

My first real glimmer of hope of being able to live in harmony with myself came my freshman year of high school. During my health class, I was assigned to sit and watch some videos about Cognitive Psychology that featured a former teacher from my high school who had gone on to share these principles all over the world. Ironically, this teacher was also my godfather, Lou Tice. As I listened, it was as though he had been camping out in my head. He said the first thing a person needed to do, to improve their life, was to become aware of their self-talk. Now, at the ripe old age of 14, I figured I had already attained the equivalent of a doctorate on that particular subject. I was hungry to get started using the tools! An easy way of understanding cognitive dissonance is to envision walking into a room and noticing a picture hanging crooked on the wall. Would that bother any of you? Yes! It seems that many of us feel a little stress associated with pictures not being in balance or not being "hung correctly." That tension leads to a desire to straighten the picture. The tension stops and the straightening ends when the picture reaches a level of congruence with the mental image that I hold of how the picture is "suppose to be!" This was a life-changer! The key in it being the words "the image I hold in my mind of how things are suppose to be." Today, I know that none of the pictures that I hold in my mind are cast in stone. They are changeable, and I can add completely new pictures to the inventory that already exists. If you want to use cognitive dissonance to construct the future you want, there is an actual formula and process for generating and changing pictures. The formula is "(I +V)R = A". Imagination + Vividness x Repetition = Actuality to the subconscious mind. > I raise my voice. > I stop listening to what the other person is saying. > I interrupt when the other person is talking. > My eyes squint. > I tend to roll my eyes. > My body shows aggression. > I carry my aggression into the next unrelated topic. > I bring our conversation to an abrupt end. > I go into a withholding quiet. Obviously, this is not the most wonderful picture I have hanging around. In fact, it makes me feel embarrassed, dumb and mad. What behaviors do these words trigger? > My voice lowers. > With interest I listen to what the other person is saying. > I let the other person complete their thought and ask questions. > My eyes and my mind stay wide open. > I maintain eye contact and seek understanding. > I make the other person feel smart by adding more information and by asking. "what if" questions for their consideration. > My body shows interest and openness. > My calm carries over into the next topic. > The conversation comes to an end with grace and appreciation. > I stay in a sharing frame of mind. This response makes me feel at ease, more knowledgeable and sensible. You can deepen and develop a greater sophistication for the use of this tool, but fundamentally, this is what helped me to find relief. Perhaps it has even helped me find joy! I hope you find this tool helpful too. Let me know. John McNeil, CEO of The Pacific Institute Community, Previously Vice President of The Pacific Institute. **Hardwood** • If you have children in your home, you have probably already had to face an instance where one of them has used a permanent marker on your floor. The best remedy for this is to apply a dab of toothpaste on the affected area. The stain can be gently rubbed out using a damp cloth for the best result. • Another common problem of hardwood flooring is water stains. They can be easily characterized by a slightly smoky white coloured patch on the surface of the floor. The first thing to do in such a case is to cover the affected area with a non-abrasive and dry cloth. Next, use a hot iron and go back and forth over the area for 3-5 seconds at a time. Once you have done this, use denatured alcohol to dampen a cloth and gently rub the areas where the stain is still visible. • You can soak a cotton cloth with hydrogen peroxide to treat general stains. All you need to do is place the cloth on the stains for about 2-5 minutes allowing time for the peroxide to get soaked into the wood. This can help bleach out any stain. **Vinyl** • Various stubborn marks and scuffs can be removed from vinyl flooring simply by wiping them with a cotton cloth using isopropyl alcohol. • For stains that may result in discoloration such as fruit juice, wine or tomato juice, bleach is the best choice. Use a 1:4 bleach-to-water ratio to dilute the bleaching agent and soak a cloth in the solution before laying it over the stain. Allow it to sit in its position for an hour at least. Bleach may take a bit longer to work but is sure to get rid of any type of troublesome stain. **Stone and Tile** • Grout between tiles is very common. A mixture of shaving cream and lemon juice can be put into a spray bottle and sprayed on the grout. Allow it to sit for 5 minutes minimum. Using an old toothbrush, the grout can then be scrubbed. • For gum stuck on a stone or tile flooring, try freezing it with an ice cube and gently scraping it away. Flooring is a big investment for homeowners. It is important to understand that one particular method cannot be applied to remove stains for all kinds of flooring. A wrong method can lead to permanent damage. Methods to clean hardwood floors is not same as that used to clean vinyl, laminate or engineered flooring. Tips from experts can help you use the appropriate stain-removal methods.