

Make a tiny upgrade

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Ten years ago, I worked with a personal coach for several months. It was one of the best investments I've ever made in myself, and I will forever be grateful for the many lessons I learned from [Phyllis, who inspired me to pursue coaching others](#).

Phyllis taught me to pay close attention to the language I used to describe my experiences and my feelings, swapping out "I'm so overwhelmed" with "I've got a lot on my plate, and I'm handling it." She taught me the importance of affirming, "I do complete work." And perhaps most importantly, she taught me to be aware of tolerations. "Tolerations" is the term she used to describe those little nuisances we tolerate - instead of fixing or replacing - that drain our energy. The spot on the carpet, the hem that's tearing, the check engine light, the burnt-out bulb, the broken rung on the chair, and so on.

Last year I gave myself a happiness boost by implementing several tiny upgrades to remove tolerations. I set aside \$100 to be used only to purchase items that would make life easier. Each purchase cost only \$8-15, so I was able to get quite a few items. After years of walking with one earbud in (and often falling out) and the other dangling, I bought a single earbud so I could listen to podcasts during my early-morning walks but still remain aware of my surroundings. When trying to meditate all I could hear was the ticking of the wall clock, so I bought a wall clock with a sweeping second hand and it made a big difference. The water at work is lukewarm so I bought my own ice cube tray with a lid to keep in the freezer.

These are first-world problems, no doubt, but they still drain energy, and therefore deserve attention. Setting a specific budget added the challenge of making sure I was really focusing on items that would make a difference. I just paid attention to the little nuisances and found ways to solve them. It brought me a lot of happiness.

Of course some tiny upgrades don't require a purchase at all. What are other little tweaks you can make to make things easier?

- Could you move things around so you can more easily access what you need?
- Could you upgrade your morning routine by leaving just 5 minutes earlier so you get to work on time?
- Could you designate an hour a week to address your tolerations?
- Could you spend 5 minutes on Google or YouTube learning how to fix a problem that's been nagging you?

The best thing is when you make a tiny upgrade the incremental increase in happiness is often bigger than you expect.