Personal discussion: Self-improvement

**Important tip #1:** This is supposed to be a fun discussion. You are allowed to tell people what you really think and feel, but you do not have to put your heart on the table. If a question makes you uncomfortable, just skip it. **Important tip #2:** If you want to be a good speaker, be a good listener. Really listen to people, be friendly and positive and open-minded. **Tip #3:** It’s ok if you don’t have time to do ALL the questions.

# Reading: Sara Lindberg (Verywell Mind), “The Growth Mindset.”

1. To you, did this text feel more like a personal commentary, based on personal observations, or an academic text, based on research? Did it look like the author was trying to use credible sources?
2. The author says that goals need to be SMART: “Specific,” “Measurable,” “Attainable/achievable,” “Realistic/relevant,” and “Timely/tangible.” Which of these 5 criteria seems the most important to you? Which one seems the least important?
3. Do you have an overall goal for this semester? It could be about your studies, or work, or your apartment or room, or your health, anything. Explain what it is.
4. Do you think that based on this overall goal, you could develop a really small, simple, basic goal for today or this week that would be a SMART goal that would help you make a step for your bigger goal? What would this small, SMART goal be like?
5. The author has 8 tips for how to reach your goals: “State goals with a positive tone,” “focus on the process, not the outcome,” “make a contract with yourself,” “clear out the old to make room for the new,” “visualize what you want,” “make a specific plan,” “keep it visible,” and “reward yourself.” Which of these tips seems the most interesting to you and why?
6. Think of a small goal that you had in the recent past, but it did not pan out. It could be about your classes this week or last week, about your room or your apartment, eating and working out, or anything minor like that, recently. Explain what happened. Which of the 8 tips do you think you did not follow with this goal?

# Watching: Chelsea Fagan (The Financial Diet), “How To Better Yourself Without Hating Who You Already Are.”

1. Chelsea is not a mental health professional and has no college degree. She is a self-made woman, a professional writer and Youtuber. Does that affect how you see her advice?
2. Chelsea talks about finding motivation from yourself, from how you feel in your body, from your own desires and needs. For Jordan Peterson, true motivation comes from helping others, especially helping your loved ones, your family. And I’m not saying Chelsea doesn’t find motivation in helping her loved ones, but it’s a different reason for self-improvement. Which makes the most sense to you?
3. Chelsea talks about self-improvement as a group effort. She says that you should tell others about your plans for self-improvement. The Verywell Mind article talked about this, but Jordan Peterson didn’t. Do you agree with Chelsea that it’s important?
4. Do you have a self-improvement project that you would like to tell us about?

# Watching: Jordan Peterson, “The Improvement Mindset.”

1. Jordan Peterson is a practicing psychologist, and he often works with people who have enormous life problems. It affects his tone, and he often talks to you like it’s the worst-case scenario: “You’re a flawed person,” “life is tragic and difficult,” “you have a miserable, wretched life,” etc. Some people like this, and others don’t. What do you think of his dark tone? Does it talk to you, or is it a bit of a turn-off?
2. Jordan Peterson says that impulsive pleasures (like playing video games) don’t lead to life satisfaction. He says that we need to focus on taking responsibilities, taking care of others. That these responsibilities become a “heavy burden,” and that the “heavy burden” is meaningful, gives our life meaning. What do you think? Do you think we can find happiness in “impulsive pleasures,” or should we focus on picking up a “heavy burden?”
3. Jordan Peterson talks about “aiming low enough:” He and Joe talk about “incremental improvement,” like when exercising: You start with something really small, because like with exercising, it makes no sense to start big, or you will never do it. Look around you, or think about your day so far. Is there something small you could do (it takes 5-10 minutes to do) to make a real improvement on your life or your environment?
4. Jordan Peterson talks about the Matthew principle: “To those who have everything, more will be given. From those who have nothing, everything will be taken away.” In other interviews, he explains that this is how games like Monopoly work: The winners keep getting more, and the losers keep losing more. In this interview, he says that the whole world works like that. What do you think? Does the world work like the Matthew principle?
5. Jordan Peterson says that because of the Matthew principle, people who make very small changes to their lives, like just making their bed, start going on a road of gradual self-improvement, and that this is what leads to completely changing their lives after 2 or 3 years. What do you think? Can you change your life by making really small changes like cleaning up your room? Or do you need big, drastic changes to really improve your life?
6. Jordan Peterson does not like the self-esteem movement. He says that it’s important to not accept yourself the way you are because people don’t want to stay the way they are: They want to improve. He says that this is particularly true for young people, who have so much potential, and people who are really depressed. Don’t tell them to accept themselves the way they are: Tell them they can improve. What do you think? Should you just accept yourself the way you are, or do you consider that self-improvement is an essential part of life, and so we should aim to improve, not aim to just accept how we are?