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Harnessing the power of permission-giving

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Beverly Landais explains how you can begin permitting yourself to pursue the things that matter to you and offers a technique for accomplishing this.



Have you ever felt something was holding you back from pursuing your dreams or taking calculated risks? If so, you're not the only one. We often give permission to others without hesitation, but we don't always give ourselves the same consideration or encouragement. This way of thinking can be problematic because it can hinder us from reaching our goals and living our best lives.

What is permission-giving?

Permission-giving is the act of consciously deciding to do something you want to do, even if it's something

you've been putting off or avoiding. It's about giving yourself the green light to pursue your goals, no matter how big or small they may seem.

These can be anything from asking for a raise at work, starting your own business or going on a date.

When you permit yourself to do something, you're not just saying 'yes' to what you want. You're also saying 'yes' to yourself. You're acknowledging your worth and your ability to achieve your goals.

It's about overcoming your fears and doubts and creating a solid plan to work towards something you desire. And when you do that, you open up a new world of possibilities.

The psychology of permission-giving

Why is permission-giving so important? Our thoughts and beliefs have a powerful impact on our behaviour. If we believe that we're not good enough or not worthy of success, then we're less likely to overcome the barriers that stand in the way of what we want.

But when we permit ourselves, we send a message to our subconscious mind that we believe in ourselves. And when we do that, we're more likely to take measured risks and do the right things that help us achieve our goals.

Permission-giving is important because it can help you to:

- **Increase your confidence.** When you permit yourself to do something, you tell yourself you can do it. This attitude

can help to boost your confidence and make you more likely to take risks and go after what you want.

- **Improve self-esteem.** When you permit yourself to do something, you also tell yourself that you deserve to do it. This mindset can help to improve your self-esteem and make you feel more worthy of happiness and success.
- **Motivate yourself to act.** Permitting yourself to do something can help you overcome your fears and doubts and do something that moves you towards your goals.

What prevents people from permitting themselves?

So, why is it so hard to permit ourselves to act in our best interest? There are a few reasons. First, our family, culture and upbringing may emphasise self-sacrifice. We may have come to believe that it's not OK to put our needs first or that pursuing the things that make us happy is selfish.

Second, negative feedback or poorly communicated criticism may have undermined self-belief. This experience can make us feel like we're not good enough and don't deserve to succeed.

Third, we may have limiting beliefs about ourselves. We may tell ourselves that we must be more intelligent, talented, or capable enough to achieve our goals.

Fear of failing can also be at play with some people, resulting in them not even trying to do what they want. Others may fear rejection and don't risk it by asking for what they want.

So, what can you do to overcome these and similar issues?

Self-permission intervention (SPI) is a technique that can help people overcome self-limiting beliefs and act towards their goals. It involves

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identifying the things holding you back, challenging those beliefs, and permitting yourself to work in your best interest.

How to use self-permission intervention

Begin by identifying the goals that are important to you. Be specific about what you want to accomplish. Once you know your objectives, identify the obstacles preventing you from achieving them. Try to understand the beliefs and thoughts holding you back and challenge them. Ask yourself if they're accurate and if there are other ways to view the situation. Be kind to yourself as you do this. Finally, identify the small steps to overcome obstacles and achieve your goals. Consider what you can do today to get closer to accomplishing your objectives.

If you're interested in using self-permission intervention, here are a few tips:

1. Start by identifying **what you want to achieve**. What are your goals?
2. Once you know what you want to achieve, **identify your obstacles**. What is stopping you from achieving your goals?
3. Once you know your obstacles, **identify the beliefs and thoughts holding you back**. What are you telling yourself that is preventing you from achieving your goals?
4. **Challenge these beliefs and thoughts**. Are they true? How do you know this is the case? Are there other ways to look at the situation?
5. Once you've challenged your beliefs and thoughts, **take small steps towards overcoming your obstacles**. What can you do today to move closer to your goals?

The WOOPS method

The WOOPS method is a simple yet effective way to apply a self-permission intervention. Here is how to use it:

- W - What is your wish?** What do you want to achieve? Your wish should be challenging but feasible. Be specific about what you want to do. The more specific you are, the easier it will be to develop a strategy for achieving it.
- O - What are your hoped-for outcomes?** What will be the best possible result from accomplishing your wish? How will you feel? Be optimistic about the outcome. Focus on the positive consequences ▶

of doing what you want to do.

This mindset will help you to stay motivated when things get tough.

- O - What are your obstacles?** What are the main blocks holding you back from achieving your wish? Be realistic about the obstacle. Be honest with yourself about what prevents you from doing what you want. If you underestimate the barrier, it will be harder to overcome it.
- P - What is your plan?** What practical steps can you take to overcome your obstacles? Decide on practical and realistic actions using the problem-solving technique of 'when-then,' i.e. when (the obstacle arises) ... then I will (name the step you will take).
- S - What self-permission will enable you to pursue your wish?** Give yourself full permission to follow your desire. Write a few sentences granting self-permission, why you deserve to fulfil your wish, and pledge your willingness to put in the effort.

Here are some examples of permitting yourself. It is helpful to write these down by starting with 'I give myself permission to'

- **Feel all my emotions, even the difficult ones.** Feeling angry, sad, scared, or any other emotion is OK. Don't try to suppress or deny your feelings. Instead, allow yourself to feel them fully and then let them go.
- **Make mistakes.** Everyone makes mistakes. It's how we learn and grow. Don't beat yourself up when you make a mistake. Just learn from it and move on.



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- **Ask for help.** It's OK to ask for help when you need it. In fact, it's a sign of strength. Don't hesitate to reach out to your friends, family, or a therapist if you're facing challenges. They can provide valuable support and guidance.
- **Look after my wellbeing.** This means ensuring you get enough sleep, eat healthy foods and exercise regularly. It also means taking time to relax and do things you enjoy.
- **Set boundaries.** This means learning to say no to things you don't want to do and to people taking advantage of you. It's essential to set limits to avoid overworking or making too many commitments.
- **Be kind to myself.** Treat yourself with the same compassion and understanding that you would treat a friend. Be patient with yourself, and don't expect perfection.

These are just a few examples of permission-giving to yourself. The most important thing is to find what works for you and to start practising it regularly. As you permit yourself to be more of who you are, you'll feel more empowered and fulfilled.

It is important to remember that permitting yourself is a process. It takes time and effort to change your mindset and overcome your fears. Taking one small step towards doing something you've been putting off within the next week can be an excellent push to start empowering yourself. ■

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Getting the most out of WOOPS

To get the most out of the WOOPS method, keep these eight tips in mind:

- 1. Acknowledge your fears and doubts.** Identify and challenge what's holding you back with unwavering determination. Once you know what you're afraid of, you can start to challenge those fears.
- 2. Have pride in your strengths and abilities.** Remind yourself of what you're good at and what you genuinely enjoy doing. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses.
- 3. Keep your goals achievable, but don't shy away from taking on a challenge.** Start with small, realistic goals and gradually build your momentum. As you achieve these goals, you'll gain confidence and self-esteem, making it easier to take on more significant challenges in the future.
- 4. Celebrate your victories.** Reward yourself for your accomplishments, no matter how small, and take pride in your hard work. This will help you stay motivated and focused on your objective.
- 5. Don't compare yourself to others.** Everyone is different. Comparing yourself to others will only make you feel bad about yourself. Focus on your journey, and don't worry about what others are doing. Stay steadfast in your progress and growth.
- 6. Ask for help when you need it.** Ask for help when you need it; it's a sign of strength to recognise that you will benefit from the input of others. Talk to a friend, co-worker, family member or professional coach and gain the benefit of collaboration.
- 7. Practice self-compassion.** It takes time to change your thoughts and beliefs. Keep going even if you don't see results immediately. Just keep at it, and you'll eventually reach your goals.
- 8. Be bold and believe in yourself.** If you don't believe in yourself, no one else will. So start believing in yourself today and notice the difference in how empowered you feel to do something.