

20 Life Hacks That Will Transform Your Life

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The best-selling book, *The Road Less Travelled*, by M. Scott Peck, opens with the statement, “Life is difficult.” Peck argues that life was never meant to be easy, and is essentially a series of problems which can either be solved or ignored.

Here are 20 life hacks which will help make your life not only easier, but also more exciting, joyful and meaningful.

These life hacks are grouped into 5 different categories: 1) Self-transformation, 2) Social, 3) Confidence and Productivity, 4) Positive Thinking and Gratitude and 5) Physical Health and Mental Clarity.

Self-Transformation Life Hacks

1. Take Cold Showers

The health benefits of cold showers are well documented: such as improving immunity and circulation, promoting weight loss, lowering blood pressure, clearing blocked arteries, making hair shinier and skin healthier, increasing the metabolism, easing stress and depression, relieving muscle soreness and increasing sperm count and motility. Convinced yet?

However, of even greater value is the increase in self-confidence and will power gained by successfully taking a cold shower. It is a great way to start cultivating self-discipline and can serve as a [blueprint for self-improvement](#). I know it may be a bit intimidating, but in the wise words of Nike, just do it!

2. Write Your Own Eulogy

It can be extremely life transforming to sit down and write your own eulogy. Doing so makes it very clear what you've accomplished so far in life and what you hope to accomplish, but have yet to do so. It will also help you to clarify what's truly important to you and could inspire you to direct your life down a new path.

Don't simply write out your eulogy as you think it will be written. To have the greatest impact, [try this three step process](#).

3. Improve Yourself like Benjamin Franklin

If you want to improve something about yourself, use the power of the week. By focusing for one week on a particular virtue or skill you are able to make significant progress without feeling too overwhelmed.

Benjamin Franklin credited much of his success to his constant drive toward self-improvement. At the age of 20, he created a system to develop his moral character. He created a [list of 13 virtues](#) and developed a chart on which he could track his progress for each virtue. Every week he would specifically focus on developing one virtue.

Instead of simply mimicking Benjamin Franklin's weekly virtues, [create your own list and plan](#), because the aspects of character which you value and need to improve may be different from his.

4. Become a Better Listener

Everyone wants to be understood. If you can show others that you understand what they are saying, they will be much more likely to work with you, compromise with you

and help you. Be a good listener and you will be unique and people will be drawn to you.

Try this simple, but effective exercise to help you to become a better listener.

- Sit down with someone you are comfortable with, explain to them that you are practicing becoming a better listener and ask them to talk about anything they want for at least a minute.
- While they are talking, practice listening. Your only goal is to hear them out. If you find your mind wandering, gently return your attention to the speaker.
- When they finish speaking, respond naturally.
- Practice for 10 minutes a day for a few days and you will teach your brain a new habit which you can then reinforce every time someone is talking to you.

Social Life Hacks

5. Stand Next to Someone during an Argument

In most cases, civilized debate and discussion can be very beneficial, however sometimes emotions flare and anger and frustration can get the best of us. If you get into an argument with someone, nobody wins and both people end up feeling worse and harbor negative feelings towards each other.

Directly facing someone can be confrontational and can make us instinctively feel threatened. A great way to alleviate the tension during an argument, and therefore bring it to a speedier and friendlier conclusion, is to move so that you are standing next to them. Try this the next time you have an argument, it is amazingly effective because our brains interpret this as an alleviation of the threat.

6. Address People by Their Name

There are few ways more effective at creating rapport than to call someone by their name. It is an incredibly easy way to validate people, show you are listening and focused on them and to simply make them feel good. Everyone likes to feel important and using someone's name while talking to them is an great way to give them this feeling.

Having trouble remembering people's names? Try this practice: when you meet someone, repeat their name back to them immediately. For example:

“Hi my name is Sophia.”

“Nice to meet you Sophia. My name is Tim.”

Throughout the conversation find natural opportunities to use their name. In addition to making them feel good, the repetition will help you to remember their name.

7. Wait for the Complete Answer

If you ask someone a question and they only give you an incomplete answer or dodge the question, just keep silent, maintain eye contact and wait. They will keep talking. If it gets uncomfortable, raise your eyebrows and lean in slightly, this will communicate that you expect more of an answer.

8. Rephrase What Others Say

Everyone wants to be understood. If you notice that someone is going on and on about something or is clearly in some sort of emotional discomfort, do them a great service and rephrase back to them what they are trying to tell you. This shows that you have received and understood what they are trying to communicate. Watch the relief in their face when they realize that someone understands what they are trying to say. This will strengthen your connection, give you the reputation of being a good listener and a compassionate person, as well as, validate the other person's feelings.

Confidence and Productivity Life Hacks

9. Power Posing

Harvard researcher Dr. Amy Cuddy gave an amazing [TED talk](#) in which she shares her ground breaking research. Dr. Cuddy has shown that standing or sitting in a certain way can quickly and dramatically change your levels of testosterone (associated with confidence and power) and cortisol (associated with feelings of stress). Dr. Cuddy found that after only two minutes of power posing there is a significant increase in testosterone and decrease in the cortisol in your body, thereby making you feel more confident and powerful, as well as, less stressed and nervous.

The next time you find yourself in a stressful or evaluative situation like an interview or examination, find two minutes and hold a power pose. This is an incredible powerful life hack! [See the poses here.](#)

10. Overcome a Fear of Public Speaking in a Few Minutes

In many of my classes I help teach others how to eliminate their phobia of public speaking. Usually I can get people to overcome the phobia permanently within a few minutes. The problem is that most people set themselves up to fail before ever stepping on stage.

What I do to help someone is:

- 1) Have them think of someone who is a great public speaker and stand the way that person stands
- 2) Then I have them speak the way this person does
- 3) Following this, they walk, gesture and move in the same way the great speaker does

4) Finally, they go into the other room for a few minutes and repeat to themselves, out loud and with increasing enthusiasm, the following statements:

- I have a message that I must share with the world
- I am strong and confident
- I am an excellent public speaker

Again and again it amazes me how effective this technique is. Instead of beating yourself up before a presentation by thinking thoughts that make you nervous and afraid, try this and get yourself into a strong and confident state. [Here is a story](#) which elaborates on the effectiveness of this technique.

11. Confidence: Fake It till You Become It

Confidence is not something we simply have. It is not a character trait. Maybe I feel confident while driving, but not when playing the piano. Confidence is a *feeling* of certainty. And, just like any other feeling, with a little practice you can learn to bring it about at will. Confidence can be learned.

It has been shown that when people speak, move and act in a confident way they actually *feel* more confident. Doing so continuously will teach your subconscious mind that you are, in fact, confident. So, even if you don't feel confident, try pretending that you are. With repetition, you will no longer feel like you are faking it because you will have trained yourself to truly be confident. [Read more](#) about how to develop confidence.

12. Eliminate Procrastination in 5 Minutes

Sometimes it can be hard to just get going. We often try to ease our way into doing something but instead we end up just wasting time. The next time you find yourself procrastinating. Try the following [technique](#).

Take out a piece of paper and at the top write the word “Action” followed by what you want to accomplish. For example: “Action: Finish My Taxes”. Next, write down and answer these two questions:

- 1) How will this be painful for me if I don't get this done ASAP?
- 2) How will I feel when I successfully complete this and it is no longer hanging over my head?

Emphasize the pleasure you will feel completing the task and the pain you will feel if you don't. Usually after about 2-3 minutes you will be ready to get to work.

Optimism and Gratitude Life Hacks

13. Learned Optimism

[Learned Optimism](#) is an idea proposed by psychologist Martin Seligman which states that optimism, or a talent for positivity, can be taught and learned by consciously changing negative self-talk into positive self-talk. The benefits of an optimistic outlook are numerous: optimists are higher achievers and have better overall health. Optimists tend to feel more successful, grateful and fulfilled. Therefore, if optimism is extremely beneficial and it is a skill that can be learned, why not cultivate it?

Seligman provides us with a learned optimism blueprint, which he calls the ABCDE model, standing for Adversity, Belief, Consequence, Disputation and Energization. Don't let the words fool you. The idea is actually quite simple and straightforward. Here is an example:

A – Adversity: Someone rushes past you and bumps into you, knocking your drink to the ground.

B – Belief: You say (and believe), “That person is so rude and selfish!”

C – Consequence: Feelings of anger and hatred arise within you and stay with you throughout the day.

D – Disputation: You recognize that these negative feelings will not help you in any way and decide to step in. You tell yourself, “It's not worth getting upset over this. Perhaps that person had to rush to the emergency room or had another serious crisis. I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt. More than anyone else, this will help me.”

E – Energization: You feel energized that you have taken control of your thoughts and successfully calmed your mind. You rejoice at your increasing ability to think optimistically.

14. The Smile Feel Good Exercise

Research shows that if you hold a pencil between your teeth you will actually feel happier. This is because doing so mimics a real smile. Amazingly, our brain cannot tell the difference and will start pumping out hormones to make you feel good even though you are merely holding a pencil between your teeth. The takeaway? You can actually make yourself happier by smiling. Don't just believe me! Try the [following exercise](#) and see for yourself. You may just be pleasantly delighted.

1) Stand up nice and straight

2) Place your hands on your hips

3) Smile the biggest, most exaggerated smile you can muster

4) Hold it for at least 15 seconds.

5) Then, without letting your smile retreat even one millimeter, try to think negative thoughts. Try to feel sad or angry. You will find that it is nearly impossible to think negatively while maintaining your big smile. The only way your brain can create negative thoughts is to force you to stop smiling. If you keep your enormous smile, negative thoughts cannot enter your mind.

We have been blessed with this simple control switch to activate positive thoughts in our minds. So use it! Smile! ☺

15. Use the Power of Questions

One of the most effective ways to teach your brain to be optimistic is to use questions. Your brain *hates* unanswered questions. Think about the following experience. You are about to say something but you suddenly get interrupted or distracted. Then, when you try to return to that thought, you just can't seem to recall what you wanted to say. You ask yourself again and again, "What was I was going to say?!" yet it still doesn't come to you. Later that night as you doze off to sleep, or the following day as you're going about your business, you suddenly remember it! All along your brain was working, digging through the filing cabinets of your mind trying to find the answer *for you* and, when it finally found it, ran up to you and screamed, "I've got it! I've got the information you requested!"

Your brain will try its utmost to answer the questions you ask it. If you constantly ask yourself, "Why am I so stupid?" your brain will find the answer. It will find evidence of your stupidity. If you ask yourself, "How did I get to be so intelligent?" your brain will also find you the answer. The answers to the questions you ask, as long as you expect an answer from your brain, will certainly come to you. Therefore, ask yourself questions which will strengthen you, make you confident, grateful and happy. To see examples of some empowering questions [click here](#).

16. Switch on the Feeling of Gratitude

My grandfather is one of the most grateful people I have ever met and also one of the happiest. He survived World War II and feels that every day since has been a gift. He completely emanates contentment and peace. Gratitude is true wealth and life becomes incredibly magical in the moments when we feel grateful.

So, how can we cultivate feelings of gratitude? Essentially, you should direct your mind to pay attention to what you have, what you have been given and the positive aspects of

your life. However, the most powerful and effective way that I know of is through the following exercise.

When you wake up in the morning, go to bed at night and any time something happens to you which disturbs you say the following [Zen affirmation](#):

“Thank you for everything. I have no complaint whatsoever.”

Saying this with *feeling* again and again will have a huge impact. Once again, don't just take my word for it. Try it for yourself.

Physical and Mental Health Life Hacks

17. Skyrocket Your Energy with These 3 Breathing Exercises

Anything of value that we accomplish in life requires an investment of energy. In order to be healthy and have an abundance of energy, you must first understand [the power of breath](#). The following breathing exercises will increase your lung capacity and ability to take in and distribute oxygen throughout your body. It takes about 5 minutes to perform all three exercises. Regularly performing these exercises will dramatically increase your energy and health levels.

Exercise 1: Take 5 breaths with a ratio of 1:4:2 (inhalation, holding, exhalation). So, for example, if you breathe in for 4 seconds, you would hold it for 16 seconds and exhale for 8 seconds (4:16:8). If you breathe in for 6 seconds the ratio would be 6:24:12. You should not strain yourself while doing this, though you should breathe slowly and deeply. Do this sitting down because, especially at first, you may feel dizzy for a few moments. This will be followed by a surge of energy.¹

Exercise 2: Sit comfortably in a chair. Breathe in and out quickly like a dog panting for a few seconds. Then, close your mouth and continue through your nostrils. Do this as many times as you comfortably can. You should imitate the motion of an automobile piston: rapidly inhale as much as you can and then immediately blow it out quickly and completely. This exercise will bring stagnating cells back to normal functioning. At first you may only be able to perform ten or so of these breaths. With repetition you will be able to increase the number of breaths significantly and, in turn, significantly increase the positive effects on your health.²

Exercise 3: Stand flat against a wall so that your heels, lower back, shoulder blades and back of your head are touching the wall. Raise your arms straight out in front of you so

that your fingers are level with your shoulders, with your thumbs touching. Then, as *slowly* as possible, breathe in. As you breathe in, keeping your arms straight, raise your arms up and over your head until the backs of your hands touch the wall. Hold for a few seconds. Then, while you exhale as *slowly* as you can, lower your arms out and down along the wall to your sides. Throughout this exercise, your arms should follow your breath. Do this twice. You should not strain yourself, but it is important to breathe slowly and fully.²

1. Exercise 1 is from "[Personal Power II](#)" by Anthony Robbins
2. Exercises 2 & 3 are from "[Touch of Life: The Healing Power of the Natural Life Force](#)" by Dr. Robert Fulford

18. Sharpen Your Mind and Focus By Minimizing Salt

What happens if you drink a lot of sea water? You dehydrate and die. Too much salt.

We are mostly water. Dehydration will cloud your mind and slow down your brain function and focus significantly. Too much salt has a very real and direct impact on your mental clarity. If you decrease your intake of salt you will be astonished at how much clearer you will be able to think, focus and process information. Eating less salt is a simple and free way to increase your mental clarity quickly.

Here is a very simple experiment that will show you how much (and how quickly) salt affects your brain.

For one day, avoid salt as much as possible, not just salt that you add, but pre-packaged foods with added salt. And drink plenty of water. Be diligent so you can see how much potential mental clarity you can have. Do all you can to minimize salt intake.

The following morning you may notice that your face is less swollen and your mind will feel much clearer. It will be much easier to focus.

The following day, you will do just the opposite. For one day, eat a lot of salt (within reason, don't down the entire salt shaker). Go nuts on eating pretzels, instant noodles, salted nuts and salty french fries. Do this on a day where you won't need to be too clear-minded the day after.

The following morning go to the mirror and take a look at how swollen your face is. Your mind will feel cloudy for most of the day. You will have trouble focusing.

To really see the difference, try three days without salt, then one day with plenty of salt. You will never look at salt the same way again!

19. The Caffeine Free Week

How would you like to fall asleep every night within minutes of getting into bed? Would you like a noticeable increase in mental clarity and focus? How about having more emotional stability? Then eliminate caffeine.

Now, I am not saying caffeine is bad and you should never ingest it. However, if you go one week without caffeine you will be astonished at what happens. Caffeine affects us in a variety of ways and cutting it out quickly restores our body and minds to, what can only be described as, a sense of balance and calmness. You can buy everything decaf now and caffeine withdrawal is barely noticeable for most people. If you are a hard-core caffeine drinker, you may want to reduce your intake for a few days before trying this. I went from drinking 3-4 cups of caffeinated coffee and tea a day to none and essentially felt no withdrawal.

If you want to see a *really* powerful transformation, minimize your sugar intake during this week as well.

20. Feel Alert 5 Minutes after Waking (Without Caffeine)

Do this upon waking and you will be astonished at how quickly you can be alert.

- 1) As soon as you get out of bed, stand up and reach your arms up towards the ceiling and stretch them as high as you can. Feel your spine stretch along with it.
- 2) Take three slow, deep breaths.
- 3) Then, smile the biggest, most exaggerated smile you can muster and hold it for about 15 seconds.
- 4) Make both your hands into fists and bring them in front of you as if you are holding two ski poles. Pump your fists three times (in whatever way feels natural for you).
- 5) Go to the sink and splash some water on your face (the colder the better!).
- 6) Do 10 jumping jacks.
- 7) Drink a glass of water (this will kick start your metabolism and fuels your brain).
- 8) Step outside (or stick your head out the window) and get some fresh air (and hopefully some sunshine too).

The first few times you try this, you may want to print off these instructions or write them down so you don't forget. If you don't do them in this exact order, don't worry about it. This is just what I've found works best for me. Tomorrow morning, give this a try! It's an exciting and empowering feeling to get your brain firing on all cylinders only a few minutes after waking up.

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