

The Power of Getting Clarity

Before I started Zen Habits, I was in a place in my life where I had a beautiful family, but I was stuck and dissatisfied with myself.

I knew I wanted to change things — my health, finances, job, way that I was approaching life — but I didn't really know what I wanted to do about any of it. Most of the time, I just ignored all of this, and distracted myself.

I didn't have any clarity on what I wanted or what I needed to do. This lack of clarity is felt in all of us very deeply, so that it shows up in how we talk, how we hold ourselves, how other people feel us. It affects our relationships, our jobs, our health.

Then I got very clear that I needed to change. And clear that I wanted to quit smoking, start running, become vegetarian, start waking earlier, and start writing more. I went on to do all those and more.

Clarity helps us to focus, to take action, to feel energized.

A lack of clarity causes stress, inaction, a scattered focus, relationship difficulties, confusion on teams.

Some examples of areas to find clarity in:

- Your mission in life
- Your morning routine
- Your financial plan
- What you need to do to improve your relationship
- How you'll get healthier
- What others expect of you; what you expect of them
- How a meeting will be run
- What your boundaries are in each relationship

As you can see, this is a pretty broad topic — it can apply to every part of our lives. And we don't have to be perfect, and we don't have to get clarity on everything this week. It's something to bring awareness to, that we can improve over time.

But the more we find clarity, the more we'll have focus, calm, motivation.

How to Get Clarity

OK, great ... we want to get clarity in our lives ... how do we do that?

I'll share some things I've learned for finding clarity:

1. **Create some space.** When we're unclear on something (how we should reach a goal, for example) ... most often we put it off instead of getting any clarity. Instead, try creating some space to get clarity. Carve out an hour. Half a day. A weekend. (Depending on how big the thing is that you need clarity on.) Then do the things below. But carve out the space.
2. **Journal, iterate.** Write about what you need clarity on — it doesn't have to be any solid answers, or any kind of coherent writing. Just let your thoughts pour out. Stream of consciousness. Just give yourself space to reflect.
3. **Meditate & contemplate.** Similarly, you can go out in nature and spend some time in solitude. Go for a walk. Sit on a rock. Meditate. See what comes up for you. Hold one question in your mind: "What do I want here?" Or something like that. See if anything emerges as you hold the question.
4. **Talk to others.** Share your thoughts with others. Share what you're not sure about. What you're afraid of. Hear their thoughts. Just the act of talking it out is valuable — you're giving space for your thoughts and feelings, and having them heard. Often you can get clarity from a good conversation.
5. **When you have a little clarity, write it down.** If you have some kind of answer, any kind of clarity at all, write it down as simply as you can. Two sentences. Putting it down simply helps it become more clear. And then you can start to take action on it.
6. **Take action to get clarity.** Many people think they need to have clarity before they take action, but it often happens the other way around. Have the slightest bit of direction? Go in that direction, take the first steps, see what it's like. You'll learn more from doing than going back and forth on things. For example, as I started working on my mission, I got clearer and clearer that this is what was meaningful for me, but I also got clearer on how I'd go about doing it. Maybe in a couple years, I'll have even more clarity, but I'm not going to wait for that in order to take action. Start moving, and learn from that.
7. **Reflect after you take action & get clearer.** As you set things in motion, it's useful to step back every month or two to see how things are going. What have you learned? What's getting in the way? Use what you've learned to get even more clarity. Write it down simply. Take action again.

And repeat.

What areas of your life need clarity? How is the lack of clarity affecting you and those around you?

Are you ready to create the space to get the clarity?