

Portraits

Why You Do What You Do
And How To Do It Better

Dr. Kris Heap



Portraits

WHY YOU ARE
THE WAY YOU ARE
AND HOW TO BECOME
BETTER

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*Dedicated to my brother, Justin,
who may never realize what an
example he is to me of strength,
kindness, perseverance, and
overcoming obstacles.*

*And to my sister, Heather, who
refuses to be defined by a
physical limitation. Who I've
never heard complain. Who is so
strong that she looks at a
disability in the face and says,
"I'm going to do it anyway."*

I love you both.

“If you hear a voice within you say you cannot paint, then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.”

- Vincent Van Gogh

INTRODUCTION

The Questions

Have you ever wondered why some people succeed in life and others don't? Why does one kid get involved with drugs, gangs, and violence while the kid that lives next door excels in school and receives a scholarship to a major university? Why are some people able to overcome life's obstacles better than others? How do kids develop a good self-esteem?

These are all questions that have been asked by doctors, psychologists, sociologists, teachers and parents for many years with no clear answers.

How about your life? Is there a hidden reason why you

make the decisions you do, or why you find yourself in your current circumstances? Is there something hidden below the surface that influences your friendships and other relationships?

In this book you'll discover the hidden secret to determining the long-term success of a person. It's something you've probably never thought about before but when you learn it, you'll understand why you make the decisions you make, why you choose the friends you do, why you perform the way you do at school or work, and many other aspects of your life.

The secret is your self-portrait.

CHAPTER 1

Portraits

Did you know that when a child is born they came to earth carrying a big blank canvas? We don't see it because they carry it deep down on the inside. That canvas stays blank for a while as a baby grows into a toddler. Then, at around the age of 18 months, the neurons in a child's brain start making certain connections that allow the child to become more self-aware. From that point on, everything that is said to them or about them begins to make a difference. It starts to stick. It starts to paint a portrait of who that child is.

This happened to everyone, your self included. Every word

said about you, good or bad, painted one brush stroke on that canvas you carried. Every good or bad experience painted another brush stroke. The way people treated you or behaved around you painted more brush strokes.

When you received praise, compliments, or encouragement the brush strokes were beautiful. When you were criticized, put down, or teased they were dark and ugly.

More and more were added, thousands of them, and soon an image began to appear on the canvas. A self-image. A picture of you painted by everyone else.

At first you looked at that portrait and saw things you liked and things you hated. Some of them made you feel good and pushed you to be better. There were other parts of your portrait that you hated and mad you want to scream, “That isn’t me at all! I don’t want to be seen like that! Don’t treat me like I’m that way!”

As you got older, more and more brushstrokes were added to that portrait. Some of them traced over the same lines again and again until they were big and bold. Some covered over the previous lines, changing the portrait. Every time you looked in at that

portrait you saw things you liked and things you didn't like.

As time went on, you started to accept some of the things you once hated. Many of them had been traced over so many times that you began to think, "Wow, maybe I really am that way because people keep saying it. Maybe I'm not smart. Maybe I won't be good at sports. Maybe I don't deserve to be happy." That's the moment when you started to become on the outside what you saw in the portrait on the inside. That portrait that the people around you painted for you.

Not only that, you began to think and act in a way that made that portrait even more bold. You started to put yourself in situations where the person in that portrait would be found. You started to say things the person in the portrait would say. You started to act like the person in the portrait. You became the person in the portrait: all of the good parts and the bad.

The important thing to know about yourself is this: **Who you are and what you do on the outside is a reflection of the portrait you see on the inside.**

Wherever you are in life is exactly where you are supposed

to be based on the portrait you carry on the inside. All of the things you like about yourself and the things you don't like. The good choices you make in life as well as the bad choices. The people you choose as friends, your choice of career, your study habits in school, and many of the other major aspects of your life can all be traced back to what you see when you look inside at your self-portrait.

Do you see yourself as confident or timid? Do you see yourself as a good student or a person who just coasts through school? Do you see yourself as a good friend, someone who is fun to be

around, smart, popular, funny, shy, scared, good-looking, lazy, or grateful? How you see yourself on the inside is how you will act on the outside.

Here's the real kicker about your self-portrait: Most of what you see, that self-image you see inside, wasn't even painted by you! Most of it was painted by other people in your life, whether they had any business adding a brush stroke or not! Your parents, teachers, friends, strangers, the internet, music, they all get a chance to add paint to your portrait.

That may sound completely like a bad thing but it isn't. It can

be either good or bad. People who are high-achievers believe that they can achieve great things because they were told and treated as though they could achieve great things from the time they were young. They see a high achiever when they look inside. People who consistently struggle with life often believe that they aren't good enough to achieve great things. That's how they've been treated so that's what they see on the inside.

For example, a child that is told how smart they are from a young age and whose parents give them extra learning activities throughout their early child-

hood will have a different self-portrait than a child who is consistently told he is a troublemaker. When both of these kids begin school, guess which one will act like the smart kid in class and which one will act like a troublemaker. Because of that, guess which one the teacher will treat like the smart kid and which one will be treated like they aren't a good student. Which one do you think will get better grades? Which one do you think is more likely to get a scholarship or go to college? Which one do you think is more likely to act like a "smart kid"?

Now here's the real question: Which one actually had a higher IQ? We don't know. We would guess that it was the "smart kid" not the "troublemaker" and we could easily be wrong. IQ has very little to do with actual success in school or life.

The point is that one child developed a self-portrait from the time they were young that showed them as a smart kid who loved to learn. When school began, they acted like a smart kid who loved to learn. The teacher treated them as a smart kid who loved to learn and therefore gave that kid more opportunities to an-

swer questions or do more creative projects, which reinforced the kid's portrait that they were the smart kid. This led to them taking advanced classes in middle and high school, which led to scholarships and college. All because at a young age, they were talked to and treated like the "smart kid." It really didn't matter if they actually started off as a "smart kid" or a "normal kid". What matters is how they see themselves, and how they see themselves comes from the self-portrait they see when they look inside.

One of my mentors once said, "You cannot consistently

perform in a manner that is inconsistent with the way you see yourself.” You act based on how you feel you should act. If you see yourself as an outgoing person who is fun to be around, you will approach life that way. If you see yourself as someone who nobody wants to talk to, you will approach life that way. The way you see yourself determines the way you experience life.

This book was written so that we can consider the portraits in ourselves and in others. What role do we play in developing the portraits of those around us? How does our own portrait look? How do we change our portrait if

we aren't happy with what we see?

In the end, the way your life is right now, the good and the bad, is largely based upon your self-portrait. It is the root of your successes, your failures, and everything in between. So let's figure out how to start creating the portrait you deserve for yourself and others.

Grab your canvas, grab your paintbrush and let's learn more about portraits.

“You cannot consistently perform in a manner that is inconsistent with the way you see yourself.” – Zig Ziglar

CHAPTER 2

The Portrait Painted For You

There is a good chance that most of you reading this book right now are living with some labels that are not true to who you really are. Those labels were put on you by other people or certain life circumstances and, good or bad, they stuck. When the labels stick, they change you and the way you experience life.

For example, there is a story about the Ashanti tribe in Africa that shows this point. In the Ashanti tribe, children are given a specific name based on what day of the week they are born. So if you were born into their tribe on a Monday, your name would be Kojo (for a boy) or Akua (for

a girl). If you were born on Saturday it would be Kwame or Ama.

Here's where the story gets strange: somehow over 50% of all crimes in that area are committed by people who were born on Wednesday! How can that be?

In Ashanti, those born on Wednesday are given the name Kwaku. Coincidentally, Kwaku is also their word for mean-spirited or quick-tempered. So as that kid grows up, if he ever loses his temper or makes a mistake, people around him say, "Oh, that makes sense because he's a Kwaku."

Over and over again that young person is told that they are quick-tempered and mean. Brush stroke after brush stroke is added to that portrait. Eventually, what is that kid most likely become? Exactly what people expected of him: mean, ill-tempered, and more likely to commit a crime. It is what he began to expect of himself because that is what his portrait showed. Was he actually born that way or was he just born on the wrong day? Interesting to think about.

It is important to remember that these labels, or brush strokes on your canvas, aren't all bad. Many of them are good and build

up your self-esteem. Parents and teachers have a major positive impact on their kids as well.

Bill Glass tells a story that illustrates this point. Mr. Glass was an all-star football player who later started a religious ministry focused on prison inmates. One day, he took a professional baseball player into the prison with him to motivate the prisoners. In between speeches, Bill asked the baseball player how he decided to pursue baseball as a career.

“I didn’t have any choice.” the baseball player responded. “From the time I was little kid my dad always told me I would

be a great ball player. If I kept swinging my bat like that I would make it to the big leagues. If I kept throwing the ball that hard I would be an all-star some day. Over and over he told me that. So you see, I knew I'd be a professional baseball player from the time I was born."

One of the inmates overheard their conversation and said, "You know, the same thing happened to me."

The two men looked at him in surprise. "You played professional baseball?" they asked.

"No, from the time I was little my dad told me I'd end up in prison some day. I must have

heard him say that to me a hundred times. And he was right, here I am, right where he said I would be. I guess I always knew I'd end up in here.”

Are you starting to understand the power of that portrait being painted inside of you? The more people tell you something, the more that portrait gains definition and clarity. The more defined the portrait, the more you start to become the person in the picture, good or bad.

As I said before, that portrait begins to be painted before you even learn to talk. From that moment forward, a majority of your life decisions stem from the

way you see yourself in your portrait. If you have parents that doted on you, complimented you, and always told you how wonderful you are, you have a better chance of developing a good self-esteem than someone whose parents constantly neglected or criticized them. If you had teachers in school that recognized your talents in certain areas and helped you develop them, you have a better chance at academic success than someone who was labeled the class clown, troublemaker, or slow kid.

Many kids grow up thinking they are stupid in all areas of life because they struggled with one

area of school and someone made them feel embarrassed about it. It all comes down to the people painting your portrait.

An important question to ask yourself is: **Who is painting my portrait?** Do you spend time with friends who build you up and make you want to be better? Do you spend time on the internet looking for things that uplift or make you want to improve? Do you spend time around people who drag you into bad habits? Everyone you meet is holding a paintbrush, so who are you allowing to paint on your portrait?

I know all of this makes it sound like your future is out of your control but I promise it isn't. We'll talk about that more in a few chapters. But for now, let's talk about some ways you can make a difference in the portraits that other people are carrying around.

“Everything that happens to you is a reflection of what you believe about yourself. We cannot outperform our level of self-esteem. We cannot draw to ourselves more than we think we are worth.”

—Ayanla Vanzant

CHAPTER 3

Painting On Somebody Else's Por- trait

Just as the people in your life have painted on your canvas, you have also painted on theirs. Not just in the things you say to them, but in the way you treat them. This is where the Golden Rule really comes into play: “Do unto others as you’d have done unto you.” Another way of saying that could be, “Only paint on other people’s canvas the things you would want painted on yours.”

We often forget just how powerful our words and actions are, but they have the ability to change somebody’s life. Something as simple as a small compliment or an uplifting word

might seem insignificant to you, but to the other person it could put a big stroke of bright paint on their portrait that had become only dark and grey.

I once had the opportunity to work with a youth group in our church. One of the young women I worked with was always shy and very self-conscious about her hair, her clothes, her smile, just about everything. She didn't really have anything positive to say about herself. When I tried to build her up, she would shake her head and lower her eyes. For reasons that I don't really know, the self-portrait she saw on the inside was boring, ugly, and worthless.

One day I sat down with 4 of the more popular boys in the group and we came up with a plan to help this young lady. We all knew she was a great person, had a great sense of humor, and had a lot of talents that she hid. We wanted to help her to realize all of those things about herself. Our goal was to change her self-portrait.

They started small, complimenting her skirt or her dress when they saw her on Sundays. Soon they were telling her how much they liked her hair or her shoes, which is something young men really never notice. As the boys got more comfortable, they

started to tell her how funny she was and how much fun she was to hang out with. At first she had a hard time accepting the compliments. I know why. Every time they complimented her she was looking inside at her self-portrait and saying, “That’s not true, I know I’m not fashionable. I’m not funny. I’m boring.” Every time a compliment came her way she checked it against that self-portrait and decided it couldn’t be true.

Luckily, the young men persisted. And even though she didn’t believe what they were saying, every compliment added another small brush stroke of

beauty on her self-portrait. Then one day, someone gave her a compliment, she looked inside, and realized that it did match her self-portrait. All of those compliments had changed the portrait enough that she actually did recognize the good things they were saying about her.

Everything changed at that moment. She started to laugh more. She held her head up higher when she talked to people. She started doing her hair more and wearing makeup. She started putting herself into conversations rather than hanging out along the wall or in a corner. It didn't happen over night, it took time. Her

confidence skyrocketed from where it had been.

It took a group of people who were willing to go out of their comfort zone to freely give compliments to someone who they never would have before. In a few months they were able to undo years of dark and negative paint that covered her canvas.

Every day you are painting on other people's canvases. Every word, every action, the way you treat them, the things you say to them, even the way you look at them is adding a brushstroke of paint.

The question is this: **What kind of paint are you using?**

Are you walking around with a brush dipped in dark and ugly paint or are you spreading positive and uplifting colors? Are you looking for ways to uplift others or do you contribute to them feeling down? Never forget, everything you do makes a difference.

If you see somebody sitting by themselves, acting like a “loner”, or who even just seems depressed all the time, please realize that there is a good chance that somebody in their life, or maybe a lot of somebodies, have been dumping dark paint on their canvas and that has made them feel worthless. I hope

you also realize that you have the power to change it! You are holding a brush that can change their life!

If you really want to make a lasting difference in the world, look for opportunities to improve people's self-portrait. When you do, a funny thing happens; some of that bright-colored paint you are adding to their portrait spills over onto yours. You cannot improve the portrait of others without simultaneously improving your own. It is just a fact.

By the same token, you cannot paint negatively on somebody else's portrait without also getting some negative paint on

your own. **In life, you get what you give.** So paint with the best colors you can!

Especially for Teachers

What a special and crucial role you play in developing the self-portrait of our children. Next to their parents, you will be the most influential person in their young lives. I have seen teachers help a “bad kid” excel and, unfortunately, I’ve seen them take a self-confident kid and knock him down.

You have an incredibly difficult task because every year

you receive a group of students from all different home situations. They all carry vastly different portraits and your job is to somehow build them all up and give them what they need while simultaneously teaching the expected curriculum. I don't know how you do it. You are amazing people.

Most of my experience with teachers has been those that taught me and those that teach my children. I had teachers that let me be a slacker because that is the way I acted and I had teachers who told me I was better than that and held me accountable. I had one teacher who actu-

ally sat me down and told me, “Kris, I know that the way you act in class is not who you are. I know you are better than the lazy homework assignments you turn in. You are better than that.” She was right! I was better than that, but I had let myself fall into the portrait of a kid who did the bare minimum to get by. She changed my life. I wish I had met her before I was a senior in high school!

My children are extremely fortunate because we live in the boundaries of an absolutely amazing public elementary school. The principal has developed a culture of caring about the

actual students and not just the grades they get. Their school is one of my favorite places to visit.

One of my children struggled with math and writing when he was young and because of that he developed a self-portrait of a kid who wasn't as smart as others. Fortunately, he made it through elementary school and ended up getting really good grades in junior high.

A few weeks ago we were talking about his time in elementary school and I asked him who is favorite teacher was. I was surprised to hear that his favorite teacher happened to be my least favorite of his teachers. I thought

she had been one of those that made him feel like he wasn't smart enough. Turns out, she made him feel like one of the "smart kids".

I then asked who his least favorite teacher was. Again I was surprised to find that it wasn't who I would have guessed at all. He almost started to cry as he remembered his time in that class. I was shocked. I asked him why that teacher was so bad and his response surprised me. He said that she had never treated him badly, never said a mean word to him, never chastised him in front of the other kids, none of the things I would think would

make a child not like a teacher. He said, “She never called on me once the whole year. Even when I really knew the answer and waved my hand as high as I could. I kept thinking that one day she would call on me and I could show her how much I knew but she only ever called on the “smart kids.”

Did that teacher do anything directly wrong to my son? No. Did she purposefully not call on my son? I sure hope not! I think maybe she knew she could get the answers she wanted from certain kids and so she was predisposed to let the “smart kids” answer the questions. Again, I

don't think she did anything purposefully wrong. She is one of my favorite teachers at the school. But without realizing it, she set my son back *years* on his academic self-esteem, to the point where we are still working on overcoming the insecurities that came from that experience.

The point of that story is not to place blame but to remind our teachers that everything you do, or don't do, is painting on a child's portrait. It is in our nature to favor those who behave or answer the way we want them to. We naturally trust the "smart kids" with more responsibilities which, in turn, helps them grow

more quickly than others. But we can't forget how much we are able to improve the lives of the "difficult" kids as well. As much as possible, please pay extra attention to the kids who may be struggling. You'd be amazed how much self-confidence they can gain if you put them in charge of something in the classroom or give them a special responsibility that is just for them.

An amazing study out of Stanford University indicates that a child's grades in school are 25% I.Q., 25% organizational skills, and 50% self-image. Yet how much time is spent working on a kid's self-image? How

many high schools offer classes about self-esteem? It is a whole 50% of what makes a kid successful yet it goes completely ignored in most schools.

Teachers have a wonderful opportunity to set a kid up for a successful life. Please recognize that the kid who is a troublemaker in class may be that way because people have painted him as a troublemaker most of his life. He may be going home to a negative environment when he leaves your class. He may go home to people who tell him he's stupid or will never amount to anything.

Take some extra moments in your day to build them up. Pull them aside and tell them how much you appreciate their hard work, even if they haven't been working hard. Paint a new picture for them of who they can be, not who they are right now. You can change their whole world and improve their future.

If we treat people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat people as they ought to be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming.”

- Goethe

Especially for Parents

What a hard and amazing thing it is to be a parent. Not only do you care for your own self-image and well-being but you have to be conscious of the well-being of children who are trying to find their way through life. I didn't know how happy and how sad I could feel until I had children and watched them succeed at times and struggle at others.

Perhaps as parents you have had the experience of raising your child one way and then as

soon as they go off to kindergarten they start coming home as a different person. We wonder what happens at school to cause this.

What is happening is a change in their self-portrait. For the first time in their life they are spending more of their waking hours outside of your home than inside. The number of people and situations that can influence and affect them skyrockets. You aren't the only one painting on their portrait anymore. They suddenly have teachers, classmates, bus drivers, teacher's aids, and older kids interacting with them on a daily basis.

Those interactions all have an affect on your child's self-portrait. Many of them are positive and many of them are negative. What throws off the balance is that for every negative experience a child has, they need 10 positives to counteract it. If your child hears 10 great things from their teacher yet experiences 5 negative things on the playground, you are losing the battle by a score of 50-10. Every time your child leaves your home to go to school or anywhere else, you can safely assume that when they come home, the balance is tipped heavily into the negative column.

That puts a lot of pressure on us as parents to right the scales. In many ways we have to undo the damage that life has done to them on the battlefield. They may come home from school grumpy or tired and it would be easy for us to make a negative comment about their attitude. They may come home seeming normal and so we would say nothing more than, “How was school today?”

Please remember that they need a lot of positive at home. I’m not saying you need to dote on them and tell them they are the smartest kid in the world, but at a minimum we need to tell

them how proud we are of them for going to school and learning and making good friends. We need to hug our kids more. I think one hug at the end of a long school day can wipe off a lot of negative paint from their portrait.

If we do nothing or we just assume they will be okay, we are losing the battle and the victims are our children. Take every opportunity to build them up. If they fail to clean their room, resist the temptation to say, “You never clean your room. You’re so lazy.” Even though you may really think it. Instead try making as positive as possible, such as, “I know cleaning your room isn’t

your favorite thing but it really makes me feel good when you do it.” Just this morning my wife said to our son, “I know that you respect the clothes we bought for you enough to hang them up.” Essentially it is the same thing but turned into more of a positive.

If we let our kids know our expectation for them, we give them the opportunity to do it and improve their self-portrait. If we force them to do it with threats of punishment, we paint a portrait of someone who needs to be threatened before they perform.

Remember, it takes a lot of positive experiences at home to

overcome the negative paint the world is splattering on them. There are opportunities in every day to build them up, hug them, congratulate them for accomplishing a chore or homework, or whatever you can think of. If we want their portrait to be a masterpiece we have to add our positive flourishes onto their canvas in as many ways as we can.

Parents need to fill a child's bucket of self-esteem so high that the rest of the world can't poke enough holes in it to drain it dry.

– Alvin Price

CHAPTER 4

The Portrait We Paint for Our- selves

We've talked about how our portraits are painted for us by others, we've talked about how we paint on other people's portraits, now let's talk about how we paint our own portrait.

Up to this point, it may sound like everything you think or feel about yourself is only because of what other people have done to you or said to you. But that is only part of the story. You also contribute to your own portrait.

One of the great blessings of life is that you truly have the power to create who you are, good or bad. You have a paintbrush just like anybody else.

Unfortunately, most people don't use their paintbrush to paint themselves a very nice portrait. Actually, most people don't think about using their paintbrush on themselves at all. They let everybody else add brush strokes to their portrait and they just accept what gets painted without question. The most important thing to remember is that society will not naturally paint a very good portrait for you. If you let everybody else paint your portrait you will quickly be left feeling inadequate and small.

I met a lady once that was struggling with life. She came to me and asked why every day was

so miserable and why nothing ever went her way. I tried to talk to her about all of the good things she had in her life but she just wouldn't accept it. For every positive thing I pointed out she would counter it with a "Yeah but..." followed by something negative. We went on like that for an hour, me trying to swoop in with a positive paintbrush and her blocking me with a shield of negativity.

In the end, I had to tell her that her life was miserable because she had decided to be miserable. She chose every day to focus on the hardships of life and nothing else. She painted her

own portrait as dark and drab as possible, day after day. It was so bad that she didn't even think she deserved to have anything good in her life. She couldn't accept a compliment, she couldn't even imagine there was any way to be happy. It was one of the saddest visits I've ever had with anyone.

The reason it was so depressing wasn't just because she had a poor self-image, a lot of people have that. It was such a tragedy because she was the one making it worse for herself. There were people all around her trying to support her and build her up. She had the power to do it herself but she refused to dip

the brush in any color that would improve her self-portrait.

One of the great tragedies in life is that people don't realize that they have the power within them to create whatever life they want. They stand there holding the brush and they can reinvent themselves any way they want, yet they do nothing because of fear, self-doubt, or because they have acted one way for so long that it just feels comfortable.

I hope that you never get to a point where you've let self-pity and low expectations feel comfortable. It should feel uncomfortable to be anything less than what you know you should be. It

is okay if you aren't perfect. Nobody is. Everybody on the world is somewhere less than perfect. But you should still strive to be the best you can be. **It is possible for you to be both a masterpiece and a work in progress at the same time.**

But how do you actually change your portrait if you are unhappy with the way your life is going?

In the next chapter we will talk about some tools you can use to re-paint your portrait into something you love.

CHAPTER 5

Changing Your Portrait

As I said in the previous chapter, you have everything you need to change the portrait you are carrying around inside. It doesn't matter if that portrait was created by others or by your self. If you don't like the way your life is going, you need to make some changes to the way you see yourself inside. Your family dynamics, your relationships, your money situation, your performance at school or work, your friendships, the way you spend your free time, the way you spend your money, the clothes you wear, the habits you pick up, everything is based on your self-image, your self-portrait.

What you see on the inside determines how you feel about yourself. How you feel about yourself determines the way you think and act. The way you think and act determines the life you create around yourself. The life you create around yourself determines your ultimate happiness.

The last question we need to answer is: How do I change my portrait?

I'll show you. But first, a story:

When I was young there was a man on T.V. named Bob Ross. He was an artist and during every episode of his show he would paint a beautiful landscape while

also teaching you how to paint. It was pretty amazing! Every once in a while he would make a mistake or paint something that he wasn't pleased with. Did he just let it stay there? Did he freak out and throw away the whole painting? No, he just took his brush and painted right over the mistake. Sometimes he would paint a rock over it, or clouds, or the occasional cabin. His favorite was to paint over it with "happy little trees." After a few minutes, you had no idea there was ever a mistake. It looked like the picture was painted exactly as he had planned it from the beginning.

Bob Ross had the ability to look at his picture and when he saw something he didn't like, he took his paintbrush and he recreated the picture.

You have the same power to recreate your personal portrait. If there is something you don't like about yourself, or some way that you've been labeled, you can paint over it just like Bob Ross. Remember, you hold a paintbrush just like everyone else.

Here are 4 effective ways to change your self-portrait and start feeling more confident:

#1 – Focus on the Positive

It is estimated that a person will experience somewhere between 100 - 300 negative things every day. Some of them are big, some are small, and most we probably don't even notice. As I mentioned previously, psychologists have found that it generally takes 10 positive inputs to counteract each negative. So for a person to develop a positive self-portrait, they need to experience as many as 3000 positive inputs every day. That seems so overwhelming!

Amazingly, most people actually come into contact with

twice that much positivity every day if they take time to recognize it. Just about everything around you can be seen as a positive. You have a house, food, your body, eyesight, people who love you, electricity, the ability to read, a country that is safe to live in, the list goes on and on. You have a thousand positive things to be thankful for that you don't even have to think about.

Yet many people will only focus on the negative. Not even all the negatives, but usually just 1-5 negative things that happened that day. There is a natural law called the Law of Focus that says whatever you focus on gets big-

ger and more abundant. So if someone focuses over and over on a couple of bad things that happened in their day, those bad things start to seem bigger and bigger until they block out all of the good things.

To protect ourselves from those negatives, we need to focus on the positives. The Law of Focus can work in our favor. The more you focus on the good things in your life, the bigger they get until they block out the negatives.

I find that a great way to do this is to make a list of everything I am grateful for in my life. I try to come up with 100. I list

everything from family to chocolate to shoes.

Focusing on what you are grateful for will help you realize how much good there is in your life that you take for granted. When you consistently recognize and focus on the good, you start to find more of it. The more good you find, the less you will be able to focus on the negatives. Soon your portrait starts to change into a picture of someone who deserves to have good things in their life.

Remember, you act according to what we see in the portrait. So if your portrait looks like someone who deserves good

things, you will begin to attract more good things.

#2 – Talk to Your Self

Normally talking to yourself could be seen as a sign that you might have a screw loose upstairs, especially if you do it in public. What you may not realize is that you already have a conversation going on in your brain all day long. You already talk to yourself, so what are you saying?

Some people spend time telling themselves how great they are, some people spend time telling themselves how inadequate they are. If you could read peo-

ple's thoughts, you may be surprised to discover that on the inside, most people say pretty depressing things about themselves.

You may or may not believe what everybody else thinks of you, but the opinion you believe the most is your own. If you spend all day focusing on the negatives or the times you failed, you will believe more and more that you are a failure. If you tell yourself that you messed up but you'll do better next time, you probably will do better next time.

One of the most effective ways to re-paint your portrait into something you like better is to

start taking control of the conversation and talking to yourself better. People say things to themselves that they would never say to another person. They beat themselves up so much on the inside that it is no wonder that they have trouble being happy. I guarantee that you are harder on yourself than anybody else is on you. You are more critical of yourself than anyone.

How do you change the way you talk to yourself? By forcing yourself to say positive things. Here is the most effective exercise I've ever used to really change the way you feel about yourself:

1. Make a list of 10 traits you think that a happy, successful, wonderful person would have. Think of some of the people you admire most and describe them. Your list could include: “helps other people”, “good listener”, “smiles a lot”, “honest”, “hard working”, and many others.
2. Next, add the words “I” or “I am” in front of each trait. So your list could read, “I am always serving other people.” “I am always on time.” “I work harder than

anybody else.” “I am always smiling.”

3. Post your list somewhere that you will see it often, like your bathroom mirror. Read your list to yourself every morning when you wake up and every evening before going to bed.

4. Bonus: If you read the list out loud while looking at yourself in the mirror, it supercharges the results (but you may feel a little uncomfortable at first).

It will be difficult in the beginning because you aren't comfortable saying nice things about yourself. You may even feel like you're lying to yourself. Just keep doing it. When the way you talk to yourself improves, the portrait you see of yourself improves and the way you feel about life improves. You will start to walk taller, smile more, and feel more confident.

#3 – Finish Something

For many people, a poor self-image leads to a feeling that they are not capable of accom-

plishing anything of value. They often feel like anything they did wouldn't be good enough so they stop trying.

There is something magically uplifting about finishing something. It could be as complex as getting a college degree or as simple as finishing a puzzle.

When you finish something, you get that little feeling of accomplishment that goes with victory. It's as if you dipped your paintbrush in the paint bucket labeled "Achiever" and then painted a line on your portrait. You were born with a desire for accomplishment and growth. It is in your DNA. That great feeling

you get when you finish something comes from your actions lining up with that inside desire for accomplishment. So the more you can accomplish, the more you will boost your self-esteem and self-image.

I once met with a young man who said he “had nothing to offer the world.” He had been thinking so negatively for so long that he had pretty much stopped trying to accomplish anything. His grades were suffering, his friendships were becoming distant, and he was fighting with his family members. He had beaten himself up inside.

As we talked about ways to get back on track, I asked him if he would be willing to try an experiment. I asked him to set just 1 goal. This was it: to make his bed every morning right after waking up. That's it, just 1 goal. He laughed for a second before realizing I was serious. He agreed to try it.

Here's the idea behind the goal. When you make your bed first thing in the morning, you accomplish something right off the bat that most people haven't done. You start your day accomplishing something, even if it is small and easy. Then, when it is time to go to bed, no matter how

hard your day was that day, you can see your made bed and know that you accomplished something positive. I know it sounds stupid but I got the idea from the Navy SEALs and they are pretty accomplished people.

Did making his bed change this young man's whole life? No. But it did get him started on a different kind of thought process. Making his bed turned into doing his homework on time and studying more for his tests. He started doing chores around the house without being asked. Before long he was accomplishing a lot of little things that he hadn't been before. Imagine what those little

things did to is family relationships, grades, and friendships. All those little things added up and now, 5 years later, he is as confident a young person as I know. He found out that by finishing something, he could slowly repaint his portrait.

Try making your bed!

#4 – Serve Somebody Else

Hands down the best way to change your outlook on life and improve your self-portrait is to find ways to serve other people. I have found that people suffering from depression, low self-

esteem, or a negative self-image often times get stuck in a pattern of focusing too much on the things they don't like about themselves. The more they turn inward, the more depressed they get because they don't like what they see on the inside. They become overly critical of themselves and slowly spiral down hill.

The best way to help your self is to help others. It is what I call "The Service Paradox".

The Service Paradox

When you serve other people, you end up benefitting from it

more than they do. You get more than you give.

Amazingly, it is impossible to reach down and lift somebody up without raising yourself up in the process. The more you do for others, the more you benefit from the service. The more positive paint you brush on others, the more you spill on yourself. It doesn't seem right but it is absolutely true.

So if you are feeling down about yourself and you want a quick way to fix it, look for somebody that you can do something nice for. It could be as small as texting them a nice

compliment, taking them their favorite treat, or cleaning up their yard. It really doesn't matter what it is, the fact that you are doing something for someone else makes some wonderful changes to your self-portrait. You start to feel more valuable. You start to see yourself as a good person. You lift yourself up. The scripture says, "Charity never faileth" and I believe that without question.

If you want to rapidly improve your life, stop looking at your own problems or insecurities and find someone to serve. It works like magic.

To review, the 4 greatest things you can do to re-paint your personal portrait are:

1. Focus on the positive
2. Talk nicely to yourself
3. Finish something (make your bed!)
4. Serve somebody else

Remember the painter Bob Ross and his happy little trees. You have the ability to do the same thing. If you see something you don't like about yourself or the portrait you carry on the inside, grab your brush and the tools we just talked about and change it! It is worth it!

CONCLUSION

The Power to Paint

How do you change a person? You change their portrait. How do you change yourself? You change your portrait. How do you change an organization? You change its portrait. We are all reflections of the portrait we carry on the inside.

In the past I would get frustrated with people I was trying to help because many of them just wouldn't make any progress. I would set goals with them and motivate them and show them exactly how they could improve their life yet they just wouldn't do it. It completely baffled me that someone could see the path

towards a more fulfilling life yet they wouldn't take it.

It wasn't until later that I realized that I was fighting against their self-portrait. Many of these people honestly believed that they didn't deserve happiness, wealth, or good things to happen to them. Many of them would leave my office feeling motivated to make some progress but when they got home they would look inside at their self-portrait and see someone who was ugly, lazy, unlovable, uneducated, unpopular, negative, or miserable. When they saw that portrait, without even thinking about it, they would abandon all of the goals

we had set together. On the inside they felt that they didn't deserve good things. That negative self-portrait that had been painted and strengthened over many years was in there sabotaging the changes that they wanted to make.

A person cannot consistently perform on the outside in a way that is contrary to the way they see themselves on the inside.

So if we want to make changes to ourselves, our families, our classrooms, our workplace, or even our country, we need to change the portrait. Once we do, once we get that little crack in

the armor, that little space where we can slip a better paintbrush in, we can start to paint a new picture. We can start to write a new story. It takes time and persistence because there will certainly be some resistance, but if we stick to it the portrait will change. When the portrait on the inside changes, the person on the outside is soon to follow.

The most important thing I hope you take away from this book is this: **You hold the paintbrush!** You have the power to change yourself and others around you. You cannot wait for others to do the painting for you. If you want change, if you want

to achieve more, if you want to help others, grab your brush and paint with the brightest, strongest, most uplifting colors you can. Paint those colors on everyone you talk to. Paint them on everything you do. Paint them all over yourself (not literally). The more positive paint you put out there, the more you will get back.

I promise that if you do, before long you will realize that you have created a masterpiece.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Kris Heap is a dentist, motivational speaker, author, and creator of the popular self-help blog, **Successify.net**, which gives practical advice to people seeking to improve their lives. He also travels around the globe, providing healthcare to “the poorest of the poor.”

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