

Exercise 4: Find your Strengths

1. Begin by writing out a list of 3 things you're good at. Just 3 little things. They can be absolutely anything. When I was a student, the only thing that would come to my mind was "really good at eating ice cream". They can be silly, small, goofy, big, weird, niche - whatever you like. If you're good at it just get it onto a page. Read over the list and take a moment to pause and feel good about these things. I bet you, no-one else has written down that exact combination of things in that way already.
2. Next we're going to top that list up to 10 things. So, begin adding 7 more things that you're good at. Again it doesn't matter what they are. I'm great at dancing in the kitchen when no-one else is around. I'm awesome at making coffee for my partner every morning. I can spell my name correctly every time. I was chosen to be an astronaut. I can pet my dog so well his butt wiggles every time. It doesn't matter what it is - get it on the page. Again, take a moment and read them over really feeling how many things that you're good at.
3. Another great way to keep this momentum going is to set a daily reminder to stop and think about what you did really well today. You can say this out loud, write it in your phone notes, or simply jot it down on a piece of paper. Once again, it can be anything. If this feels overwhelming then just start by identifying one thing. Before you know it loads of other things will be popping into your mind as your brain naturally brings up all of the good stuff, and you'll be reeling more things off in no time. Try for a week or two finding one thing per day, then go up to 3 things for the next week to two weeks. After that, try 10 things per day. If you'd like, another satisfying thing to do is to look over all of these lists at the end of the month, and really see the true volume of all of these things you've done well. You did all of those, you badass!

By retraining your brain to look at all of the positive things you're doing and being, it begins to form this into a habit. Good habits yield good results, like pride in yourself and your work, self-esteem, courage, progress, motivation, consistency, energy etc. Bad habits, like

negative self-talk do the opposite of this. Think of them as a spiral - good habits go up and up and vice versa.

4. Whenever you find yourself sliding down into negative self-talk, pause and identify the thought. Don't judge it, react or get emotional about it. Think of it as a piece of data that has just come up, one that is simply telling you some information about your internal state right now.

Look at it and observe it, write it down. If you were a totally objective scientist looking at this piece of feedback, not attached to the experiment results at all, how do you think you would feel about it? You wouldn't feel anything at all because you're not emotionally attached to the data. It's just data, telling you what is going on. If the scientist acted in anger towards the result, that would seem overboard, right? So don't get mad at yourself and your thoughts for showing you what's going on. Negative self-talk is telling you there's something bigger going on in your state, and addressing that will help you in all areas of your life, far beyond just your work.

So take some time every day - even just a few minutes - to focus on the positives, and before you know it they will begin adding up. Other great books to check out are "The Imposter Cure: Escape the Mind-Trap of Imposter Syndrome" by, Dr. Jessamy Hibberd, "Why do I Feel like an Imposter: How to understand and Cope with Imposter Syndrome" by Sandi Mann, and "Own Your Greatness: Overcome Imposter Syndrome, Beat Self-doubt and Succeed in Life" by Lisa & Richard Orbe-Austin. The following chapter will go into more detail about the power of good habits, and chapter 5 will detail more wellbeing exercises that can help as well.