



Spring clean your mind

When spring is here its a great time to open up the house and let the sunshine in. Grab a few garbage bags, go through all the cupboards and the pantry, and throw away everything that has cluttered up the house.

Make a point this month to also clear out some mental clutter. Mental clutter is internalized expectations, conditions and values that estrange you from your true self. We often take on the values and expectations of parents, teachers, friends and media to preserve their positive regard, falsifying our own values and beliefs. Some people so strongly attach to these 'external paths' that they engage in self-deprecating thoughts and destructive behaviour patterns because they don't "fit in".

Here are 4 tips for how you can give your mind a tune-up in time for the warmer months ahead.

- 1. Get in the habit of listening to your inner voice.** Maslow describes that in each of us we have the necessary ingredients for self-actualization, and that by listening to your inner voice you can reestablish contact with your real self. The real self is not only who you are, but what you are in terms of your life goals your likes and dislikes in food, music, clothing etc. Maslow suggests that the next time someone offers you a glass of wine, try a different way of responding. First, I suggest that you not look at the label on the bottle. Therefore, you will not use it to get any cue about whether or not you should like it. Close your eyes and really look within yourself and shut out the noise of the world so that you can savor the wine on your tongue and listen to your feelings.
- 2. Be open to new experiences.** Try out one new activity every week that is expressive of your interests or talents. Try to approach the activity with an open mind. The things you tell yourself about the world predict how you perceive it. If you look for bad things to happen to you, they will - not because you can cause events to happen, but because you will perceive your experiences negatively.
- 3. Trust in your own experiencing process and develop values in accordance with that experience.** It is possible to be happier — to feel more satisfied, to be more engaged with life, find more meaning, have higher hopes, and probably even laugh and smile more, regardless of your circumstances.
- 4. Seek feedback from your environment and make realistic changes resulting from that feedback.** We often use psychological defenses to stop us hearing the truth about ourselves. We do not want to hear evidence that we are not as clever, attractive, witty, and handsome or liked as we tell ourselves. We hide from ourselves, because the pain of self-knowledge is too great.