

Lesson 1 Best Version of Me

Becoming the Best Possible Me

You are at a critical stage in your life, trying to figure out who you are and who you want to be.

You may also be wondering how you can improve yourself. Self-improvement is not about being perfect.

It is a journey to become the best version of yourself. The talks here will inspire you as you take your first steps.

Talk 1 For Those Struggling with Creativity

I'm a writer, and I love writing. But there are moments when I feel anxious about my writing and blame myself for a lack of creativity. Creating something new is not easy, and you have probably experienced this when you had difficulty coming up with ideas for group projects or videos. So, how can we set aside those worries and enjoy the creative process more?

I did some research on this issue and found that ancient Romans understood "genius" differently from how we see it today. To them, "genius" didn't refer to a particularly gifted person but rather a divine assistant spirit of creativity. They believed that geniuses lived in the walls of artists' homes and would come out and help them with their work. This meant that if the artists' work was not good enough, they didn't have to blame themselves entirely. Everyone knew that their genius was also responsible for the quality of the work.

Some people may think this is not scientific, but we often hear stories about how people get inspired mysteriously. I once met an American poet named Ruth Stone. Throughout her life, she worked on a farm and wrote poems. She had a special way of recognizing when a poetic genius was coming to her. She said it felt like the earth was shaking under her feet! Whenever that feeling hit her, she knew she had to return home quickly and write the poem down before the genius found another poet. My creative process isn't as dramatic as hers.

I have to get up at the same time and work on my laptop for hours every day. Yet, even in this rather boring routine, I do get ideas coming from a source I can't identify. Typically, it happens when I'm deeply engaged in my work. Several hours or even days can pass, and I completely immerse myself in my creative process. It's at those moments that a brilliant idea strikes me somewhat mysteriously. I'm sure that's my genius.

Remember that you too have a magical genius that is willing to help you. But first, you must put your heart and soul into your work. Immerse yourself in your work and try to enjoy the creative process itself. If you do, your genius will come for sure.

Talk 2 For Those Worrying about an Uncertain Future

When I was 12, I was passionate about soccer. I played soccer every day, and I always thought that I would grow up to become a great soccer player one day. Forty years later, however, I don't even watch soccer games anymore. I'm actually a big fan of American football now. My 12-year-old self may find this a betrayal.

When I was 22, I graduated from college in India with a computer science degree. At that time, it never occurred to me that I would be living a completely different life in the U.S. as a journalist and podcast host. Thirty years ago, we didn't even have podcasts or smartphones, and the future was not just unknown but unknowable.

When we look back, we can see how we have changed, but when we look forward, we tend to imagine ourselves as the same people, only older and taller. That, however, is not the case. Biologically, our cells are continuously renewing themselves, and our brains are rewiring and modifying their connections. We are constantly becoming new versions of ourselves.

Have you heard of the "Ship of Theseus"? When Theseus, a famous Greek hero, returned from his adventure of rescuing the children of Athens, the Athenians wanted to preserve his ship. They kept replacing the wood pieces that had decayed until all the original pieces were replaced with new ones. In this situation, could we still call it the Ship of Theseus?

Well, we are living examples of the Ship of Theseus. Every day, we are changing and growing to become new versions of ourselves. This means that our future selves may be very different from who we are now. Then how can we create a future we'll be proud of? I have some advice for you.

First, actively envision the kind of person you want to become in the future. To do this, spend time with different kinds of people to learn more and stay curious. Second, when expressing your views online or with friends, remember that your future self might disagree with your current opinions. So, be respectful of other people's opinions and don't just assume that you are always right. Finally, your future self will have strengths and wisdom that you may lack today.

Even if you can't do something now, you might be able to in the future. So, don't be afraid of new challenges. Be brave!