You should know...I hate the word “should”. As in, I REALLY find it problematic in many ways. In fact, in our house, we work very hard to avoid using it. Why is the word such an issue? It’s just a word, right? Actually, no.

First, “should” is a very judgmental word. Stop and think about it for a second. When someone says, “you should do...,” what’s your first reaction? Do you feel as though someone is wagging their finger at you? It can come across as though the person you are interacting with (or ourselves when we use it for our own behaviors) automatically knows more and has more expertise than you do, even if that’s not true or accurate.

Second, using “should” can make you feel less than. We’ve already established that it is a judgmental word. Judgements cause us to question our thoughts, feelings and actions. To be fair, this can be a good thing at times, as it may help us make better and more skilful decisions. At other times, it can negatively impact our self-esteem and self-confidence, causing us to shrink away from things or avoid engaging for fear of repercussions and negative responses.

When we get caught up in the “shoulds,” we lose sight of what we need. Our focus is about pleasing others rather than pleasing ourselves. We forget to stop and think about what’s important to us and what we want. We are living in a state of comparison rather than a state of ownership.

So, how do you shift from the “shoulds” to the “needs”? The first step is recognizing when you get caught up in the word. Notice that you are “shoulding” on yourself. Pay attention to the feelings that arise. Note when it feels uncomfortable and when it feels like an obligation. These are reactions that are important to pay attention to if you want to change the focus.

Next, notice if the things you are doing are things you need or want to do. Remember though, that needs and wants are different. Sometimes we need to do things we may not want to do, but we still have to do them anyway. Shifting to the use of the word “need” from “should” helps you to feel a sense of agency and control. Things feel less cumbersome and overwhelming if you feel as though it’s your choice to make.

Lastly, slow down. When you get stuck in the “shoulds”, stop and take a breath. Using “should” can cause your anxiety to activate, which speeds you up. If you slow down, take some deep breaths and refocus, you can shift to what it is you need. This can help you prioritize, reset and keep moving.

Obviously, we can’t stop using the word “should” entirely. However, if we can shift to thinking about what we need to do, we may feel more committed to the change we are creating, allowing it to be more long-lasting and meaningful. So, stop “shoulding” on yourself! It’s not helping you move forward. In fact, it may be keeping you stuck.

Author by: Jennifer Hartstein, PsyD
Retrieved from: https://www.hartsteinpsychological.com/stop-shoulding-on-yourself

Interested in learning more?
YouTube Clip on Shoulding
Podcast on Shoulding
Give yourself permission to treat your self kindly. Taking time to take care of your self is not an act of self-indulgence, it is an act of self-preservation. We need to be of sound body, mind and spirit to be at our best.

Self-compassion recognizes a shared human condition. Everyone experiences hardships. However, in the moment, we tend to take an egocentric viewpoint. We ask ourselves “why me”? We dissociate from others and become isolated. One of the worst things we can do for our well-being is to isolate ourselves. While it can be difficult, we need to connect with others in our suffering.

Hardships are part of the human experience – while it might be painful, it’s normal and natural. We possess a lot of psychological mechanisms to avoid pain, including going straight into problem-solving mode. Acknowledge and validate how difficult the situation is. We need to be aware of our suffering in order to give it compassion and be with it. To get through any hardship, we need to give ourselves care and support.

We also have a tendency to be our own worst critic. Notice how you speak to yourself. Would you ever say this to a close friend? We should speak and treat ourselves in the same manner as we would our best friend. Write yourself a letter or start a journal. In difficult times, go back and read your positive words of encouragement and self-worth. Through evolution, we are programmed to respond to physical warmth, soothing touch and soft vocalization. By placing your hands over your heart or giving yourself a hug, it invites a sense of calm and safety.

Creating Lifelong Habits

The New Year often marks a new beginning, with many people making resolutions around their health. However, any day is a good day to start making positive changes! Here are some keys to making long-lasting changes:

1) Change one thing at a time. We are nearly 85% successful when we focus on making one change. The success rate drops to 34% when making two changes and less than 10% for three. Less is more!

2) Create a reminder. Cues are effective at triggering a response. When cues reach a subconscious levels, our actions become habits.

3) Start so small, you guarantee success. Build your confidence and gain momentum by starting with smaller expectations. As you experience success, gradually raise the bar. We can’t go from 0 to 60!

4) Perform it daily. Neural pathways are strengthened with greater frequency. Choose to change behaviours that occur regularly to increase your chances of success!

5) Create accountability. Whether it’s friends, family, social media or a support group, it’s important to hold yourself and others accountable. Having a support network is key!
The Pareto Principle: Improving Efficiency

The Pareto Principle states that nearly 80% of the outcomes achieved can be attributed to 20% of the actions. The best thing anyone can do is to use our time efficiently and effectively.

Whether it’s personal or business related, the Pareto principle can be applied to improve time management and optimize the outcomes achieved. **Spend more time on the things that matter most.**

The first step in the process is **self-awareness** and **reflection.** Ask yourself:

“What are the most important objectives that need to be achieved to reach my goal?”
“How much time am I spending on various tasks and procedures to meet these objectives?”
“Are there trivial items that are time-consuming and don’t have a major impact on the final outcome?”
“Are there tasks where I would benefit from outsourcing, leveraging the expertise of a colleague or making use of technology?”

The next step is to take an **inventory** of the tasks and time spent on each task (in a typical week). **Does anything stand out?** Per unit of time, are there any tasks that are eating up a significant portion, but don’t make a meaningful contribution to the outcome?

The final step is **time re-allocation.** Let go of those tasks and put your time and energy into what’s actually working for you. If it isn’t possible to eliminate those tasks, commit to spending less time on them.

Adopting the Pareto Principle can create positive and productive change in both your personal and business life. It can **reduce stress** or prevent burnout by honing in on the tasks that have a real impact. Spending time on trivial tasks can lead to feelings of boredom, frustration and disengagement. Focusing your time and energy on tasks that really matter can lead to **greater engagement** and enjoyment. Finally, when you can get more done with less effort, the time and energy you save can be put towards pursuing your passions outside of work -- spending time with your family, your hobbies or attending to your well-being.

Bell Let’s Talk Day – January 26th

**Bell Let’s Talk** is focused on engaging Canadians to take action to create positive change in mental health. Dedicating to moving mental health forward in Canada through awareness and action, the initiative is based on four key pillars: driving conversation to reduce stigma and promote understanding; improving access to mental health supports and services in communities nationwide; funding research projects with the potential to have a transformative impact on our mental health and well-being; and, encouraging greater corporate engagement by providing employees with mental health training.

On January 26th, Bell will donate 5 cents for every applicable text, call, tweet or TikTok video using #BellLetsTalk or use of their Facebook frame or Snapchat lens. Visit [Bell Let’s Talk](https://bellletstalk.ca) for more information, including activities to support your own mental health. We would also encourage you to complete the [Mental Health E-Module](https://owl.westernu.ca) available through OWL and visit our [Mental Health webpage](https://www.mentalhealthwestern.ca) for additional resources and supports at Western and in our community. [LifeWorks (EAP)](https://www.lifeworks.com) can be accessed 24/7/365 by calling 1-844-880-9142; for immediate clinical consultation, press ‘1’ at menu. You can also access [Reach Out 24/7 (CMHA)](https://www.cmha.ca) for 24-hour phone crisis assistance at 519-433-2023.
To ensure the health and safety of our campus community, in-person classes won’t be scheduled in January. We would encourage you to visit the Living Well @ Western page to participate in previously recorded fitness sessions, including: Yoga, Zumba, Pilates, and Functional Fitness. Check back frequently, as we’ve added new content including Yoga for Beginners and Meditation.

We would like to encourage everyone to take wellness breaks throughout the day. If you are looking for new opportunities, you can access our 10-minute wellness break library, participate in a guided art session, listen to the musical talents of our Western students, or tune-in to our new wellness podcast.

Disclaimer: Before engaging in a new exercise program, please consult with your physician or health care provider to ensure that these classes are right for you.

“There is a choice you have to make in everything you do. So keep in mind that in the end, the choice you make, makes you.”

– John Wooden

**Books**

**YouTube Channels**

**Podcasts**

Collection of Favourite Resources

Courtesy of Adam Craig
Recipe of the Month
Bulger, Mint & Parsley Salad

Ingredients

- 1 cup uncooked bulgur
- 1 cup boiling water
- 3 tbs. lemon juice
- 2 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves minced
- 3 cups chopped tomatoes
- 1 ¼ cup chopped cucumber
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley
- ½ cup chopped green onions
- ¼ cup chopped fresh mint
- Pinch of salt
- Pinch of ground black pepper (or lemon pepper)

Directions

Combine bulgur and boiling water in medium bowl. Cover and let stand for 30 minutes or until tender.

Chop fresh vegetables, herbs and combine with bulgur.

Add olive oil, lemon juice, and seasonings. Toss gently to coat.

Nutrition Facts

Per serving (1 cup): 113 calories; 4g fat (0.6g saturated); 18g carbohydrates; 4.7g fibre

Recipe found at cookinglight.com

Resources & Supports