Change one trait on purpose

A free one-page guide to the video "Your Personality Isn't Fixed"

Personality isn't set like plaster. It shifts with age, with the roles you take on, and with what you do every week. Here is what the studies behind the video found, and a simple way to start, with a tracker for your first four weeks.

What the research found

Traits keep changing through adulthood. A review of 92 long-term studies found several still changing in middle and old age, with the biggest gains in steadiness and dependability between 20 and 40.

Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer (2006), Psychological Bulletin

Your setting trains you. German recruits came out of military training lower in agreeableness than a comparison group, and still were five years later.

Jackson et al. (2012), Psychological Science

Signing up isn't doing. In a study of weekly challenges, accepting a challenge did not predict change. Completing it did.

Hudson, Briley, Chopik & Derringer (2019), JPSP

Change takes months, and it holds. Across 207 studies of interventions, which averaged about 24 weeks, the changes held in follow-ups.

Roberts et al. (2017), Psychological Bulletin

Try it: the four steps from the video

1. **Pick one trait, not five.** In the studies where people changed on purpose, they aimed at a specific trait. Not sure where to start? The most common choice worldwide is steadiness under stress.
2. **Turn it into behavior.** A trait is a pattern of what you do. To be more dependable, plan tomorrow tonight, show up early, and finish what you start.
3. **Do it every week.** Don't just sign up for it. Do it, and mark it in the tracker.
4. **Change your setting.** Your friends, your schedule and the room you work in all train you. Choose them, and take on a role that asks more of you.

Did I do it today?

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
Week 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Week 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Week 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Week 4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Your plan

My one trait

_____

Where it shows in my week

_____

The small thing I'll do every day

_____

The one person I'll tell

_____

Keep in mind

These effects are real but modest, and many were self-reported. Change is slow: the intervention studies averaged about six months. Months from now, people won't say you changed your personality. They'll say you're the kind of person who shows up.