

Emergency Optimist

M e d i t a t i o n

Accept You

Sometimes in the midst of a busy life, when you are giving yourself to work, to other people, to small practical tasks, it is easy to become critical of yourself. When this happens, consider this. The critic is simply the child inside you calling for some of the attention you are giving so generously to others. When you hear the beginnings of this critical voice, spend a moment or two in your own company. Do nothing. Say nothing. Think of nobody. Just be with yourself, expect nothing, breathe, rest and in time the voice of criticism will quieten. Deep down, we are only the same as the children we often have to care for.

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Act of Kindness

Balance is the secret. Sometimes when we are worried we go too far inside ourselves. Then we get lost. Then we become lonely. One of the best antidotes to this is to connect with another and help them. Even the smallest act of kindness, when acknowledged not even by the other but by ourselves, can be enough to calm us down and bring us back to the gentleness that comes with being a part of a community rather than alone.

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Be A Director

It is good to be flexible. But there are times when it is important to move, choose, direct. If you begin to feel tired or disengaged from a situation and yet find yourself rooted to the spot, recognise this as a sign that it is time to take action, to make a decision - even if is only the decision to stand up or to go out of the room. Small decisions restore your Self to yourself. They also help other people to be decisive.

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Be Kind

... And so the thoughts run on. On and on they go without your permission, commenting, analysing, criticising, praising. When you notice your thoughts becoming unkind in a way that serves nobody, least of all yourself, stop. Move yourself physically. Go outside. Come inside. Change activities. And then try changing thoughts. The move from criticism to kindness takes a second, but it can save your happiness, your health and your reputation. Let your thought-footprint be one you are proud of. And if it goes wrong one day, there is always the next day...

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Bigger Picture

A person who keeps the bigger picture in mind is the good parent. Be the good parent to yourself. When you find yourself becoming bogged down in the detail of any endeavour, activity, relationship, STOP. Change activities, sit down, stand up, have a cup of tea and consider why you are involved in the endeavour in the first place. Or if you can't answer that question, simply recognise that the detail you are struggling with will have its day. Maybe today is not its day. Leave it and return to it tomorrow when you will be different and so will it.

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Communicate

We are made to communicate. It is at the heart of our nature. Even if the communication we are preparing for seems frightening, it will ease the pressure, relax the tension, bring about change. Aim for bravery. Aim also for directness tempered by kindness and above all, if you are about to broach a difficult subject, prepare. If you prepare, even for a few minutes, you won't be the victim of but the participant in the situation. Preparation, which is really only a matter of standing for a few moments at a slight distance, removes the emotion that muddles all connections.

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Do Something New

Routines are seductive. In moderation they are also healthy because they bring stability. But when you feel what you are doing or saying to others is beginning to feel empty, STOP. Think of one new thing that you would really like to do – swim, walk, meet a different friend, write a diary, anything... And then do it! These things don't even have to be kept up. They are a chance for refreshment, so do not impose upon yourself a new set of demands. Think of a dance where the steps never change. What a shame that would be. One new step is enough to transform a dance.

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Face It

The inside of our heads is both a safe and a dangerous place. When we hide things inside, they build up. When they are aired in the right way, at the right moment, everything changes. All tension collapses and the universe can collaborate. Though the world might seem like a cruel place, in general a person who faces life bravely is rewarded by support. If facing something is too hard, talk to a friend about facing whatever it is that is worrying you, and only after that tackle the situation, and preferably in good company.

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Full Stop

Sometimes life moves very fast, sometimes very slowly. When it feels as if everything is speeding up around you, as well as inside you, call a halt. The easiest way to call a halt is to turn off the computer, walk out of the room, get up from the bed where you can't sleep, move outdoors or indoors, away or towards a person. Thoughts follow action, so lead with action first. Consider this, too: if every word you spoke or thought you had was worth a million pounds, how carefully would you choose your words and thoughts? Become a little more careful and your self-respect, as well as your happiness, will increase.

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Give Someone a Chance

We are all guilty. We are all bad. We are all good. We all have strengths, we all struggle; we all have our victories. Work against the tendency to fix a person in your mind as being one thing or another. Even more, avoid talking about them in a particular way. Stay awake during conversations rather than sleep-walking towards insult. To imagine a person who is annoying you doing the right thing is like extending a hug to them. It warms you and it strengthens them. If you can't love the person, love the room you are in, love the day, the moment, the fact of your life and let that love embrace them too.

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Pick Your Moment

Restraint is a strength as well as a sign of maturity. Think of speaking out as the equivalent of planting a seed. If the ground isn't ready, the seed won't grow. Wait until the storm is over, the rain has died down, the heat cooled before adding your penny's worth. And when you do intervene, do so simply and directly. People can be changed by the wise intervention while the cross word brings resentment.

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Really Listen

Listening takes patience. Patience takes strength. But recognise that the act of listening is a chance to rest your ego, that part of you that is so keen to be in on everything. People don't always find it easy to express what they're feeling. Your quiet attention is the greatest support you can give them in their attempt to say what they mean. Good listeners are rare and precious people.

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Stay Cool

To be passionate is a good thing. It means you love life and care about how things work out. You can be passionate and cool at the same time. Coolness comes with experience. You've seen it before, heard it before. If faced by something new, take comfort from the simple fact that you are still able to breathe. Focus only on that. Resisting the temptation to commit yourself too fast will increase your self-worth and will give the situation time to take its right shape.

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Step Back

There are so many of us. It doesn't always need to be me who steps in, gives advice, agrees or objects. Regard stepping back as an act of generosity. Often the least articulate are the most wise, the youngest the most knowing. There is wisdom in learning one's position in a generation. Like all emergency remedies, stepping back is also a form of rest.

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Take a Minute Out

The magic of time is that it can seem much longer or much shorter than it is. A single minute taken out purposefully can carry an hour's experience, if not at the time, then in its repercussions, while an hour wiled away can turn into nothing. Taking a minute out is one of the simplest ways to add value to your day. Do it but appreciate yourself for doing it, too.