

3 Ways to Practice Strategic Reflection

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Reflection is a natural part of being human. It's a way to look back at our life and interpret meaning, lessons and enjoyment from our experiences. Yet so many of us only reflect reactively, instead of proactively. It's human nature and a default state of worrying and excess pondering that doesn't serve our best interests at the end of the day. The key is taking active steps to learn how to effectively reflect.

Reflection has enormous power if we harness it correctly. Looking back purposefully at our experiences allows us to absorb a wide range of knowledge about ourselves and the world around us. The ancients spent copious amounts of time reflecting, which led to better questions and breakthrough discoveries.

Here are 3 ways to practice intentional, strategic reflection that can propel your life forward.

1. Combine reflection with outside activity

Oftentimes when we reflect, it's a subconscious pattern of thoughts that frequently repeat themselves again and again in our minds. When we step outside into the fresh air and open skies, it's easier to break patterns and connect with nature while we think about lessons from our past or experiences we want to make sense of. Simply going for a walk – alone or with others – is a great way to give yourself space to activate

intentional thought and in turn, reflection.

Our past often holds the key to our future and it's important to spend quality time understanding past challenges or obstacles, so we can move forward confidently knowing what we need to work on. Once we can see areas of challenge in our lives that we haven't solved yet with clear eyes, all it takes is consistent action and you've transformed. At least in some small way.

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2. Write down your thoughts and ask yourself hard questions

We live in an age of unprecedented information, with 24/7 flows coming at us through our smartphones, social media and the internet. Have you ever heard the phrase "monkey mind"? This endless flow of information leads to our minds being constantly turned on, with very few breaks for peace and calm. The monkey mind is the background chatter in our heads and the to and fro of our thoughts rapidly firing. The result can be a scrambled and unclear mind.

Writing gives us clarity. Write down exactly what your thoughts are in as much detail as you can. Getting them out of our heads and into the physical world lessens their hold over us. Tying in with stoicism and other philosophies, we realize that thoughts are just that – thoughts. Electrical impulses that we can choose to act on or choose to ignore.

Asking yourself better questions is almost always a powerful way to make dramatic breakthroughs if you're brave enough to face reality, and build inner determination to improve it.

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3. Separate reflection from regret

Spending valuable time dwelling and passively replaying your past actions over and over again is not a healthy, proactive habit. There's a fine line between reflecting and falling prey to a cycle of thinking that doesn't benefit us. The difference is that reflecting entails taking a hard look at our experiences and framing them in a positive light, no matter what the specific memory is. Take the lessons you learned as a positive and bring yourself back to the present moment. After all, the present moment is all we really have.

We all need to take a time-out to see what valuable lessons we've learned, what new ideas and thoughts we now have and how they fit in with our long-term goals and objectives.

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