

5 ways to ignite your future and feel empowered

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It goes without saying that life right now feels a little chaotic - especially for the youth of South Africa. Pandemic lockdowns have disrupted everything from school or university to first jobs and how and when you see your friends. But there are various ways to deal with life's current challenges that lead to transformation and healing rather than anxiety and confusion. Here are a few simple ways that young people can personally empower themselves and ignite their futures.



1) Get creative

Energy can be understood as emotions in motion. Sometimes, if these emotions are unexpressed, they may get stuck, leading to feelings of apathy, sadness, anxiety and even anger. Releasing emotions in a healthy way can help support your mental health. Activities like painting, singing, dancing or writing allow you to express yourself and release pent up feelings. And you don't have to intellectualise your feelings; they don't have to make sense or be clear to you. Getting out of your head will help reduce anxiety and allow these emotions to move through you, causing you to feel instantly lighter. Creativity is a powerful healing tool.

2) Do an emotion check in

Emotions are useful in guiding us. When certain emotions come up, it's helpful to ask, "What is this emotion telling me?" In this way, you're giving the emotion space to breathe and allowing it to gently alert you to a feeling that may need to be healed. We often carry childhood and collective trauma with us, unknowingly believing that these feelings make us who we are. But they're just an indicator of the work that may need to be done. Journalling and reflection are useful methods of bringing the deeper workings of emotions to the surface and looking at how or if you want to work on a particular feeling.

For example, if a close friend tells me she's just landed a job, I'm excited for her. But it also reminds me that I'm still unemployed and have to support my family financially. Feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness can present as jealousy. The inner voice comes out saying, "Maybe I'm not good enough. Maybe I can't do this. I should just give up." Jealousy is the symptom of underlying feelings that need to be healed. However, this might not always be the case. Sometimes an emotion can come up and, upon reflection, you see that the feeling doesn't have deeper roots and can gently be let go. Doing an emotion check-in will help increase emotional intelligence, awareness and create a sense of resilience. Try to be aware and bring yourself back to your truth: "I am worthy, I am capable and I trust the timing of my life. I know I will find the right opportunity for me."

3) Be mindful of what you are consuming

No, not the foods you eat, but the information you take in. With the explosion of rapid sharing on social media, remember that while social media allows you to be disengaged with those you see on your phone – when you're scrolling on TikTok – it's still an exchange of energy. Your brain is processing the information you see. If you are currently unemployed or in a

less than fulfilling career, you unconsciously create feelings of comparison and low self-worth when you look at someone reaching their goals on Instagram. But social media is not real life.

Consider who you follow and what you consume. Value yourself enough to not allow weeds to creep into your pristine mental garden. Set boundaries by doing a clean out of your social media every now and then, then think about who you should be following. If you want to learn how to be a more positive person or find your purpose, follow coaches or professionals who specialise in these areas. These people have studied this work and have important tools to share with you. Follow them instead and remember that impact – not influence – will take you to the next level.

4) Be compassionate

Going through healing does not mean that you won't have bad days. It means that when you are compassionate with yourself on tough days, you are able to see the joy and blessings in your life amidst the hurt and pain. Be kind to yourself when that nasty inner voice rears its head. Commit to compassion for yourself in the knowledge that you will heal and days will be better.

5) Seek counselling or support

Oprah Winfrey said, "If you don't heal the wounds of your childhood, you bleed into the future." Healing sometimes needs more support than what you have at your disposal. But you can reach out for help. In our society, the stigma of receiving counselling or support is diminishing. It's time we value ourselves enough to know when we need a friendly voice to help us through a tough time. You can take your life's path into your hands. You have control over how you move forward on your journey. Seeking guidance, tools and support is one of the most beneficial things you can do for yourself. Look to places like Lifeline, SADAG or the Ithemba Social Counselling Centre for support.

The youth of today are under pressure. But, with the right tools and a positive mindset, you can take control of your future and become confident and empowered. These simple changes might be all you need to heal and set yourself up for success.

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