

5 Ways to Jumpstart Your Personal Growth

 aish.com/5-ways-to-jumpstart-your-spiritual-growth/

by Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith

August 31, 2022

4 min read

This is the best time of year to shake things up.

1. Strengthen Your Free Will Muscles

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, literally means “head of the year.” It’s referred to as the head because the New Year is the time to attain clarity and vision about your life’s purpose and goals for the upcoming year.

The Hebrew month of Elul, which began this week, is the last month of the year. If Rosh Hashanah is the head, Elul – the end of the year – is signified by the feet. In Hebrew, a foot is *regel*, which shares the same Hebrew root as “habit,” moving mindlessly on auto pilot.

The mandate of the end of the Jewish year is to reconnect it to the previous Rosh Hashanah when you were burning with passion to accomplish clearly defined goals. Now is the time to shake off the dust of complacency and to infuse this last month with the vitality you had at the beginning of the year.

When you live by habit, you’re sleepwalking, going through the motions, and letting your free will muscles atrophy. The most important thing you can do to jumpstart your spiritual growth is to stop being a zombie and strengthen your free will muscles by making active choices.

That’s why every morning during the month of Elul the shofar is blown. It’s your daily reminder to wake up! Break your routine, wrestle with your lethargy, go to battle with your laziness, negativity, and repeat cycles of giving up.

Reconnect to your greatest gift: your free will.

How?

Pick one clearly defined act that you can commit to for the next four weeks, something that requires a real effort (but manageable) and will lift you out of the dross of your habituated life. It may be committing to exercise for 15 minutes a day – no matter what, giving one person a sincere compliment every day, doing something that is out of your comfort zone.

Each mini victory is significant. You’ll feel empowered, confident, unstuck. It can show you that with hard work, change is possible, and give you the initial momentum you need to move further.

2. Put More Focus on Your Most Important Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are the primary training ground for spiritual growth. How you treat others is the most concrete way to excel in giving and become more like G-d, the Ultimate Giver.

It’s common for people to treat their coworkers and strangers better than their spouse and children. It’s easy to take for granted your most important relationships – after all, they’re always there.

Until they aren't.

Don't take your spouse and kids for granted. This month, put them at the top of your priority list. Spend more quality – and quantity – time, be extra considerate, affectionate, and attentive.

3. Waste Less Time

The plethora of streaming platforms and social media feeds generate a tsunami of distraction and, let's face it, causes us to waste oodles of time. If you want to show up on Rosh Hashanah and plead your case for another year of life, you need to demonstrate that you value your time and are serious about using it meaningfully.

Where can you cut back on killing time?

4. Do More Jewish

Take on doing one additional spiritual practice that you find meaningful. It may be reading an inspiring book, taking a weekly online class about a Jewish subject, or having a family Shabbat dinner filled with good food, meaningful conversation and song. Think about something that resonates with you, and make sure it's not too daunting.

5. Have a Heart-to-Heart with G-d

Even if you're not the crunchy-granola spiritual type or a Hasid in the making, consider giving this a shot. The Jewish concept of G-d – an Infinite, Eternal, All-Encompassing Being Who has no form – is very abstract, and it's easy to relegate this transcendent Being to the Heavens while you go about your life on earth.

Work on making G-d tangible, right here, right now. Open up your heart and talk to Him, share your feelings, your fears, your anger, whatever is on your mind or weighing down your heart. It doesn't have to be in a synagogue, or with a prayer book. G-d is everywhere, aware, listening; just find some quiet alone time and confide in Him. And keep at it. You may be surprised to see how having those heart-to-heart chats makes you feel connected to Him.

More About The Author

Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith

Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith lives in Jerusalem with his wife and children. He is the chief editor of Aish.com, one of the world's largest Judaism websites. He is the author of [*Shmooze: A Guide to Thought-Provoking Discussion on Essential Jewish Issues*](#) – a must-have little book for anyone who loves a good question, and the co-author of [*Rabbi Noah Weinberg's 48 Ways to Wisdom*](#) and [*Wisdom for Living: Rabbi Noah Weinberg of the Parsha*](#).