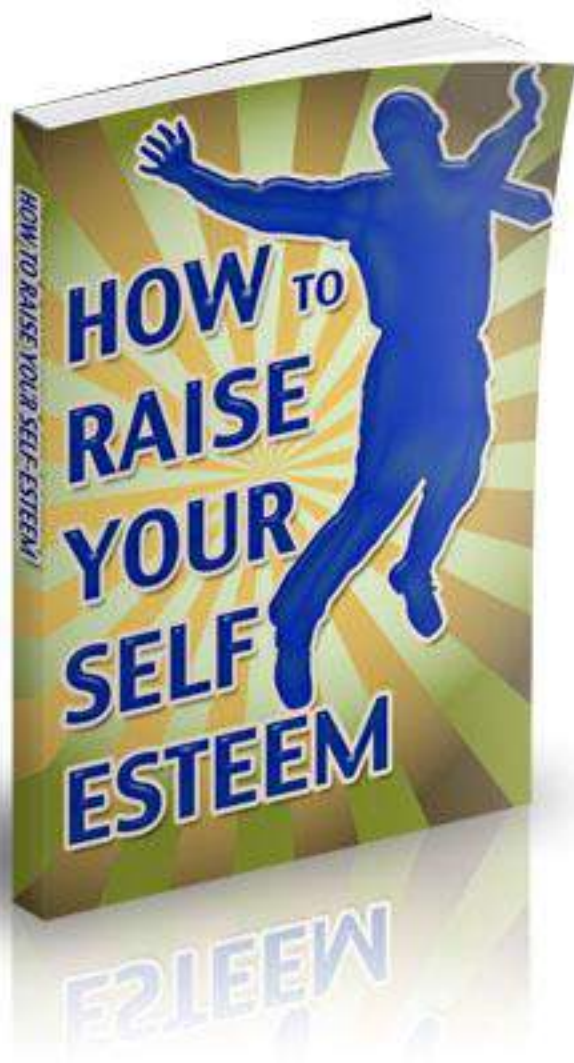


How to Raise Your Self-Esteem



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Introduction

If you are one of the millions of people who suffer from low self-esteem, you are no stranger to the sensation that something vital is missing from your life. Besides the inner disconnection you live with on a daily basis, you may also feel distanced from loved ones and friends by an invisible wall that prevents you from opening up and trusting those closest to you.

It seems like such a minor thing, holding oneself in high regard, because most of us have been taught how to be unselfish and generous to others. Any hint of selfish interest was severely frowned upon during our formative years, and we still carry the echoes of that sentiment to this day.

While selflessness and generosity are admirable traits, too many of us carry them to an extreme, going so far as to completely neglect ourselves and our needs.

The problems stemming from such a habit are far-reaching and can affect many parts of our lives, from our work, to our income, our interpersonal relationships, the way we dress, our health habits, and even our perceived purpose in life.

A person with low self-esteem will generally feel less joyful, less involved, less connected with their daily lives and the people surrounding them. They'll often feel unfulfilled by their jobs, earn less money, experience a higher incidence of illness, and even suffer from recurring bouts of depression and anxiety.

Does this describe you? If so, take heart because you are definitely not alone. You'll be comforted to know that raising your self-esteem is actually a very simple process! With small daily actions and a minor shift in your thought patterns, you can learn to love yourself in a truly healthy, beneficial way – that will also benefit everyone around you.

First, let's explore exactly how self-esteem gets "lowered."

When we are first born, we are completely selfish creatures. We have little awareness of others around us, and we couldn't care less about the feelings and needs of anyone other than ourselves. We care only that we are provided with the warmth, nourishment and attention that we require on a regular basis.

As we grow and develop, we become more aware of others in our lives, such as our parents and siblings. For the most part we are still self-centered, focusing mostly on our own needs. But the older we get, our

parents begin teaching us to share and be considerate of others and their needs.

However, just being taught to share and be considerate of others is not what lowers our self-esteem. Rather, we are often the recipients of derogatory comments from both adults and peers. Usually these people have good intentions, like the aunt that casually mentions how you're gaining weight and becoming "chubby," or the parent who tells you that playing near a busy street was "stupid."

No matter how well-intentioned these comments are, many of them act as barbs that are absorbed into our subconscious minds and become part of our self-image.

Remember that we have nothing to compare these comments against. We still don't have full knowledge of ourselves as individuals, so we have no reason not to believe the things that are said to us.

Even worse, as we get older, we keep "replaying" these comments from our subconscious minds and continue to reinforce the negative beliefs they formed. Every time we do something "stupid," or every time we notice the numbers on the scale creeping higher, we experience a sense

of shame and the feeling that we are somehow “less than” we should be. We don’t measure up.

Of course, there are more extreme examples of actual abuse and neglect that contribute to low self-esteem even more powerfully, but even seemingly inconsequential experiences like those described above can do some damage.

As we grow into adulthood, an interesting thing happens. We automatically do whatever we can to keep “proving” to ourselves that we are the person our self-image tells us we are. If our self-image is one of a stupid or valueless person, we’ll automatically do things that would be considered stupid or demonstrate a lack of respect for ourselves.

If we believe that we’re not worthy of love and acceptance, we’ll act in ways that push others away from us. We’ll shy away from intimate, healthy relationships and do everything we can to prove that our belief is true – even if we wish it weren’t!

Also interesting is that other people will tend to treat us in accordance with our own self-image! A person who has little self-respect will usually find themselves surrounded by other people who feel the same way and treat them accordingly.

As mentioned earlier, this type of thinking can even affect your career and income, and the place you live. If you don't think you have high value as a person, you won't strive to have a better career, earn more money and live in a safe area.

Even worse, all of this happens below your level of awareness so you don't realize what's causing all the turmoil in your life!

Perhaps you do have a nagging sense that your self-esteem is low, otherwise you probably wouldn't be reading this guide. That's great news, because along with awareness comes the power to do something about it.

And, what exactly can you do about it once you realize you have low self-esteem? The following pages will share some simple ways you can begin raising your self-esteem immediately.

It may have taken a lifetime for your self-esteem to get as low as it may be right now, but raising it can be done in only minutes a day and you'll usually start to see positive results almost immediately.

Let's get started:

You and Your Authentic Self

First and foremost, raising your self-esteem means getting to know yourself again; NOT the “self” that has no value, but your TRUE self. Your authentic self. As a child, you knew who you were and you demanded that your needs were met, without a care of what other people might think of it. You were fully in touch with your authentic self because you knew no other way to live. You had a healthy, natural love for yourself as a person who deserved to be cared for and loved.

It may sound like an impossible challenge to get back to that state again, but you’ll be glad to know that it’s really not difficult at all! The easiest way to start is by spending quality time alone on a daily basis. It doesn’t have to be massive chunks of time, but at least 30 minutes or so per day.

What should you do with this time? For starters, activities you enjoy. Do you have any hobbies or interests? If so, start devoting time to them at least a couple of times per week.

If you don’t have any hobbies or interests, don’t feel bad. Many people with low self-esteem don’t allow themselves any recreational time, so they’ve never had the opportunity to engage in fun activities except perhaps in group settings.

Your personal time alone is a great opportunity to begin exploring all the possibilities available to you! Take a few minutes to make a list of everything you have ever had an interest in or curiosity about; or things you've always wanted to learn more about. Then start exploring! Buy a few books, do some research online, or check out classes in your local area.

In fact, you should undertake this same process even if you already have a few known interests, because part of getting to know your authentic self again is the willingness to explore and try new things.

Now – what to do if you have NO idea what your interests are? If you've completely lost touch with your authentic self, you may have no clue at all about the things you'd enjoy doing. If that's the case for you, start with the process of elimination. Make a list of every kind of activity you can think of, from creative activities and artistic pursuits, to music and sports, and beyond. (See below for a sample list.) Simply look at the items on the list and ask yourself if you have an interest in learning more about it. If not, cross it off. If so, make a checkmark near it. Note that this is not a complete list, so if something else comes to mind while you're looking it over, jot it down on a separate sheet of paper so you can follow up on it later.

Dance	Cooking	Photography
Sports	Singing/Music	Gardening
Writing	Painting	Drawing
Pottery	Languages	History
Health/Fitness	Nutrition	Computers
Children	Animals	Education
Medicine	Reading	Decorating
Volunteering	Beauty/Fashion	Men's/Women's Issues

It may take time, but you'll eventually find some things you'll enjoy doing. Once you know what those things are, it is your DUTY to do them frequently. Why is this so important? Because in order to learn how to value yourself as a person, you have to give yourself time and room to grow as a person. Through these activities you enjoy, you'll gradually start to reconnect with your authentic self again, and your self-esteem will naturally begin to grow.

Learning to Love Yourself Again

Another unfortunate side effect of low self-esteem is that you stop being kind to yourself (if you ever were in the first place). You avoid doing nice things for yourself, and you even go so far as to demand too much from yourself and push yourself to do and be more than is really necessary.

Pushing yourself to do and be better can be a healthy habit because it encourages you to grow and stretch beyond your perceived limits – but it's NOT healthy if you're doing it in a negative way, like berating, overworking or punishing yourself.

To reverse negative habits like these and raise your self-esteem, you need to make a strong effort to love and value yourself – not just when you feel you “deserve it,” but all the time, from this moment on.

Does that sound impossible? Do you believe that there is nothing lovable or valuable about you? This is one common side effect of low self-esteem; the belief that you can learn to love yourself eventually, but not until you make changes to yourself (either inside or out). You figure you'll finally be worthy of love when you lose enough weight, when you meet Mr. or Ms. Right, when you become a better mother, father, sister,

friend, employee, citizen, and so on. Is that the direction your thoughts have been heading for years now?

As difficult as it may seem, you need to learn how to love yourself NOW, exactly as you are in this moment. I won't tell you it will be easy, but it is achievable if you're willing to put in the effort.

Here are two good ways to start right away:

- 1) Start speaking kindly to yourself several times a day. Like most people with low self-esteem, you probably have an ongoing negative monologue playing in your head – and you don't even know it! This chatter is filled with negative comments and perceptions about yourself, and it keeps you feeling badly about yourself. In order to turn it around, you'll need to start replacing those negative messages with more positive ones. You won't be able to turn it around completely right away, but if you work at it a few times each day, you'll eventually begin to feel more positive about yourself.

As often as you can, say positive things to and about yourself. Praise yourself when you do something well, even if the task was insignificant. Look in the mirror and give yourself compliments –

but make sure they are genuine compliments! Don't lie because your subconscious mind will know you're lying and it will reject the positive comments. Instead, find one or two things about yourself that you actually do admire or see value in, and compliment them.

While you're saying these things to yourself, be sure to use a kind and loving tone. Don't recite them like a robot, without feeling. Infuse each comment with the same tone you'd use for someone you genuinely care about. You'll probably feel a little silly as you do this, but keep at it anyway! You can even laugh while you're doing it, if you want to, because laughter will actually help you take yourself less seriously and inject a bit of fun into the process.

2) Emphasize your positive traits frequently. Another unfortunate side effect of low self-esteem is the tendency to focus only on the negative while ignoring the positive, especially regarding your character traits and capabilities. From now on, spend a few minutes each day acknowledging and emphasizing your positive qualities. You might say something like, "I've got a wicked sense of humor, and that's something that's always served me well." Or, "I'm really glad I'm so good at organization; it's something that

not everyone can do well!” The items you choose to focus on don’t really matter, except that they are true about you.

Besides boosting your self-esteem, this type of activity can also help you become more confident too! As you keep emphasizing the things you’re good at, you’ll get bolder about finding out what else you can do well – and probably discover that you’re capable of a whole lot more than you ever realized!

Stop With the Nit-Picking!

Besides getting to know yourself and learning to value yourself again, it is absolutely CRUCIAL that you stop putting yourself down. Some of us can be brutal with the things we say to ourselves sometimes. Sure, sometimes we say them in a joking manner, like commenting on how large our posterior is, or making fun of the way we always screw up directions and get lost, or even calling ourselves dummies, ninnys, klutzes, idiots – and much worse.

You have to understand that even saying these things in a joking way does not prevent our subconscious minds from absorbing – and believing – them. And the more we believe these things, the more we act in ways that must reinforce their “truth.”

Do yourself a huge favor and stop that habit now. It will take some repeated effort on your part, but every time you catch yourself saying or thinking something negative about yourself, immediately turn it around to something more positive and flattering. Just doing this alone can drastically help improve your self-esteem.

Nix the Guilt

Are you one of those people who always feels guilty about something?
Do you worry about offending others or displeasing them in some way?
Do you feel that way even when you have no real reason to feel guilty?

It's a common trait in people with low self-esteem, because they usually have a nagging belief that there is something wrong or lacking in them. This usually leads them to apologize constantly, or do everything in their power to please the people around them, even when it causes great inconvenience or discomfort to themselves!

This is a bit more challenging to overcome, and in fact, much of this guilt complex begins to fade naturally as your self-esteem improves. However, you can help it along by reminding yourself often that you have nothing to feel guilty about. If it helps, you can encourage yourself with supportive comments like, "It's okay, you're doing a good job!" Or, "I'm proud of you for who you are and what you do."

Again, it may seem silly to talk to yourself like that, but your subconscious mind hears these things and begins to alter your self-image in accordance with them – which begins shifting your self-esteem to a higher level.

What If You Were Someone Else?

One of the greatest techniques to help you stop the self-abuse and begin treating yourself kindly again is to imagine that you were someone else in your life, like a relative or friend. Would you ever DARE treat someone else as poorly as you treat yourself sometimes? It's highly doubtful, right?

You probably treat the people you love like they were the most important people in the world! You support them, encourage them, listen to them, shower them with attention and care, and generally make sure they know that you value them.

Begin treating yourself this way too. Every time you notice that you're being unkind to yourself or neglecting yourself, remember that you don't treat others so poorly, and you shouldn't treat yourself that way either! You'll probably need to remind yourself of this a lot in the beginning, but eventually it becomes second nature to monitor your thoughts and actions.

Self-Pampering – Elixir of Self-Esteem!

Another great way of boosting your self-esteem is by pampering yourself on a regular basis. It's difficult to feel badly about yourself when you're glowing with happiness from some genuine TLC!

From this moment on, make it your mission to care for yourself body, mind, and spirit! Don't cast self-pampering into the "when I have time" category of your life - MAKE time for it; and don't allow yourself to put it off unless you have absolutely no choice (like in the case of a dire emergency).

How exactly do you pamper yourself? Try some of these ideas:

Take bubble baths; enjoy long, leisurely walks in beautiful places; record your hopes and dreams in a journal; buy yourself a bouquet of flowers the next time you're at the mall or supermarket; enjoy delicious meals, either at restaurants or at home; enjoy recreational activities with friends; read a good book or watch a good movie; spend time laughing; take dance lessons; get a manicure; buy some new clothes; indulge in your favorite foods.

Those are just a few suggestions to get you started, but don't stop there. Think about things that would make you feel special, cherished and loved – and do them often.

Love Away Your Imperfections

Remember I said that you need to learn to love yourself exactly as you are? I'm referring to your "flaws" and "imperfections" too! This activity will be difficult for just about everyone, so don't worry if you feel resistant to it also.

One terrible result of low self-esteem is that it makes you see everything about yourself as bad or unacceptable in some way. You create this image of perfection in your mind, knowing that you'll never measure up to it no matter how hard you try. What you probably fail to realize is that NO ONE could measure up to such ridiculous standards!

Over the years, I've discovered a foolproof way to make your perceived flaws and imperfections vanish, and I'm going to share it with you now. Love them. Accept them. Embrace them as a small part of a gorgeous, beautiful you. Most likely you are cringing at that suggestion! Most people do. However, you need to learn how to stop judging those parts of you – all parts of you, really.

Those parts of yourself are "bad" only because you are comparing them to some impossible standard. Stop doing that. Learn to love all parts of

yourself and see them for what they are; not good or bad, just part of you.

Now, this doesn't mean you can't work on improving yourself, inside or out. You definitely can. But not from the perspective that there is something wrong with you as you are; rather from the perspective that you are great as you are and you want to be even better.

So, from now on when you judge a part of your body or character or capabilities and find it lacking, stop yourself and focus on loving and accepting that little piece of you instead. It will take practice, but eventually you begin to see yourself in a new light and realize that those parts of you are not so bad – they may even be unique and special.

Just remember, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE those flaws and they will transform before your eyes.

More Techniques to Boost Self-Esteem

In addition to those I've described above, you may want to try using affirmations and visualization to improve your self-esteem. Below you'll find some easy ways to get started if these techniques appeal to you:

How Affirmations Can Help

Affirmations can be extremely effective at improving your self-talk and boosting your emotional state. However, they should be used on a regular basis and worded in a specific way to make them more effective:

- 1) First, be sure to word them in the present tense, and in a way that is believable, like these:
 - “I am learning to love myself more each day.”
 - “I enjoy treating myself kindly.”
 - “I look forward to doing things I love.”
 - “I love how I feel after pampering myself.”
 - “I choose to believe that I am valuable.”
 - “I trust myself to know what is best for me.”
 - “I choose to feel proud of who I am and what I do.”

- 2) You'll also notice that these affirmations are worded in a way that your subconscious mind will not resist. If you said, "I know that I am valuable and lovable," your subconscious mind would probably block such a statement because that's not how you really feel, right? Look closely at the affirmations above and you'll see that I worded them in a way that makes them easier to believe, like saying, "I choose to believe that I am valuable". That puts YOU in control with the power of choice, not your existing limiting beliefs.
- 3) Finally, lend more power to your affirmations by infusing them with strong emotions! Rather than robotically reciting the words, allow yourself to feel the sentiment behind them. Emotions like love, pride, tenderness, compassion and joy will transform any affirmation from "just words" to a powerful, targeted MESSAGE to your subconscious mind.

How Visualization Can Help

Equally as powerful as affirmations, visualization can also be a formidable ally in improving your self-esteem. Visualization has the power to feed new messages to your subconscious mind, in the form of mental images. The great thing about this is that your subconscious

mind experiences all such images in the same way; as if they were actual reality! It doesn't matter if you are remembering something from the past, dreaming about something wonderful that you hope will happen in the future, or thinking about something that is happening now. Your subconscious mind treats them all the same.

Obviously, this comes in very handy when you want to instill new, empowering messages in your mind.

Like affirmations, visualization tends to work better when it's used consistently, so aim for a few minutes each day if you can. Before you go to bed at night is an optimal time because your mind tends to be more relaxed (and therefore more receptive) at that time of day.

Visualization is as simple as closing your eyes and calling up a mental image of something. In the context of your self-esteem, probably one of the most powerful things you can do is create a new self-image, since your current self-image probably isn't too flattering at the present moment.

Start by imagining yourself as you would like to be. See yourself as being successful, attractive, wealthy, fit, happy, confident – or anything

else you'd like to be. See yourself as a radiant, beautiful person that is happy and well-adjusted.

Most importantly, as you see these things in your mind, be sure to get into the FEELINGS that the images portray! Don't just "think" confidence, FEEL it! Likewise for all other qualities you are trying to embrace.

The more you do this, the more you'll notice that you're starting to feel that way in your everyday life too. Gradually, you'll shift your self-image to more closely match the one you've been visualizing.

Another great visualization technique is to see and feel yourself surrounded by a cloud of universal love. People with low self-esteem often feel that the universe (or some angry God, perhaps) is against them, just waiting to punish them because they're such terrible people. A good way to counteract that belief is by gradually shifting your perception from an angry, judgmental universe to a loving and supportive one.

Simply see yourself in your mind's eye, and imagine that you are surrounded by a soft cloud of pink light. Imagine that this light is pure divine love, soaking into your body, mind and spirit and transforming

any feelings of guilt or unworthiness. Again, allow yourself to FEEL those feelings of unconditional love and acceptance as you do so. It works!

You can even combine affirmations and visualization together as one powerful tool. For example, record your affirmations on an audio tape and play it while you're performing a visualization to heal your self-image, or make up your own new affirmations that match the images you're seeing in your mind during visualization.

There are really no right or wrong ways to use these tools. Follow your instincts and do what feels right to you.

It's a Process – Keep Growing!

The techniques above are a great way to start boosting your self-esteem, but ultimately what will have the greatest impact is your own willingness to begin believing that you ARE a valuable and worthy person.

When it comes to your existing life circumstances, beliefs are everything! Whatever you believe to be true is what you will experience as your truth.

Believe you are valueless and unworthy? That's exactly what you'll experience in most areas of your life. Believe you are a great person with much to offer the world? That's what your life experiences will reflect back to you, “proving” it to be true over and over again!

This is great news, because you do have the power to CHOOSE what you believe! It may not be easy to change existing beliefs, but it is very possible if you keep working on it.

Understand that this is a process, however. As much as you might like to wave a magic wand over your life and transform the parts of it that displease you, it's not realistic to expect it all to change overnight.

Instead, raising your self-esteem (like any aspect of self-improvement) is an ongoing process that you'll be engaged in throughout your lifetime. You'll never be quite done with it, because there will always be higher levels of achievement and self-mastery you'll want to strive for. Just when you think you've reached the absolute limits of what you can do, you'll decide to reach just a little bit higher.

That's a great thing! Keep going, and keep GROWING.

Patience and Perseverance

One final bit of advice: be patient with yourself through this process. You will probably have days where you slip back into old habits again. You'll catch yourself being pessimistic or calling yourself derogatory names – and probably get frustrated because you thought you were beyond that stage!

It's okay; when this happens simply backtrack mentally and get your thoughts into order again. Soothe any hurtful comments you may have uttered by replacing them with more positive and supportive comments. Apologize to yourself if you want to; it can go a long way to healing self-abuse!

Whatever you do, don't declare yourself a hopeless cause and give up! Sometimes when habits are deeply ingrained it can seem impossible to change them, but that is simply a perception – a belief that can be changed also.

Keep affirming that nothing is set in stone and you are easily as capable of positive change as anyone else. You simply have to want it badly enough and be willing to work diligently at it.

If you find that you're struggling with a lot of emotional baggage from the past and you can't seem to work through it on your own, consider consulting a qualified therapist or coach that can help walk you through the rough spots. They have the training and knowledge to guide you more gently to where you want to be, and there is never any shame in asking for help. Give yourself whatever you need to heal and move forward with joy and inner peace.

In addition, be sure to go EASY on yourself through this process of change. If you're in the habit of treating yourself harshly and demanding too much from yourself, you might inadvertently start doing the same thing while trying to raise your self-esteem. You might get frustrated with yourself when you slip up or berate yourself if you don't seem to making progress quickly enough.

Obviously, an attitude like that won't help matters at all. Try to be gentle with yourself. Allow room for errors and backsliding – it's only natural that it will take some time to change old habits. Over time you'll start to see progress – and you're much more likely to see progress when you treat yourself kindly and gently. (That alone will help boost your self-esteem, no matter what else you do!)

Affirm daily that you deserve to heal and live a productive, happy life.
Eventually you'll begin to believe it, and you'll make it your reality.

How to Know When It's Working

As you progress through this process, you'll start to notice that you're feeling lighter, happier, and less burdened. Each day will no longer seem like a drawn out battle, but instead you'll find yourself enjoying each day just a little bit more than you used to.

Eventually, you'll start feeling stronger, more focused, more empowered – and less willing to settle for less than you deserve. As a result, other people will begin treating you differently because you'll be expressing a different demeanor than you used to. Remember, people can sense your self-image, even if you don't say a word! The more confident and empowered you become, the more people will respect you. The more you value yourself, the more others will too.

You'll find yourself gravitating more toward healthy and fulfilling relationships, rather than destructive and dysfunctional ones. Your existing relationships will probably deepen and improve too.

Most importantly, your relationship with yourself will become deeper and more meaningful. You'll gain a whole new level of appreciation and admiration for yourself as the unique person you are. And when that happens, there won't be anything you can't do.

About Will Edwards



Will Edwards is the founder of White Dove Books - one of the internet's leading websites for Self Improvement and Personal Development.

A graduate of the University of Birmingham in the UK, he also develops and teaches Personal Development courses & workshops and he is a published author.

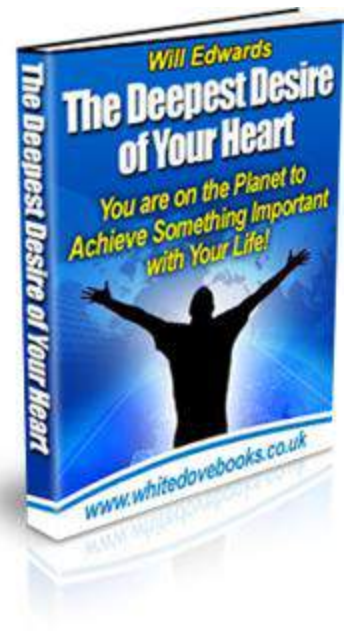
The Deepest Desire of Your Heart by Will Edwards

Find and Fulfil Your Unique Purpose in Life

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- Professional Tips and Exercises
- Identify Your Most Important Activities
- Complete System to Optimize Time
- How to Ensure You Achieve Your Goals



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About White Dove Books

White Dove Books was founded by Will Edwards, in 2003 primarily as an outlet for his writing. Within our first three years, we became recognised as one of the internet's leading Personal Development sites.

The Inspiration Newsletter, published by White Dove Books, was started in 2005 as a way of providing useful information including tips and techniques for living life to the full, interesting articles and free inspirational ebooks to our visitors.

Today White Dove Books works in partnership with many authors and on-line publishers of inspirational material to provide a quality online service that serves thousands of people in dozens of countries across the world.

We are passionate about Personal Development and we believe that life holds a specific purpose for you. You can help us to change the world by distributing our books. In fact, you can even get paid for sharing them.

Our mission is to help people to develop their own unique talents, abilities and passion in order that they may lead more meaningful, joyful and fulfilled lives.



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