

# Putting ‘Spring’ into your Life

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It has been said many times by many people that human beings are always in search of the new. We are a restless species. One of the ways that restlessness shows itself is through people wanting to improve themselves and do things that they believe will meet with the approval of others. Oliver James, a popular psychologist, concludes that as many as 90% of people in the UK are dissatisfied with who they are and aspire to be something different. Who we are determines what we are and how we see ourselves. At this time of year, the New Year’s resolutions of many of us - losing weight, getting fit or to taking up a hobby - lie in ruins. It is ironic that as the self-improvement gurus take over the market, people’s ability to stick to their resolutions seems to get poorer. We need to recognise that many of the ‘persuaders’ out there, asking us to buy their books and products, are simply preying on our vulnerabilities. There is currently a rarely mentioned epidemic sweeping America and it’s coming to the UK. Every year, we spend millions on books, courses and DVDs that promise to fix all our problems and leave us happy ever after. Claiming to be able to make people happy, successful and attractive has made millionaires out of authors, TV personalities, chefs, personal trainers, psychiatrists and beauticians. The late John Lennon exposed one of these con-men, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. In the 1960s, The Beatles, like many other successful pop groups, overdosed on everything that fame and fortune could bring them, but still remained

restless and unfulfilled. Lennon was driven to attain spiritual enlightenment and sought out the Maharishi, but soon suspected that he was not at all



what he claimed to be. Lennon came to the conclusion that the Maharishi was exploiting those who sought his help. Self-improvement can become an addiction every bit as much as drugs or alcohol. Woody Allen has spent most of his life visiting various therapists, not because, as he has frequently said, it improves his life, but because he would miss going if he stopped!

Before we contemplate any change, it is important to take stock of ourselves. People tend to believe they know more about themselves than they perhaps do. The basis of all therapies, whether it is counselling, psychotherapy or yoga, should be to help people get to know themselves, and their needs and aspirations, and to become competent at managing themselves. If something about myself causes me distress or concern, a good starting point is to find out why. What is the source of my problem? Why do I seek the approval of others? Why do I eat excessively? Why do I drink too much? Why do I not measure up to my own expectations? If answered honestly, these questions reveal a great deal about who we are, how we function, how

valuable we believe our lives to be and what we want from life.

I believe that Spring is a much better time to contemplate change than any other period of the year. Just as nature is awakening from its winter slumber,

so we can wake up too. The torrent of colour that is about to burst out around us - yellows, whites, purples and reds - speak of new beginnings and new possibilities and are a prelude to growth.

If you are contemplating changing your life at this time of year, there are a few things to keep in mind.

Focus on making a change that is well within your capability, whether it is taking up swimming, running, reading, socialising or learning a new

skill. Make sure you will enjoy what you plan to do and that it will make a real difference in your life. If you are successful at the first thing you try, then you are more likely to be successful at the next.

Give yourself a reasonable timescale. You’re not likely to achieve your goal overnight and you may have several false starts, so make sure you give yourself months rather than weeks. Once achieved, make sure that whatever change you have made becomes a part of your routine. Don’t let things slip.



When you have successfully achieved what it is you wanted to achieve, make sure you give yourself a reward. Perhaps a new outfit, a holiday or visiting someone you haven’t seen for a while.

Choose a close friend to talk to about what you are doing and how well you are coping. The support and encouragement of a person you respect is priceless.

Once you have successfully made one change, think about what you want to do next, and apply the same rules as before.

The problem for most people is that they take on too much and start with the biggest challenge in their lives, something that they have been struggling with for years. Change is possible; it’s just a question of deciding that we really do want to change, of getting plenty of support, taking one step at a time, and allowing ourselves to enjoy the improvement in our lives that we have made.

