



Identifying Patterns & Building Healthy Habits & Routines

Taught by Andy B Allen

To be able to identify patterns of thoughts and behaviors and effectively change them if necessary, we must master the skill of self study. Self study can be subdivided into several smaller concepts or parts. Let's take a look at some of them.

Categories of Self Study

- Observation
- Reflection and Self Reflection
- Introspection
- Self awareness
- Self knowledge
- Contemplation
- Meditation



Observation

To watch carefully the way something happens or the way someone does something, especially in order to learn more about it



Reflection & Self Reflection

The ability to deeply think about something in particular and evaluate it, looking at the pros and cons, and to judge the situation based on it



Introspection

A reflective looking inward, an examination of our own thoughts, feelings and behaviours, also known as *inward observation*



Self Awareness

Our ability to recognise our own thoughts, feelings, sensations, behaviours and individual character



Self Knowledge

The knowledge of one's own state, actual knowledge and it is beyond the first 4 forms of self study



Contemplation

The act of looking at something in a calm and careful way, to concentrate on spiritual things as a form of private devotion, a state of mystical awareness



Meditation

Meditation is a multilayer state, but for now, the most important is to understand is that meditation is not something that is done, it is something that happens as a consequence to several other factors. In this case, as we engage in the first 6 steps of Self Study, we will naturally, and at some point in time, will end up experiencing one of those layers of the meditative state, the layers go from a gross to a more subtle form.



You might be wondering how this connects to building healthy patterns

Once we have done a thorough (yet still superficial) enquire of the self, we will naturally have the tools and the disposition to create change. Patterns and behaviours are not only the result of repetition (although that is an important part), they are also the accumulation of impressions, or as called in Yoga, *Samskaras*. Actions (Karma) lead to impressions (Samskaras) that lead to the creation of tendencies (Vasana) that then lead to the creation of mental patterns (Vrittis) that will push us to recreate the action (Karma), and the cycle repeats over and over (Samsara).



Conclusion

Self Study is only one part of the process of breaking the cycle. All the practices of Yoga are equally useful, and for the most, necessary to fully break the cycle. A balanced approach has proven to be the most effective for most people. One of the most balanced approaches of that of Raja Yoga.



How to approach this practice

Go through the ladder of Self Study, respecting the order but without forcing it. Understand that in some circumstances in life, you will be able to deepen faster than in others. In some cases, you will need to start at the lower or more basic level (observing), while in others, you will be able to find yourself in a contemplative state immediately. In some cases, you are able to empathize with others almost immediately, in in other cases, it is a very challenging thing to do. But the steady practice of Yoga eventually allows us to get more and more in tune with life, therefor finding it easier to go through the self study process in a seamless way. The best way to practice is to incorporate it into your already existing daily routine.



Recommendations

- Practice mindfulness and become aware of when certain behaviors arise. Observe your thoughts and actions without excessive judgment.
- Identify the root cause of the behavior: Understand the underlying emotions, beliefs, and habits that drive the behavior.
- Cultivate positive qualities: Use yoga practices such as Yoga nidra, pranayama and asana to cultivate positive qualities, such as patience, compassion and self-control.
- Practice self-regulation: Practice controlling your thoughts and emotions through self-discipline and self-reflection.
- Replace negative habits with positive ones: Replace negative habits with positive habits that align with your values and goals.
- Surrender to a higher power: Cultivate a sense of surrender to a higher power, which can help you let go of control and experience inner peace.
- Remember that this process is ongoing and requires consistent effort.

More Recommendations

The best way to change patterns and behaviors can vary depending on the individual and the specific behavior or pattern. However, some effective strategies that can be considered include:

- Setting clear and achievable goals: Establish specific, measurable, and attainable goals for the behavior change you want to make.
- Awareness: Increase your awareness of the behavior or pattern you want to change and its triggers.
- Create new habits: Create new habits that are incompatible with the old ones and make them a part of your daily routine.
- Use positive reinforcement: Reward yourself for positive behaviors to encourage continued change.
- Seek support: Surround yourself with positive and supportive people who can encourage and motivate you.
- Problem-solving: Identify the underlying problems or challenges that may be causing the behavior and find practical solutions to address them.

More Recommendations

- Cognitive restructuring: Re-frame negative thoughts and beliefs that may be contributing to the behavior.

Remember, changing patterns and behaviors can take time and effort, and setbacks are normal. Be patient and persistent in your efforts, and consider seeking professional support if needed

Practice

Include all six categories of Self Study in your daily routine. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to include all of the recommendations in your daily routine. Instead, make an initial assessment and prioritise. Focus on building the 6 categories, or ladder, of Self Study. Train yourself to respond to life using the Self Study model.

Generic Daily Routine for a Balanced Life

6:00 AM - Wake up and practice yoga asanas (physical postures) for at least 30 minutes

6:30 AM - Sit in silence and practice pranayama (breathing techniques) for 15 minutes to calm the mind and regulate the breath.

7:00 AM - Sit quietly (meditate) for 20 minutes to increase awareness and focus.

7:20 AM - Read spiritual texts or affirmations to set a positive tone for the day.

8:00 AM - Eat a healthy and nourishing breakfast if you eat breakfast, savoring each bite and practicing mindful eating.

Throughout the day - Incorporate the principles of self study into all interactions and activities.

5:00 PM - Practice yoga asanas for at least 30 minutes to release any built-up tension and stress.

Generic Daily Routine for a Balanced Life

5:30 PM - Reflect on the day, journaling or practicing self-reflection.

6:00 PM - Eat a balanced dinner, savouring each bite and being mindful of portion control.

9:00 PM - Establish a bedtime routine that promotes relaxation and prepares the mind and body for restful sleep.

*This routine can be modified to fit your personal schedule and needs and is not meant to be followed literally. The most important aspect is to develop consistency.