

using reminders to 'wake up' (wisdom)

Human beings, like most animals, habituate – we get used to things and then tend to stop paying attention to them. In evolutionary terms, this can promote survival as dangerous threats and worthwhile rewards typically emerge as new aspects of our environment. However, as an unfortunate side-effect of habituation, a bit like a machine that automatically switches off unless a timer is reset, psychologically we tend to “fall asleep” unless we deliberately counter this drift to “mindlessness”.

One way of resetting our internal “habituation timer/off switch” & waking up psychologically is to use regular physical reminders. For example, choose a quotation that particularly reminds you of one of your key values (see below for possible examples). Write it out on a small piece of paper and carry it with you. During the day, you could have it in your pocket, on your desk, or in your bag. At night keep it by your bed or under your pillow. One or more times each day, actively read the quotation to yourself. Memorize it. Look in the mirror and speak it out loud to yourself. Of course, you’ll habituate, so use this process for a while and then change creatively – you can always come back to it again later.

Try the same approach but using a picture of someone who inspires you in your values. It might be someone you know personally, or it could be someone “well known” (where there are probably images of them downloadable from the internet). You can carry the picture with you in the same way as the quotation. And you can use additional methods of reminding yourself as well – for example having the picture as “wallpaper” on your phone or computer or sticking it up on your fridge or on a wall. Further possible reminders can involve pictures you have drawn yourself or physical things/symbols – like a crucifix, prayer beads, jewelry, and objects from nature & our environment – that you carry with you.

“Wisdom, compassion, and courage are the three universally recognized moral qualities of men.” Confucius

“It’s not what happens to you, but how you react that matters.” Epictetus

“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.” Pericles

“One of the most beautiful qualities of true friendship is to understand and to be understood.” Seneca

“Count each day as a separate life”. Seneca

“A human being is a part of the whole, called by us the "Universe", a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest - a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. The delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening the circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.” Albert Einstein

“It is the mark of an educated man to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.” Aristotle

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.” John Muir

“Set your course by the stars, not by the lights of every passing ship.” Omar Bradley

“The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance – it is the illusion of knowledge.” Bradley Boorstin

“Experience is not what happens to you; it’s what you do with what happens to you.” Aldous Huxley

“Our character is what we do when we think no one is looking.” H Jackson Brown Jr.

"Never does nature say one thing and wisdom another." Juvenal

"Common sense in an uncommon degree is what the world calls wisdom." Samuel Taylor Coleridge

"A wise man is superior to any insults that can be put upon him, and the best reply to unseemly behaviour is patience and moderation." Moliere

"The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom." H. L. Mencken

"Wisdom begins in wonder." Socrates

"Turn your wounds into wisdom." Oprah Winfrey

"Never cut what you can untie." Joseph Joubert

"Patience is the companion of wisdom." St Augustine

"By three ways we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is the noblest; second, by imitation, which is the easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest." Confucius

"From the errors of others, the wise man corrects his own." Publilius Syrus

"Every man is a damn fool for at least five minutes every day; wisdom consists in not exceeding the limit." Elbert Hubbard

"Wisdom outweighs any wealth." Sophocles

"Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground." Rumi

"No man was ever wise by chance." Seneca
