Best Possible Self

Goals and Motivation: Picturing the Future You Want

The best possible self exercise asks you to imagine your life in the future, after everything has gone as well as it could, and write about it. Psychologist Laura King tested it in a 2001 study where people wrote about their best possible future selves for 20 minutes a day, four days in a row. A 2019 review of 29 studies found that it can give mood and optimism a small to moderate lift. This worksheet walks you through it and helps you turn the picture into one small step.

1 How to do it

- Pick a time in the future, such as one year, five years, or ten years from now.
- Imagine that you have worked hard and things have gone as well as they possibly could. You have reached the goals that matter most to you.
- Write about that life for about 15 to 20 minutes, in as much detail as you can. Write about what you want, rather than what you hope to avoid.
- Keep it believable for you. Aim for a hopeful picture that still feels possible.

Why does this work? *Picturing a future you want can make your goals clearer and remind you that things can get better. Writing it down helps you turn loose hopes into something concrete, which makes it easier to see what matters most to you and where to start.*

2 Warm up: look at each part of your life

Before you write, jot down a few words about how each part of your life looks in your best possible future.

Relationships (family, friends, partner):

Example: Sunday dinners with my kids, and a close friend I see every week

Work, school, or how I spend my days:

Health and how I take care of myself:

Personal growth, interests, and what I care about:

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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3 Write about your best possible self

Set a timer for 15 to 20 minutes. Write in the present tense, as if you are already living this life. Describe a normal day: where you are, who is with you, and how you feel.

4 From picture to step

One small step I could take this week toward this future:

How did I feel after writing? What surprised me?

If writing about the future brings up sadness about where you are now, that is common. Be gentle with yourself. If low mood stays with you, a therapist can help.

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