

13 Ways to Stay Small

(The Last One Works Every Time!)

Growth is easy when you're 8-years-old. It gets harder at 30 or 40 or 50. However, it's easy to *stop* growing. Your growth as an adult demands intention.

Stop growing? Easy as pie! But just in case you run out of ideas, here are a few ways:

1. Hold on to things



Whether it is a wound, an awful experience or that old couch that you should have donated in 2007. If you want to stay stuck, then fear letting go. If you want to soar, you might need to drop a few pounds of excess baggage. If you want to move forward in relationships, you might need to stop white-knuckling grudges and myths.

2. Hang around people who aren't growing.

The people you hang with will ultimately play a huge part in your growth as a person. If the people around you are constantly sinking into negativity and abuse, it may be time

to get you some new people.

3. Stop reading.

Here's some great advice from Groucho Marx:

"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book."

4. Binge watch a greater number of television shows at the same time.

People who are living real lives must spend less time monitoring fictional characters trapped in screens on walls.

5. Place your Bible in your car and keep it there from Sunday to Sunday.

A sure way to grind your growth to a halt is to stay away from God's Word. In an age of Bible apps and memes, may I propose that you get a real Bible—one that you can hold. Consume it, write in it and highlight it. But for goodness sake don't just treat it like a Sunday prop. It's a sad commentary that many believers will not walk ten yards away from a smart phone but will leave God's word in the car or on the shelf most of the week.

"The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly."— Søren Kierkegaard

Yes, read books, but every day read THE Book.

6. Beat yourself up.

If you want to stop growing, become hypercritical of yourself. Fill your mind with lots of regret and self-loathing. Don't view yourself like Jesus views you: wholly accepted. Instead hold yourself up to impossible standards and when you fail, compare yourself and your life by the lives of your most successful friends.



This one is my specialty. I've been honing my craft for years. I beat myself up all the time! I can be so cruel to myself. I'm my worst enemy! (Wait. I think I just beat myself up about beating myself up.)

7. Spend time trying to get people to like you.

In truth, this was never the point of Christianity. Where do you think we would be if Paul, the apostle, spend his ministry trying to get people to like him. If that was the goal, he failed gloriously. Think about it:

- Stoned (in the biblical sense, of course)
- Beaten
- Jailed
- Doubled-crossed
- Talked about
- Ignored
- Rejected

And that's just confirmed stuff. Here's how Paul writes it:

I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

8. Numb the pain.



If you don't want to grow, here's the key: Every time you feel pain, reach for a pill, a drink, a pie, a website, a lover, a needle, a social media platform, or a hobby.

The last thing you want to do if you don't want to grow is to feel it. All growth involves pain.

Growing pains? Is there any other kind?

You lose, you learn. You hurt, you learn. The smartest guys in the room wear their scars like a badge of honor. They are kind of like Jesus that way. The pain is where the truth comes alive. Don't chase the pain but please don't run from it. I would agree with the ancient poet, philosopher Rumi when he said,

"Through love, all pain is medicine."

Pain actually heals us and brings us home.

9. Take the credit and the blame for your children's choices

If you'd like to stop growing as a person, live your life vicariously through your children to the extent that they are your identity. It's a two-edged sword. When they mess up, you mess up. When they succeed, you find your identity in them. You can't work on your own stuff if you are too focused on your kids stuff.

10. Pray sparingly and sporadically

If you want to stop growing all at once, stop praying immediately. If you pray, you are growing. It's hard to not grow when you pray because it is so hard to be sinning and praying at the same time. Try it some time. (Actually, no. Don't try it. It would be so weird.) Prayer is growth on steroids without all the dangerous side effects. God wants your skin in the game, and the best way to get some skin in the game is through prayer.

11. Code your feelings rather than

expressing them.

You know how frustrating it is when people with whom you work alongside choose to code their feelings. You know they are mad. They have just decided to use codes embedded in their overall attitude toward you. Adults use words not codes. To not use words, when it comes to feelings, is to stunt your growth and the growth of any relationship. No one has ever truly changed from the inside-out by having someone pout at them for weeks.

12. Talk more than you listen

This is the ying in the yang of #11. If you don't want to grow, talk more than you listen. I hope that one day people will say of me, "He really knew how to listen." I'm not there yet, but I do



know that I have rarely gotten it wrong by listening actively in a time of conflict or stress. On the other hand, I have very often messed things up terribly by speaking. It's true what they say, "When you speak words that wound, it's hard to get that toothpaste back in the tube." When you listen, you usually grow. When you interrupt, you usually churn.

Once again, the words of Rumi:

*So just be quiet and sit down.
The reason is: you are drunk,
And this is the edge of the roof.*

And finally... The BIG one...

13. Blame others

This is the biggest shortcut to stunted growth. If you don't want to grow, spend your life blaming others.

There's no growth when you blame. So that's why this is my best advice for people who don't want to grow. Blame your mom, your dad, your kids, your job, your past, the market, your spouse, your ex, the economy, the president and the devil. Find *someone* or *something* to blame, and I can assure you that you won't grow. There is nothing in blame that has growth potential.

"People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them."

~ George Bernard Shaw

There are many who love to just sit around talking about how terrible their friends, neighbors and family members are. But research says that complaining to a friend about how awful someone is will most likely reflect negatively on you. Researchers call this 'spontaneous trait transference'.

So if you want to grow, show a little grace. If you want to stay stuck, blame away!

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If you truly want to stay small, these are my best recommendations. I hope you won't take any of them. My prayer is that you'll join me as I continue to grow. If you catch me

using one of these growth stunting strategies, please call me on it. I promise I won't blame you, beat myself up or numb the pain. (At least I hope not.)

