

Sports & Outdoors

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Braving the steps to *self-improvement*



COURTNEY KENADY / SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

Drewbie en route to the summit of Peak 8 at the 2017 Imperial Challenge this past weekend on April 23. Self-improvement can take many forms, from quitting a bad habit to skinning up the side of Breckenridge, and Drewbie has the roadmap to get you there in one piece.

Big, meaningful changes in life can seem daunting and even impossible. But with the right mindset, plus a reliable roadmap, the journey will be worth it.

Making changes in life is an extremely

for continual self-improvement since about July 11, 1981 (when I emerged on

daunting, overwhelming and intimidating endeavor. There are things in life we want to improve on, should improve and need to improve on, but how do we make these changes sustainable and not just temporary fixes?

Being in a recent slump of sorts, it became apparent I needed significant betterment. I have been unhappy and negative, allowing these negative emotions to guide and dictate my life. I was growing farther away from the person I wanted to be, and those closest to me, particularly my wife, had to deal with the worst of me. Being around the nugatory Drew was unpleasant to say the least, and regrettable.

Each of us lets something hold us back from joy, success, fulfillment, self-worth or whatever it is we're seeking. I've struggled



Drew Mikita
Dear Drewbie

this planet), so I might not be the best person to talk about five steps for improvement, but maybe you can relate to these failures and desires. I'll even go through the steps with you!

STEP 1: IDENTIFY WHERE YOU WANT TO BE IN LIFE.

Living environment, behaviors, traits, careers, relationships, weight, goals — these can evolve and change over time. And that's good: not evaluating your direction and goals in life is far more harmful. What does happy you look like? (For me, it's being mentally healthier, optimistic, active, driven, balanced, supportive, artistic, funny, goofy and encouraging.)

STEP 2: WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK FROM BEING THERE?

Understand and define:

What is a healthy decision and what is a negative decision? As Matty Adkins told me, "Excess in moderation." Be honest with yourself. (For me, this includes resentments, regrets, laziness, anger and pride-prevented growth.)

STEP 3: HOW CAN YOU CHANGE OR IMPROVE SPECIFICALLY?

Many of the changes I wanted to see were feelings, which don't change on their own, so my actions and thought processes needed to change first. Evaluate your decisions and do things that make you feel awesome and alive versus crappy and indolent. (For me, it is yoga, art, writing, cooking healthy meals, spending time with positive friends and plenty more.)

STEP 4: WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE VERSION OF YOU?

We all have different versions of ourselves: employee, friend, athlete, son/daughter, adventurer, traveler, optimist, etc. Compare that version of yourself to the one you like the least: negative, fearful, controlling, anxious, abusive, depressed. Make it a priority to be more like the version you enjoy. (I

like fun, active, yogi-artist, outdoorsy, communicating, Imperial Challenge-doing me far more than lazy, anxious, negative, fearful, belittling, jealous, mean me.)

STEP 5: ELIMINATE THE EXCUSES AND DO IT.

Excuses, justifications, blame, the can'ts and won'ts all stop progress. Process through regrets and resentments, and be willing to change. (For me, this is letting go of past anger and resentments from poor decisions, and instead focusing on gratitude, fun and the future.)

It all seems so easy — just five insanely terrifying steps. Why are these so terrifying? Because change means that we might fail. Becoming really good at things like complacency, anger, apathy, laziness, (insert your negative trait here) will start to define you unless you make the change.

EVEN MORE TIPS

■ Form new habits — Create new routines and behaviors by replacing a negative habit with a positive one. A hike instead of an extended couch session can be massive improvement. Just make sure you're

clear on what choices are positive and negative for you.

■ Find a balance — Sure, we all like "vacation-me" more than "stressed-overworked-me," but that doesn't mean we can have one all the time. Having a balance of those versions will help make the bad seem not so bad. Stay organized.

■ Avoid burnout — Unlearning years of bad decisions won't be done in a day or week, but stay the course. If persistent in change, the awesome will become habit and normal. There's no shame in falling off the wagon — if you get back on.

■ Make changes for you — If others don't understand or appreciate your changes, don't give up! Make changes for yourself to be happier. While others can help motivate change, do it for you first.

■ Be open with your desired improvements — Tell those around you about desired improvements in your life. Let them know how they can support you in this endeavor and hear their suggestions. Support teams can be helpful, as mine has been for me recently.

■ Surround yourself with positive people — Since making changes about five weeks ago, I have worked

to be around those who support and encourage me. Misery loves company, so the more positive, the more awesome. Focus on your side of the street and don't allow others to bring their trash to it.

■ Go one day at a time — I have no problem stealing from AA, a group that gets the change game. Yes, you want change to be sustainable and lasting, but it takes small efforts, one at a time. Multiple days in a row are how a good (or bad) habit starts.

You are all pretty awesome people, and Summit Countians kick-a**! I am so proud of who we are, but we can all be better. I know I'm certainly trying. If you feel like you need to improve in some way(s), do it — we are all here to help.

Drew Mikita is an associate professor of psychology at Colorado Mountain College. Since 2007, he has practiced mental health in Summit County as a licensed professional counselor. He is also a sports psychology consultant currently pursuing a doctorate in sport psychology. Originally from Summit County, Ohio, Drew is living out his dream as a mountain person.