Preparing ourselves for Yom Kippur

We are just a few days away from Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, and probably the most important day of the year for a Jew.

In Yom Kippur we can not improvise. We have to prepare ourselves in advance. Besides knowing the details of the day of fast (who must fast, and who should not, and how to proceed when one does not fast, etc.) if we want to experience a "Day of Atonement" we have to delve first into the concept of Teshuba.

Teshuba, the repentance process, consists as per Maimonides of three or four (usually four) steps

1. **Hakarat haChet**. Recognize that we have done wrong. We must free ourselves from excuses, blame transference (blaming everyone of my mistakes, except myself) and acknowledge that we were wrong. We possibly damaged friends, colleagues and loved ones. And we probably betrayed our pact with HaShem. Without this recognition, repentance (or forgiveness) is not possible.
2. **Tiqun**. Repair. If we have not caused injury or damage to any individual, we can proceed to step 3. But if we are more humans than angels, and as such, we have done wrong to others (and it does not matter now if it was unintentionally or intentionally, or if the other deserved or not deserved) we must make every effort to repair the damage we have caused. Examples: If we have taken what is not ours, money or other material goods, we must return it. If you have personal debts, unpaid donations, etc. we should pay it NOW. If we hurt someone with our words, offending, speaking ill or making fun of someone, etc. we must arm ourselves with courage and ask forgiveness. If we do not have the courage to apologize personally, we must do it even by phone. Or even by email or WhatsApp. The main thing is that our apologies should not be half apologies, half excuses: they need to be very sincere and delivered with humbleness. Our sages say that if we do not repair what we did wrong to others, or if we did not apologize to those we hurt and offended, we will not be forgiven by God

in Yom Kippur.
3. **Viduy**. In the process of Teshuba, the most important Mitsva of Yom Kippur is the Viduy or confession. On the day of Kippur we must confess before God, quietly, all sins we have committed to Him or to other people. It is very important to keep in mind (or make a super-private list of) the faults we have committed. According to our sages, recognizing our wrongdoings mentally is the first step of Teshuba, which is what we should do when we hear the Shofar in Rosh Hashanah. But this recognition can only be effective when we verbalize it. Only then, when we have the courage to articulate what we did wrong, we can overcome what we did wrong. That is why the sages explained that all I need in order to obtain HaShem's forgiveness for the offenses I did against Him (shabbat, kashrut, tefila, etc.) is to recognize and articulate my flaws and faults. BH we'll talk a little more in the coming days about the Viduy.
4. '**Azibat haChet.** the final test of a sincere Teshuba is change. Changing our behavior, our habits, improving the negative elements of our character, this is the final challenge of Yom Kippur. Contemporary Rabbis say that if we can change or improve even a small area of our behavior or personality, and this change is firm and solid, then Yom Kippur and the process of Teshuba were a great success, although there is still a long way to go. Recommendation: when choosing an area to change or improve, we have to choose something that is meaningful but also realizable, and not unattainable. The successful strategy consist of finding an area of change that represents a balance between the transcendent and the attainable.