

Step 2: Reliving

Once you have begun recognising your good qualities, the next step is to help them to sink in, to make them real. One way of doing this is to use your memory for experiences of acting in line with them as a resource.

Give yourself a few days to notice more items to add to your list and then, when you feel you have taken it as far as you can for the time being, once again find yourself a comfortable, relaxing spot and read the list to yourself

Don't skip through it at top speed. Pause and dwell on each quality you have recorded. Let it sink in.

Lin, for example, recalled a time when she had been home by herself and a friend had telephoned, apparently for a casual chat. Lin picked up something in her friend's voice which prompted her to ask gently, "Are you OK?" Her friend burst into tears and confided that she had had an argument with her boyfriend and was feeling really depressed. She was pleased to have an opportunity to talk. Lin was able to accept this as an example of her own sensitivity.

When you have read slowly and carefully through your list, go back to the top again. Now, as you consider each item, bring to mind a particular time when you showed that quality in how you behaved.

As you do this, you may find it helpful to close your eyes.

Take time to recall the experience as vividly as you possibly can — almost as if you were reliving it, right now.

See too if you can call up the emotions you experienced at that moment.

Take all the time you need to allow the memory to develop fully in your imagination.

Notice what effect this exercise has on your mood and how you feel about yourself. If you can absorb yourself in it fully, you will find that the items on your list become much more vivid and meaningful to you. You should find your mood lifting, and a sense of self-acceptance and confidence creeping in.

If this does not happen, it could be that in some way you are disqualifying what you have written. Throughout the exercise, keep a watchful eye for feelings of shame, embarrassment or disbelief. These feelings may be a cue that self-critical thoughts are going through your mind.