

Workbook Theme: Revitalize

Summary: *Life is about exploring, learning, and growing. It requires taking chances and stepping outside of your comfort zone every so often. Use this workbook to welcome new experiences and perspectives into your life in both big and small ways.*

As the days grow warmer and longer, you might feel a heightened sense of energy and excitement for new things to come. Perhaps you're looking forward to a special event (like a wedding), vacationing in a new place you've never been to before, or indulging in a hobby in a more creative way.

Life is in full bloom, and your subconscious is most likely picking up on it. In fact, research shows that spending more time outdoors on sunny, clear days can actually make us feel happier and more open to new ideas and experiences. This might explain why it might feel more compelling to break away from your everyday routine and indulge in something new.

New experiences can help revitalize our lives when things get sort of stagnant. It can jolt us out of autopilot and inspire us to see the world from a new perspective, leading to accelerated personal growth and a greater sense of purpose.

What Is Novelty?

Novelty is anything that's new, different, and unexpected. When we have novel experiences, our brains have to work harder than usual and use a wider range of neural connections to make sense of the new information it's taking in.

Being in a situation that's completely new makes us naturally pay more attention to it. We look for patterns and try to remember any similar experiences we had before to help us understand what is happening. This makes us more alert, focused, creative, open-minded, and likely to remember things.

While novelty can sometimes be scary or overwhelming, it can also give us a rush of positive feelings that motivate us to keep exploring new things and expanding our horizons. You might not realize it, but your brain is actually wired to seek out novelty so you can learn and grow.

Even the smallest novel experiences can help us break out of routines and boredom. When we're stuck in a rut, doing the same things day after day, it's easy to become disengaged and uninterested in life. Introducing something new into our lives can give us a much-needed sense of excitement and revitalization.

Here are a few common examples of how people seek out novelty in their lives:

- Trying new foods or restaurants
- Exploring new places in or around your local area
- Attending events, festivals, or concerts
- Meeting new people through local clubs, groups, or volunteer opportunities
- Taking classes online or offline

The Biggest Obstacle to Seeking Out Novelty

What keeps us from seeking out more novel experiences is something psychologists call "intolerance of uncertainty," which is a fancy term used to describe our tendency to fear or resist anything that's not familiar or predictable.

People with a high intolerance of uncertainty tend to be very risk-averse, preferring the comfort and security of the known over the unknown. They like things that are familiar and predictable, and they tend to stick to routines. They may have a hard time dealing with change, both in themselves and in their environment.

People with a low intolerance of uncertainty, on the other hand, are more likely to be comfortable with change and uncertainty. They're more willing to take risks and try new things, even if it means dealing with some uncertainty or ambiguity. They tend to be more open-minded, creative, and adaptable.

While a high intolerance of uncertainty might be beneficial in some situations (such as when taking calculated risks), constantly avoiding anything that's unfamiliar or unpredictable can severely limit our ability to learn, grow, and thrive in life. By embracing novelty, we can expand our horizons, explore new possibilities, and open ourselves up to all the amazing experiences that the world has to offer.

How to Lower Your Intolerance of Uncertainty

If you want to learn and experience more new things in your life, but you feel like you're a little bit "stuck" in your comfort zone, there are a few key strategies that can help. Here's what you can do:

1. Review your current areas of life (family, work, friendships, hobbies, etc.) and analyze how much variety or novelty they bring into your routine.
2. Plan and design experiments that slowly expose you to new ideas, perspectives, or activities.
3. Take action on your experiments and then reflect on what you've learned from your experiences—both good and bad.
4. Use the lessons you learned to brainstorm even more ways of adding more novelty into your routine.

By working toward lowering our intolerance of uncertainty, we can open ourselves up to new experiences that can bring excitement, joy, and growth into our lives. Let's get started!

Do a "Revitalization Review"

In many cases, we're just so busy—or so used to our own routines—that we don't even fully realize where we've stagnated in our lives. That's why it can be so helpful to do a "revitalization review," or an in-depth analysis of all the different areas of your life and how they're contributing (or not contributing) to your personal growth.

To do a revitalization review, start by taking a close look at each area of your life—family, friends, work, hobbies, health and fitness, and so on. Think about the amount of novelty they bring into your daily routine, and consider how often this happens.

Activity: Life Review Chart

Use the following chart to review each specific area of your life and think about how often you get to try new things or have new experiences. In the following columns, add brief notes according to the timeframe given.

Life Area	New Experience(s) This Past Week	New Experience(s) This Past Month	New Experience(s) This Past Quarter	New Experience(s) This Past Year
Family Life	<i>E.g., Visited a new park with the kids</i>	<i>Saw a new movie together</i>	<i>Went to the zoo together</i>	<i>Vacationed at a resort together</i>
Friends/Social Life				
Romantic Life				
Mental Health				
Physical Health				
Work/School				
Finances				
Spirituality/ Purpose				

Home/ Environment				
Fun/ Recreation				
Creative Expression				

Here are some tips on how to make sense of your chart.

New experiences in the past week: You're doing a great job. Ask yourself, how can you keep this up?

No new experiences in the past week, but at least one in the past month: Pretty good! This could be fine as is, or it could use some improvement depending on the type of new experience you've had and your personal preferences.

No new experiences in the past week or month, but at least one in the past quarter: This is a potential sign of stagnation. It's worth looking into how you can have new experiences in this area of your life more often.

No new experiences in the past week, month, or quarter, but at least one in the past year: You're quite stagnant here. Consider prioritizing this area of your life to revitalize it.

Start Experimenting

Now that you're aware of the areas of your life that could use a healthy dose of revitalization, it's time to start thinking about how to ease yourself into unfamiliar territory without feeling overwhelmed or putting yourself at too much risk. Remember—if your intolerance to uncertainty is medium to high, it can keep you from taking the necessary steps to venture out into the unknown.

One strategy for gradually lowering your intolerance to uncertainty is to design and implement "experiments" that test your beliefs or assumptions about uncertainty and then slowly introduce you to new experiences, ideas, or perspectives. These experiments can be small or large in scope, depending on the area of your life that needs revitalization.

For example, if you feel like you're stuck in a rut when it comes to your career, applying for a new job might seem too intimidating because you just don't think you're ready for it. Instead, you could start by researching companies that are doing things in a way you'd like to see your own company do. Through your research, you might find that you actually are ready to apply for a new job.

Activity: Experimentation Planning

Referring back to the previous activity, identify the areas of your life that are on the low end of incorporating novel experiences. These are typically the ones where you've only experienced something new in the past quarter or past year—but sometimes in the past month, too.

Fill out these areas in the first column, then consider what beliefs or assumptions you have that may be keeping you from seeking out new experiences in each area. In the final column, brainstorm some ideas on how you can take action to test these beliefs and assumptions.

Life Area That Needs More Novelty	Belief/Assumption About Uncertainty	Experiment Idea to Test My Belief/Assumption
<i>E.g., Physical Health</i>	<i>I don't enjoy cooking and think I'm bad at it.</i>	<i>I'll look for one easy recipe I can try making.</i>

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Test, Reflect, and Learn

Making a plan is one thing, but acting on it another. Make sure you follow through with testing each experiment you charted in the previous activity. This is why you want to keep your experiments small or less intense—you're far more likely to act on them when you do.

Once you've started to test your beliefs and assumptions, take some time to reflect on how it went. Were there any surprises? Did the experiment change your original beliefs or assumptions? What did you learn?

Reflecting on your experiences is important because you get to see just how true your original beliefs and assumptions are in reality. One way to clarify this is by measuring a specific emotion or experience related to the belief or assumption you're testing—such as learning, joy, relaxation, or something else.

For instance, if you don't believe you can relax by leaving the kids with your partner or spouse and taking a day to go out and do something for yourself, you could experiment by trying it for just an hour instead of a whole day. When you reflect on your experience later, you might find that you felt more relaxed than you expected.

Activity: Reflective Learning

Building on the two previous activities, use the following chart to name each experiment in the first column. In the second column, choose an emotion or experience you want to measure. In the third column, briefly describe the outcome, and in the fourth column, identify the overall lesson (or lessons if there are multiple).

Experiment	Measure	What Was the Outcome?	What Did I Learn?
<i>E.g., Cooking a new easy recipe</i>	<i>Enjoyment</i>	<i>Tasted good, enjoyment fluctuated with some frustration</i>	<i>I might like cooking if new recipes are relatively easy.</i>

Revitalize Further

While the first three activities in this guide have focused on identifying, experimenting, and reflecting on new experiences, there's always more to explore. The great thing about running through this process is that you can build on your experiences in new and exciting ways you never thought possible.

For instance, if one of your experiments involved an hour of some much needed "me time" to go shopping with a friend, why not take it further by scheduling a day at the spa together next month? The idea is to always work on shaking things up so that they feel fresh and new—even in small or subtle ways.

Here are some ideas to keep the novelty alive:

- Keep a running list of new things you want to try
- Join or create a group dedicated to trying new things
- Schedule time for yourself every day to do something different
- Talk to people outside your social circle about their hobbies or interests
- Go on a trip and choose activities based on your interests
- Research new experiences online and sign up for classes or workshops
- Try a new hobby, or revive an existing one in a new way
- Create a new ritual or tradition to keep things interesting
- Make a point to learn something new every day

- Take a different route to work or school
- Ask friends or family for recommendations on new things to try
- Keep on the lookout for new opportunities in unexpected places, like in your community or online

Activity: Exploratory Q&A

Considering your chart from the previous activity, answer the following questions to help you find even more new ways to revitalize the areas of your life that could use some extra novelty.

1. What have you learned in this experiment that could be tried again in new situations?

2. How can we consolidate what you have learned?

3. What other experiments could you do?

4. What might you need to do to maintain what you have learned?

5. What other therapy tasks could build upon the learning?

6. Have you developed any new perspective, and how could they be tested?

7. How could you put what you have learned into practice?

8. What else needs to be explored or tested?

Breathe New Life Into Your Routine

At the end of the day, the key to staying revitalized and engaged in your life is to continually seek out new experiences. By approaching each experience with curiosity and an open mind, you can learn more about yourself and the world around you.

The sky's the limit on how you can incorporate novel experiences into your life to revitalize and invigorate. So get out there and try something new! You might be surprised at just how good it can make you feel.