

Start Living Your True Potential

Steps to Move Beyond Your Judgments and Live Your Best Life

By Mary Mackenzie

Do you ever find yourself in the same emotional landscape over and over again? Okay, sure, the scenery and faces around you might be different, but the way you feel — a tangible sense of dissatisfaction — seems all too familiar. Could it be Deja vu? Karma? A result of your childhood?

How can we live up to our true potential, a life filled with relationships and experiences that truly meet our needs, when we keep putting our focus on the outside rather than looking inward? Isn't it true, that the only common denominator in your experiences is you?

Nonviolent Communication gives you the tools to take responsibility for what you need to live your best life. This means no one else is responsible for your quality of life but you!

Check in with yourself over the course of a day. Do you find yourself blaming others for what's missing in your life? Following the five steps below will help guide you toward creating a different life experience and living up to your true potential.

Step 1: Own it!

The first step toward realizing your true potential — in relationships, in your job, and in every aspect of your life — is to own your life experiences rather than blame them on others. You can do this by translating that blame into your own feelings and needs in the moment.

Instead of saying, “my boss is so controlling. He doesn't let me take the lead on anything,” try this: “When I go to work I feel bored. I really need more stimulation and an opportunity for growth.” See the difference?

When I translate my life experiences through feelings and needs, I can discern my world without judgment. In fact, I can avoid any thoughts of good/bad or right/wrong.

This revelation may seem minor to some, but to me it represents freedom, inclusion, abundance and the very real possibility for a deeper life experience, and more meaningful relationships. Through this simple first step, you can shift your method of discerning your world.

Step 2: Instead of Judging, Experience

Previously, my relationships were hampered by my judgments. Instead of simply experiencing my feelings and needs, I found myself constantly sizing the other person up to see where I fit.

If I thought someone knew more about a particular topic than me, I judged them as superior. If I thought I knew more about a topic than others, I thought I was better than them. This competition often led to distrust, hurt feelings and a lack of real connection with the people in my life.

As you go through your day, be conscious of how you relate to others. Do you find yourself turning to judgments to determine where you fit? If so, try to take a step back and simply experience your feelings and needs for what they are.

For example, if I'm in a conversation where someone knows more about the topic than I do, instead of judging them as intellectually superior (and myself as inferior), I can check in and experience what I'm feeling: "I'm feeling insecure right now because I'm needing acceptance and inclusion in the conversation."

Experience the feelings/needs simply for what they are, absent of judgment.

Step 3: Focus on What You Want

At one point in my life, I began to notice I spent more time than I enjoyed focusing on the negative — what was missing in my life — rather than on what I really wanted more of.

I wanted to notice my unmet needs, but focusing on what was missing made this difficult. In a sense, I was attempting to make a shift in my mental alignment. For example, if I was talking with a friend who interrupted me, my first thought might be, "she is self-centered." However, if I focus on what I want, rather than on what is missing, I might instead think, "I love it when I'm heard." When you translate your judgments in this manner as often as you notice them, it creates a subtle and powerful shift.

As this shift occurred in me, for the first time in my life I noticed that the machine gun of judgments was running out of ammunition. My focus was more in alignment with my dreams, what I hope for and value, and most especially what I love.

Perhaps the most significant gift I received from aligning my focus on what I want was learning more about what it is that I love. Prior to this step, I could tell you what I didn't like and what I didn't want to do, but to commit to what I wanted often eluded me.

Step 4: Ask For It!

Creating the life experiences that meet your needs also means being able to ask for what you want. By simply focusing on what you want (rather than what you don't want), you are in better position to suggest strategies to better meet your needs.

Going back to the example earlier, let's say that you've connected to your needs and realize that you're feeling bored at work, and need stimulation and an opportunity for growth. What if you requested a meeting with your boss to express your feelings/needs, and to brainstorm opportunities together? When you are connected to your needs, your requests will become clearer, they will be more readily received, and they will be more precise in helping meet your needs.

Step 5: Remember, Your Potential Is a Living Concept

As I became more skilled at discerning what I want, and asking for it, all my relationships improved and I became more able to live to my true potential. What does that mean exactly and what is true potential? I used to think of it as an outcome — a static concept, something written in stone the day I was born that I was supposed to "become." Now I consider it a living concept that changes with the ebb and flow of my life. When ill, my true potential might look very different than when I'm healthy. It is, in fact, less about the results of my effort and more about the consciousness I bring to my life, such as authenticity, humility, and integrity. To me, this is living to my true potential.

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