

Three Steps To Increasing Inner Peace

by Suzanne W. Zoglio, Ph.D.

1. Take Mini-Retreats

If your life is insanely busy, but you're not content, it's possible that you've gotten stuck in a rut of activity that's not aligned with what you really want. It's time to stop and take stock. Plan a month of mini-retreats: a one-hour walk in the park, a Saturday morning of silent reflection, 20 minutes alone before you go to bed. Schedule four or more...right now. Then use each one to address a few questions. What's working? What's not? How do you feel? What moments in your day do you feel most alive? What do you miss that you used to love? What do you wish you could have more of? What would you like to contribute and to whom? Focus only on one or two questions each "retreat" and commit your thoughts to writing. Make the last note of each retreat a commitment to the time and date of your next session. Once you've taken stock of where you are and where you want to go, you'll feel a surge of focus and energy. In a month of listening to your inner voice, you'll make more conscious choices about how to invest your time, money, and energy. As you bring your outer behavior into alignment with your inner desires, the chaos will fade and inner peace will rise.

2. Let go of the past

If you feel distressed about moving forward, you're probably hanging on to some baggage from the past. It might be time to make room for what you really want. Old mindsets like, "I can't," "Life isn't that easy," "It's selfish," "I'm not good enough," or "I might need it someday" can keep you stuck in your comfort zone, even when your heart says, "Go for it." Jot down any blocking phrases that might be causing inner conflict. When one appears, simply note it, and replace it with an affirmation such as "I can," "Life is a delight," "It feels great to share my gifts," "I'm loveable and capable," or "I have all that I need." Now you're changing your mind chatter to empowering thoughts instead of disabling ones.

Also, consider cleaning out a closet, the attic, or garage. Recycle all your I-might-need-it-someday stuff and see how free you feel. You're making room for the new.

Next, clear out old hurts. Take a stack of index cards and on each one write down the name of anyone who has hurt, betrayed, or annoyed you in some way...ever. Put the cards in three piles from your weakest emotional reaction (slight) to a moderate reaction to your strongest reaction (still really mad). Starting with the slightest reactions, see if there are any that you could just decide now to forgive and let go. If so, rip up the card as a ritual of letting it go once and for all. Next, sort out any that you never really expressed your annoyance about. Write that person a letter explaining how their actions affected you. It's not necessary to mail them, just express yourself, and then if you want to, forgive and let the incident go. Finally, sort out any hurts that need further action (a meeting, prayer, therapy, meditation). Try releasing (or at least diminishing) one grievance a week.

3. Make Each Day Count

We generally feel at peace, when we are proud of ourselves...when we are being the person we aspire to be. If we are living our own dreams, growing wiser each day, and making a difference in a loving way, we will sleep well. To stay on target, try adding two rituals to your day: Morning Intent and Evening Acknowledgment. When you awaken each morning, practice Morning Intent. Before you get out of bed, take five minutes to formulate your intent for the day. Decide three things: 1. Which personal trait do you want to "grow" today (patience, humor, compassion, good listening, loyalty, courage)? 2. What top three tasks do you intend to accomplish today? 3. Where will you make a difference in someone's life today? Just before you go off to sleep each night, practice Evening Acknowledgement. Reflect on three things: 1. What moments in your day were you the person you aspire to be? 2. What did you learn today, perhaps from mistakes? 3. What blessings...large and small...are you grateful for today?