

5 Steps to Freedom: SHIFT Acronym

S = See it

H = Honor it

I = Identify

F = Figure Out

T = Take Action

5 Steps to Freedom: My SHIFT Acronym

Follow these five steps, with an emphasis on the first two, to live your best life.

SHIFT:

1. See it. Zen is all about consciousness practice. Here's where you become curious about your stuck places, what you're feeling or thinking, what your habitual patterns and stories are, how you react to your emotions, what you repress (which thus becomes your shadow), and more.

NOTE: In the western world, this step has traditionally been accomplished through talk therapy. However, Shift dialog is my preferred method as it seems to get right to the heart of the matter, very quickly.

2. Honor it. This is the second part to living a Zen life. Here's where you do your best to be ok with what you're experiencing. Whatever shows up in your life- can you find a way to consider, listen to, dance with, and be intimate with your many and constantly changing moods and moments, rather than resist any of it? This can be difficult to practice because of the nature of your dualistic mind, which has preferences, plus our long history of avoiding any unpleasant feeling. As a result, this step requires an active practice.

NOTE: The above is a two-step, staggering journey which leads you to be in flow with who and what you are, and is a practice of pure Eastern Zen, which involves no goals except to be one with your life.

These next three steps, are my version of American Zen, which involves goals. These steps should not be taken though, until and unless a sufficient amount of time is given to the first two steps (at least one month, but preferably years).

3. I identify if there's still a big enough problem in your life (after the first two steps), that you're willing to do something more about it.

And know, there rarely is. Typically, people won't tip over this edge unless they absolutely have to. Robert Downy Jr. when asked: "Was it hard to quit drugs and alcohol?" he replied, "No, it was very easy."

"But, getting to the point where I was WILLING to quit, that was extremely difficult."

If you tip over this edge though, as Robert suggests the rest is easy:

4. Figure Out what you want to replace it with. If you have a problem that --after all this-- still persists, you now only need to decide what your new 'you,' will be. Here, you make a conscious choice on how you prefer to feel, be or act from now on. And know you can choose anything, and I mean anything, you want.

5. Take Action. They say if you do something 20 times, it becomes your new habitual pattern. So, it's now your temporary but very rigorous, full-time job to; whenever you see the problem arise, and you've honored it (thank it for its wisdom), you now get to work to replace it with your new choice. You must be diligent about this for several days, but after about 20 times consciously shifting the pattern, the old version of you should be wilted and you will no longer be identified with it like before, and the new version of you will be blooming.

An example:

I was cheated on by a boyfriend and after we split up, I was consumed by whole host of emotions, including fear, anger, sadness and jealousy. I spend the several weeks engaged in my practice, 1. I saw it all as it showed up- the fear, jealousy etc., and 2. honored it all, which was a deeply moving experience. As a result I felt very alive and in flow with all that arose, and these very painful feelings and emotions eventually ran their course after about a month and let me go.

Everything that is, except the jealousy. The only lingering problem was, I couldn't stop thinking about the two of them together and that image was driving me crazy. So, I tipped over the edge, decided this problem was a big enough deal I was willing to do something more about it. I consciously decided to replace my jealousy with instead, how much I love my cat Sigmund, and got to work.

The next week it became my full-time job to -whenever I saw my mind thinking about the two of them together- honor the jealousy I was feeling, then end the conscious moment by replacing the bad feelings and images with instead, the feeling and image of how much I love my cat. After 4 days of this, I never felt the jealousy again, and I was back in flow with my life.