

Reminders!

Reminders: This is a short list of reminders to myself; not sage-like wisdom, just things that I need to remind myself of from time to time. Maybe it will be useful to others. There is some overlap, but then I need a lot of reminding. I will be updating them as time goes on, as I remember what it is that I have to remind myself. (*I always have to remember that there are evil forces afoot – society – which will try to convince me of the untruth of these words or at least subvert them for its purposes, but that the goals of the evil force are not mine.*) This is a work of personal healing, but it is also a work of transmission; I dedicate it to all who may find it useful for themselves.

1. **What does it matter what other people say about you, unless you secretly agree with them?** People anger us when they make assumptions about us because we secretly agree or at least we suspect that what they say may be true. (When was the last time you got angry at someone whose opinion did not matter to you?) All anger is anger at ourselves. The issues that we need to work on are our issues with ourselves. (I do not speak here about people who purposely punctuate their hurtful words with hurtful actions, such as withholding themselves from you – those people are poison actually actually do us a favor by removing themselves.)
2. **The only power words have, is the power we give them.** Words sometimes hurt, but they have no power in themselves, they are just meaningless sounds. The only meaning these sounds have is our own interpretations and misinterpretations; the power of these words is really ours. It is especially in our power to ignore words that do not add to the real meaning, the purpose, of the conversation and are added to cause a reaction; they are a trap which we foolishly fall into because we have allowed ourselves to. It is the meaning we give words, our understanding, that has the power to hurt us; their power is a stolen, a surrendered, power.
3. **Rewrite the story!** Many times the hurt of some words or actions of another come from our assumptions of the other, which may or may not be true. It is within our power to write other stories for the behaviors of the ones who have hurt you. It doesn't even have to be "true," because you are writing the new story to help yourself and not to exonerate the other person.
4. **Tear up the "laundry list."** How many times have we argued with someone and as the argument precluded we pull out this "laundry list" of complaints from every other unresolved argument we have ever had with them? Each argument should be treated as what it is, unique, and we should not cloud that unique issue with other unresolved issues. As an exercise you could sit down together and physically write your

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“laundry Lists” and then tear them up.

5. ***Your control of the world ends with your fingertips.*** You can't change another person unless they are willing and open to change. Only when they want to change themselves will they change. Therefore, the only thing you have absolute control of are your thoughts and actions – in other words your control of the world ends with your finger tips.
6. ***Drop the Nut!*** Robert Pirsig, in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, speaks of South Indian monkey traps – a coconut with three holes, with a nut enclosed. Two holes are smaller and are knotted with a rope which is tied to a tree. The third hole is larger and is just large enough for the monkey to stick his hand through, but small enough so that the monkey's fist, clutching the nut, will not fit back out. We trap ourselves by our grasping minds, grasping – grasping at our goals and wants, Freedom is as simple as letting go: Drop the Nut! (Remember pushing something away, denying it, is also, paradoxically, grasping at its absence!)
7. ***Neither cling to, nor to push away, instead to accept.*** (This is my understanding of Buddhism.) Frustration comes from not accepting the world, it is the impossible desire to change the world. The way out is to neither want something badly or to not want something badly, but simply to accept whatever comes our way. On those days when you can't accept, practice by accepting your nonacceptance; some days are easier than others, so be patient with yourself.
8. ***Don't chew your cud!*** Cows are called ruminants because when they eat grass they chew it the first time, regurgitate it to chew it again, and so on. This is ruminant behavior; it is sometimes said that the cow “chews its cud.” How similar this is to what we do with our worst thoughts; we worry them, let them settle, bring them up again to worry about them some more, and so on. By analogy, this is called “ruminating,” but it could just as well be called “chewing your cud.” Don't chew your cud, you'll thank yourself later!
9. ***Learn to step outside yourself!*** Instead of sitting around needlessly “chewing your cud,” do something to help someone else. It is harder to feel bad about yourself when you are helping someone else with their problems. That person will appreciate the help and you will get a needed break from your worries; it is a win-win situation. Who knows, they just might return the favor.

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10. ***Caring is a hands on activity.*** Too often we think that we are helping someone when we tell them that we "care" or that our "prayers are with them," and then we step away sure that we have done something special, feeling better because we have proven ourselves to be a "caring person," But, we have left that person's life in much the same state as before, richer for only a few empty words. Perhaps, we don't even go that far; we tell ourselves that we have donated to charities, we have paid our taxes; let them do our caring for us. True caring can be as simple as asking someone out for a leisurely cup of coffee, giving them a chance to take a vacation from their cares. It is immediate actions that matter and not words or future promises; it is the gestures of a common humanity.
11. ***Don't lend, give – but only give what you don't need (be honest)!*** How many times have we lent a friend some money, only to have it ruin the friendship when they did not pay it back? How much easier it is to offer them the money, or anything else, as a gift and if they do pay it back, bask in the pleasure of their gift to you. If you can't afford the gift then honestly explain that to them.
12. ***Remember: "Normal is a setting on a clothes dryer."*** We all feel pressured to fit in and for what? The definition of normal has been made before hand; it has not been made up "for us," but instead has been made up "against us." Isn't it less stressful to make up who we are on our own and not accept our the World's preassigned role? (Personally, I think that "normal is boring.") When you're are doing your laundry it's OK to worry whether your clothing is "normal," "permanent press" or "white" ... but your life is not a a load of laundry. Normal is a setting on a clothes dryer, not a judgment about your life.
13. ***Count your blessings!*** Because the good things that happen to us do not loudly call attention to themselves, it is human nature to notice only those things that scream to us through our pain, the bad things. When times are bad, set away a time everyday to remind yourself of the good things that are happening. It may be hard at first, but this becomes easier with practice, persevere.
14. ***Some days, it will be just one damn thing after another.*** We've all had those days (weeks, months, etc.), days when the only luck we seem to have is bad luck. It seems that the Universe is out to get us – everyone thinks that sometimes if they think at all. This is were the Mathematical Theory of Probability comes to our rescue. Probability teaches us that random occurrences will be clumped together. If the Universe

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was out to get me, then there would be no bad days, just a steady stream of bad luck without let up.

15. ***Hold a Baby!*** Have you ever felt a baby snuggling in you arms, giving you implicit trust? Doesn't that make you feel good? Isn't it harder at those times to worry about your troubles. I call this baby therapy. If you don't have a baby, borrow someone else's, you won't regret it.
16. ***Forgive yourself!*** It says in the bible that we are to forgive anyone who comes to us sincerely asking for forgiveness. In my opinion this makes perfect sense because the real healing comes when we forgive ourselves. Face it, our life goes on, or should, in much the same way whether we are given an apology or not. By accepting another's sincere apology we are giving them permission to forgive themselves for something that was probably not intended to hurt us; we are allowing them to heal themselves.
17. ***Put one foot in front of the other.*** Some Mornings it's hard enough to get out of bed in the morning, let alone contemplate whatever else it is that needs to be done. If your to-do list is too daunting and you grind to a halt just thinking of it, just think of only the next thing you have to do and do it. If something is seems so large that the thought of doing it makes you queasy, break it up into smaller steps, focus on the first step and do it. Lao Tzu said that "A journey of thousand miles begins from the first step;" just put one foot in front of the other, again and again until your done.