

Family Counseling Service: The Keys, and the Path, to Personal Growth

By Larry Deavers

The path to personal growth involves a courageous self-examination, stepping outside our comfort zone, and taking on new challenges. Here are some ideas to help you get started on making the changes you've always wanted to, but never quite followed through on:

Seek to Understand Yourself

People committed to personal growth don't settle for simply blaming others for their problems. We all have flaws. Once you determine to look at any challenging interactions with other people as learning experiences, rather than threats, you gain valuable insight into yourself, your ability to communicate and your ability to appreciate others. Seek feedback from those who know you best, both at home and at work, with a welcoming attitude. Listen, unafraid, and identify areas where you can grow.

Challenge Your Fears

Take on something that intimidates you and set a goal to become proficient at it. Facing our fears frees us from the power they have over us. It will be intimidating in the beginning, but if you take those first one or two steps towards facing that challenge, often you will discover that your fear has been greatly exaggerated. You are capable of more than you give yourself credit for.

Learn from Others

You can learn something from anyone. It's easier to learn from those you admire, but everyone has some strength, skill, or piece of wisdom you can adapt to make improvements in your own life. Ask yourself, "How can I learn from them and adopt that skill for myself?" This is a humbling experience, but it also reframes your interactions with others as growth opportunities, even with those with whom you have a difficult relationship.

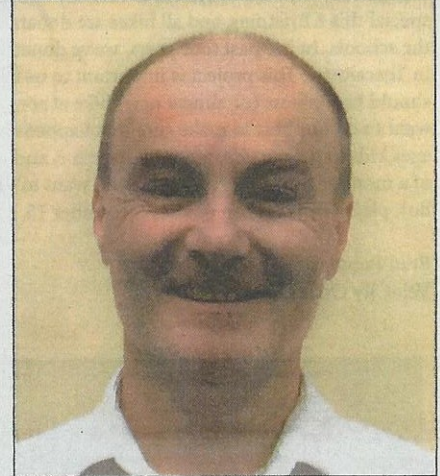
Establish Positive Routines

Set out to develop positive habits and stick with them. You already know what habits you want to establish; maybe you've struggled with them for some time. Renew your commitment to make this new habit a routine – same time, same place, same behavior – as much as possible. Then, determine to take one step, no matter how small, towards your goal every day. Start by telling one or two others your plans, and ask them to hold you accountable. Taking that step will give you the impetus to move forward.

Resolve Past Grievances with Others

As far as it is possible on your part, make a sincere effort to make amends with others who have a grievance against you. Even if you have no ill feelings towards them, taking the initiative to restore a broken relationship can be extremely freeing and empowering. Releasing those past painful experiences will enable you to grow and not be quite as burdened by the past.

If these steps sound intimidating, start with something small, and build on that. The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step!



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