have not been demonstrating the truth about Who You Are. You can demonstrate your truth only after you've discovered it, and to do that, you must look inside you to find your own character and integrity, your own truth.

First of all, do not shame or blame yourself for doing it again. Just say to yourself, "Stop! Next time I'll do better." Shame, blame and guilt are not helpful; they only stop you in your tracks, let you wallow in self-pity, and keep you from moving forward to a solution. A better thing would be to ask yourself, "What do I do now? How do I move past this?" As you begin to recognize that what you have been doing is no longer working for you, you will become more sensitive to and aware of that negative behavior. Every behavior has a beginning and an end. You want to begin to catch yourself in the behavior, and stop it sooner and sooner every time, until you stop it before you begin it.

I suggest you get a small notebook and write down every time you do a negative behavior, so you become very tuned to it and can catch yourself more quickly each time you fall into it. You might be surprised how many times a day you revert to old patterns. Start to really think about what you do, how you respond, what you say, and how you feel. Everything begins with a thought. You cannot bake a cake or tie your shoes without thinking about it first. You create the cake or the tied shoes through the activity of thinking; your thoughts direct your movements. You create new behavior in your life through new thoughts. Change your thinking, and change your life.

Every day is an opportunity for a new beginning, for turning over that old leaf! Every minute is an opportunity for change. Now is your point of power, for you really only have NOW. Take control of your life now. Don't be too hard on yourself; know that all learning is sporadic - two steps forward, one back. No shame, blame or guilt - for you or anyone else; that's just the way we all learn. Give yourself time to learn a new behavior. Start tracking when you fall back into old negative patterns; promise to do better next time, and try something new. Remember the three steps to changing anything: recognize it's not working for you, own your part in that mess, and try something new. Begin again.

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