

The 7 self improvement ideas behind thousands of YouTube videos

YouTube has probably thousands of videos on self-improvement but many of them, perhaps most of them, are just talking about variations of the same ideas. Despite this, these videos will often hide behind 'clickbait' titles, promising 'secrets', 'shocking new information' or 'revelations'. I don't blame the creators, they are just trying to capture our attention. Nevertheless, it can be useful to see the pattern of common ideas that many of these videos are discussing. And they are simple.

When it comes to self-improvement, there aren't an infinite number of concepts out there. There are seven core ideas that I see discussed most on YouTube: get enough sleep, eat well, exercise, meditate, write a journal keep educating yourself and practice stoicism. Then there is one 'meta' concept that can help with all of these: developing habits.

None of these concepts are particularly new. Which might disappoint our endless quest for new things, but should also reassure us. Humans have been around a long time, and have had time to figure out the things that are good for us. These ideas are typically quite simple, and are, in some cases, the sort of advice our Grandparents might have given us.

These seem to be the methods that are most helpful, for most people and have some backing from science.

Get enough sleep: lack of sleep not only deprives us of energy during the day but can create long-term health problems. Of course, if you have insomnia there can be many causes, but reducing stress, having a wind-down period of an hour or so before you go to bed in which you avoid looking at bright

screens, and sleeping in a very dark and quiet room seem to be the most frequently cited bits of advice.

Eat well: The field of nutritional advice seems overly complicated and often contradictory. It's probably also the case that optimal diets depend on our unique genetics and biochemistry. And this also means that some people can get away with eating diets that would be bad for most people. I recently read that the famous investor Warren Buffet eats McDonalds for breakfast every morning and has five Cokes per day, and he is still going strong at 92 years old. Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing consensus that too much processed food may be the real enemy. And a varied diet with plenty of different types of plants is best for our gut biome – the ecology of good bacteria in our stomachs that are critically important to our health yet have only been fully recognized in recent years.

Exercise: Again, what is optimal will vary a lot between unique individuals. But the basic idea here is to keep moving. Get your heart rate up several times a week, and that's about as much as we can generalize about what is good for most people.

Meditate: This seems to be the ultimate method for stress reduction and achieving a sense of mental balance and well-being. Again, this doesn't need to be complicated. Some forms of meditation involve focusing on your breath. Others in repeating a word silently in your mind (a mantra). There doesn't seem to be any special length of time either.

Writing a journal: Writing a journal offers numerous benefits that can positively impact one's personal and professional life. To begin with, journaling can be a therapeutic outlet, allowing individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, which can help reduce stress and improve mental health. Additionally, it encourages self-reflection and personal growth by providing an opportunity to gain insights

into one's own behavior, attitudes, and goals. Furthermore, maintaining a journal can boost memory and cognitive function, as the process of writing things down reinforces learning and recall. Lastly, a journal can also serve as a historical record, preserving memories and experiences that can be revisited and cherished in the future. A similar practice, known as 'morning pages', is to just write 2 pages every morning of whatever comes to mind. This is just a kind of a brain dump that can be very useful to quieten racing thoughts, stress or a feeling of being overwhelmed with thoughts.

Keep educating yourself: This is probably self-explanatory, but by staying on a track of life-long learning you will not only keep your brain active (which could stave off any possible dementia in older age) but help to make yourself more valuable in your career. Most people also just find it satisfying to learn new things and find that it enriches their lives.

Practice Stoicism: Stoicism is an ancient Greek and Roman philosophy that emphasizes personal virtue, self-discipline, and inner resilience as the foundation for a meaningful life. Rooted in the belief that one's true worth lies in their character and rational nature, it teaches the importance of focusing on what is within one's control while accepting external circumstances with equanimity. This often means learning to curb the excesses of our material desires and learning to accept that life will not always go our way. The benefits of stoicism include the cultivation of inner peace, as practitioners learn to navigate life's challenges with grace and composure. Furthermore, stoicism encourages personal growth by fostering virtues like wisdom, courage, and temperance. By embracing stoic principles, individuals can develop emotional resilience, improve decision-making, and enhance overall well-being.

The fact that multiple YouTubers, interviewing multiple experts have coalesced around this common list of methods

suggests that there might be something to this particular range. This set of methods represents a sort of super-set of effective practices.

However, there are probably a few extra candidates. One of them would be focusing on so-called 'deep work' (as in Cal Newport's book of the same title) by switching off digital distractions like social media and checking emails. Nevertheless, I think it's helpful to realize the simplicity of this finite range of pieces of advice. We don't always need to be searching for new ideas, the best ideas are probably already known to you.