

The ‘Best Possible Self’ Exercise

The exercise to create your Best Possible Future Self



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The “**Best Possible Self**” (BPS) exercise, consists of writing about one’s best possible self in the future after everything has gone as well as it possibly could.



Previous research suggests that visualising your ‘best self’ boosted and sustained positive mood and was able to ‘bring greater awareness and clarity to one’s priorities’. People who completed this exercise daily for two weeks showed increases in positive emotions.

Those who kept up with the exercise for longer duration, continued to show increases in positive mood one month later. Over time, participants noticed an improved mood and feel their lives are more purposeful and have more direction.

How to do the BPSE?

The idea is to imagine how you would like to be living in the not too distant future (say 1-5 years). It's not just about your physical life (where you are living for example, or whether you are 5 kg's lighter or not), it's also about *who* you are (the type of person you will be) and *how* you feel when you are living the life you want to be living in the future.

The idea is to be quite specific and really connect with how you imagine life will be - all going well.

It takes 15 minutes a day for two weeks. You can then do 15 minutes once a week or so, and re-engage this activity whenever you feel a need for a refresh/refocus/reset.

Some people have difficulty identifying with the wording of 'Best Possible Self' - if this is you, change the wording to suit you. People have used the wording: 'Best Possible Life', or even 'If everything went to plan'. Choose words that resonate with you. You will need more time the first time you do this exercise and a pen/s and paper or journal.



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Instructions

- Take a moment to imagine your life in the future (between 1-5 years).
- You have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing your life goals.
- What is the best possible life you can imagine? Consider all of the relevant areas of your life, such as your career, academic work, relationships, hobbies, and health.
- Think of this as the realisation of your life dreams, and of your own best potential.
- In this future, imagine:
 - Where are you living?
 - What is your job?
 - Who are you living with?
 - What are your relationships like?
 - What's different about your best future from today?

Continued below



Instructions continued:

The more specific you are, the more engaged you will be with the exercise and the more you'll get out of it.

If you think about a new job, imagine what you would do, who you would work with, and where it would be.

For the next 15 -30 minutes, write continuously about what you imagine this best possible future to be. Be as creative and imaginative as you want, and don't worry about grammar or spelling.

This exercise is also about *who* you would like to be. The type of person you would like to be and how it feels to be living this life.

It's important to write in present tense - as if it is already happening. ie: '*I am* living in a house in the country' (rather than '*I will be*....')

For the next two weeks, spend a few moments going over your writing, adjusting, adding more as needed.

For extra focus - I often encourage people to *draw* their BPS. It's a lot of fun. If you choose to draw it's important to:

- Use crayons - this helps with the creativity and fun
- Do not worry about the quality of your drawing (stick figures are fine!)
- Use words, colours etc to add what you need

Hang this somewhere you will see every day.



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Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(2), 73-82

