

[The below piece is a guest blog post I wrote for a Nashville based online publication. I chose to include it in my portfolio because it demonstrates a writing style that is in high demand in today's social media-centric business landscape. Including a lifestyle blog on a company's website gives businesses the opportunity to connect with customers and prospects through a two-way dialogue. This opens the door for readers to comment on posts, and businesses can use this exchange to gain new insights into their customer's needs, and structure their content and marketing initiatives based on what they've learned. This lighthearted style of writing is an important aspect in getting higher search engine rankings for businesses. Google, for example, rewards websites that add content on a regular basis (such as blogs) by continually moving them up in their search results. This increases visibility, which is a goal of all businesses, large or small. Fresh content is also more likely to be timely or news-related, which means it's more likely to get exposure for "trending" searches.]

For this style of writing, the key is to make your content interesting and engaging enough that people will want to read it for leisure, without having to overthink. Over time, a business with a consistent blog presence can create a connection with its readers through the tone and content of the blog and foster brand loyalty.]

AWESOME HABITS. AWESOME YOU.

By Kelly Dutton

Aristotle once said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit".

I love this. In essence, this means everything about you - success, health, happiness, prejudices, friends, aspirations, outlook on life - is all

because of routines, and patterns of habitual thinking and acting.

If Aristotle was in fact telling the truth (which I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt on... he has a pretty good reputation up to this point), this means that we literally have the power to transform our lives simply by tweaking our thought patterns. It is interesting how habits all begin with a simple thought. A thought grows into an action that may seem menial at the time, but if we seem to benefit in some way from this action, we repeat it. In repeating our actions, they become habits, which become a way of life. This, in turn, becomes embedded into who we are, all beginning with a tiny thought - sort of like throwing a rock or pebble into a pond and watching the ripples grow.

If we have allowed less than ideal habits to creep into our daily lives, reversing this problematic progression of our minds doesn't happen overnight. We have to retrain our brains to think like the type of



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person we aspire to be. A *fake-it-til-you-make-it* kind of thing. Except one day, if you commit to doing the work needed, you won't be faking it, it will just be...*you*. The key is to learn to re-wire the routine, and avoid the cues and triggers that cause you to engage in the habit or negative thought process in the first place. An attuned sense of awareness is one of the key ways to do that. I've recently begun a meditation class in North Hollywood (highly recommended for anyone who wants to really get inside their heads without the distractions of iPhones, Snapchat notifications, Twitter, which Kardashian is dating which basketball player, etc....). It is amazing how much clarity we get when we truly allow ourselves to be alone with our thoughts, undistracted. Some of the "self-talk" we encounter just sounds downright silly when listened to and repeated back to ourselves.

I have found meditation is a perfect time to introduce new "self-talk" into my brain and ensure that my inner dialogue is as positive as the outer layer I show to the world. We are bombarded with so many messages each day from the outside world. It is crucial to not ignore the most important voice of all, the voice of whom matters more than any other... our own. Now we just have to make sure it is speaking positivity and light!

An important thing to remember is that bad habits really never go away - the neural pathways are always there, just waiting for their cue and waiting for you to relapse into old patterns of thought. But, fortunately,

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we have the power to prevent this and continue growing and evolving into people who are striving to become a better version of themselves. I know about you, but that makes me pretty excited. Do not be an accomplice to anything attempting to hold you back this week. The world does enough of that on its own, why make it any easier? How amazing is it to know that with the power of a single thought, we can begin to take on whatever stands in front of us at this moment? What negative thought or habit is holding you down today or making you feel less than awesome about yourself? Just like the tiny pebble that causes a ripple in the pond, a new/positive thought can be the first step in completely transforming your life. So, go ahead, remind yourself how incredible you are! Tell yourself you are stronger than that one vice that has a hold on you! Let yourself believe that wonderful compliment given to you today! By taking positive baby steps each moment, we can break habits, large and small, that are keeping us from living our best life. That Aristotle knew what he was talking about. Too bad he doesn't have a twitter account.



Kelly is a guest blogger who resides in Los Angeles, California. She is on a mission to promote self-love and free minds, and equally hopes she can practice what she preaches. Thank you, Kelly!