Co-authored by Dave Ellis, author of *Becoming a Master Student* which has sold over two million copies.

Human Being

DAVE ELLIS STAN LANKOWITZ

A MANUAL FOR HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH

hundreds of ways to create a wonderful life

HUMAN BEING

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Dave Ellis Stan Lankowitz

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HUMAN BEING IN A NUTSHELL

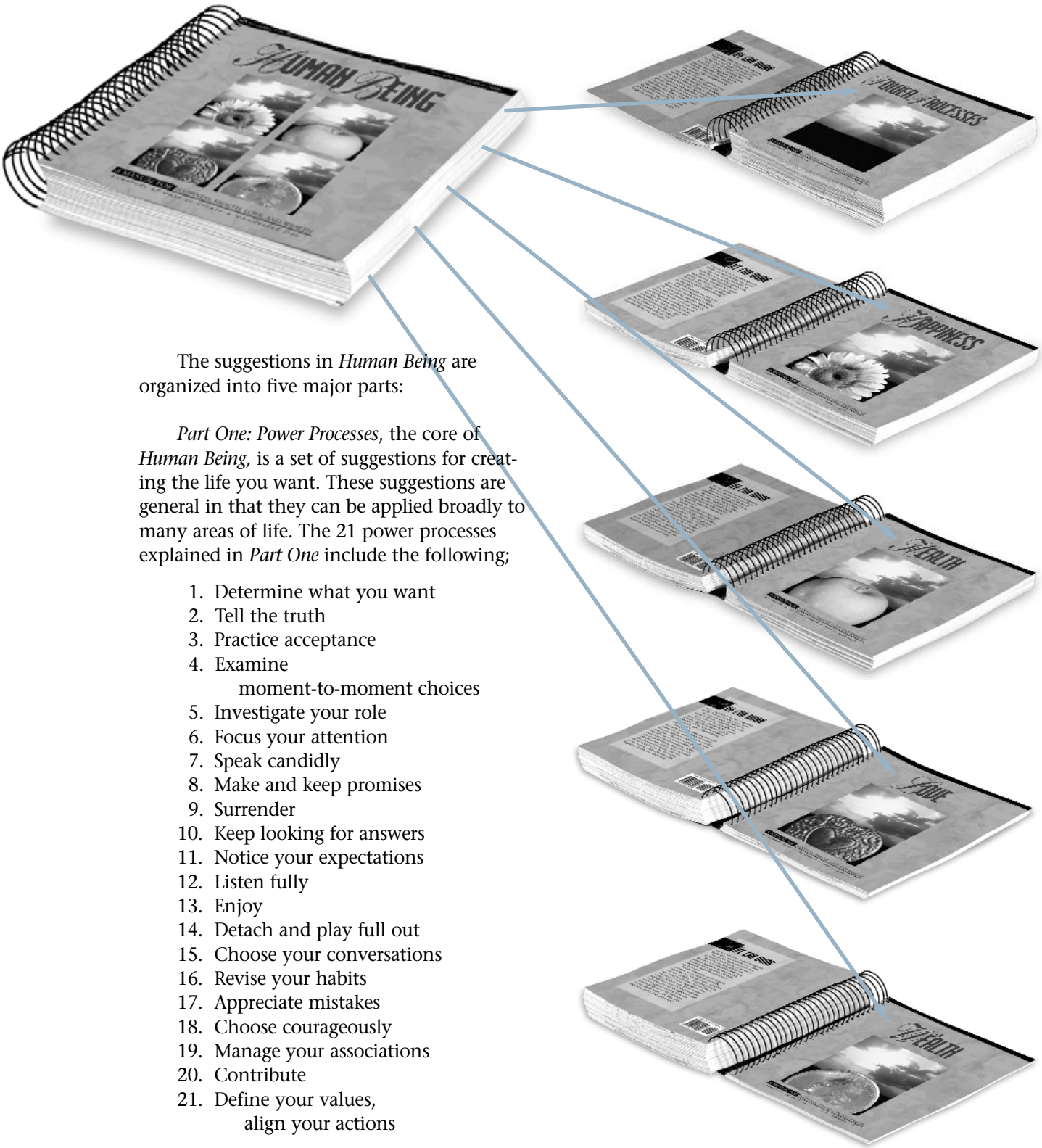
The premise of this book is simple: You can create a wonderful life no matter what your history is, what your current circumstances are, or how much money or time you have—or don't have. And you can begin creating this life right now.

This may sound like a tall order—far too tough to swallow. If you feel this idea is too outrageous, practice applying a strategy mentioned later in this book. Ask: "What if this idea is true?" Note that you don't have to agree with the premise yet. Just be willing to play with possibilities for now, remembering that you can release them later if you choose.

Just for a moment, consider a few questions. Could you be more satisfied with your life? Could you significantly increase your overall level of health? Could your relationships be richer and more often free of persistent conflict? Could you be more comfortable with money and have more time for the activities most important to you?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you've opened a window to change. You might consider raising your standards and not being content to live with the self-imposed and often needless suffering that many human beings experience. You're already on the way to getting what you want. *Human Being* can help you discover and travel the path.

The ideas and strategies you can use to be more happy, healthy, loving, and wealthy already exist. The aim of this book is simply to communicate those ideas so you can immediately put them into practice.



The suggestions in *Human Being* are organized into five major parts:

Part One: Power Processes, the core of *Human Being,* is a set of suggestions for creating the life you want. These suggestions are general in that they can be applied broadly to many areas of life. The 21 power processes explained in *Part One* include the following;

1. Determine what you want
2. Tell the truth
3. Practice acceptance
4. Examine moment-to-moment choices
5. Investigate your role
6. Focus your attention
7. Speak candidly
8. Make and keep promises
9. Surrender
10. Keep looking for answers
11. Notice your expectations
12. Listen fully
13. Enjoy
14. Detach and play full out
15. Choose your conversations
16. Revise your habits
17. Appreciate mistakes
18. Choose courageously
19. Manage your associations
20. Contribute
21. Define your values, align your actions

The remaining sections of the book demonstrate how you can apply these processes to getting what you want in four general areas: happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Part Two: Happiness starts with a chapter on how to deal with feelings of unhappiness. Following is a chapter on how to solve problems and another on how to be happy no matter what your circumstances, no matter what you have or do.

Part Three: Health affirms that changing health habits can be difficult and offers techniques for doing so anyway. Look for some new perspectives on how to eat, exercise, rest, manage stress, and protect yourself from injury and illness. You will also find some help in sorting through the smorgasbord of health treatments available today.

A NOTE ABOUT GENDER-FAIR LANGUAGE

To avoid awkward sentence constructions, the authors chose to alternate the use of male and female pronouns throughout *Human Being*. Their intent is to use language that is as inclusive and bias-free as possible.

Part Four: Love tackles the challenges of building relationships that work. Here you'll find specific methods for increasing your effectiveness at listening, speaking, raising children, and enjoying romance. Suggestions are also included for becoming a leader, resolving conflict, and thriving in an era of diversity.

Part Five: Wealth explains how you can start erasing worries about time and money from your life. Also included are practical hints for career changes. If you actively absorb these ideas and practices, you just might free up enough time and money to share your bounty with others. For that reason, *Part Five* ends with a chapter on contribution.

Each part of *Human Being* begins with its own cover. These covers make it easy for you to skip easily to the beginning of each section of the book and the covers also emphasize that each section is like a book by itself.

EXERCISE

Do a book reconnaissance

Start participating actively with this book by doing a 25-minute reconnaissance. Begin by reading the table of contents. Then turn page by page through the entire book, noticing whatever catches your eye—a picture here, a headline there. The benefit of this exercise is that it establishes a mental framework ready to receive new information.

Think of this book as a house you're entering for the first time. Once you become familiar with the floor plan, you can find your way from room to room more easily. In this case, the "rooms" are the articles that make up this book.

To make this exercise more effective, keep your eyes peeled for ideas or techniques you can use right away or ideas that are particularly interesting. In the following space, describe each of these ideas or techniques in a phrase or two and note the accompanying page number.

*Page:*_____
Idea:

_____
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*Page:*_____
Idea:

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*Page:*_____
Idea:

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Idea:

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DID YOU DO THE EXERCISE?

Throughout this book are opportunities to interact with the book—to actually "do" the book. If you did not do the exercise on the previous page, please do it now. Also, following are two more exercises that are designed to assist you to get the most out of this book.

EXERCISE

Create a personal time capsule

Before using this book to increase the amount and quality of happiness, health, love, and wealth you experience, take a few minutes to mark this moment in time. Write a letter to yourself that sums up who you are right now and who you wish to become. If it helps, as part of your letter, complete the sentences below.

I'm becoming a person who . . .

The gift I most want to give myself is . . .

The most important thing I want to remember about this period of my life is . . .

The most important struggles I've experienced so far in my life are . . .

The most important accomplishments I've experienced so far in my life are . . .

In the future, the words of wisdom I'll most want to hear are . . .

Date the letter, put it in a sealed, self-addressed, stamped envelope and send it to the address below. It will be returned to you in 15 months.

Human Being
P.O. Box 8396
Rapid City, SD 57709-8396

EXERCISE

Write your testimonial

This exercise includes a crazy request. You are asked to write a testimonial for this book. In fact, you are asked to do this now, even before you read the book.

Right now, write what you want to be able to say about this book once you've finished reading it.

_____

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Examine what you've written to see if you are doing justice to your potentials. Read the following sample testimonials to stimulate your imagination. (Note: These testimonials are pure fiction.)

"The ideas in this book make significant life changes easy and joyful."

"When reading this book, I discovered that I can be happy no matter what is going on in my life."

"I saw for the first time that even when I feel sad or sick, I can have a wonderful and joyous life."

"Life is just wonderful! It always has been great, but I didn't realize it until I read this book."

"Every hour of every day, I can make the choices to have my life continue to be outstanding."

"Several years ago I read this book and made remarkable changes in my life. I haven't forgotten what I learned, and I continue to use the power processes."

"After I read this book, I transformed the quality of my life—dramatically—in just a few days."

"I'm a skeptic, but the book showed me how to be happy almost every minute—and the ideas work even though I still don't agree with all of them."

"I've read dozens of self-help books, many of which were extremely helpful. This book did more than all of those books combined."

"Like most people, I was doing pretty well and thought life couldn't get much better. Then I read this book and my life took an unbelievable leap forward. But, I realize that I don't even need to read the book; I can just choose moment-to-moment happiness."

"I thought I knew what transformation meant; then I read this book and realized that transformation means more than just improving. My life shifted dramatically for the better."

"Unbelievable! I've never experienced anything like this book. It is possible to be happy no matter what happens in my life. And happiness is not equal to complacency."

Now that you have read the preceding examples, write a second testimonial that could reflect your experience of this book, once you have finished it.

_____

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The writing of your own testimonials is based on a simple idea: You don't need to wait until you're finished reading to decide if this book will be valuable. You can choose up front—right now.

Of course, the content of this book plays an important role. Yet, what you choose to do with this book plays a far larger role in the outcome than do the words on the pages. Commitment is more important than content. Nothing that's written here can equal your intention to actively use the suggestions in this book. That's what writing a testimonial is all about.

Commitment is the key not only to the value of this book, but also to the quality of your life. You can use your work with this book to re-create your entire life. And, you can do it with ease. Now, it's time to write again. Compose more of your own glowing testimonials in the space below.

_____

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WRITE THIS BOOK

Extra sheets of blank paper can be found in the back of this book for those exercises where you are asked to write on a separate piece of paper. Also, some of the exercises may not have as much space as you want to fully express yourself. Please continue to write this book by filling these pages with your discoveries and intentions.

WANTED: YOUR IDEAS

Please help us write the next edition of this book. Sometimes, after a book has been written, rewritten, edited, designed, typeset, and printed, it is declared complete. That is not true of this book. This book is still in development.

In fact, this book will be in transition for many years. We will change it frequently as we learn more about what works. For this reason, we want to hear from you. Please write to the address on the right to let us know your reactions to this book.

Most of the interactions we have had with others have been in workshops, classrooms, and counseling sessions. In these situations, feedback is usually frequent and complete. The communication takes place in two directions. Communicating through a book is different. Often there is no feedback, and when there is, it is usually sparse. Such one-way communication does not give us a chance to improve.

We want your feedback. When you see ways to improve this book, write to us. We want the next edition to reflect your experiences as a result of doing this book.

If an idea in this book doesn't work for you, let us know. If a technique is particularly effective, let us know that, too. When you write to us, you are completing a communication loop. You are teaching us to be more effective teachers.

Thank you for your help.

Dave Ellis & Stan Lankowitz
P.O. Box 8396
Rapid City, SD 57709-8396

P.S. BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Throughout this book you will see references to its continued development. They are indicated by the following icon:

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Just like a human being, *Human Being* is a work in progress. When you come upon this symbol, please send us your ideas.

Human Being

Introduction

In this introduction you'll find...

How to get the most from this book.

Participate actively with this book and maximize your benefits.

Declare your purpose and commitment: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Declaring your goals for participating with this book sets the stage for achieving them.

Apply strategies across the board.

Notice how the methods in this book apply to several areas of your life at once.

Create your own article-exercise.

Practice finding at least two different applications for a set of strategies.

This book is not for everyone.

Human Being is intended to help already successful people learn to be more successful.

The Discovery/ Intention Journal System.

To get what you want, describe it in writing. Then, choose a course of action.

Seven Discovery Statement guidelines.

Discover what you want, record specifics, notice self-talk and sensations, suspend judgment, stay with discomfort, and tell the truth.

Seven Intention Statement guidelines.

Make intentions positive, small, and keepable. Choose criteria for success, set timelines, stay in control, anticipate self-sabotage, and identify rewards.

Practice the process: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Practice writing about some area of your life that presents a consistent problem. Describe the problem and decide what to do about it.

Learn from your champions–exercise.

Describe what you've learned from three significant people in your life.

Go beyond the printed page: Discovery/Intention Statement.

You can invent your own Journal Entries at any time while doing this book.

How to get the most from this book

Following is a list of suggestions that can help you maximize the value you derive from *Human Being*. As you read, please mark up the book. Highlight graphically the suggestions you will put into practice. Any graphics will do—asterisks, commas, check marks, stars, or any other marks that catch your attention.

Do it your way

Becoming happier is a do-it-yourself job. Everyone does the wonderful life thing differently. Every human being has different abilities, backgrounds, styles, and preferences. It's no surprise, then, that every individual charts a slightly different path to living her dreams. No one else can know exactly how living a life filled with more happiness, health, love, and wealth will happen for you.

This being the case, find out what works best for you by experimenting with a variety of techniques. And that's what you'll find in this book: page after page of methods that have worked for numerous people from all walks of life.

Think of this book as a huge grab bag of methods, techniques, processes, suggestions, hints, tools, skills and habits for you to play with—a kind of toolbox. Some of those tools may work for you as is, right from the box. Great! Others may not work. That's OK. Put them on the shelf for now. Modify the suggested strategies, come back to them later, or design your own. It is up to you to tailor this book to suit your individual situation and style. Do what works for you.

If you're insulted, ignore it

This book is written with love. It is written as if it were communication to be given to a parent, brother, or sister. It is written with respect for and with a commitment to honor your dignity. If what you read does not sound that way, it is the authors' mistake. If this happens, please just pick out what you can use and move on.

Start with the purpose

The purpose of *Human Being* is to provide an opportunity for you to learn and adopt methods and ways of being that assist you in being successful.

Examining key words in the above sentence will help the purpose of this book come to life.

The purpose of this book is to–
provide an opportunity (set the stage, enable, give a chance, not to force or guarantee) . . . for *you* (this book is designed to be a personal experience) . . . to *learn* (to acquire new skills and experiment with new ideas) . . . and *adopt* (use, apply, put into practice, make part of your daily routine) . . . *methods* (plans or actions based on plans) . . . and *ways of being* (values, basic principles of living, who you *are* beyond what you have and what you do) . . . that assist you in being *successful* (getting what *you* want, achieving levels of happiness, health, love, and wealth that *you* choose.)

Please read the statement of purpose again while considering the definitions of the words in italics. It says a lot about the experimental nature of this book and the value of taking action on the methods suggested.

Enjoy the benefits of a book

As a means of learning, a book offers big advantages over a classroom, a workshop, or a TV. You just experienced one of those advantages if you reread the purpose statement. With a book, you can review and study that which you consider important.

If you didn't reread the purpose statement, then you experienced another advantage of a book: You have control. You get to choose what is interesting to you, what is helpful, and what is not. You can skip around in a book. This is harder to do when watching a videotape and impossible when listening to a lecture. Also, you can read at your own pace.

When reading, you have the option of quickly skimming the material, or you can slow down so that you can study each word as you read. This freedom is not possible when learning from a TV or a lecture. When you read, you can even take the time to look up words in the dictionary. Even a sentence of familiar words comes more "to life" when you look up the key words.

Many people don't take full advantage of a book. You can. Skip around. Study what is useful. Reread what is unclear for you. Take the time to write about what you like. Ignore what you think is rubbish.

Proceed with caution

Doing this book could be hazardous to your current life circumstances. You might decide to change, to leave your comfort zone, and to take the risk of trying some new behaviors.

This book is not for the faint of heart. If you avoid skeletons in closets, then avoid this book. Many books allow—even have as their purpose—an escape from life. This book can drive you *into* your life.

There are moments in our lives when we grow significantly. There are times when we push to a breakthrough. There are moments of dizzying change when we make a decision that alters our lives forever. Your experience with this book might be such a time—particularly if you're willing to put some of its suggestions into action.

Change

It's been said that if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten. Many people expect to get different results in their lives without changing any of their behaviors. It's not very probable.

There is another option, and it's available at any time. You can grant yourself the gift of freedom from self-limiting behaviors. It all starts with action—planning and making simple, small changes in daily behavior. Over time, all those minute changes carry the momentum of an avalanche.

Disagree

Many people who gain tremendously from this book will disagree with some of the ideas. If you don't think a particular strategy will work for you, then tailor it to your circumstances or let it go for now.

Use some tools of the trade

You can now think of yourself as being engaged in a profession called "learning happiness, health, love, and wealth." Like every trade, this one has its own tools. Here are some you could use in practicing your craft and working with this book:

- *Highlighters for marking key ideas*. Using more than one color adds variety and a way to designate your own categories or distinctions. For example, you could highlight top-priority ideas to use now in green. Yellow could be used for ideas to consider more thoroughly or for suggestions you might use later.
- *Two pencils or pens* to write in this book. Far from being taboo, marking up this book will help you make it your own.
- *A bound notebook for keeping a journal*. This can be a place to discover your goals and to map a clear path to reach them.
- *Several packs of 3x5 cards*. These have multiple uses, as explained in many of the exercises in this book. For example, you can use 3x5 cards to remind yourself of strategies that you want to practice. Write the strategy on a card and then tape it to a mirror, put it in your pocket, store it in your purse, or put it somewhere else where it's easily noticed.

Get a partner

Find an individual or small group who will do this book with you. Meet regularly to discuss and apply the ideas. Others can help you find new ways to create happiness, health, love, and wealth, and you can do the same for them.

Remember these techniques work—except when they don't

No idea or suggestion in this book is absolute. A technique that works like magic in one area of your life might flop in another. Even the same strategy applied consistently in the same way might lose its effectiveness over time.

Consider these examples: You can be happy, regardless of circumstances—except when you can't. (Sometimes it pays to change your circumstances.) Choose the career of your dreams and the money will follow—except when it doesn't. (Have some savings in the bank.) Learn to listen well and your relationships will improve—except when they don't. (Sometimes people need more than a sympathetic ear.)

When it comes to enjoying happiness, health, love, and wealth, there are no sure-fire formulas. When your chosen plan or strategy doesn't work, it's time to choose another.

You can use this idea to create more value from this book. If you read a suggestion that sounds particularly effective, consider how the *opposite* of that suggestion might also be useful. For example, take the preceding suggestion to do this book with a partner and explore the possible benefits of working through this book alone.

Keep looking for other techniques

When you search for a way to apply the techniques in this book to your own life, you are doing the hard and rewarding work of critical thinking. Be willing to persist as you search for ways to create value from *Human Being*. Put the question clearly: "What new strategy could I use now to dramatically improve the quality of my life?"

It's OK if answers are not on the tip of your tongue; just keep searching. Ideas will come. By staying in the inquiry even when answers are not immediately obvious, you might be arousing and getting in touch with the part of you that is already wise.

Rise to the occasion

Standing engages your attention and helps you be active and alert. The quality of your thinking just might rise when you rise. It is possible to read, write, and think while standing or walking.

Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence while standing. Winston Churchill, Virginia Woolf, and Ernest Hemingway were also fond of standing while writing. Bill Clinton and Gen. Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have been known to use stand-up desks. When you stand, you'll be in good company.

Be alert for strategies with impact

As you read *Human Being*, prepare to encounter hundreds of suggestions and strategies for happiness, health, love, and wealth. Often you'll see lists of a dozen or more suggestions, each with a short description. It might be easy to dismiss a powerful strategy because it is relatively short and imbedded in dozens of others.

You can avoid this problem by slowing down and giving attention to each item. That way, you're more likely to pick up on a transformational idea—one that can make a real difference in your life.

Expect something different from this book

The fact is, this book is different from many other books—different in three ways.

First is content. Even if you've read lots of other books, chances are you'll find some new ideas here. They are presented in a straightforward, no-jargon conversational style.

Second is design. This book looks different from most other books. Its format is designed to invite you to explore lots of ideas and to really participate in putting those ideas into action.

Third is participation. This book invites you to take action. There are scores of invitations for you to discover, write, plan, and experiment with a strategy; to adopt new behaviors; and then to repeat the whole cycle again. The idea is to help you bridge the gap between getting a good idea and putting it into practice.

Note: You might encounter some repetition as you read. This is intentional. Repetition is one way to reinforce key ideas. Because many articles in this book are self-contained, they occasionally summarize ideas from a previous article. When you notice repetition, congratulate yourself. It means you have retained well what you have read.

Apply this to yourself

The ideas explained throughout this book are most effective when we apply them to ourselves. Readers who say, "My life would be great if only other people put these suggestions into practice," are missing an opportunity to get value from *Human Being*.

The fact is, we have far more influence on our actions than we do on the actions of those around us. Applying a powerful suggestion to our *own* behavior makes the difference.

Do it!

If you want to benefit from *Human Being*, then get your hands, feet, and mouth moving. The real value of this book lies not in the words and pictures you see on each page but in what happens to you as you bring the ideas to life. The exercises and Journal Entries scattered throughout the text are designed to help you do this.

As you read this book, you might find ideas and suggestions that sound familiar. If you're tempted to stop reading for this reason, consider that people often *know* but don't *do*. That is, they neglect to practice what they've heard or read. One of the most important functions of any book or speaker is to present familiar ideas in a new way, to remind us of what we already know—and to invite us to take action.

Actively participating with this book is the most effective way to achieve your goals. Participating with this book includes writing in it, doing most of the exercises in it, and experimenting with its suggestions.

Be prepared for this to take time. Some of the exercises, if you do them thoroughly, could take hours spread over several days or weeks. A master builder who is creating something magnificent often loses herself in her work and forgets about time. In working through this book, you too can build something magnificent—your life.

We have a way that we usually act around books. We call it *reading*. That is not the way to act around this book. This book is to be *done*, not just *read*. Get a taste of this now by doing the following Discovery/Intention Statement.

NOTE: You will be invited to write Intention Statements throughout this book. After giving a particular issue some thought, you might choose to do nothing about it right now. Even when you aren't going to use an idea, you can write an intention statement like, "I intend to do nothing about this right now."

This Intention Statement can be as valuable as any other. Deliberately choosing to take no action is far more effective than letting something slip by unconsciously. Rather than letting life happen to you by default, you can make thoughtful, decisive choices about what you will and will not do.

Declare your purpose and commitment

Declaring your purpose for participating with this book sets the stage for achieving that purpose. Your purpose might be exactly the same as the one stated on page 3, somewhat different or completely different. Whatever your purpose for participating with *Human Being*, write it in the space below:

My purpose is . . .

Given your purpose, commit to completing a minimum number of exercises and Journal Entries in this book. (In total, the book includes 91 exercises and 89 Journal Entries.)

I will complete exercises.

I will complete Journal Entries.

Choose a sentence from the list below that represents your commitment to creating value from *Human Being*.

1. "I've got the book in my hands right now. What more do you want?"
2. "I will skim the book. I might read a few pages if they spark my interest."
3. "I will read parts of the book and consider using a suggestion or two."
4. "I will read much of the book and consider using several of the suggestions."
5. "I will read most of the book and apply many of its suggestions to my life."
6. "I will read most of the book and do a majority of the exercises and Journal Entries."
7. "I will read the entire book, constantly searching for ways to use its suggestions."
8. "I will read and participate fully with almost all of the exercises and Journal Entries."
9. "I will read and participate with the entire book more than once, each time searching for new ways to map its ideas onto my life."
10. "I will read and participate actively with this book as if the quality of my life is at stake.

If needed, I will revise sections of the book and invent new strategies based on my own experiences so that my experience with this book will dramatically improve the quality of my life.

Write your level of commitment here:_____Today's date:_____

If none of the previous statements of commitments apply to you, write your own below.

APPLY STRATEGIES ACROSS THE BOARD

Many of the strategies suggested in this book can be used in several different situations. Listening strategies, for example, are useful at home, at work, in the grocery store, at social gatherings, or anywhere human beings relate to each other. An idea for saving money might work for saving time as well. A suggestion for improving your relationship with your partner might also transform your relationship with your boss or your congressional representative.

An advantage of applying the same strategies to two or more different aspects of life is this: We are creatures of habit, and when we change our behavior in one area of our lives, that change can easily spill over into other areas. A single change can echo throughout our lives. We can take the strategies that work in one area and apply them to another area, often with little or no modification.

The following 10 strategies offer an example. They're about possibilities for exercising more—and even liking it. The same strategies can also work for contributing your money and time to worthy projects and enjoying it to boot.

The strategies are first explained as they apply to exercise. Then the same strategies are applied to contribution.

THE JOYS OF EXERCISE

1. Recognize side benefits

Some common benefits of exercise include a longer life, increased self-esteem, fun, a healthier and trimmer body, less stress, and a clearer head for thinking.

2. If you recommend it, do it

More people recommend exercise than do it. You can be a model of a person who practices what you preach.

3. Remember that anyone can

You can avoid the trap of excuses. Age, weight, skill level, income, disability—none of these factors needs to hamper you. There are creative ways for almost anyone to exercise.

4. Remember that you have a variety of choices

Look for what you enjoy, then choose several avenues to pursue your goals. When exercising, you can pick from several different activities, from weightlifting to armchair aerobics.

5. Join with others

Support systems work. For exercise, these include health clubs, YMCA's or YWCA's, running partners, teams, jogging clubs, neighbors, friends, and many more.

6. Build up to it

One of the more common reasons people stop exercising is that their initial plans are too ambitious and they burn out. When first starting to exercise, it helps to begin with a light or moderate program and increase slowly.

7. Do enough
Do enough exercise to make a difference. Unless you do, you may feel that it wasn't worth getting dressed for a workout.

8. Give until it almost hurts
Exercising too much can lead to bodily injury and time away from work and family. It sometimes becomes a harmful addiction.

9. Do it regularly
You get meaningful results when exercise becomes a habit. Exercise daily or every other day. Make it part of your routine.

10. Do it from your heart
Long-lasting habits are easier to maintain when we choose them freely, without feeling obligated. The joy of movement and the pleasures of improved health lay the groundwork for regular exercise.

THE JOYS OF CONTRIBUTION

1. Recognize side benefits
Possible benefits of contributing include self-empowerment, a wider network of people and resources, increased self-esteem, a safer community, and fun.

2. If you recommend it, do it
It's common for people to say, "I'll get around to contributing when I've got extra time." Often the "extra time" never arrives. You can break this cycle by promising to contribute and aligning your actions with your words.

3. Remember that anyone can
People who are busy or people with time on their hands, people with many skills or people who seek new skills, people with a lot of money and people with little money—all can contribute.

4. Remember that you have a variety of choices
When contributing, you can give time, you can give talent, you can give money, or you can give material things. You can also give all of these.

5. Join with others
If you want to contribute, there's a world of people waiting for you to join them. This includes employee campaigns, national and global organizations, volunteer meetings, and informal partnerships with others who have similar interests.

6. Build up to it
You can start contributing by giving time and money in a way that's within your means. Start at a level you can easily afford, increase your giving each year, and develop a long-term giving budget.

7. Do enough
To derive maximum satisfaction, avoid token gestures. Give enough to make a real difference.

8. Give until it almost hurts
Too much contribution can drain family relationships and personal finances. The trick is to contribute with enough intensity to make a difference, yet not so much that you harm yourself. You can avoid the fate of the unemployed homeless man who said, "When I did work, I was a philanthropist, but I got carried away."

9. Do it regularly
You can contribute at regular intervals, such as through monthly payroll deductions. Over time, your gifts of time and money really add up.

10. Do it from your heart
The most genuine motives for contributing come from compassion. When we see that others are not as fortunate as we are, we then help as if they were one of "us." Generous people who stick with it for years are those who are in touch with the joy that they receive from giving.

EXERCISE

Create your own article

The previous article explained how the same strategies can apply across the board to different areas of life. You can demonstrate this phenomenon for yourself. Pick one aspect of your life that you want to improve or select an activity that you want to do with more regularity and joy. Write this topic in the space below. Then, create examples of how the strategies in the previous article fit the topic you chose.

Topic: _____

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

6. _____

_____

7. _____

_____

8. _____

_____

9. _____

_____

10. _____

_____

THIS BOOK IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

Human Being is intended to assist already emotionally healthy people in learning to be even more successful.

Human beings face a wide range of challenges. We deal with everything from short-term upsets and simple errors in communication to long-term problems and deep emotional wounds that cry to be healed. Sometimes serious problems call for therapy, hospitalization, or medication—which are obviously beyond the scope of this book.

Human Being is recommended for already emotionally healthy people who want to be even more successful at getting what they want in their lives. It is not intended to deal with mental disorders or to be a substitute for psychotherapy. If you are severely depressed, overly anxious, or have suffered from poor physical or mental health for extended periods of time, please seek professional care.

THE DISCOVERY INTENTION JOURNAL SYSTEM

There's one way you can magnify the power of all the strategies mentioned in this book. This is a tool you can begin using immediately, and it's one that can serve you for the rest of your life. It's called the Discovery/Intention Journal System.

Write Discovery Statements

The first aspect of this journal system is writing Discovery Statements. These are records of where you stand today. The recipe for writing a Discovery Statement is simple. Just tell the truth about what you believe, value, want, do, feel, or experience right now. Tell the truth about your current skills at experiencing happiness, sustaining health, nurturing loving relationships, and producing wealth. Also state what you want, your values, and whatever matters most to you.

Discovery Statements offer a potent way to zoom out and step back from the chaos of daily life. Through writing, we gain a wider vision. Describing our current thoughts, feelings, desires, and behaviors helps bring them into clear focus. Through writing, we can create new and useful ways to look at the issues and circumstances in our lives. We keep our values in mind. That's what Discovery Statements are all about.

Write Intention Statements

Discovery Statements are about stating where you are now. Intention Statements are about where you want to go. When you write an Intention Statement, you can commit yourself to accomplishing specific tasks. You are setting goals and planning how to achieve them.

When your discoveries lead to precise intentions, you are on the way to new results in your life—more happiness, health, love, wealth, or whatever else you value most.

Journal Entries (Discovery or Intention Statements) are scattered throughout this book. And you can write a Journal Entry at any point. Every article in this text can be the occasion for a significant discovery and intention.

Write to gain clarity

As we write Discovery and Intention Statements, the patterns in our thinking and behavior emerge into plain view. If something in our lives is not working, we can detect it with more clarity and decide how to fix it.

Keeping a daily journal can help us keep track of where we've been, where we are now, and where we're going. After a period of time, reviewing our Journal Entries might give us a' reason to celebrate how much we have grown.

Sometimes making charts or graphs to monitor our behavior and accomplishments helps us stay on track. These are additional forms of Discovery Statements. An example is noting on a calendar each day we get aerobic exercise. After we've set a goal, we can count each week how many times we exercised to verify that we were successful.

Write to stay on course

Since we are such creatures of habit, change is one of the most challenging tasks we can take on. It is easy to get lost in the details of what we are doing and forget the reason we started to do it in the first place. Frequently reminding ourselves of our overall purpose and remembering the big picture of our goals can help us stay on course. Taking time to remember and to get perspective can also help us make corrections if we discover that we are off target.

Amazingly enough, it often takes no more effort to reach our goals than it does to miss them. Sometimes it even takes *less* effort to get what we want in life. Instead of worrying and fussing about not getting something accomplished, we state clearly where we are now (Discovery Statements) and decide up front where we want to go (Intention Statements). With clarity comes focused action and personal power. When we chart a specific path to our goals, it's easier to know when we're off track. We can make timely corrections in our thinking and actions to get back on course. Intention Statements are not about gritting our teeth and trying harder. We can relax and enjoy the journey.

Write to coach yourself

When we are faced with a problem in our lives, it can be helpful if we put the problem into words. We can describe the problem to someone or put it in writing, defining it as carefully as we can. Then, we can pretend that someone else is having this problem—someone we care about deeply—and write down several suggestions for this other person. Then we can step back and ask if any of these suggestions might work for us. This is one way to start being our own coaches.

Another way is to pretend that you are describing to a very wise person your circumstances. Then you can shift gears and assume the role of this wise person and listen to what you say. You don't have to know in advance what you will say. Just trust that after you've described your problem, a very wise part of you will take over and play the role of a wise person. You might be surprised at the wisdom you discover that you already have.

SEVEN DISCOVERY STATEMENT GUIDELINES

1. Discover what you want
Most of us have more energy when what we're doing leads to what we want. Many people give up on life simply because they are unclear about what they want. Writing down what we want can make it clear.

2. Record the specifics
We can observe our actions and record the facts. If we spent 90 minutes reading spy novels instead of planning our next career, we can write it down. Including the details, such as what we did, when we did it, where we did it, and how it felt, can help us remember and learn from the events.

3. Notice inner voices and pictures
We talk to ourselves constantly in our heads, and our minds manufacture pictures faster than television does.

When we notice internal chatter, we can write down what we are telling ourselves. If this seems difficult at first, just start writing. The act of writing can trigger a flood of thoughts.

Our mental pictures are especially powerful. Picturing ourselves getting fired is like rehearsing to do just that, and resisting or ignoring negative images can make them even more powerful. We can replace these voices and images with ones that move us closer to our goals.

4. Notice physical sensations
Physical sensations can alert us to useful messages. When we avoid certain problems, for example, we might notice churning stomachs, shallow breathing, or yawning. We can write our observations quickly, as soon as we become aware of them.

We can also notice how we feel when we function well. If we discover that we have more energy in the early evening hours, we can adjust our schedules. We can use Discovery Statements about how we feel to pinpoint exactly where, when, and with whom we're being most effective.

5. Use discomfort as a signal to continue
When we are writing Discovery Statements, feeling uncomfortable, uneasy, bored, or tired, might be a signal that we are about to do valuable work. It might be a signal to stick with it. We can tell ourselves that if we can handle the discomfort just a little bit longer, we will be rewarded.

We can also use Discovery Statements to cut through the layers of doubt and self-judgment that restrict most people from living an abundant life. If we start writing about a touchy or painful subject, we can resist the urge to stop writing. Sometimes the most valuable insights lie just on the other side of discomfort.

6. Suspend self-judgment
When we are discovering ourselves, we can be gentle. If we continually judge our behaviors as "bad" or "stupid" or "galactically imbecilic," sooner or later our minds will revolt. Rather than put up with the abuse, they will quit making discoveries. Being kind to ourselves empowers Discovery Statements.

7. Tell the truth
"The truth will set you free" is a cliché. It has been said so often that people say it without thinking about what it means. Using Discovery Statements can help us find out why the phrase is so well-worn. The closer we get to the truth, the more powerful our Discovery Statements will be. There *is* freedom in the truth.

SEVEN INTENTION STATEMENT GUIDELINES

1. Make intentions positive
Instead of writing, "I will not fall asleep while reading," we write, "I intend to stay awake when I read."

Also, avoid the word *try*. Trying is not doing. When we hedge our bets with *try* we can always tell ourselves, "Well, I *tried* to stay awake." The result is we fool ourselves into thinking we succeeded in some way because at least we tried. We also rob ourselves of the opportunity to fail. The willingness to risk failure is one mark of a skillful human being.

2. Make intentions small and keepable
We can give ourselves the opportunity to succeed by breaking large goals into small, specific tasks we can accomplish quickly. If we want to get a new job, we can ask ourselves, "What can we do today?" Choosing to make a list of companies we want to work for could be our intention.

3. Use observable criteria for success
Choose goals that can be measured. Rather than writing, "I intend to exercise more," write, "I intend to walk briskly from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m., Saturday." When we use observable criteria, we can determine precisely if we accomplished what we intended when we review our progress.

4. Set timelines
Timelines can focus our attention, especially if used in conjunction with the suggestion that we make intentions small and keepable. For example, if we are asked to write long memos at work, we can break the assignment into small tasks and set precise timelines for each one. You might write, "I intend to brainstorm the main points by 9:00 a.m., Wednesday." And remember, we create timelines for our own benefit, not to make ourselves feel guilty.

5. Be careful of intentions that depend on others
Our intentions might depend on the actions of other people. If we write that we intend to make the most money of anyone on our sales team, our success depends on how our colleagues do. Such intentions can be powerful. They might also fail, depending on how others perform. Make such intentions carefully.

Another example is intending to talk to someone on the phone tonight. Succeeding depends on that person being home. An intention over which we would have more control is, "I intend to call John before 7:00 p.m. If he is not home, I'll call at least twice more before 10:00 p.m." With this intention, our success depends on us alone.

6. Anticipate self-sabotage
We can take preventive action if we are aware of what we might do, consciously or unconsciously, to undermine our intentions. If your intention is to write in your journal tonight, you can be aware that your nightly habit of watching television might interfere with your intention. You can then add to your Intention Statement that you will write in your journal *before* you turn on the TV.

7. Identify rewards
Rewards that are natural consequences of achieving goals can be the most powerful. For example, your reward for earning a college degree might be having the career you want.

Self-selected rewards, such as a movie or an afternoon in the park, are also valuable. These rewards work best when you're willing to withhold them until you successfully achieve your goal. If you intend to nap on Sunday afternoon whether you write to your mother or not, the nap is not an effective reward.

Another way to reward yourself is to sit quietly after you have finished your task and savor the feelings. You might notice how your body feels when you have done a good job. One reason success breeds success is that success feels good.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Practice the process

Choose some area of your life that has been troublesome or that presents a consistent problem. Using the guidelines for writing Discovery Statements, write a Discovery Statement about this aspect of your life.

I discovered that I . . .

Using the guidelines for Intention Statements, describe an action you will take regarding the problem you wrote about in the preceding Discovery Statement.

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Learn from your champions

Think of three people who've made significant and positive impacts on your life. In the space below, list the names of these people and briefly list their most memorable qualities.

1. _____
(person)

_____
(most memorable qualities)

_____

_____

2. _____
(person)

_____
(most memorable qualities)

_____

_____

3. _____
(person)

_____
(most memorable qualities)

_____

_____

Now describe in one sentence the most important things you learned from each of these people.

1. _____

_____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

_____

3. _____

_____

_____

_____

Describe how you could apply these lessons today.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now write a thank you letter to each of these people. Writing these letters can be valuable whether you mail them or not.

Go beyond the printed page

Here's a procedure for inventing your own Journal Entries at any time while reading this book:

- Set aside at least 10 minutes to write.
- Summarize the chapters or articles you just read. Include your own thoughts, keeping in mind the guidelines for Discovery Statements. Ask yourself if the ideas on the page correspond to something you've directly experienced. Take a general principle and ask how it applies to you. After reading suggestions, see if you can find an example of how it has worked (or not worked) in your life.
- Write an Intention Statement based on what you've just discovered about yourself. Ask if what you've read calls for action to be taken on your part. Describe that action in concrete terms. Include the details about what you'll do: when, where, and with whom. Describe the benefit you could experience as a result of the action.

Note that the Discovery/Intention Journal System is not a once-through-and-you're-done affair. You can come back to any article in this book as many times as you want, writing Discovery and Intention Statements each time you do.

You are a source of wisdom. You have the ability to create hundreds of original strategies for increasing happiness, health, love, and wealth in your life. Journal Entries are one way to probe the endless depths of your imagination. When you write Discovery and Intention Statements, you're not just recycling the authors' ideas—you're excavating your own deepest knowledge.

Begin now. Complete the following sentences:

After reading this section of the book, the most important discovery I made is that I . . .

To follow up on what I discovered, a valuable thing I intend to do is . . .

LIFE CAN WORK.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE as much happiness, health, love, and wealth as you choose.

You can feel happy and fulfilled no matter what your current circumstances.

Each of us can be essentially free from insecurity, depression, fear, worry, jealousy, aggression, turmoil, anxiety, boredom, vanity, hostility, irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and frustration.

Within a short time, and with some new skills, you can experience vitality, satisfaction, joy, serenity, health, contribution, fun, confidence, happiness, pleasure, love, peace, effectiveness, and security far beyond your current expectations. These positive experiences are always available and can be developed when you tell the truth about your current experiences and when you practice creating new ones. You are invited to use the techniques in this book to create a life filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Co-authored by Dave Ellis, author of *Becoming a Master Student* which has sold over two million copies.

POWER PROCESSES

DAVE ELLIS STAN LANKOWITZ

A MANUAL FOR HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH

hundreds of ways to create a wonderful life

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OVERVIEW

This section of *Human Being* includes 21 Power Processes that explain strategies for increasing your experience of happiness, health, love, wealth, or whatever else you value. They are called Power Processes because they're rich in applications, embodying suggestions that you can use to generate new results in several areas of your life. These Power Processes are summarized in this article and then explained in detail in the following 21 chapters.

Chapter 1. Determine what you want

When our daily activities are guided by a clear vision for the future, we can be more effective.

Chapter 2. Tell the truth

When we tell the naked truth about ourselves, without shame or blame, we unleash a powerful force for change.

Chapter 3. Practice acceptance

Changing something begins with accepting the way it is right now.

Chapter 4. Examine moment-to-moment choices

The small decisions we make every day are a decisive factor in the overall quality of our lives. Treat the small stuff with care, and watch our whole life start to improve.

Chapter 5. Investigate your role

There are choices we can make under any circumstance to regain control of our lives.

Chapter 6. Focus your attention

Learning to "be here now" releases mental distractions and increases our effectiveness at any activity.

Chapter 7. Speak Candidly

When we say some of the things that we've been holding back, we can make a significant contribution to ourselves and others.

Chapter 8. Make and keep promises

Making promises that stretch us to meet our potential is an immediate way to raise the quality of our lives.

Chapter 9. Surrender

Sometimes the most effective way to deal with the challenges of our lives is to give up control and trust that help is forthcoming.

Chapter 10. Keep looking for answers

Going beyond the first solution we find can create a world of new possibilities.

Chapter 11. Notice your expectations

One path to happiness is releasing our pictures of how life ought to be.

Chapter 12. Listen fully

Paying close attention to others, to ourselves, and even to our environment can teach us more than the wisest sage. Practicing this type of listening is both rare and extremely valuable.

Chapter 13. Enjoy

Maximum effectiveness can come from maximum fun.

Chapter 14. Detach and play full out

We can care a lot about the people and projects in our lives. At the same time, we can keep the whole game in perspective and not worry about winning or losing.

Chapter 15. Choose your conversations

What we talk about and who we associate with play a surprising role in how effective we are.

Chapter 16. Revise your habits

Learning and adopting a systematic method for changing habits is an efficient way to erase unnecessary suffering from our lives.

Chapter 17. Appreciate mistakes

When we know how to learn from them, mistakes can be powerful and patient teachers.

Chapter 18. Choose courageously

Fears need not stop us from doing what we choose to do.

Chapter 19. Manage your associations

When we link a desired new behavior to pleasure, we can establish it with a minimum of struggle.

Chapter 20. Contribute

When we move from getting to giving, we discover a source of joy and our problems shrink by comparison.

Chapter 21. Define your values, align your actions

Effective living is enhanced when we are clear about our fundamental values and then make choices consistent with them.

POWER PROCESS #1

Determine what you want

In this chapter you'll find...

The power of vision.
Once we know what we want, we're well on the way to getting it.

Consider the role of goals: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Consider the role that written goals have played in your life.

Write your life purpose-exercise.
Spend five minutes drafting a one-sentence statement of the purpose of your life.

Write your eulogy-exercise.
Write down what you'd like to be said in your eulogy. Consider what new light this exercise sheds on your values.

Create your lifeline-exercise.
One powerful way to determine what you want is to consider what you'd like to see happen during your entire lifetime.

Reflect on your lifeline: Discovery/Intention Statement.
After you've completed a lifeline, consider what your lifeline reveals about you.

Add details to your lifeline-exercise.
After listing your three most important lifetime goals, begin planning how to achieve them.

Experience the freedom of planning.
Planning puts us in charge of our lives, reveals opportunities, renews us, allows excitement, and stamps out resignation.

If you want it, rehearse.
One way to get what we want is to clearly visualize and imagine our success before we achieve our goals.

Stage a mental rehearsal-exercise.
Mentally rehearse one of your upcoming activities in great detail. Then describe how this exercise affected your actual performance.

Say that you've arrived—for a minute-exercise.
Imagine that you woke up this morning as the person you always wanted to be. From that place, choose how to spend the rest of your day.

THE POWER OF VISION

Imagine a person who walks up to a counter at the airport to buy a plane ticket for his next vacation. "Just give me a ticket," he says to the reservation agent. "Anywhere will do."

The agent stares back at him incredulously. "I'm sorry, sir," he replies, "I'll need some more details. Just minor things—such as the name of your destination city and your arrival and departure dates."

"Oh, I'm not fussy," says the would-be vacationer. "I just want to get away. You just choose for me."

Compare this to another traveler who walks up to the counter and says, "I'd like a ticket to Ixtapa, Mexico, departing on Saturday, March 23 and returning Sunday, April 15. I'd like a window seat, coach class, with vegetarian meals." Then ask yourself which traveler is more likely to end up at a place he would enjoy.

Knowing where we want to go increases the probability that we will arrive at our destination. This is especially useful in achieving our goals to experience happiness, health, love, and wealth. Once our goals are defined precisely, our brains reorient our thinking and behavior to align with those goals. Once we know where we want to go, we're well on the way.

Ask two people what they want in life. One says, "I just hope to be happy, somehow." Another says, "I want to become financially independent in 10 years so that I can devote my time to writing a novel and working with homeless people." It's not hard to guess who is more likely to realize her goals.

You can begin now to bring your dreams into sharp focus. You can take actions that define your overall direction in life. Completing the exercises and Discovery/Intention Statement that follow will get you started.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Consider the role of goals

After considering the role that written goals have played in your life, write a Discovery Statement. Complete the sentences below:

Regarding my own history of putting goals in writing, I've discovered that I . . .

Regarding the practical value of putting goals in writing, I believe that . . .

EXERCISE

Write your life purpose

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word purpose as . . . 1. The object toward which one strives or for which something exists; an aim or goal . . . 2. A result or an effect that is intended or desired; an intention . . . 3. Determination; resolution. (From *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Mass.)

Having a succinct statement of your overall purpose in life can be an immense aid in determining what you want. An effective purpose statement tells you when goals or behaviors are off track. With your purpose firmly in mind, you can make moment-to-moment choices with real integrity.

Right now, spend five minutes drafting a one sentence statement of the purpose of your life. As you do, keep the above definition of the word purpose *in mind. If you like, prompt yourself with questions based on the above definition: "What am I striving for?" "What is the aim or goal of my life?" "What is the main result I want in my life?" "What am I determined or resolved to achieve with my life?"*

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You can write several different versions of your life purpose during this five minutes. After the time is up, spend another 10 to 15 minutes revising your purpose statement. You might choose to combine several versions of your purpose statements.

Repeat this exercise several times. To gain more insight and creative juice, do this exercise with a group and give people the option of sharing their statements of purpose with the group.

Following are some sample purpose statements:

My purpose is to live, learn, love, and laugh.

My purpose is to have a wonderful life and to dramatically contribute to the quality of life on earth.

I intend to become financially independent and raise happy, healthy children.

I will live in harmony with all creation.

My purpose is to be a healing presence in the world.

My purpose is to promote the well-being of my family.

In my life, I seek to release suffering and serve others.

My life purpose is to become an accomplished, famous pianist.

The purpose of my life is to serve.

The purpose of my life is to be loved and loving.

I aim to promote evolutionary change and be a catalyst for growth.

My purpose is to have a great time and laugh a lot.

EXERCISE

Write your eulogy

Imagine that you get to attend your own funeral. (In our imaginations, we can do anything; just play with the idea.) Now write down what you'd like people to say about you. Describe in detail what you would like to have had your life stand for. Describe what you did that other people value even after you died. Describe who you were and what you valued most in life.

Write your eulogy below:

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Now describe what you learned from this writing. Consider what new light this exercise sheds on your values. What did you learn about yourself and the things you consider important? Put your answer in writing.

I discovered that I . . .

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Finally, decide what changes in your present life are called for as a result of your discoveries. Describe what you will do to bring your daily activities more in line with your "eulogy." Set any long-range or short-term goals that seem appropriate.

I intend to . . .

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E X E R C I S E

Create your lifeline

One powerful way to determine what you want is to consider what you'd like to see happen during your entire lifetime. You can even look beyond your lifetime if you choose. Creating a lifeline offers one way to do this.

To get the most out of this exercise, be willing to let it move you. Among the thousands of people who've done this exercise, many have reported it to be a life-changing event. Some have even wept. (Know, too, that the lifeline exercise can be effective even if it does not raise this level of emotion in you.)

1. Begin by taking a blank sheet of paper and orienting it horizontally. For ease in writing, you might want to use a larger-than-notebook-size sheet, such as an 11x17.

2. Draw a horizontal line across the middle of your paper. This is your lifeline. It represents the approximate number of years you'll be alive.

3. On the far left end of the line, draw a dot and label it with your date of birth.

4. Estimate how long you might live. Then place a dot somewhere near the far right end of the line and label it with your projected date of death. As you project the length of your life, take into account the relative factors, such as your health habits (exercise, nutrition, seat belt use, and so on). Also consider the average life span of your family members.

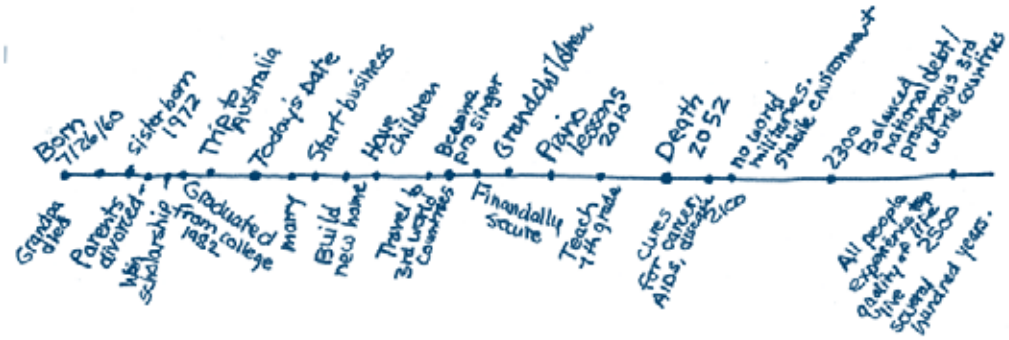
Note: Do not place your date of death at the extreme right-hand edge of the line. Leave some space on the line for goals that exceed your life span. Give yourself a few minutes to complete this step. Allow a few moments for the reality of your death to sink in.

5. Next, place a dot on your lifeline that represents today's date. Label it.

6. At appropriate points to the left of today's date, plot some significant events in your life. Examples include graduation from school, marriage, career changes, birth of children, deaths of relatives, and so on. Take at least 10 minutes for this part of the exercise.

7. Now set goals for the future. Do this by adding dots to the right of today's date. These points on your lifeline represent what you'd like to be, do, or have in the future. Take at least 10 minutes for this part of the exercise.

During this step you might find yourself drawing a blank. Consider this to be a temporary "planner's block." It's a signal that your creative juices are just about to flow, that great ideas are getting ready to explode to the surface. For most of us, reflecting on the meaning and scope of our lives is a new experience. Allow some time to let the process work.



8. Finish your session by considering what you want to have happen after you die. You might include goals for your family, friends, workplace, city, community, state, country, and world. Be willing to set goals that extend far into the future—50 years, 100 years, and beyond.

One of the advantages of this exercise is that it allows you to set goals in the context of your entire life. You get to consider the whole span of your individual life and even beyond. You might also find that remembering significant events in your past prompts you to make certain choices for the future.

For instance, you might choose to renew an old relationship or finish an uncompleted project.

You can repeat this exercise many times, at intervals ranging from once a month to once a decade. Each time you create a lifeline, you can gain new insights into the past and create a new vision for your future. Look at your lifeline as a living document—one that changes as you learn and grow.

As you do this exercise, you can allow the artist within you to emerge. Add colors to your lifeline. Draw pictures that depict significant events. Also color-code the events on your line. For example, you might choose different colors for different categories of goals.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Reflect on your lifeline

After you've completed your lifeline, think about it for a few more minutes. Consider what you've learned from this exercise and what your lifeline reveals about you. Complete the following sentences:

While doing my lifeline, I was surprised to discover that I . . .

Doing my lifeline taught me that the things I most value in life include . . .

Of the goals I've selected for the future, the three most important are . . .

EXERCISE

Add details to your lifeline

After listing your three most important goals in the previous Discovery Statement, plan how to achieve them. Following is one way to do so.

Draw a separate lifeline for each goal. On the far left end of each line, put today's date. On the far right end, write your goal and assign it a date. Between these two points, note the sub-goals you might set. For example, if you want to get a graduate degree by a certain date, set a date for applying to a college, choosing a major, securing financial aid, registering for classes, and so on.

EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM OF PLANNING

Planning allows us to live with more freedom, and if we want to start enjoying new results in our lives, planning helps produce them. If we want to start enjoying more happiness, health, wealth, and love, making concrete plans moves us in that direction.

Planning is about being precise when it comes to the overall thrust of our years on this planet. Talk to some people about this and they'll recoil at the very thought. "I want to be free and spontaneous," they object. "Planning is too restrictive. The very thought of it makes me uptight."

Consider the possibility that planning and spontaneity go together. With a plan, you know what needs doing today, this week, this month, and this year. You know the contours of your schedule—the times when you can relax and play and the times when you're committed to being on task.

Planning does not mean that you have to be busier or more harried than you are now. It means that you get the maximum value from every activity you choose to do, since you understand how each activity contributes to your overall mission. It can actually take less time to achieve our goals than to miss them, because we often invest more time worrying about the goal than it takes to roll up our sleeves and get

the job done. Planning and then taking action can actually leave more time for relaxing, goofing off, or taking part in any new project that comes along.

Planning can help us find the surest path and the shortest route to our dreams. With the time we save as a result, we can actually gain breathing space and the freedom of spontaneity.

Planning allows us to be proactive

A plan is a scheme for doing something. It is a draft for achieving some result, a map for reaching some destination, an outline for taking some intended course of action, or a design for creating something new.

Many people have desires and many never satisfy them. When goals remain general and vague, they often remain mere wishes. When wishes are translated into plans, they turn into clear intentions to act. Translating our goals into specific steps helps us shift our thinking from "Wouldn't it be wonderful if . . . " to "Here's what I want and this is what I intend to do about it."

Many of us are so busy with crises and other urgent matters that we spend little time planning. The furnace isn't working, the kids need a ride to the game, the report is due on Monday, we're out of milk, the insurance payment is due this month—the list goes on and on.

In the midst of our hectic lives, we might plan for short-range goals—what to serve for dinner or where to go on vacation. Yet we may seldom get around to the big picture of our lives. We miss out on finding a quiet, relaxing place and thoughtfully inquiring into what we want, who we are, and where we're headed for the rest of our lives. Without that inquiry, life can seem shallow and aimless.

When we react only to immediate demands and plan only for short-range goals, we can end up drifting. We are attracted to this, repelled by that, pushed here, pulled there. While we bounce from project to project in random fashion, we can fail to make significant progress in any one direction.

Planning presents a powerful alternative. When we plan, we are not simply reacting to whatever life throws at us. Planning makes us proactive. We create a path, channel our energies, and tap slumbering potentials. Rather than merely reacting to circumstances, we are preparing to take advantage of them and use them in ways that further our goals.

Planning makes opportunities clear

Life offers countless opportunities and resources for achieving our aims. When our goals are explicit and clearly defined, we can hone in on the relevant stimuli.

Say that you read a newspaper article about the increasing number of two-income families. If you're without a comprehensive plan for your life, you might conclude the idea has little meaning or use.

This can be different if you read the article with a plan in mind. Perhaps you're dissatisfied with your current job and have been thinking about starting a new business. When you read the article, you might wonder if there is a need for more daycare facilities in the community. You could explore the possibility of starting a new daycare center. You might even expand this idea and wonder if there is a market for a nationally franchised daycare business.

As you continue to think about a daycare business, you might notice a group of retired people sitting on lawn chairs in front of their home. Some of them might adore children and make wonderful daycare employees.

With a plan, circumstances that would otherwise appear meaningless can become opportunities to improve the quality of our lives.

Planning renews us

Sometimes it seems that there is not enough time to plan. It might even seem irresponsible to take time for planning.

When working hard to handle pressing issues, we often feel as if we're on task and accomplishing something. Tangible results are being produced, and we experience a sense of satisfaction. Planning can seem intangible, failing to offer the same sense of accomplishment.

This line of reasoning is flawed. It's much like saying that we are too busy chopping wood to sharpen the axe.

Once we have planned, we can dive into our work knowing that we are making the most effective use of our time. When we have a plan, it can actually take less time and energy to reach a goal. Charging thoughtlessly into activity with the vague hope that we'll get where we want to go can be highly inefficient.

Planning allows excitement

Some people see planning as a dreaded, dry activity that stifles creativity, eliminates spontaneity, and destroys excitement. They envision tedious charts, boring meetings, and constraining schedules.

There is an alternative. Planning can be seen as a way to help ensure happiness and enhance excitement. Planning is a creative adventure during which we design our lives. We can mentally rehearse the future, avoid costly errors, and increase the odds that our visions will become reality.

Planning stamps out resignation

It's easy to fall into the trap of resignation. We are told that many areas of life are complicated and that it's best to let the experts handle them. We're often told that it's smart to let others make decisions for us. We trust our cars to mechanics, our bodies to physicians, our children to educators, and our spiritual lives to members of the clergy. These choices often make sense. The problem begins when we become resigned and then delegate blindly. Many people allow daily choices about everything from foods to furniture to be determined by advertising.

Our resignation is reinforced when we witness events that seem beyond our control. Faced with global catastrophes, inefficient bureaucracies, and unresponsive governments, we can discount our ability to make much of a difference. We give up. We resign. This mentality easily seeps into our personal lives: "Well, there's not much I can do about this job (or this relationship or this problem). I'll just make the best of a bad deal."

Many people fail to reach goals for the simple reason that they have no goals. And even when they do have goals, they might not have concrete plans to reach them. Resignation and a "why bother" attitude are a natural result.

There are probably several antidotes to resignation. One of them is planning. It is difficult to plan and be resigned at the same time. Planning invites exploration of purpose and inquiry into possibilities. It helps us generate energy that can be used to create new ideas.

Where there is a plan, there are possibilities. Where there are possibilities, there is hope. Where there is hope, there is energy and enthusiasm. Where there is energy and enthusiasm, there can be action.

Planning is already a part of our lives.

We already know how to plan. We do it all the time. Consider how we take a vacation, buy a car, clean a house, or shop for groceries. Each of these activities involves forethought. They call for some preparation to take actions in a certain sequence. Many of our activities, from getting dressed to making a business investment, require some level of planning. We make hundreds of plans every day. By refining and improving the planning skills we already have, we can increase our chances of reaching significant goals.

Warning: Planning can be overdone

Like most of the other strategies in this book, planning can be used inappropriately. Sometimes it's fine to be totally spontaneous and not plan a thing. At times it is appropriate to say, "OK. Enough planning. It's time to move into action. Let's go." Balance is the key.

In general, most of us spend too little time planning. We have a long way to go before needing to worry about planning that is getting out of control.

> *The secret of success is constancy of purpose.*
>
> –Benjamin Disraeli

If you want it—rehearse

Mentally rehearsing with affirmations and visualizations can help us align our behaviors with the outcomes we desire. This process can be compared to how an invisible magnetic force aligns iron filings into a precise pattern.

Suppose that we want to organize randomly scattered iron filings on a piece of paper into an oval-like pattern. We could get a magnifying glass and a pair of fine tweezers and manually position the filings, one at a time, in the desired pattern. It makes more sense to put a magnet under the paper. The iron filings will respond to the magnetic field and align naturally into the desired pattern. Similarly, if we want to make a change in our life, rehearsing mentally is like creating a force field that helps us align our behaviors with the change we want to make.

Assume that a woman becomes interested in playing tennis and chooses to make this activity a regular part of her life. One of the most effective strategies she can use to make this change is to mentally rehearse playing tennis. She can picture what she will look like out on the court in her new tennis outfit. She might smile as she remembers the smell of opening new tennis balls. She can imagine the feel of the racquet in her hand and the warm breeze in her hair. She might repeat a daily affirmation that she is alert and responds quickly to her opponent's swing. She can remember the sound of the racquet hitting the ball as she serves powerfully and accurately. She can rehearse returning the ball with a strong, graceful backhand. And, she can

imagine taking a shower and enjoying the wonderful feeling of having played well and exercised hard.

Another example: A bank employee is no longer satisfied with being a run-of-the-mill bank teller. He decides to transform himself and set a matchless standard for customer service. He affirms his new intention by repeating to himself, "I am now one of the most courteous, efficient, and productive bank tellers in the entire world." In his mind's eye, he pictures customers walking away from his window with broad smiles and high satisfaction. At any given moment, he can ask, "What would a world-class bank teller do at this moment?" When he asks this question, he usually thinks of an answer almost immediately.

This person allows his affirmations and visualizations to drive him so that he generally knows what to do next. At both conscious and unconscious levels, he is operating in ways that are consistent with being a truly great bank teller. As a result, he gains a promotion and has more money and prestige. He is also far more satisfied and fulfilled in his new career.

The more details we can use in our mental rehearsals, the more our emotions are likely to get into the act and the more effective this strategy will be. Details can be enhanced by using all five of our senses—seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling.

Mentally rehearsing, repeating affirmations, and visualizing success are powerful ways to enhance our progress in making changes and accomplishing anything we choose to do.

The idea behind mental rehearsal is simply to have a rich and complete internal experience of already having what we're after. We can experience any goal in our hearts and minds first. We can visualize the desired result and affirm our abilities to achieve it.

EXERCISE

Stage a mental rehearsal

Think of an activity in which you will soon be involved. It could be anything that you would like to do well. Some possibilities include hosting a dinner, giving a speech, going dancing, playing bridge, playing racquetball, interviewing for a job, or taking a test.

Rehearse performing that activity extremely well. Mentally rehearse in great detail. Imagine everything you want to see and hear. Imagine whatever physical feelings you want to experience. There might even be tastes or smells involved. Get an image of those too.

Now, in the space below, write a detailed description of your excellent performance:

EXERCISE

Say that you've arrived—for a minute

Imagine that you woke up this morning as the person you always wanted to be. All the personal problems that used to get in your way are now resolved. You have developed new and powerful skills for handling whatever challenges life sends your way. Your life is full, rich, and satisfying.

Now, from that imaginary place, choose how to spend the rest of your day. What will you do? What commitments will you make? What will you focus on? How will you use your time and money today? Where will you go? What people will be present in your life?

Write your answers to these questions in the space below.

Now come back to the present and consider what you've written. Circle any activities that you actually can do today; add them to your to-do list.

Perhaps something still blocks you from doing an activity that you described. In the space below, state that activity along with the obstacles that get in your way.

Finally, list one thing you can do immediately to begin removing these obstacles. Then consider taking that action today.

Keep coming back to your list of obstacles. As you chip away at them, you get closer and closer to becoming the person you want to be.

POWER PROCESS #2

Tell the truth

In this chapter you'll find...

The value of the truth.
When we're honest about which aspects of our lives are working well—and which are not—we're poised for change.

Denial is pervasive—and we deny it.
We can get past denial by practicing "no shame, no blame," starting from forgiveness, and seeing the connection between strengths and limitations.

Get a start at truth telling-exercise.
Begin truth telling by describing your current strategies for maintaining happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Take a First Step-exercise.
Admit your strengths and write frankly about all the aspects of your life that you want to improve.

Look for strengths-exercise.
Building on our strengths can be just as valuable as admitting our weaknesses.

Practice five ways to know yourself.
Be specific, collect the facts, listen to others, and evaluate yourself. In fact, do all of the above.

Review a mistake with a fresh outlook-exercise.
Keeping in mind the difference between facts and judgments, describe one of your mistakes. Also describe how to prevent the mistake from happening again.

Survey yourself-exercise.
Complete a self-survey by assigning numerical ratings to your current skills in four crucial areas of life: happiness, health, wealth, and love.

Uncover rocks in the road: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Look deeper. Describe any current problems in your life that you might prefer to hide.

Choose what not to examine: Discovery/Intention Statement.
While doing the previous exercises, you may have discovered aspects of your life that you are not willing to examine. Set aside a later time to consider these areas.

The Value of the Truth

If we want to change, it pays to tell the truth. When we're honest about which aspects of our lives are working well—and which are not—we're poised for growth. On the other hand, if we're out of touch with the truth, we can easily ignore pressing problems or come up with bogus solutions.

Alcoholics Anonymous offers one of the most popular and successful self-help programs around, and it begins with telling the truth. The first thing AA members do to change their behavior and transform their lives is to tell it like it really is. Step One of the AA program offers a timeless example: "We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable."

AA is just one example. People who join Weight Watchers begin by telling the truth about how much they weigh—a ritual that's repeated at the beginning of every meeting. Likewise, one of the first things that counselors do is assess their clients—learn the truth about what the client is thinking, feeling, and doing now. Physicians start their treatments only after a careful examination and diagnosis. Coaches design a training program only after gaining a clear idea of their team's present abilities. Supervisors, managers, and teachers do the same.

This strategy can be applied to tackling any problem. Talking straight about ourselves complements and enhances all other strategies in this book. When we tell the truth, we unleash the forces of change.

There is an added benefit to having the courage to tell the truth and then successfully handling our problems: We provide a model for others. After observing us, others might glimpse the power of telling the truth, get sight of their potentials, and take the first step toward solving a long-standing problem. When we tell the truth we contribute not only to ourselves but also to others. Everybody wins. Our honesty may provide just the opening someone else needs to move forward.

DENIAL IS PERVASIVE AND WE DENY IT

Many people find it tough to admit weaknesses and are willing to go miles out of their way to avoid the truth. When the only way a person can get through the night is with the aid of a six-pack of beer, it's not surprising that he'd rather keep that fact a secret—even from himself. When an executive fudges expense reports so she can get cash for a gambling habit, it's hardly news that she wants to keep the fact hidden.

It's tempting to avoid the pain that comes with telling the truth. In the short run, denial might even work. It smooths over the rough spots and makes things look all right for a while. That benefit usually comes with a cost: Over the long run, denial limits the possibility of change. Denial often stops us in our tracks and keeps us stuck waist deep in our problems, cheating us of happiness. Just ask any recovering addict.

Denial and struggle sap energy. Struggling with the truth can leave us exhausted. The very notion of struggle implies resistance. And the more we resist something, the more it usually fights back. Denial of being overweight is a common example. Denying the problem, resolving to use pure willpower to fight it, spending endless hours putting ourselves down about it—all these are paths of resistance and struggle. Rarely do they lead to any lasting and satisfying solution.

What we resist, persists. It takes courage to break through protective layers of falsehood and allow ourselves to open up to the truth. And while telling the truth might hurt, it is also the first step in getting past the hurt. It opens the door to methods we can use to make effective, enduring changes to improve the quality of our lives.

Practice "no shame, no blame"

Many of us approach a frank evaluation of ourselves with the same enthusiasm with which we'd greet an auditor from the Internal Revenue Service. The very word *evaluation* is often associated with negative experiences—incomprehensible essay tests, tense performance evaluations, and rectal exams. Few people would list these as their favorite afternoon activities.

There is another way to think about evaluations. If we could see evaluations as opportunities to solve problems and take charge of our lives, we might welcome them as gifts. If, after evaluations, we routinely experienced more happiness, we might even greet them with hopeful excitement.

It may seem natural to judge our shortcomings and feel bad about them. Some people believe that such feelings are necessary to correct their errors. Others think a healthy dose of shame is the only thing that can prevent the moral decay of our society.

There is an alternative. We can discover a way to gain skill without feeling rotten about the past. We can change the way things are without having to be upset about the way things have been. We can learn to see shame or blame as excess baggage and just set them aside. We could acknowledge and even regret our mistakes and shortcomings while accepting ourselves completely. And by doing so, we can experience more happiness, health, love, and wealth in the long run. Believe it or not, we can begin working with our list of weaknesses by celebrating them.

Consider the most loving, successful, enlightened, "together" people you know. If they were totally transparent with us, we'd soon hear about their mistakes and regrets. The more successful people are, the more likely they are to be open to looking at their flaws.

The point is simple: We can love and accept ourselves and still work like mad to change ourselves.

Start from forgiveness

One powerful way to move from shame to acceptance is to forgive ourselves. Blaming ourselves is like trying to play tennis on a muddy, slippery court. We can be so busy trying to keep our footing that we miss every swing. Before practicing, it's wise to clean the court.

Shame puts us on an unhealthy playing field. In contrast, forgiving ourselves provides stability and freedom. We get to practice new skills without the self-blame that saps our energy and keeps us focused on failure. We can get on with the game at hand and make progress that does justice to our potentials. We don't need to beat ourselves up before we re-enter the game.

We can be totally honest with ourselves and, at the same time, be gentle. While admitting our mistakes, we can treat ourselves with care. After all, mistakes are a common property of humanity.

See the connection between strengths and limitations

As we practice telling the truth, we can remember something about our strengths and weaknesses. Most people place these two things in separate, unrelated mental categories. Another way to perceive them is as being closely related.

Often the things about ourselves that we label as weaknesses are simply examples of taking our strengths too far. A virtuoso musician might devote most of her waking hours to practice and rehearsal, neglecting her health in the process. A person with a passion for organization can become obsessed with details and lose sight of overall goals. Someone who is skilled at planning may neglect to act on his plans. A person who listens well may forget to speak about his own thoughts and feelings. A detective may be so skilled at cool, detached observation that she seldom enters into real relationships with people. Someone who approaches life bravely might get carried away and take foolish risks.

These are just a few examples. The point is to remember that our assets and liabilities may all be part of the same personal account. Staying aware of the balance between our strengths and current limitations can help keep us from judging ourselves too harshly. Knowing this can help us accurately diagnose problems and discover resources for solving them.

EXERCISE

Get a start at truth-telling

Use this experience in truth-telling as a warm-up for the more comprehensive exercises that follow. Complete the following sentences:

To cultivate a sense of happiness in daily life, I use the following strategies:

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_____

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_____

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The ways I nurture and maintain my health include:

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I cultivate loving relationships by:

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I take the following steps to manage money and maintain wealth:

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Now describe one or two ways that you think you can improve your skills in each area.

To be happier, I could . . .

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To be healthier, I could . . .

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To be more loving, I could . . .

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To create more wealth in my life, I could . . .

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EXERCISE

Take a First Step

Telling the truth about yourself has an uncanny power. Absolute honesty puts in motion a set of forces that can alter you forever. If you want to change your life, begin with the truth.

This exercise gives you an opportunity to do just that. In a few minutes, you will survey the whole expanse of your life. Prepare to admit your strengths and to write frankly about all the aspects of your thinking and behavior that you want to improve.

This may be the most difficult exercise in Human Being. *It can also be the most powerful. Doing this exercise thoroughly may be enough to fulfill your purpose in using this book.*

The idea is this: Write the truth about who you are and what you want. The instructions below will guide you through the process step by step. Telling the truth is the core of everything that follows.

If you want to experience the full benefit of this exercise, do three things. First, be concrete. Get down to specifics. Instead of writing, "I'm unhappy," you could write, "I feel isolated and have few people I can call on during times of crisis."

Second, be courageous. If you start to feel uncomfortable, it's probably a clue that the exercise is working. You may be looking at parts of yourself that you'd rather not face. If this happens to you, acknowledge the feeling fully. Then return to telling the truth. Remember that it's difficult—if not impossible—to change those aspects of our lives that hide in the shadows. When we shine a light on our shortcomings, we begin to rob them of their power.

Third, be complete. Many people think that telling the truth is a strategy that applies only to our weaknesses. In reality, this strategy is even more powerful when we fully admit our strengths and skills as well.

As you complete this exercise, you might reveal things that you don't want others to know—perhaps things that could get you into trouble. For that reason,consider writing your responses on a separate sheet of paper and destroying it when you're finished. Allow about 30 minutes to complete the whole exercise.

Part 1

Take 10 minutes to complete the following sentences. List as many responses as you can to each one—at least 10. This will be a rough draft, so don't worry about the quality of what you write. Just get as many ideas down on paper as you can in the allotted time.

I start to have problems in my life when . . .

_____

_____

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_____

Things don't work well when I . . .

_____

_____

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_____

It is ineffective when I . . .

_____

_____

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_____

Part 2

Set aside another 10 minutes to complete the following sentences. Again, aim for at least 10 responses to each one. And don't worry about whether what you write is wrong or silly. If an idea pops into your head, put it down. You can review and reflect on your responses later.

I am good at . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

One of my strengths is . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

It is effective when I . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part 3

Once you've finished the first two parts of this exercise, take a short breather. Also celebrate the difficult and potentially rewarding work that you've done so far.

Now take another step to solidify your insights. Review the two lists you've created. Cross off any ideas that don't make sense. Put an asterisk next to statements that really ring true. If you can reword any of these statements to make them clearer or more accurate, do so.

Part 4

Here's your chance to follow up on what you've learned about yourself. Make it a point to review your list of strengths regularly, especially when you feel discouraged or just plain stuck. You might want to post this list in a prominent place so you'll see it often.

Next, look again at your list of problem spots from Part 1. Take your top priority items and rewrite them as Intention Statements. Move from problems to possible solutions. For example, "It is ineffective when I run low on cash at the end of each month" can be transformed into, "I intend to decrease my spending without sacrificing my overall quality of life." If any of your intentions bring up outrageous possibilities or hold the promise of far-reaching change, that's great. Consider dividing these long-range goals into simple, specific actions you can start taking immediately.

There's only one step left, and it goes beyond writing: Do what you intend. Take action. Savor any positive new results in your life. Also, come back to this exercise periodically. Use it any time to spotcheck for problems and take charge of your life again. You can make truth telling a habit.

EXERCISE

Look for strengths

It can be just as challenging to tell the truth about our strengths as it is to admit our shortcomings. Speaking about our strengths, or agreeing with others who are speaking about our strengths, is sometimes seen as conceit. Our desires to be liked and to avoid appearing conceited can interfere with telling the truth.

Building on our strengths can be just as valuable as admitting our weaknesses. When we ignore our strong points, we cheat ourselves. Celebrating our strengths can boost our morale and fuel us with energy needed to tackle long-standing problems.

Describe three times when you experienced success or felt great about how you handled a problem. Also write about a few of your strengths that contributed to the outcomes of these experiences.

PRACTICE FIVE WAYS TO KNOW YOURSELF

Even when you're willing to tell the truth about your problems, you may not know exactly how to discover the truth. As you don your detective cap, consider the following four strategies.

1. Be specific

Problems defined in ambiguous or general terms offer little insight into possible solutions. When problems are described in specific terms with lots of detail, solutions are easier to identify.

Consider this statement: "I'm a lousy parent." When it comes to telling the truth, that's an OK place to start. This insight puts us in the ballpark. Now we can go straight to home base by getting more specific: "I am so intent on pursuing my career that I spend little quality time with my family. In fact, I spent the last three weekends at my office." Now that the problem is outlined in detail it's easier to create a specific plan: Rent a boat and take the family on a picnic next Sunday or hold weekly family meetings to discuss problems, share joys, and plan activities together.

To gain the full power of truth telling, go for the specifics. Precision is power. When we're specific about what's not working in our lives, we get clear about what to do next. Precision prepares us for action.

2. Collect the facts

One way to know ourselves is to collect the facts. These are the simple, neutral measurements that most of us find hard to dispute: the weight on the bathroom scale, the score on the multiple choice test, the number of widgets we sold this month. This approach gives us useful feedback and a way to double-check other ways of knowing ourselves.

As one of several different ways to explore the truth, it is useful; yet, as a singular and ultimate judgment, facts can be dangerously misleading. For one, a cold report of the facts often ignores the role of luck. For example, we might guess blindly on a test item and, by chance, get it right. Some people are so skilled at test-taking techniques that they sneak by. When the final grades are posted, their scores do not truly measure their knowledge.

3. Listen to others

When our solo attempts to collect the facts come up short, we can turn to other people. They can often see things about us that we'd prefer to overlook. It is sometimes hard to see ourselves objectively, especially when we've got a lot invested in our current habits.

When we look in the mirror, we may see only a rehearsed moment. We straighten up, suck in our belly, and strain to look our best. In contrast, other people can report on what we do and say when we're not rehearsing. We can learn priceless information and insights by listening.

When people we trust tell us something about ourselves that we don't recognize, it's wise to pay close attention. We might learn something that could dramatically increase our experience of happiness, health, love, or wealth.

It often helps when others put their evaluations in writing. That way, we can review them whenever we choose. Writing promotes deliberate and careful thinking. We're more likely to get thoughtful, insightful evaluations if we ask for them in writing.

4. Evaluate yourself

It's easy to neglect the one source of feedback that can be the most powerful: ourselves. As helpful and insightful as listening to others can be, few people can tell the truth about us as fully as we can. This is especially true when we're willing to stay awake to our strengths and current limitations. You will have an opportunity to give self-evaluation a whirl by doing the exercise on page 42 titled "Take a First Step."

5. Do all of the above

We're not limited to one way of knowing ourselves. None of these methods by themselves is foolproof. A combination of all of these methods could well give us the most accurate feedback.

EXERCISE

Review a mistake with a fresh outlook

Remember a time when you made a mistake or did something you regret. Describe in writing what happened.

Review what you just wrote and look for anything that is not a fact. Facts are raw data; they contain no evaluations or judgments. "I locked my keys in my car," is a fact. "I was stupid" is a judgment. Rewrite your description of what happened and include only the facts.

Now think of what skill or corrective action might help prevent something like this from happening again. Describe those skills or actions and how you can use them in the future.

EXERCISE

Survey yourself

This exercise can be the foundation upon which you build the quality of the rest of your life. Like any exercise in truth telling, it requires clarity and courage. The potential gains are tremendous, limited only by what you choose to invest in courage and follow-up.

Soon you will complete a self-survey. In the process, you will assign numerical ratings to your current skills in four crucial areas of life: happiness, health, love, and wealth. As you do, keep the following points in mind:

- *Use the scores as guidelines only. They suggest general skill levels for specific strategies and ways of being. Subjective evaluations of our own abilities and personal growth are probably far more accurate and useful than whatever numerical scores we assign in this exercise.*

  Measuring our skills against some arbitrary scale or against others' abilities in the same area can be valuable if we use it as a device to be aware of what's possible, to step up our commitment to change, and to take action. Rating ourselves can be valuable if we use the process to generate energy and enthusiasm. If we enter into this exercise while staying open to the opportunity it offers, we can use it to empower ourselves.

- *Use this exercise to guide you through the book. Build on strengths and work on current limitations by choosing where to invest your time and energy. Concentrate on sections of* Human Being *that look particularly useful.*

- *Come back to this exercise several times. Do it monthly, quarterly, or annually. Use it any time to diagnose problems in your life and discover solutions.*

  Don't be surprised if your scores in some categories are lower in the future, possibly a result of taking more risks and being more honest.

To complete this exercise, read the following lists of statements and write a number from 1 to 5 in front of each statement:

5—*This statement is always or almost always true.*
4—*This statement is often true.*
3—*This statement is true about half the time.*
2—*This statement is seldom true.*
1—*This statement is never or almost never true.*

Happiness

_____I have an abiding sense of fulfillment that I can return to even when circumstances are difficult.

_____I periodically examine the quality of my thinking and choose beliefs that promote my happiness.

_____I have a clear sense of the factors in life that I can control and also of the factors that I cannot control.

_____I focus my thinking and action on the factors I can control.

_____I take risks, even if it means making mistakes.

_____I make a habit of forgiving myself and others.

_____I have a clear strategy for responding to negative feelings such as anger, fear, resentment, and sadness.

_____I can take constructive action even when I don't feel like doing anything.

_____I know of and use effective strategies for solving problems and changing habits.

_____When my life is not working well, I look to my own thinking and action for solutions rather than blaming others.

_____***Total score—Happiness***

Health

_____I am knowledgeable about the nutritional value of the foods I eat each day.

_____I choose foods that promote my health.

_____I exercise to increase my aerobic capacity and gain strength, and I stretch to maintain muscle flexibility.

_____I have more than enough emotional and physical energy to meet the demands of my daily life.

_____I am aware of the factors in my life that are associated with feelings of stress.

_____I have a clear and effective set of strategies for responding to stress.

_____I have organized my immediate environment (including my home and car) to help prevent accidents.

_____I practice habits (such as buckling my seat-belt) that promote my safety.

_____I am clearly in control of the alcohol, nicotine, or other drugs that I put into my body.

_____I notice early signs of health problems and respond promptly and effectively.

_____***Total score—Health***

Love

_____I know how to develop and sustain relationships that support myself and the others involved.

_____I practice speaking candidly with the people I trust.

_____When my relationships are not working, I know how to respond effectively.

_____I listen attentively and with skill.

_____I communicate my thoughts and feelings without blaming others.

_____I like who I am, and I know that I am lovable.

_____I make big promises and keep my word.

_____I can learn from other people even when I don't like them.

_____I have clear and effective strategies for resolving conflict.

_____I give my time, money, and talent in ways that contribute to other people.

_____***Total score—Love***

Wealth

_____I know the details about how much money I spend and earn.

_____I am wealthy: I have more than enough time, money, and possessions to live the life I choose.

_____I earn more than I spend, and I save the difference.

_____I have enough money saved to handle an emergency or financial crisis.

_____I have a clear plan for saving money, investing money, and protecting my assets.

_____I periodically monitor myself to see how I spend my time.

_____I regularly set goals and plan how to achieve them.

_____I have a clear sense of personal mission and know what I want to accomplish in my lifetime.

_____I rarely worry about having enough time or money.

_____I do work that creates value for myself and for the world.

_____***Total score—Wealth***

If you completed this exercise thoroughly and honestly, congratulate yourself. You're already well on your way to enjoying more happiness, health, love, wealth, and whatever else you value.

After you've taken a breather, reflect on what you learned from the previous exercise. Complete the following sentences:

What surprises me most about my survey is . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The areas of my life in which I am most skilled include . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The areas in which I'd most like to gain skills include . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Now move into action. Decide what you will do as a result of telling the truth about your current skills. Complete these sentences:

The most important thing I can do right now to experience more happiness is to . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The most important thing I can do right now to experience more health is to . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The most important thing I can do right now to experience more love is to . . .

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The most important thing I can do right now to experience more wealth is to . . .

_____
_____
_____

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Uncover rocks in the road

Sometimes, we try to "smooth over" issues that are too difficult or troublesome to face directly. The problem is that these "rocks in the road" don't go away. They just get covered up or disguised, and we continue to trip over them.

This exercise, like many others you will find in this book, invites you to be courageous. After doing the survey, take a close look at the major areas of your life. If you have been denying that a problem exists, here is an opportunity for you to tell the truth about it.

I discovered that I . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Choosing what not to examine

While doing the previous exercises, you may have discovered aspects of your life that you are not willing to examine. That's fine. You can simply tell the truth about this and set aside a later time to consider these areas. To do so, complete the following sentences:

I discovered that I am not willing to examine . . .

I intend to examine these areas of my life by the following dates . . .

POWER PROCESS #3

Practice acceptance

In this chapter you'll find

Love it all.

Loving a problem—that is, telling the truth about it and accepting it fully—is one way to leave the problem behind.

Love it all-exercise.

Take a little problem, one that you could easily live with for the rest of your life, and practice "loving it all" by using a specific suggestion from the previous article.

Love it all—part two: exercise.

After doing the previous exercise, choose a problem that is more significant and apply the same strategy.

Love it all

We have a ticket to paradise. We hold that ticket right now, and we can use it any time. What's more, every time we use that ticket, we get a free replacement—one we can redeem anywhere at any time.

That ticket is not a real ticket, one we actually hold in our hands. Rather, it's one we hold in our heads. The ticket to paradise is an attitude, a way of thinking, a style of perceiving the world. Call this attitude "loving it all." Practice permitting things to be the way they are—right now, in all their hairy imperfection and glorious messiness.

Love it all—then choose the next task

When we are willing to love our problems, we drain them of much of their energy. Once we love something—which means telling the truth about it and accepting it for what it is right now—we often have more clarity about what to do next. If we learn that the fan belt on our car is broken, we know what to do: replace the belt. If our doctor tells us that our cholesterol level is 300, we also know what to do: alter our diets and exercise patterns to bring our cholesterol level down. After a while, we can check our cholesterol level again, and if it's still too high we can do something different.

We could take other approaches. Instead of replacing the fan belt, some people bewail the current state of fan belt technology. "Why do they make fan belts that break?" these people moan. "Why can't they make fan belts that last forever? They can send astronauts to the moon and they still make lousy fan belts. What's wrong with this country? This is not the way things should be. Things ought to be different."

Perhaps. And the truth in this moment is that fan belts do break, even as NASA launches more cargo into space. Mothers do call to scold when birthdays pass unnoticed. Knowing these things, we can replace the belts, send the cards, and get on with our lives. Eventually someone might even come up with a better design for fan belts. Telling the truth and accepting something can lead to useful action. Resisting the truth and complaining about it leads nowhere.

Love it all—then leave the problem behind

Remember that loving a problem does not need to keep us stuck in the problem. When people first hear about "love it all," they often think it means to be resigned about the problem, to just get use to it. Loving a problem does not stop us from acting. Loving a problem does not keep us mired in it. In fact, fully accepting and admitting the problem assists us in taking effective action and perhaps in even freeing ourselves of the problem once and for all.

There's an ancient story about a man who is struck by a poison arrow shot by one of his enemies. Instead of removing the arrow, the wounded man demands to know who shot it. Moreover, he wants to know what kind of material the arrow is made of. While he's bleeding and the arrow is still piercing him, he demands apologies from both the person who shot the arrow and the person who made it. "No one should act this way," the wounded man gasps with his dying breath. "People ought not to act this way."

Another person suffers a similar wound. Instead of demanding details and apologies, he removes the arrow, calls for help, and lives. The first person perishes from inordinate demands and an acute attack of "the should's." The second person survives due to his habit of seeing what is and doing what needs to be done. That's what "loving it all" is all about.

Move from what should be to what is

Many of us are not used to just looking at the facts. We're more familiar with another way of viewing the world. When others don't act the way we want them to act, we see this as a disaster. When events don't turn out the way we expect, we judge life to be awful. From this viewpoint, we see only how other people and events fail to measure up to what we want, what we think should be or ought to be.

We can feel put down, frustrated, or excluded when family members and friends fail to meet our requirements and veer from our expectations. This approach can be a ticket to constant disappointment.

"Love it all" represents an alternative. It's about softening our requirements into preferences. It's about noticing what is instead of what should be. And it's a path we can start today—not next week, not tomorrow, but right now, before the next 60 seconds are up. And every step on the path involves the same process. We simply accept whatever is happening in the present moment. Period.

So if our dog tracks in mud on our freshly shampooed carpets, we can just love it. Love the dog. Love the dirty carpet. Love it all. And then chose to clean up the mud. If our mother calls for the third time this month to say that we forgot our second cousin's birthday, we can just love it all. Love our mother. Love our second cousin. And love ourselves even though we forgot. And then choose to send a card or letter. (While we're at it, we can love ourselves for "loving it all.")

Love it to death

When we totally experience pain, it often diminishes, and sometimes it disappears. This strategy works with emotions, past traumas, and even physical pain. For example, you can use this technique the next time you have a headache. Make it your aim to love the pain—that is, to fully accept the pain and know all the details about it. Far from being solid, most pain has a wave-like quality. It arises, reaches a peak of intensity, and then subsides for a moment. See if you can watch the waves come and go. Also notice if the pain has any "borders"; does it seem confined to one area or does it ripple throughout particular areas of the body? If you were to associate a color, shape, texture, smell, and word with the feeling, what would they be? When we accept, allow, and permit the pain, we pave the way for its release.

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

(This very abstract concept is more easily understood when applied to specific circumstances. Please send your examples.)

EXERCISE

Love it all

One way to get the hang of "loving it all" is to start small. Take a little problem, one that you could easily live with for the rest of your life. Practice "loving it all" by using a specific suggestion from the previous article and see what happens.

Describe the problem you want to work with. Follow up with your chosen strategy for loving it to death.

The problem is . . .

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Love it all—part two

After doing the previous exercise, choose a problem that is more significant and apply the same strategy.

The problem is . . .

I intend to . . .

POWER PROCESS #4

Examine moment-to-moment choices

In this chapter you'll find...

Genius is in the details.

Managing even the largest enterprise involves attending to the smallest details with consummate care.

Focus on the process.

We can make minute-to-minute choices that are consistent with our values.

Small change, big difference: Discovery/ Intention Statement.

Describe a routine activity you perform and what it reveals about how you approach other activities in your life.

GENIUS IS IN THE DETAILS

Life often hinges on the little things. Friendships are developed one small interaction at a time. Books are written word by word, sentence by sentence, page by page. A mansion is built board by-board, brick by brick. A massive garden begins with a single flower. A 100-mile hike begins with one step. Corporate dynasties are built one decision and one action at a time. Managing even the largest enterprise involves attending to the smallest details with consummate care.

Maybe one shortcoming of many self-improvement schemes is that they concentrate on huge goals (such as happiness, health, love, or wealth) while forgetting the little things (how we sweep the floor, how we shut the door when leaving the house, the way we set down a bag of groceries on the kitchen counter, and the way we hold our face muscles when listening to another person.)

In short, the smallest choices can be as powerful and far-reaching in their effects as the largest choices. The way we breathe when feeling stressed, the words we choose to describe a problem, the gestures we make when speaking to a lover—all are small things. Seldom are we aware of them. (In fact, people are often unaware of the big choices too.) We may not even realize that we're making choices each moment. Yet all those micro-choices, when added together, become a force that determines what we have, do, and become. The way we choose to live our next moment is the way we live our lives.

The process is always the same

If you want to get real insight into a person, observe in detail how she performs the simplest, smallest activities of daily life. A person who keeps a neat closet is also likely to be well organized at work. The person who supports human rights organizations is likely to give up her seat on the bus for an elderly person. The person who exercises regularly is more likely to pay close attention to what he eats.

In a way, small behaviors give us an imprint of the entire person, just as the chromosomes of a single cell provide the blueprint for an entire human organism. One simple action such as sipping a cup of tea, can be merely one wave in a whole ocean of related behaviors.

This is not surprising, since human beings are creatures of habit. Simply put, our behavior follows regular patterns. The more we perform a certain behavior, the more likely we are to perform it again in the future. Our very notion of personality, in fact, rests on this concept. Personality refers to enduring patterns of behavior and ways of thinking about the world. When we know someone's personality, we can reasonably predict how he will act in a certain situation. We know the patterns that shape his life.

These patterns can pervade everything he does. For example, if he reacts with anxiety to a small change in the menu at his favorite restaurant, we can reasonably expect him to react anxiously to other changes in his life as well.

Focus on the Process

A big part of examining moment-to-moment choices is noticing our processes—the things we habitually do to achieve the results we want. To apply this strategy, we can stay aware of our processes: our methods, approaches, procedures, and habits. Each day we can take some time to step back and watch ourselves as an outside observer would. We can see our lives as films being projected on a screen and place ourselves in the audience. Valuable lessons can be learned when we closely examine almost any incident in our lives—even those that last only a few minutes.

Using strategies is a matter of minute-to-minute choices—choices that we're already making. The quality of our lives is in large part determined by all of those small, "unimportant" choices. We can make choices more thoughtfully and in ways that are consistent with our values and with what we want.

Major choices in our lives—whom we marry, if we marry, or what career we pursue—make huge differences in the quality of our lives. But, rarely do we have opportunities to make big choices. Yet, every few minutes we can make small choices that eventually lead to big results. We might see the smaller, moment-to-moment choices as unimportant. Actually, moment-to-moment choices are the building blocks of magnificent results.

Start small and reap big rewards

If you want to take better care of your overall health, start by changing one health habit, such as flossing your teeth daily. If you want to become a better listener, just listen with full attention to the next person you meet. If you want to practice eating all your food more slowly so that you eat less at each meal and enjoy it more, start by eating one bite of food slowly. For example, if your favorite food is pizza, the next time you order it spend at least 10 minutes savoring just one piece.

Perhaps mastery of any task involves a core of common skills, such as the abilities to focus attention, to observe carefully, to plan thoroughly, and to act decisively. Those abilities can be lifesavers no matter what we're doing—whether it's building a doll house or a 20-room mansion. If we bring those abilities to bear on any one thing that we do regularly, we can watch ourselves reap the benefits in everything we do.

Put choices in writing

The practice of writing Discovery Statements and telling the truth about our behaviors can start with the smallest details of our lives. If we want to understand how we handle stress in general, we can look at how we respond to one overdraft notice on our checking account. If we want to learn how we handle changes in any area of our life, we can observe how we respond when our partner rearranges the living room furniture.

Writing Intention Statements is a way we can plan to change our behaviors. If we want to make huge changes in our life, we might want to consider starting small. We can change one simple thing about what we do and watch that change echo throughout our whole life. If we want to get better at attending to details, we can start with a written commitment to notice the color of our spouse's shoes every day. We then

might also get better at spotting typos in memos and catching loopholes in contracts. If we want to start being on time, we can begin with a written intention to show up to our next business appointment or social event on time.

The point

In essence, this strategy boils down to one idea: If we change one area of our lives, others areas are likely to change also. And, when we solve small individual problems, we might solve many more at the same time as well.

If we pay exquisite attention to the small choices, as well as to the larger ones, our lives can be more in tune with our values. In small behavioral and cognitive steps, we can take transformational leaps that increase our experience of happiness, health, love, and wealth.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

SMALL CHANGE, BIG DIFFERENCE

In the space below, describe a routine activity you perform and what it reveals about how you approach other activities in your life:

The routine activity I perform is . . .

What this reveals about how I approach other activities is . . .

Now describe a simple related behavior that you will change immediately—one that might pave the way for larger changes in the future.

I intend to . . .

POWER PROCESS #5

Investigate your role

In this chapter you'll find...

How did I create this?

As we take more responsibility for the quality of our lives, we can ask, "What did I do to help create my circumstances?" and "What can I do to improve them?"

Escaping victim mud—the power of our words.

Speaking less in terms of obligation and making more promises are ways to increase our personal effectiveness.

Climb the ladder of powerful speaking-exercise.

Practice describing a current problem in your life with a new way of speaking.

Look beyond cause and effect.

Instead of generating excuses, we can generate choices. We can take action instead of search for causes.

Practice taking responsibility: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Brainstorm a list of ways that you might be creating a problem and decide what you can do to solve it.

How did I create this?

Get ready for one of the most bizarre suggestions in this book. Here it is: Our lives work most effectively when we take total responsibility for all of our experiences.

We can take responsibility for our lazy, incompetent supervisor.

We can take responsibility for the cars in front of us that sputter and moan as we drive home on the freeway.

We can take responsibility for the neighbors who consistently play their CD's at volumes that could shatter glass.

We can take responsibility for the dogs that howl from midnight until 2:00 a.m.

In short, whenever we're tempted to blame someone or something for an unpleasant circumstance in our lives, we can do the opposite. We can take responsibility for it—all of it.

Check your first reactions to receiving this suggestion. Perhaps they went something like this: "No way! This idea is crazy. I will not take the blame for my rude, insensitive neighbor or for that obnoxious dog or for a boss who's so incompetent he can barely zip his pants. If I start taking on things like this, pretty soon you'll ask me to start taking responsibility for poverty, war, and world hunger."

Hmm—good idea! Stick around for further clarification.

The first thing we can do to explore this idea is to lighten up. We can take this practice as a point of departure, a suggested line of thinking. We can play with it and see where it leads. For now, we need not worry about proving or disproving it. This is not a time to win debate points. We can just try the idea on for size, knowing that we can reject it later if that seems appropriate. It is useful to approach this idea of taking responsibility by asking, "Well, if this idea is true, then where could it lead?"

Another thing we can do is to be clear about what's really being suggested. Taking responsibility is not the same as feeling shame or blame. Taking responsibility is not the same as saying, "Oh, I see. It's my fault." As we hear the word *responsibility*, we can translate it into *response-ability*. We can practice our ability to respond. This practice is not saying that we choose to have loud neighbors or an incompetent boss. We are not solely responsible for all the circumstances of our lives (though it's sometimes interesting and instructive to pretend that we are.) The title and message in this chapter, "Investigate your role," says that we can choose our responses to our neighbors or bosses.

As we seek to take more responsibility for the quality of our lives, we can benefit by asking two questions: "What did I do to help create this situation?" and, "What can I do to turn this situation around?"

Ask: "What did I do to help create this situation?"

Few of the problems in our lives come uninvited. In many cases we made choices that set the circumstances in motion.

Take a man whose relationship with his wife has deteriorated. When asked what's wrong, all his answers are about what she did to create his problems: "She doesn't attend to my needs. She wants all the attention. What's more, she makes financial decisions without telling me. I'm usually the last person to know where our money goes."

On the face of it, such statements sound reasonable. The problem is that they're based on the unspoken and unworkable assumption that what this man's wife does or fails to do solely determines the quality of their relationship. That way of thinking instantly turns the man into a passive victim.

It's possible to take a different view. After looking more deeply, this man might uncover some choices he made that decisively affected his marriage. He might discover that he seldom speaks what he truly thinks or feels. He might also discover that his wife's questions about how to spend money are usually greeted with, "I'm very busy right now. You decide." Frustrated with his vagueness and lack of commitment, she opts to make the decisions.

Asking what we did to create a particular problem often results in good and bad news. The bad news is that many of our frustrations stem directly from what we said or failed to say. Others stem from what we did or failed to do. When our lives are not working, it pays to look first to the person standing in our shoes. That can be terrible news. But there's good news right around the corner. If we chose our way into the present circumstances, we can often choose our way out again. That's what the next question is about.

Ask "What can I do to turn this situation around?"

A second step in taking responsibility is asking, "What can I do now to turn this situation around?"

This question is pure magic. It refocuses our attention. Immediately, it lifts us above the whole self-defeating parade of resentment, frustration, resignation, and fear. With this question, we begin to move into a whole new dimension of life. By choosing our next response and moving into action, we stop swimming in victim soup and start taking control of life again.

Return to the man in the previous example. He can decide to speak clearly about what he wants. He can start to participate more in decision-making. He can become an equal partner in shaping his family's financial destiny. By taking simple steps that are entirely within his control, he can help turn his marriage around.

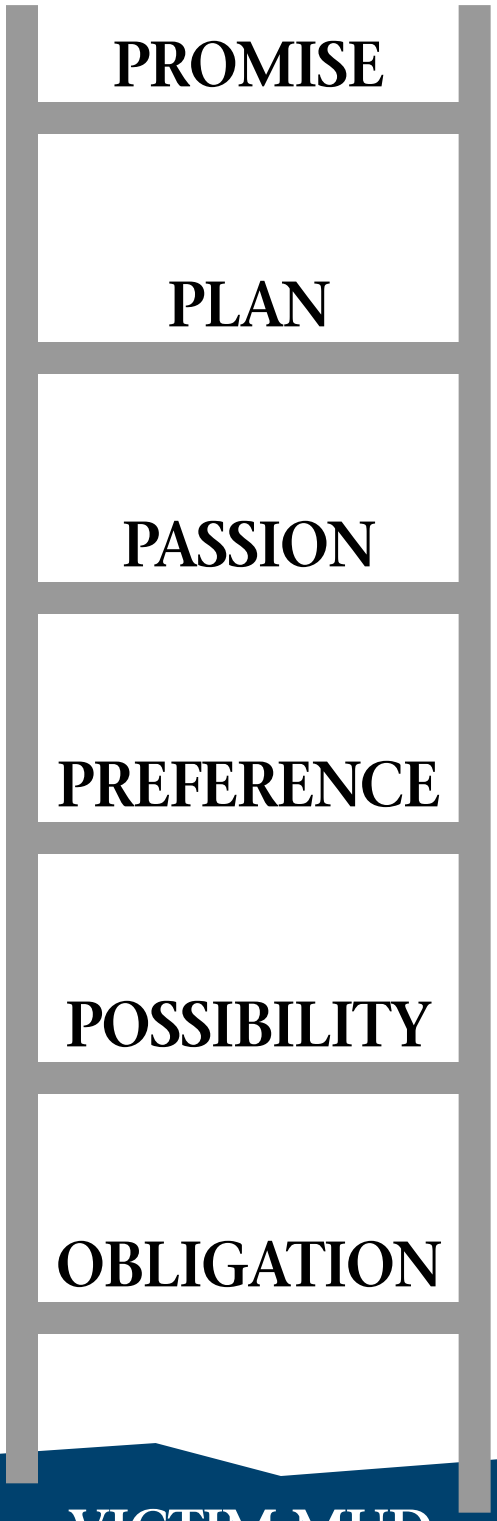
In short, happiness might be less related to having the right conditions in our lives and more to developing the skills to work with whatever conditions exist. No matter what the circumstances are, we can practice choosing where to focus our attention and which actions to take.

The difference in spelling between the words *victim* and *victor* is minor, just a matter of two letters. Likewise, the difference between victors and victims in life is quite small. It could just be a matter of asking the previous two questions—two questions that unleash the true power of taking responsibility.

> ***Look at the word responsibility —"response-ability"—the ability to choose your response. Highly proactive people recognize that responsibility. They do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior.***
>
> –Stephen R. Covey

Escaping Victim Mud—The Power of Our Words

As a tool for rising out of the mud of victimhood, we can use an imaginary "ladder of powerful speaking." On this ladder are six "rungs": obligation, possibility, preference, passion, plan, and promise. Each rung represents a certain type of speaking, from the least powerful (obligation) to the most powerful (promise). At any moment, we "stand" on one of these "rungs"—that is, our speaking exists on one of these levels. Moving "up the ladder"—speaking less in terms of obligation and more in terms of promise—is a way to increase our personal effectiveness. More details about each rung on the ladder of powerful speaking follow the illustration on the right.



Listen for obligation

Obligation is the bottom rung of the ladder. When someone uses the words, "I should, I have to, I must, I ought to, someone better,they made me, someone should, or I had to, then she is speaking out of obligation. People who perceive themselves as victims often speak at this level. Since they see themselves as pawns of circumstance, they pretend they have no control over their lives. When speaking this way, what these people are actually lacking is influence over their lives.

Speak about possibilities

The next step up the ladder of powerful speaking is possibility. When we use phrases such as I might, I'll consider, I could, maybe I will, or I hope, we've made a small but significant step out of the quicksand of obligation.

Opening up possibilities for our lives is far more energizing and exciting than feeling obligated. One of the main differences is that obligation puts other people in charge of our lives. Possibility, like all the rungs above it, puts us back in charge.

While possibility is more freeing than obligation, some cautions are appropriate. First, we can be careful not to fill up our speaking, and therefore our lives, only with possibilities. Speaking is a finite commodity. We can do only so much of it. The more we fill our lives with one level of speaking (like possibility), the less space we have for other levels. A person who is always talking about what he can accomplish someday, may never get around to doing anything.

The second caution concerns hope. Many wonderful and inspiring stories revolve around people's hopes and dreams. These stories have their value and their place. However, when they take the place of promising, planning, and action, they can be deceptive narcotics.

Dreams can be so seductive and so compelling that we might forget to turn them into reality. People who live only in their hopes and dreams are seldom effective.

Even the dictionary makes this point. One definition of *hope* is: "a desire for some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of attaining it." In our speaking, we can go beyond "slight expectation" to plans and promises. The ladder of powerful speaking encourages us to have hopes, to keep looking for possibilities, and to keep dreams alive. It also reminds us that we can move on to other ways of speaking.

Speak about preferences

"I prefer to" and "I want to" are common expressions at the next level of speaking—preference. It is natural to move from considering a possibility to declaring a preference for doing it. We can also be cautious about overusing this rung of the ladder. Sometimes, people say they want to do something, but even after talking about it at length, never get around to doing it.

Stating our preferences indicates that we have thoughts and feelings that count. It means that we can envision something other than the status quo. This stance is an opening to consider the next step—passion.

Speak about passions

This rung of the ladder can be exciting. Our emotional energy is charged and our enthusiasm is heightened. Our words have more punch and our speaking is more animated. When people hear passion in our speaking, they realize that we have a great deal of personal energy invested in an idea.

There is a catch: No matter how much energy we have, no matter how much enthusiasm and excitement we generate, not much is likely to happen until we climb to the next and even more powerful rung of the ladder. Not much is likely to happen until we translate our energy into something more concrete, like a plan.

Passion can be compared to the fuel in a rocket ship, while planning is like the guidance system. All the fuel (passion) in the world won't help the rocket stay on course if the guidance system (plan) is not functioning properly.

Passion alone can send us flying off in the wrong direction.

Speak about plans

We can begin to turn our passion into a reality by speaking about a plan. A plan, especially if it is written, helps ensure that we'll back up our words with action. A plan gives purpose and direction to our passions. Effective plans lay out the specific steps we'll take to achieve a goal. The guidelines for Intention Statements on page 18 explain how to do this.

Brilliant ideas die when plans are not designed to keep them alive. A goal that comes with a definitive plan is far more likely to be reached than a goal with no plan.

Speak your promises

To reach the top of the ladder, we first make a promise. When we are absolutely committed to an action, we say the words *I will, I do, I promise.*

Promises are plans backed by an ironclad commitment. Promising can help us take the lid off our potentials. We can free ourselves of the self-imposed barriers that limit our participation in the world.

Whenever we speak, we have the option of moving up the ladder of powerful speaking all the way to the top rung, to promise. It's perfectly OK not to move up the ladder. It would be foolish to promise everything. As we listen to ourselves speak, we can just pay attention to which rung of the ladder we're standing on. Then we can decide if moving up the ladder makes sense.

When it comes to promising, most of us do not even come close to our limits. We are capable of far more than we've ever imagined. We can free ourselves of the artificial barriers we've used to limit our participation in the world. One path to a rich, rewarding life is to make promises that stretch us to meet our potentials.

EXERCISE

Climb the ladder of powerful speaking

Think of a problem in your life or something that you would like to change. Write about how you could speak about this situation while "standing" on each rung of the ladder of powerful speaking. Afterward, choose which rung is most comfortable for you.

Now consider risking being a little uncomfortable and moving up the ladder. If you choose to take this risk, actually speak the words at this new level to a trustworthy family member, friend, or someone directly affected by the problem.

LOOK BEYOND CAUSE AND EFFECT

When considering how to be more successful, most people start with causes. We begin by analyzing our circumstances and determining what happened. What were the causes of our failures and our successes? Until we know that, goes this line of reasoning, it's almost impossible to change anything about ourselves.

Consider a different point of view. If we want to create new results in our lives, we might be more successful if we let go of the idea of cause and effect. If we're poor, lonely, or depressed, we can cross off all our reasons and excuses for being that way. In being happier and healthier, wiser and wealthier, it often pays to lift our thinking to a new plane.

When we use cause and effect to analyze our behavior, we can easily fool ourselves. Human beings are complex creatures. Life is complicated. When we consider all the variables at work in our lives, it's less clear that there is any one cause or group of causes that fully explain what we do.

To be perfectly accurate about the causes of our present actions, we could consider the food we ate this morning, the traumatic experience we had when we were four years old, an unusual relationship with a fifth-grade teacher, a recurring dream, the amount of sleep or sunlight we've had in the last week, and thousands of other factors.

Analysis—searching for causes—gives us a long list of possible reasons for the way we are. Once our misery is explained away by history or outside circumstances, we might feel excused from doing anything constructive. We've got a complete and convincing story. Case closed.

The problem is this: After we've figured out why our lives are the way they are, nothing has really changed. Although we can now talk with more sophistication about our misery, we might still be miserable.

When it comes to being happier or healthier, wiser or wealthier, we have a basic choice. We can choose to work for what we want, or we can be satisfied with a long list of reasons why we don't have it.

This does not mean throwing the idea of cause and effect out the window. This concept is one of many tools we use to make our way through life, and it's a useful tool that often fits. Cause and effect works especially well when we're engaged in physical or mechanical activities—grasping the handle to open a door or turning the key to start the car. When asked about a broken window, it's appropriate for us to explain that a baseball flew through it and caused it to break. Looking at cause and effect points to actions we can take to change things.

When we believe that cause and effect is the ultimate all-purpose tool, we can get into trouble. It's like saying that a hammer is the only tool we need to build a house. A hammer is great for driving nails, but it fails miserably at cutting boards and painting walls. Cause and effect works well in the domain of inanimate objects. In the domain of human life, it can be both useful and dangerous. It can cheat us.

Be cautious when using cause and effect. Instead of asking, "Why did I do that?", we can ask, "How did I do that?" Instead of generating excuses, we can generate choices. Instead of searching for causes, we can take action. We can even change our behavior and adopt new attitudes without knowing why.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Practice taking responsibility

This journal entry is a problem-solving exercise with three steps: describe, examine, and plan.

A. Describe the problem

Choose any current problem in your life. For purposes of this Journal Entry, long-lasting and perpetually unsolved problems can yield the most insight.

Keep in mind one definition of a problem: a discrepancy between what you want and what you have. For instance, if you want a group of close friends and find that you have only a couple of passing acquaintances, that's a problem.

With this in mind, choose one problem in your life and describe it on a separate piece of paper.

B. Examine your role in the problem

Now brainstorm a list of ways that you might be creating this problem. Again, take the example of feeling isolated. A person with this problem might remember that it's been six months since he's thrown a party or invited anyone to his home for dinner. His problem and these habits could be connected. Look for similar factors at work in your own problem.

Keep in mind that this list is a brainstorm. The goal for right now is to generate as many ideas as you can. Judging their quality or accuracy comes later.

Also remember that this list has nothing to do with shame or blame. You're merely diagnosing a problem the way a detective would—telling the truth in an objective, nonjudgmental way.

It's often tempting to trace our problems to other people—what they're doing or failing to do for us. And, in fact, other people may be a big part of the problem you're writing about. If this is true, look past it for now, remembering that other people's behavior is outside of your direct control anyway. Brainstorm this list of your behaviors. Use additional paper if needed.

I discovered that I might be creating this problem by . . .

C. Plan a solution

Leave your list for at least 24 hours, and then come back to it with a fresh eye. Look over what you've written, considering it carefully. Choose one specific behavior—something you say or do—that seems to contribute the most to your problem. Now state how you intend to stop this behavior, change it, or replace it with a new behavior. Be specific and keep the focus on what you can do to turn the situation around.

I intend to . . .

Follow this intention for a minimum of two weeks and determine whether or not it's helping to solve your problem. If not, go back to your original list of behaviors and choose another one to change. Take action as before and evaluate the results. Even if the change you originally made is helping, you still might want to review your list for other intentions that could accelerate solving your problem

Cycle back through this exercise as often as you want. If you like, use it to tackle several problems. Doing so can be a significant step toward taking charge of your life.

POWER PROCESS #6

Focus your attention

In this chapter you'll find...

Be here now.

Learning to focus attention can enhance our effectiveness at any activity.

Do what you're doing when you're doing it, be where you are when you're there.

To focus your attention, practice mental noting, making tick marks, involving your body in the process, and handling distractions immediately.

"Be here now" with one activity-exercise.

We can start to "be here now" with one simple activity and then extend the quality of focused attention to the rest of our lives.

"Be" with an orange-exercise.

When we slow down to "be here now" with simple things, we can experience the ordinary in extraordinary ways. Start with a piece of fruit.

Focus your attention: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Describe your current abilities to focus your attention.

BE HERE NOW

You've seen those late-night ads for fantastic gizmos that slice, dice, grind, chop, blend, and do everything except change the oil in your car. Inevitably, the ad touts a skill, product, or service that promises to transform the quality of your life—all for just $19.95 and a handful of handling charges.

Imagine that what you are reading now is an ad for gaining a skill that truly could transform the quality of your life. What's more, imagine that learning this skill is not only inexpensive, but free. In fact, imagine that it's a skill you already have and always have had . . . but have not fully developed.

Well, this ability is already yours. It's a skill that you can develop without paying postage or C.O.D. charges. This too-good-to-be-true offer is about the ability to pay attention. Your ability to "be here now"—that is, to focus your attention—can boost the power and quality of all your activities.

Think for a minute: Is there anything you do that would not benefit from your ability to pay full attention to it? When you take a walk, you could just take a walk. You would not worry about making the rent or mortgage payment or about buying your child's next pair of shoes or about those unfinished projects at work. When you eat your favorite food (say, pizza), you could pour all of your attention into the mouth-watering aroma of that hot, thick, rich concoction of cheese, tomato sauce, and freshly baked bread. You wouldn't be thinking about adding transmission fluid to your car or about that cutting remark your boss made a year ago. You'd just be eating that pizza, savoring every bite as if it were the very first piece you had ever eaten.

In short, you could really start showing up for life. You could be where you are when you're there. You could do what you're doing when you're doing it. You could melt into the fullness and completeness of the present moment. Whenever that happens to us—while fishing, lying on the beach, cleaning house, working at our jobs, or staring at a sunset—we feel fulfilled and complete.

Like many other great ideas, this one is utterly commonplace and utterly extraordinary at the same time. The power of focusing our attention is so obvious that we overlook it hundreds of times a day. The marvelous thing about this practice is that we can do it any time, any place. This practice is available to us every second that we're awake. Best of all, the training program is free—no tuition charges, and no new balance on our credit cards.

Consider this: Everything present in our lives right now—our jobs, our relationships, our possessions, our houses or apartments—results from where we've placed our attention. We took focused action to gain these things, and to take any action at all we had to have first focused our attention. Perhaps the overall quality of our lives is just a reflection of our ability to focus our attention.

When we practice focusing our attention, we're likely to watch our activities take a subtle but significant turn for the better.

There's a story about an anthropologist who encountered a "primitive" tribe on one of her expeditions. After she learned a little of the tribe's language, she asked members of the tribe about the role of the arts in their society. "We have no art," was the reply. "We just do everything as well as possible." Of course, this is the essence of art.

Doing everything as well as possible—that's what this practice is really about. The path to quality activity starts with truly showing up for it—doing whatever we're doing with full attention.

This practice is to just "be here now" with each activity. Inevitably, our thoughts will wander. Noticing this, we can gently bring them back again . . . and again . . . and again. Though we may find this task difficult at first, we'll find that our ability improves with practice. Focused attention is a skill to be learned over time, like any other skill. With patience and forgiveness, we can return our attention to the present moment now . . . and now . . . and now.

Cautions

Like most effective tools, the concept of "be here now" can be misunderstood.

Some people mistake this notion for one of the ideals promoted by the hippies of the 1960's, which was to live for today—don't concern yourself about tomorrow, because it may never come anyway. This "live for today" philosophy is not the same as focusing attention, In fact, the ability to "be here now" is generally enhanced when we plan for tomorrow. Effective short-range, mid-range, and long-range plans can assist us in keeping our attention in the moment, instead of constantly drifting while wondering what we'll be doing next.

The concept is, do what you're doing when you're doing it. If you are planning for the future and your attention drifts, you can gently bring it back to the present—to what you are doing, which is planning for the future.

Some people also mistake this suggestion—to focus attention—as an admonition against daydreaming. Not so. Daydreaming is a wonderful and effective activity. It can help us relax. Daydreaming can also facilitate our reaching a particular goal by imagining the fulfillment of that goal. Daydreaming is a way we can unleash our creativity. The point is, do whatever we're doing consciously and with our full attention. If you choose to daydream, then daydream. If your attention is interrupted, gently bring it back to your daydream.

A final caution about this powerful strategy. It is difficult, and therefore, it can be frustrating. When we begin to notice where our attention is, we often discover that it is hardly ever "here." Even after years of practice, we will still find our attention frequently wandering. Knowing that this frequent drifting will occur, we can give ourselves permission to lighten up and forgive ourselves when our mind seems to have a mind of its own. Then we can gently bring our attention back to "now."

DO WHAT YOU'RE DOING WHEN YOU'RE DOING IT, BE WHERE YOU ARE WHEN YOU'RE THERE

The message here is simple: Each of us has the ability to focus attention. This ability may be underutilized right now. No matter. We can develop it. We can "be here now" wherever we are and whatever we're doing. We can turn down the volume of distracting mental chatter. Like any other ability, the ability to focus our attention is one we can develop systematically. All it takes is practice.

There are many ways to practice focusing our attention, and they involve taking a few minutes each day to somehow be fully present in the moment. Four techniques you can use right away are mental noting, making tick marks, involving your body in the process, and handling distractions.

Mental noting

To practice mental noting, just take some time to fully pay attention to a favorite activity—fishing, walking the dog, reading the paper, or anything else. If distracting thoughts show up and tempt you with irrelevant fantasies, just make a mental note of that fact. You can even say to yourself, "Distraction," and gently return your mind to the task at hand.

For example, if the lyrics to a song start to run through your mind while you're reading an instruction manual, just say to yourself, "Music distraction" or "Song distraction," and then gently return your attention to the chosen activity. The specific word you use doesn't matter that much; the act of noticing the distractions and refocusing your attention does.

That's all there is to it. You can do this mental noting 10 times a day, 100 times a day, a thousand times a day—whatever it takes to keep your attention focused. You might even do noting out loud at first, something that works well when no one else is around.

Make tick marks

Another effective way to focus your attention is to create a visible record of your distractions. For example, if you notice your attention wandering while taking notes at a meeting, make a small tick mark in the margin of your paper. Add another mark each time you start daydreaming about going to the beach, picturing what you're going to eat for dinner, or going on other mental trips that remove you from the task at hand.

The purpose of making these marks is not to score yourself or to give yourself a grade for concentration. Rather, you're using the physical act of putting pen to paper to re-engage your attention. Just notice your wandering mind, make a mark, and return to the moment. As you do, you'll probably see that the number of tick marks starts to decrease naturally, without any further effort or evaluation on your part.

Bring your attention to your body—or your body to attention

When your mind is drifting, you can engage an old and reliable friend—your body. There are at least two ways to do this. One is to bring attention to your body. Scan your body and notice physical sensations. In any given moment, you are experiencing a symphony of sensations. For instance, if you've been sitting for a long time, you might feel a tingling sensation in your hands, a numbness in your legs, and a tightness in your lower back muscles. Noticing these sensations as they arise and pass in the present moment is a way to return to the here and now.

A second option is to bring your body to attention. That is, assume the posture of someone who is fully engaged, active, and alert. Instead of slumping in a chair, move up to the edge of your seat and straighten your spine. Act as if you're waiting for someone to yell "Fire!" and you're fully prepared to leap out of your seat. Notice what happens to your wandering mind.

Handle the distraction fully, now

Say that you're reading a novel and your mind keeps drifting to an argument you had earlier in the day with a coworker. You read one paragraph and think of something you wished you had said. You then bring your attention back to reading. While trying to crawl through the next paragraph, you mentally anticipate her response. Soon you realize that you've turned three pages without comprehending a word. The words on the page can't compete with the shouting in your head.

Faced with this situation, you could apply one of the techniques for focusing your attention mentioned above. It might work well. Another option is to put down the book, call your coworker, talk it out, and resolve the conflict.

Sometimes a wandering mind is a sign worth heeding—a reminder that something needs to be handled. What we might at first label a distraction could be a call to action from a wiser part of ourselves.

EXERCISE

"Be here now" with one activity

The practice of focusing our attention can transform our lives, increasing our effectiveness at almost any activity. We can start to "be here now" with one simple activity and then extend that quality of focused attention to the rest of our lives.

To start experiencing the benefits of this practice, choose one activity that you perform regularly. This can be anything from washing the dishes or eating to exercising or taking a shower. Even the simple act of breathing or walking are wonderful places to start.

Whatever you choose, do the activity with full attention. Notice the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and other sensations associated with the activity. Aim to be aware of every detail. And, if your attention wanders, simply note this fact and refocus on the activity at hand.

Another tip: Perform the actions slowly and deliberately, at least at first, so you can attend to more of the details.

If you practice this exercise regularly, you might make some startling discoveries. One is that the world around us is rich, varied, and ripe for detailed exploration. You might really taste food for the first time in years. You might rediscover the beauty of a sunset or the joy in a child's laugh.

You also might notice that even the most unpleasant sensations—such as headaches and other types of bodily pain—pass. When you experience that fact firsthand, you can gradually become free even in the midst of suffering.

To do this exercise, practice "be here now" in one corner of your day and watch the benefits ripple throughout your life. Eventually you might even be able to "be here now" as you fill out your tax forms and as you drive to work.

EXERCISE

"Be" with an orange

When we slow down to "be here now" with simple things, we can experience the ordinary in extraordinary ways.

Experiencing this can be as simple as eating an orange. First, notice the color, shape, and surface of the orange. Take three minutes (a full 180 seconds) to observe these characteristics in great detail. Pay close attention and see things you never knew were there.

Close your eyes and spend another few minutes feeling the orange. Use your fingers, your forehead, your cheek, your tongue, and the back of your neck. Roll it between your palms. Throw it from one hand to the other. (You might want to open your eyes for that part.) Feel its weight and mass. Squeeze it. Would it explode if you squeezed hard enough? What temperature is it? Warm it up on your stomach. Does it feel different now? Can you balance it on the top of your head? Will it roll in a straight line?

Listen to your orange. No kidding. Are you sure there are no sounds inside of it? Just put it up to your ear and listen very carefully. Will it make a sound if you squeeze it? Tap on it with your finger, then with whatever other objects are nearby. Compare the sounds. How are they alike and how are they different? How else can you use this orange to make sounds?

Without using any type of instrument or utensil, begin dissecting your orange. Explore the inside of the peel using the same strategies you used on the outside of the orange. The inside color is different from that of the outside. Exactly where does the color change? Does it change close to the outside surface or closer to the inside surface of the peel? How is the inside texture different from the outside? Exactly where does this change take place?

Now explore the taste, which is what most of us think of as the most important characteristic of an orange. What does a little piece of that white stuff that we usually try to avoid taste like? What would a whole bunch of it taste like? Put a slice of the orange in your mouth. Will it "melt"? What does it feel like under your tongue? With a slice between your tongue and the roof of your mouth, very slowly squeeze some juice out. Does it squirt, ooze, or do both in different directions?

And just think: We haven't even begun to consider the growth cycles, chemistry, economics, nutrition, advertising, or politics of oranges. If we look closely enough, we might discover secrets of the universe hidden in a simple orange.

If you get tired of oranges and have the courage, eat an entire meal this way.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Focus your attention

To say that the ability to focus our attention is commonplace does not mean that it's easy. You can verify this for yourself. Tell yourself that for the next two minutes you will close your eyes and pay attention to nothing but the feeling of your clothing on your body. You won't think about sex or about calling your cousin in Seattle or about all the things you need to get done this weekend.

Go ahead. Do this exercise right now.

Follow up with a Discovery Statement describing what you just learned about your ability to focus your attention.

I discovered that I . . .

POWER PROCESS #7

Speak Candidly

In this chapter you'll find...

The values and risks of candid speaking.
When we stop ourselves from speaking candidly, we can cheat ourselves and the people we love.

How we stop ourselves.
Negative mental rehearsal, fear of imposing our values, pleading that we're too busy, avoiding our feelings, and priding ourselves on being good listeners can become barriers to candid speaking.

Ways to just speak.
Say what you are not saying, risk sounding foolish, sometimes don't speak, or just say it anyway.

Rewrite history-exercise.
Remember a time when you chose not to speak about something that was on your mind. Write a story in which the opposite happened and your candid speaking led to a positive outcome.

Catalog your secrets-exercise.
After creating an environment of safety, list all your secrets in writing.

Shed your secrets: Discovery/Intention Statement.
After completing the preceding exercise, consider the possible benefits and costs of sharing your secrets.

THE VALUES AND RISKS OF CANDID SPEAKING

There are times in life when most of us think we should have said something, and didn't. Maybe we were angry when someone insulted us, but we were frightened and didn't stand up for ourselves. Maybe we came up with an idea that would have been a great solution to a problem, but we were embarrassed and didn't share it. Or maybe the timing was perfect for the hilarious comment we had in mind, but we were too self-conscious to say anything.

Being frightened, embarrassed, or self-conscious are just a few of the ways we stop ourselves from speaking candidly. In doing so, we can cheat ourselves and the people we love.

Our ideas can be a source of nurturing feedback for others. Instead of using our ideas to cut people down or diminish others, we could turn our thoughts into speaking that helps people experience success. Feedback is just a tool. And like any tool, it can be used for harm or for good. Feedback can be given with the intent to hurt, or it can be given with love.

Refusing to speak our minds often cheats others of an opportunity to look at a problem with a fresh pair of eyes. Remember that the choice about how to respond to what we say is still theirs. If they choose to ignore our ideas, we've still communicated the fact that we care. If they use what we say to make a positive change in their lives, everyone wins.

Sometimes we remain silent because we don't want to get hurt. The less others know about us, the less ammunition they have to harm us. This line of reasoning assumes other people are out to get us. Sometimes this is true, and so it's wise to avoid speaking. Most of the time, though, this is an unfounded assumption.

Consider the woman who feels threatened and hurt every time her partner talks about his past relationships. Her partner genuinely loves her and would feel terrible if he knew the effect his speaking has on her. By keeping her feelings to herself, she denies her partner the opportunity to change his behavior. If she were to choose to reveal what she's really thinking and feeling, she could stop this source of upset. More often than not, truthful speaking is useful speaking.

How we stop ourselves

There are many strategies we use to stop ourselves from speaking candidly. Sometimes it is valuable to apply these ways of not speaking and consciously chose to be silent. Sometimes it works well to just speak.

1. Before speaking, we often rehearse silently to ourselves. Instead of simply starting to speak, we begin an internal dialogue:

What if it sounds stupid?
I'll probably just make a fool of myself.
They know more about it than I do, anyway.
What if I'm wrong?
Nobody else really cares.
Do I have any right to meddle?
If I say this, I might create an ugly scene.
Will this make him mad?
Will this get me what I want?

When we engage in this kind of internal dialogue, we can easily discredit our original thought. We get lost in a tangled web of doubt and confusion. We start to consider a lengthy list of issues unrelated to our original message. By the time we get around to speaking, if we ever do, our words are so measured and so cautious that the message is often lost.

2. Some of us keep silent to avoid forcing our values on others. We associate value judgments with blaming, demeaning, or fault finding. Naturally we want to avoid doing this to others.

3. We might consider ourselves to be outstanding listeners. In fact, we listen so well and so often that we hardly ever speak. (What a "worthy" reason for not speaking!) We simply retreat behind the ability to listen well.

4. Sometimes we avoid speaking with the thought, "I'm too busy to get into this right now." Sometimes this is the truth. At other times, it's an excuse. People who find that they're almost always too busy to talk may be choosing a full schedule to avoid communication.

5. We can avoid speaking to avoid our feelings. We think, "If I don't talk about it, I won't have to feel it." This approach is based on the faulty assumption that hiding our emotions is the same as dealing with them.

Ways to Just Speak

Say what you are not saying

One way to clarify our message and avoid hurting others is to tell people what we are not saying:

I want more time alone. I am not saying that I want to end our relationship.

I wish you would stop playing it so safe. I am not saying that you should take foolish risks or needless chances.

Sometimes I get frustrated with your mother. I am not saying that I want to stop seeing her.

Adding this extra dimension to our comments can prevent people from filling in the gaps with faulty assumptions of their own.

Risk sounding foolish

When we speak candidly, we might say something stupid or offensive. This risk is real, and a sure-fire way to avoid such mistakes is to avoid speaking. In so doing, we rob ourselves of the opportunity to learn, grow, and improve. We also rule out the possibility of truly getting to know others, and letting them know us beyond a surface level.

Speaking candidly requires a willingness to risk sounding foolish. We can remain silent, avoid the risk, and cheat ourselves of feedback. Or we can say it, risk sounding foolish, and be willing to make amends when needed. The reward is a life filled with more love and friendship.

Sometimes, don't speak

No suggestion is absolute, including the suggestion to speak candidly, to "just say it." There are times when it is appropriate and effective not to speak: when our speaking will hurt someone, spoil the punch line, or rob others of the opportunity to learn from their own experience.

Answering the following questions can help us decide when to hold back on speaking:

Is this statement really the truth from my point of view?

Is this statement consistent with what I value, with who I say I am?

Is this statement consistent with my promises and commitments?

Am I saying this to get even or indirectly insult another person?

Is this thought persistent? How often does it cross my mind?

How much emotional energy—body sensations, knots in the stomach, headaches, heart pounding, and so on—is associated with the thought?

What is the nature of my relationship with this person? (We might not need to tell the checker at the grocery store that he has bad breath.)

Just say it

Although it might be helpful to monitor what we say, most of us err on the side of being too safe. In the name of being responsible and taking better care of ourselves and of others, we censor our speaking too much, too often. One powerful way to take better care of ourselves and others is to speak more, not less.

Talking about our feelings, whatever they are, is a path toward releasing them and healing our relationships. After expressing a tough emotion like anger, we might find out that there is fear or compassion underneath it. Saying "You jerk, I'm so angry at you for staying away so long," can lead to "I missed you," or even "I love you."

After considering the preceding list of questions, you can always opt to speak anyway. Don't rehearse. Don't wait for the right moment. Don't evaluate how you will look if you say it. Don't worry if the syntax isn't quite right. Don't consider the outcome. Don't speak to please someone else. Don't worry about whether or not your speaking will create some particular result. Don't weigh your words. Don't wonder if someone else will change her mind. Don't wonder if he'll like you. Don't worry about how it will sound. And don't be concerned that it isn't the right thing to say. Say it anyway, and ask others to do the same.

EXERCISE

Rewrite history

Remember a time when you chose not to speak about something that was on your mind. In the space below, write a story in which the opposite happened, when you actually said what you were thinking and your speaking led to a positive outcome for everyone involved.

Make your story realistic enough to be an actual possibility. Give some thought to how you could have set the stage, prepared the listeners, and spoken in a loving and candid way to achieve positive results.

_____

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_____

Finish with an Intention Statement that describes what you will do differently in the future.

I intend to . . .

_____

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_____

_____

EXERCISE

Catalog your secrets

Before doing this exercise, create an environment of safety. Work in an environment where you can be alone. Also plan to write your responses on a separate piece of paper that you can destroy later. The goal is to keep these responses confidential until the time—if it comes—that you choose to reveal them.

When you've finished with this preparation, begin listing all your secrets—those things that you consistently choose not to tell other people. Focus on the things you don't want to tell, as distinguished from what others might not want you to tell.

As you do this writing, be willing to examine all aspects of your life: money matters, sexual behaviors, work, mistakes, failures, stolen property, lies, and so on. Work quickly, jotting down as many secrets as you can. This is a free-flowing list, so don't stop to edit or rewrite. Just aim to spill all your secrets onto paper.

If you get stuck, shift mental gears for a moment. Divide your paper into two columns. In the left column, list the most important people in your life. These might include your spouse, lover, parents, siblings, children, close friends, or coworkers. In the right column, opposite each person's name, list at least one crucial thing you avoid telling this person.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Shed your secrets

After completing the preceding exercise, decide what to do about your secrets. Consider the possible benefits and costs of shedding your secrets, of saying what you've been withholding.

It might help to divide your secrets into several categories. First, circle the secrets you would be willing to share with the person involved. Then underline the secrets you would be willing to speak about to someone other than the person directly involved. Finally, put an asterisk next to the secrets you wish to remain secret.

Look again at the secrets you'd like to make known. Create an action plan for handling each secret. If you choose to speak to someone, list that person's name and what you plan to say. If you prefer to reveal your secret in writing, begin drafting a letter to the person involved. If you want to apologize and make amends to someone, decide specifically what you'll do and when.

Another way to create your plan is to simply fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

By_____, I intend to speak or write to _____
about_____.

By_____, I intend to speak or write to _____
about_____.

Return to this exercise periodically and consider circling or underlining any of the secrets you've marked with an asterisk. Caution: consider reading "Build a bridge before walking the canyon" on page 392 before sending difficult messages.

POWER PROCESS #8

Make and keep promises

In this chapter you'll find...

The value of our word.
Giving our word is a powerful first step in creating a compelling future.

Ways to keep a promise.
We can make promises that are both challenging and realistic. We can practice examining the consequences of a promise, negotiating changes when appropriate, asking other people to hold us accountable, keeping promises visible, designing detailed action plans, and more.

Practice making and keeping a promise-exercise.
Make a challenging and realistic promise that you can keep within the next 24 hours. Then reflect on the experience.

Keep a written list of all promises-exercise.
For one month, keep a written list of all your promises and set up regular times to review it.

Listen for "can't"- exercise
For one week, notice how often the word can't crops up in your speaking or writing. In each case, see if you can replace this word with a more powerful one.

Examine your promises: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Remember a time when you broke a promise and reflect on what the experience taught you about keeping promises.

Clean up a broken promise: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Explore how you can make amends, or "clean up," an unfulfilled promise.

THE VALUE OF OUR WORD

Our promises can be used to create our lives. Our promises can give life to our purposes and goals. Our promises can move us into action. Giving our word is a powerful step towards creating a compelling future.

When we communicate our purpose, we open up vast new possibilities. Words and language bring our intentions into existence. When we commit ourselves to something by giving our word, there is a much greater chance that we will take action and follow through.

When we give our word and keep it, we are creating—literally. Through promises, our words can set the pace and predict the future. Promises are the forerunners of action. Our words float out into the universe, bearing a vision of what is to come. When we align our behavior with those words, we turn intentions into reality.

Our promises make things happen. Circumstances, events, and attitudes fall into place. Information, resources, and help show up. All of these processes start with giving our word.

Life works to the same degree to which we keep our promises. When something goes wrong in the world or in our lives, the problem often goes back to a broken agreement.

Imagine how different life would be if all promises were honored. Marriage vows would be honored. Loans would be paid off when they were due. Treaties between nations would be respected.

If individuals, businesses, and nations kept their promises, tremendous resources would be freed to handle injustice and misery throughout the world. In fact, if everyone kept their word, there would be much less injustice and misery to handle. Problems in our national governments, schools, businesses, and homes would be minimized. Harmony would be maximized.

Each of us can be a force in promoting this ideal. We can be model promise-makers and promise-keepers. We can aim to keep all our promises—not just the important ones, not just the convenient ones, but all of them. After we have spoken a promise, we can begin making plans, gathering support, and aligning our behavior with our words.

Others know who we are when they hear our intentions, commitments, and agreements. Our word defines our values and beliefs. We can learn who we are by observing which commitments we choose to make and which ones we avoid.

Ways to Keep a Promise

There are two broad ways to deal effectively with promises. One is to align our behavior with our words. If we promise to start a regular exercise program or read for one hour daily, we can act on our intentions and live up to our word.

Another option is to align our speaking with our behavior. For example, someone who has talked about a career change might study the options and decide that her current job is the best fit for her right now. She can avoid making any promise to change positions.

Using either strategy, we find that our words and our behaviors are consistent with each other. Our promises are fulfilled.

When our words and our behaviors are aligned, we often experience a sense of comfort, control, and freedom. There are no lies or broken promises lurking in the shadows. We don't have to worry about keeping our stories straight, because there is only one story—the truth.

Improving our ability to keep promises is a skill that can be learned. What follows are a few strategies for doing so.

Make challenging and realistic promises.

Promising is a daring adventure. Testing our skills and determination in the world by making a promise can be an enlivening experience. If there is not much risk involved, there is not much of a promise. Promising something that is already likely to occur does little to contribute to ourselves or others. It is not a powerful or effective way to speak.

We can monitor our promises by avoiding two extremes—laziness and outrageousness. Realistic promises are those we have a reasonable chance to accomplish as we stretch ourselves to meet them. If our promises are too audacious: ("I'll become a world-class athlete in six months"), we set ourselves up for failure. If they are too easy ("I promise to get up tomorrow morning"), we insult ourselves. There's little to gain in promising something that we'd do anyway. We would be like the workaholic who promises to show up for work on time.

Effective promises invite us to meet our potential. At the same time, they represent results we can actually achieve. For example, a single parent can promise to attend school, get a college degree, hold a part-time job, and raise two kids. These promises call for planning, commitment, and support. If, in addition, he promises to contribute 15 hours a week to the local volunteer fire department, he might be getting in over his head.

Be gentle with yourself

Another way that will help us keep our promises is to recognize that everyone breaks promises. The only two ways to be absolutely certain we keep promises is not to make any, or to make only those that are very easy to keep. Both choices lead to avoiding risks and playing it safe.

We can choose to perceive broken promises as feedback, not failure. Until we stretch ourselves to the point of not being able to keep all our promises, we're probably not realizing our full potential. Until we occasionally bump up against our limits, we probably aren't doing that which is worthy of who we are.

This is not to say that it's OK to break promises . . . well, it is and it isn't. Breaking promises doesn't work. At the same time, few people are skilled enough to keep every promise they make.

When we are consumed by the fear that we might break a promise, we increase the chances that we will. It makes more sense to accept the fact that we break promises sometimes. This acceptance can dilute or even eliminate the fear of breaking promises, increasing our odds of keeping them.

Be gentle with others

At some point in our lives, nearly all of us will be on the receiving end of a broken promise. Examples are many: People forget to stop at the store on the way home. They fail to show up at key events. They leave us in the lurch when we count on their presence. They persist in an old habit, even after promising to quit it. They even divorce us after promising to stay a lifetime.

Faced with such facts, we can keep score and stockpile resentments, a choice sure to give us a lot of emotional baggage to drag around. We could instead choose to accept, allow, permit, and even love people who break their agreements. When we do, we gain at least three benefits.

First, we can be more effective at helping these people keep their agreements the next time. They don't have to experience us as someone who makes them wrong for failing.

Second, forgiving the broken agreement allows us to let go of resentment and get on with life. We can shed the residual pain and upset that lingers with the memory of broken agreements.

Third, acceptance can give us more respect and appreciation for people who do keep their agreements. An agreement that's fulfilled is something quite extraordinary—an event to be celebrated.

Caution: Forgiving broken promises does not mean setting ourselves up to suffer repeated broken promises. If there are people in our lives who consistently break promises, we can forgive them (in the sense of not holding onto anger and resentment) and still hold them accountable.

We can even protect ourselves from repeated exposures to their lack of responsibility. If, for example, a person in your car pool has frequently failed to pick you up on time, you can communicate your disappointment, forgive this person, and make other travel arrangements.

Examine consequences

To increase the chance that we will keep our promise, before making the promise, we can examine the consequences. We can ask the following questions:

How might this promise affect me?
How might this promise affect my family?
How might this promise affect my work?
Do I have time to keep this promise?
How committed am I to keeping this promise?
Do I have enough support to help me keep this promise?
Does this promise conflict with other commitments?
Is this promise the best use of my time?
What are the benefits of making this promise?
What are the costs of making this promise?
How easy would it be to renegotiate this promise?

The consequences of keeping or breaking our promises vary. Promising to go to a movie tonight is a different enterprise than promising to pay taxes on time. The stakes become higher when we sign legal documents or when we declare marriage vows. Knowing the consequences of breaking or renegotiating a promise can help us choose whether or not to make it in the first place.

When appropriate, negotiate changes

Negotiating a change in a promise can be done when we are still willing to fulfill that promise. If we see an alternative that might be an improvement, if a different time line would be more convenient for us, or if for some other reason we want to negotiate a change, we can request to renegotiate. We can point out that we are still willing to keep the original promise and that new information suggests a modification. We can even go as far as to ask to be released from the promise.

Reporting that the promise will not be kept or that it will be revoked is another matter. If we are not able or willing to keep the original promise, we are not renegotiating it—we are breaking it.

Ask others to hold you accountable

Many of us are more likely to keep promises we make to other people than promises we make only to ourselves. This points to a powerful strategy that can help us keep our promises. We can choose people we trust and ask them to accept our promises and hold us accountable. For example, you could ask key people in your life to accept your promise to exercise three times this week. These people can check on you periodically and you can report to them once your promise has been fulfilled. If you choose to renegotiate or revoke your promise, you could talk about it with the people you've asked to hold you accountable.

Keep promises visible

There's probably some truth to the old saying "Out of sight, out of mind." Keeping visual reminders of promises that we want to emphasize or suspect we'll forget, can help us keep our word. We can create lots of ways to display our promises. Some possibilities follow.

Keep them written on 3x5 cards on our desk.

Write them in calligraphy to be framed.

Tape them to a mirror.

Use magnets to put them on the refrigerator.

Attach them to the front or top of the television.

Fasten them to the car dashboard.

Rent a billboard that's on the way to work.

Put them in drawers, shoes, and other places to be discovered.

Glue them to light switches.

Use them as bookmarks.

Mail them to yourself.

Ask a friend to mail them to you in two weeks—or two months or two years.

In addition, keeping a written list of all promises and reviewing it regularly is a powerful practice. The act of writing forces us to make our promises more precise and thoughtful. Writing also helps us eliminate the excuse, "Oops—I forgot."

Design a detailed action plan

One way to reach a goal or fulfill a promise is to break it down into smaller steps. We can often divide a larger goal into smaller actions that can be completed in less than one hour each. Then we can list these actions on separate 3x5 cards.

Remember that involving others in this process often improves the quality and effectiveness of our plans.

Chart your behavior

Charting your behavior can be one piece of a detailed action plan. If your promise is to lose 25 pounds, graph the number of pounds you lose each week. If you want to save for next year's vacation, set aside some money each month and note the amount on your calendar. Creating ways to make your progress visible can help you generate enthusiasm, manage your efforts, and experience success.

Evaluate the promise

We can use the guidelines for Intention Statements on page 18 to evaluate our promises. These guidelines are designed to help ensure our success. When our promises conform to them, we increase our chances of keeping our word.

Create a ceremony to make a promise

If a promise we are about to make is significant to us, we can honor it with a ceremony. We can invite friends and relatives to a formal ceremony during which we will declare our promises. Ceremonies are already commonly used to celebrate a variety of promises—wedding vows, career promotions, sending friends off on a voyage, confirmations, and bar mitzvahs. Events can take on more meaning and significance when ceremonies honor them. When rituals, ceremonies, and official public declarations accompany our promises, they are more likely to be kept.

Accept thoughts and feelings—then act

We have far more control over our words and actions than we do over our thoughts and feelings. For this reason, when it comes to making and keeping promises, it makes sense to pay more attention to our words and actions than to our thoughts and feelings.

Our thoughts and feelings don't always have the same respect for promises that our words and behaviors can. Sometimes our thoughts scream, "There's no way I can keep this commitment!" or "This promise is stupid." Sometimes our feelings cry, "I'm too stressed out to do this!" or "I'm so angry, I quit."

We can notice these thoughts and feelings and choose to keep our promises anyway. We can accept our thoughts, sympathize with our emotions, and still choose the path of integrity by keeping our promises. Fear, fatigue, jealousy, shame, love, embarrassment, pride—none of these feelings needs to interfere with keeping our promises.

Report breakdowns early

When we become aware of potential barriers to keeping a promise, it helps to report them early. This gives everyone time to adjust and to create strategies for helping us keep the promise. Early reports also minimize the chances of unwelcome surprises. Without early reporting we end up with: "What do you mean you'll need another two weeks for that report?"; "I thought you were planning to pick me up at 5:00 not 6:00."; "Aren't you taking care of the kids tonight like we planned?"; "Why didn't you tell me?"

Reporting that the promise might not be kept as soon as we become aware of it may assist us in keeping the promise. For sure, it will assist us, and others to minimize the damage if the promise is broken. We can make alternative plans. And we can know that we handled the situation with integrity.

Examine intentions

To keep from breaking a promise, we can examine our intentions. On one hand, we might want to keep the promise ("Yeah, going back to school is a good idea"), while on the other hand we might be resisting it ("Taking classes will strain my schedule and budget").

When we genuinely and completely choose to do something, internal resistance often disappears. All aspects of ourselves—thoughts, feelings, and intentions—stand ready to make good on the promise.

Continue to keep the promise

After we break a promise, we might be tempted to throw in the towel by revoking it. For example, if we promise to exercise three times per week for six months and then we don't exercise for a week, we may be tempted to not keep our promise.

That's not necessary. Even if we break long-term promises—a pledge to record the checks we write or to get our tax forms done well before April 15—we can acknowledge our mistake and recommit to the promise. While admitting that we've broken the promise in the past, we can declare our intention to keep it in the future.

There's no need for shame in breaking a promise. A far greater danger arises from failing to make promises or failing to take some action to keep them. If we have genuinely invested our time and energy in keeping a promise, we can be proud of our efforts. We can also recognize that we sometimes break promises and—like everyone else on the planet—we're not perfect.

EXERCISE

Practice making and keeping a promise

Make a promise that you can keep within the next 24 hours. Make it both challenging and realistic. After doing this, come back and write both a Discovery and an Intention Statement that describe your experience of promising.

In doing this exercise, I discovered that I . . .

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_____

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_____

I intend to . . .

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EXERCISE

Keep a written list of all promises

For one month, keep a written list of your promises and set up regular times to review it. Leave space for noting when you fulfilled the promises. After the month, return to this exercise and write both a Discovery and an Intention Statement.

*My promise is:*_____

_____

_____

❏ *I fulfilled this promise on:* ____/____/____

*My promise is:*_____

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_____

❏ *I fulfilled this promise on:* ____/____/____

*My promise is:*_____

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_____

❏ *I fulfilled this promise on:* ____/____/____

*My promise is:*_____

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_____

❏ *I fulfilled this promise on:* ____/____/____

*My promise is:*_____

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❏ *I fulfilled this promise on:* ____/____/____

*My promise is:*_____

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❏ *I fulfilled this promise on:* ____/____/____

*My promise is:*_____

_____

_____

❏ *I fulfilled this promise on:* ____/____/____

In doing this exercise, I discovered that I . . .

_____

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When it comes to making promises in the future, I intend to . . .

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EXERCISE

Listen for "can't"

Can't *is sometimes a disempowering word—a tip-off to a life that's not working. People who feel that their lives are out of control will frequently say, "I can't." It signals that promises are not being made or kept.*

Someone might say, "I have been in counseling for years, and I just can't talk about my problems to anyone other than my therapist." A more accurate and empowering way to speak might be, "I have been in counseling for years, and I don't choose to talk about my problems to anyone other than my therapist." The change in words makes it clear that this person is in charge of when he speaks.

For one week, notice how often the word can't *crops up in your speaking or writing. In each case, see if you can replace this word with* don't choose to. *Instead of saying, "I can't talk to my husband about this," you could say, "I don't choose to talk to my husband about this."*

You can tune up your speaking even more. Consider replacing don't choose to *with* could *or* will *or another word that implies possibility or commitment: "I could talk to my husband about this" or "I will talk to my husband about this."*

> ***That civility which separates men from the lower animals depends upon the making and keeping of promises, covenants, vows, and contracts.***
>
> –Sam Keen

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Examine your promises

All of us have broken promises at some time in our lives. Remember a time when you broke a promise. Describe the circumstances below and include writing about the level and quality of the intentions you had when you made the promise. Then write about what you learned from this experience.

I broke a promise when . . .

I discovered that I . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

"Clean up" a broken promise

Choose some unfinished business from your past—a time when you broke a promise and experienced negative feelings as a result. In the space below, list the specific people involved and describe exactly what happened:

Ask yourself how you can make amends, or what you can do to clean up the situation. Examples include making an apology, repaying a debt, or making a new promise and keeping it. In the space below, describe exactly what you will do and when you will do it:

I intend to . . .

Power Process #9

Surrender

In this chapter you'll find...

Victory through surrender.
One of the most powerful ways to meet problems is to stop our futile attempts at total control and accept help.

Surrender with care.
We can surrender and still take active responsibility for a problem.

Practice surrendering: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Describe how "surrender" can help you deal with a current problem in your life.

Victory through surrender

This book is in large part about taking charge of our lives. It's about taking responsibility for our choices. It's about how to stop being the victim and start being the victor, no matter what life tosses our way.

With that in mind, it might sound illogical to include a practice that counsels us to surrender. It *is* illogical. But life is larger than logic. Sometimes, one of the most powerful ways to deal with the challenges of our lives is to stop our futile attempts to control events and other people.

Open up to help

There are times when life backs us into a corner and brings us to our knees. One person might develop an intense fear of driving after someone he knows was killed in a car accident. Another person who has fastidiously taken care of her health might be diagnosed with a terminal illness. Someone else might slowly develop an addiction to drugs, vow to quit scores of times, and fail at each turn. Almost all of us have experienced times when all our approaches to solving problems have fallen utterly flat.

At those times, it's wise to bend. We can admit we're stumped. We can admit we're hopelessly confused and overwhelmed, that all our ideas and energy are spent. We can admit we'll never make it by ourselves.

There's magic in this admission. Once we admit we're at the end of our rope, we open ourselves to receiving help. We learn that we don't have to go it alone. We find out that other people have faced similar problems and survived. We give up our old habits of thinking and acting as if we have to be in control of everything. We stop acting as general manager of the universe. In short, we surrender. And, that opens a space for something new in our lives.

There are countless examples of this. A student raises her hand in class and admits that she's totally lost, without a clue as to what the teacher is talking about. Now the teacher can help her frame a meaningful question.

An alcoholic admits that he just can't control his drinking. This becomes the key that allows him to seek treatment.

A person with multiple sclerosis admits that she's gradually losing her ability to walk and tells others about it. Now the people around her can understand, be supportive, and explore ways to help.

The couple who desperately wants to have a child finally accepts that they've been trying for years without success. After telling the truth about this, they're able to seek out support groups.

A man is devastated when his girlfriend abandons him. He is a "basket case," unable to work for days. He surrenders to a higher power as he understands it. In the process, he gains strength by trusting that he will be OK and that he can eventually learn to live a new and even healthier life.

In each of these cases, the people involved learned the power of surrendering.

Surrender in ordinary ways

This practice doesn't only work in extreme circumstances. In fact, you've probably experienced it in ordinary matters. You try to remember the name of someone you met at a party last week. For five minutes, you rack your brain. No name. So, you give up. The next day when you are driving to work, the name suddenly pops into your head. When you stopped working so hard to remember, you let your subconscious mind deliver the name, with ease, in its own time.

The idea behind "surrender" is that there are times when it pays to step out of the way and give up control. We can quit fighting what's happening. We can ride the horse in the direction it's going.

A person learning to play a Bach fugue on the piano has a hundred things on her mind. She's paying attention to how she is sitting and the proper angle to hold her fingertips when they strike the keys. She is worrying about the fingering for a particularly difficult passage that's coming up. She starts to flounder at the keyboard until she remembers something her teacher said: "When you're performing, forget all the technical stuff. Stop trying so hard and just let the music sing." Suddenly she relaxes into the composition, and it seems as though the piece is playing itself. She has surrendered to the music.

A writer is tackling the first chapter of his novel. He has painstakingly outlined the whole plot, recording each character's actions on individual 3x5 cards. Three sentences into the first draft, he's spending most of his time shuffling cards instead of putting words on paper. Finally, he puts the cards aside, forgets about the outline, and just tells the story. The words start to flow effortlessly, and he loses himself in the act of writing. The result is something far better than he ever dreamed. That, too, is surrender.

Ride with the current

People who go river rafting soon discover there's no way to control the force of the water. If they fall out of the raft, the safest action is not to struggle, but to flow with the water. If they do so, the current will take them around the rocks. If they try to resist the current, they are more likely to end up smashed against the rocks.

This is the idea captured in the *Serenity Prayer*, words about surrender often quoted by members of Alcoholics Anonymous: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." (And note that you don't have to believe in God to use this process. You can surrender to God, to a

Higher Power, to the truth about the way the universe works, or to anything you choose whatever name you give it.)

"Surrender" is about becoming humble. When we surrender, we simply admit that the universe does not revolve around our likes and dislikes. We admit that we are not gods. It's much like staying safe during a hurricane. One way to deal with a hurricane is to run outside and scream, "Stop!" So far, there's no recorded evidence that this approach has ever worked. An alternative is to find a safe place in the basement, away from any glass or large objects, and wait there until the winds die down.

It's much the same when we face other life events that defy our control. Our car might be parked legally when a drunk driver loses control and collides with it. We might respond to an ad for an exciting job, only to find there really was no opening; the personnel director just wanted to fatten up his file of résumés. In such cases, we face one fact: Most of the time, we cannot control what other people do. No matter how much we scream, rant, rave, worry, protest, or fuss, we cannot change the fact that our needs haven't been met and our job search is not over.

If we choose to surrender, we can also choose to trust. We can trust dawn to follow darkness. We can trust that we will come out on the other side of our problems with new strength and wisdom. We can trust the process. We can surrender.

> ***A life without surrender is a life without commitment.***
>
> –Jerry Rubin

Surrender with Care

It's easy to misunderstand what "surrender" is all about. Keep some cautions in mind.

In this Power Process, surrender is not giving up or refusing responsibility. Surrender is simply telling the truth—that we don't always have an ace up our sleeve, that we don't always know the answer. Even so, we can still be committed to the projects we have taken on and be responsible for the results we've promised. We do this even though we don't have the answers.

Another caution: Surrender does not exclude getting help from something greater than ourselves. We can surrender while knowing that help is available for us. The name and nature of that help varies for people, depending on their beliefs, preferences, and spiritual practices: God, Higher Power, the way of the universe, Jesus, Buddha, Cosmic Consciousness, Creator, Creativity, or simply the human community. The point is, there's something in life that we can trust and get help from, especially during times of adversity.

And another caution: Surrender is not the same as being lazy or avoiding effort. We can surrender and, at the same time, continue to invest lots of time and intense energy in a project. Surrender is not necessarily accompanied by inactivity.

There are situations in which it is appropriate to let go and invest no more physical or emotional energy in a project. Maybe we've given it our best shot and, after thoughtful consideration, decide that it is time to quit. No problem. It might now be time to invest our skill, time, and energy into some new adventure.

That leads to one final caution: Remember that we can control some events. At those times, surrender can be coupled with decisive action. Some people surrender to a toothache. That strategy makes sense particularly if they're driving to the dentist's office.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Practice surrendering

Make a list of problems in your life right now. Give special attention to those that you find difficult to face or speak candidly about. Look for problems that persist despite your best efforts to solve them. List these problems below.

Consider your list, keeping in mind that any problem is a potential candidate for the practice of surrender. In the space below, choose one and then describe how surrender can be helpful in dealing with this problem.

I discovered that I can apply surrender to . . .

Surrender can help me deal with this problem by . . .

POWER PROCESS #10

Keep looking for answers

In this chapter you'll find

Stay in the inquiry.
Instead of being content with the first or easiest solutions that come to mind, we can keep searching.

Ask empowering questions.
Questions can focus our attention, change the way we feel, and move us into action. It pays to choose questions with care.

Ask "What if that's true?"
When presented a new idea, even one that seems crazy, we can still look for aspects of it that might be useful.

Explore the language of possibilities.
The difference between expanding our possibilities and limiting our options can be as simple as choosing new words.

Keep looking at a controversial topic-exercise.
Make a case for a stand on a controversial issue, even if you disagree with that stand.

Expand your options-exercise.
Create at least three solutions to a problem you now face.

Turn problems into questions-exercise.
Turn a problem into an empowering question that invites possible solutions.

Ask zero questions-exercise.
For 24 hours, commit to asking no questions.

Reflect on your experience with "no questions": Discovery/Intention Statement.
Write about what you learned during your experiment with asking zero questions.

Stay in the Inquiry

How can human beings live abundant lives? How can they become happier, healthier, more loving, and more wealthy? This book is a collection of possible answers to those questions—answers for you to experiment with in your own life.

Answers are wonderful, especially when they relate to our most persistent and deeply felt questions. Yet, answers can get in the way, too. Once we're convinced that we have the answer to a question, it's easy to stop looking for more answers. We stop learning. The range of possible actions becomes limited. If the answer or solution we found doesn't work as well as we'd like, we stay stuck with our problems.

When we consider fundamental questions about life and come up with answers that are different from mainstream thinking, we might bump into people who resent this fact. This resentment is one source of religious persecution, racism, and prejudice. If there were more tolerance for more answers, there would be less hatred and less antagonism in the world.

Instead of latching onto one answer, we can look for more. Instead of being content with the first or easiest options that come to mind, we can keep searching. Even when we're convinced that we've finally handled a problem, we can brainstorm and refine our thinking until we find additional solutions.

When we look for more answers, a new world of possibilities opens up. We uncover fresh possibilities for thinking, feeling, and behaving. Like children learning to walk, we experience the joy of discovery.

ASK EMPOWERING QUESTIONS

Certain types of questions have uncanny power. They can focus our attention. They can change the way we feel. They can prompt us to make choices and take action. And once we ask a question wholeheartedly, it's hard to avoid finding an answer.

Each of us has habitual questions—questions we ask ourselves over and over again We can change this habit by asking different questions. The quality of these questions can determine the quality of our choices and actions. To a large extent, the quality of our questions creates the quality of our lives.

There's an expression among computer scientists: garbage in, garbage out. That is, when we feed confusing and contradictory instructions into a computer, what we're likely to get back is a bunch of confusing and contradictory answers. What comes out can be no better than what we put in. After all, the computer is not intelligent—just fast. It can't tell the difference between a precise program and a garbled program. The computer just executes the program, no matter how good or bad the program is.

In this respect, our minds work like computers. The mind is highly efficient: Feed it a question and it will obediently flash us the answer. And our minds will do this with any question, without regard for the quality, effectiveness, or value of the question.

Ask a different question

In any situation, we can ask ourselves questions that empower us. We can also ask questions that set us up for failure. Take the person who gets some surprising news from her accountant. She owes $1,253 more in taxes than she did the previous year. Immediately, her mind starts racing with questions: "Why do things like this always happen to me?"; "Does the government have it in for me?"; "Why work so hard if the government is just going to take my money away?" Working with questions like that, her mind is likely to come up with some predictable answers: "You're jinxed."; "Yes, the people at the IRS are out for your money."; "Don't work so hard; it's not worth it."

There's a problem with these answers—and the questions that preceded them. All of them promote a victim mentality. They presuppose that someone is out there waiting to trap her and that there's little she can do about it except lay low. That's hardly an empowering view of life. Garbage in, garbage out.

With a different set of questions, things could go differently. She could ask: "How did I contribute to this happening?"; "How can I avoid such surprises in the future?"; "What is great about having this problem?" Those questions are bound to yield answers such as these: "My taxes increased because I made a lot more money last year than I did the year before."; "In the future, I'm going to set aside an extra amount each month to pay my taxes."; "Wow, that's a great problem to have." I can use this problem to help me prepare that monthly budget that I've been meaning to do. While I'm at it, I can complete a comprehensive exploration of how my relationship with money is consistent with my values. With these questions and answers, she's drawn empowering lessons from her experience. She has moved from being a victim to being a victor.

List your favorite questions

You can develop a list of empowering questions. Here is a list for you to begin with. As you ask these questions, notice how the resulting answers and the actions they suggest could affect your life.

What can I do today to promote each of my values?

What shall I not do today?

What did I learn today?

Is this expense consistent with what I want to do and have in my life?

Is this activity consistent with what I want to be, do, and have?

What's the most important thing I could do to generate new results in my life?

What do I want?

What am I willing to do to get what I want?

What role have I played in how this situation is turning out?

How can I turn this problem around?

What are the costs and benefits of turning this problem around?

What is great about having this problem?

How can I use this experience to avoid mistakes in the future?

What am I happy about?

What am I grateful for?

Whom do I love?

How do I demonstrate my love for the people I love?

What have I given to others today?

Asking empowering questions can maximize the value of any experience. For example, you can choose to approach *Human Being* with powerful questions: "What one new strategy can I adopt that will make a tremendously positive difference in my happiness? My health? My relationships? My wealth?" With the answers to those questions, you can put your chosen strategy into action. Then you can come back to this book and go through the ask-answer-act cycle again. If you repeat this process for a lifetime, you can watch the quality of your life soar.

> ***If we watch ourselves honestly, we shall often find that we have begun to argue against a new idea even before it has been completely stated.***
>
> –Arthur Koestler

Ask "What if that's true?"

When presented with a new idea, many people take pride in being critical thinkers. They look for problems. They continue to doubt the idea until there's clear proof. They probe for weaknesses. Their main question seems to be, "What's wrong with this idea?"

This approach can be useful at times. However, if it is the only tool we use, we can come up short. When we constantly look for what's wrong with new ideas, we can miss what's right.

People have a tendency to play the devil's advocate or armchair expert. When they find fault with something, they might feel righteous and important. By making something or someone else wrong, they experience the feeling of being right. By finding fault, they temporarily boost their self-esteem.

It seems easy to find and remember that which we can ridicule. After hearing a lengthy speech, for example, people often talk about the one item that didn't make sense.

A different and potentially more productive approach is to ask, "What if that idea were true?" This opens all sorts of new possibilities and variations. Rather than looking for what's wrong, we can look for what's potentially valuable. Faced with a new idea, we can stay in the inquiry, look deeper, and go further.

The airplane, the light bulb, the notion of the unconscious, the invention of the transistor and the computer chip—these and countless other advances—exist today because their inventors practiced staying in the inquiry.

Some people reject this idea because they fear getting fooled or duped. They think if we thoughtfully consider every new idea that comes our way, we'll waste lots of time and money on worthless adventures. We'll end up with a closet full of slicers, dicers, gizmos, procedures, strategies, and ideologies we'll never use.

Asking "What if that were true?" doesn't mean letting others manipulate or take advantage of us. This strategy does not mean automatically believing everything we see and hear. It does call for a willingness to stay in the inquiry, to experiment, and to play with new notions.

If an idea is foolish or unsound, asking "What if that were true?" does no harm. Under the spotlight, unsound ideas have a habit of revealing their true nature. In the meantime, considering even the craziest ideas can lead to unexpected benefits.

For example: A company advertises jobs available in Australia. The magazine ad claims that jobs are plentiful, salaries are high, and benefits are generous. All we need to do is send $300 to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

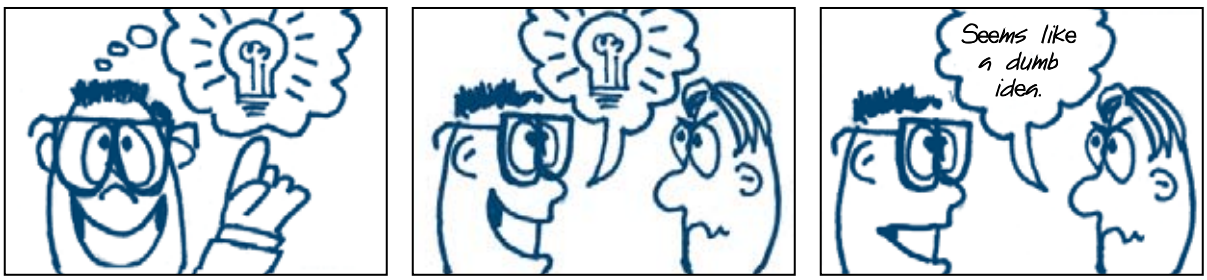
Someone reads the ad, and his gut reaction is excitement. After a while, though, he starts to feel uncomfortable. Pessimism sinks in. He decides to get real. "Sure," he says to himself, "I bet for an extra $50 they'd not only find me a job in Australia, they'd also sell me their magic potion for eternal youth." He closes the magazine, along with any further possibilities for this job idea.

Instead, he could ask himself, "What if that ad were true? What if something about the ad were true? What if I could get another job in an exciting new location, even if it's not Australia? Would I be interested in that?"

Now he's thinking on a new level. He's giving his mind some space to create. Now he can seriously think about a career change, something he's been putting off for a while. As he explores the possibilities, he's reminded that he's not satisfied with his current career.

His inquiry continues even after he calls the toll-free number at the bottom of the ad and discovers that, sure enough, all he'd get for his money is a list of companies based in Australia. But he doesn't stop there. His willingness to play with this crazy job idea leads to a new job with a higher salary and better benefits—the very things that piqued his interest in the original ad. If he'd been skeptical and had dismissed the idea outright, he might have remained stuck in his old job forever. Instead, asking "What if that were true?" led to a more satisfying life.

Scenario #1



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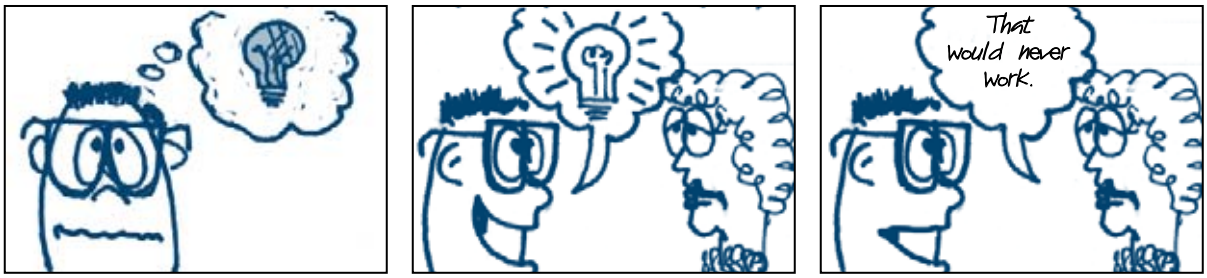
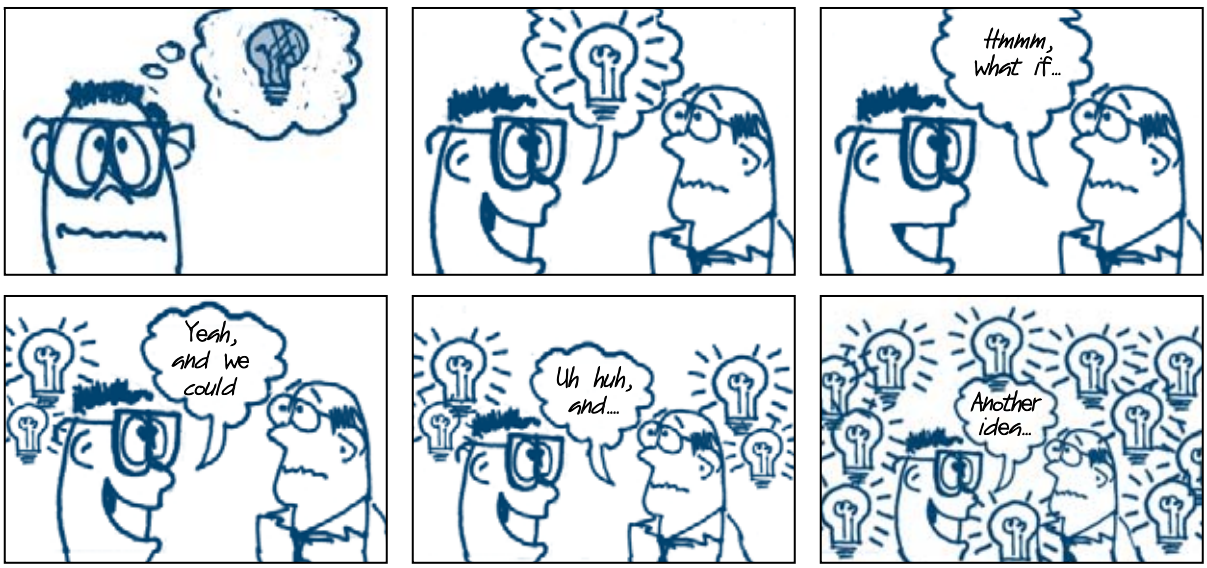


Scenario #3



EXPLORE THE LANGUAGE OF POSSIBILITIES

Language has subtle and powerful effects. Language can expand possibilities. It can also limit our options.

Words such as *but* and *however* demonstrate a case in point. These words can often discount or disqualify what came immediately before them and put an end to further exploration. Replacing these words with *and* often helps us stay in the inquiry. After all, the word *and* simply connects the two statements without cancelling either one.

Consider this statement:, "Today is our planned picnic, but it's raining." The word *but* implies that we won't have a picnic. The reference to rain sounds like a stopper.

If we replace *but* with *and*, something new happens: "Today is our planned picnic, *and* it's raining." This gives us the possibility of figuring out how to have a picnic while it is raining. The word *and* invites further conversation. Perhaps there are ways to deal with the rain: staging an indoor picnic, asking everyone to wear raincoats, putting up a rainproof tent, checking the weather forecast to see if postponing the picnic for two hours might make a difference, changing the location to the covered pavilion at the park, or wearing swimsuits in the rain. These are just a few possibilities.

Imagine a customer in a music shop saying, "I love classical music. *However*, my spouse can't stand it." A salesperson could easily conclude it's a waste of time to discuss classical music with this person. On the other hand, imagine the customer saying, "I love classical music *and* my spouse can't stand it." This reminds the salesperson that the two facts are not mutually exclusive. Fact one: This customer likes classical music. Fact two: The spouse can't stand it. Now the salesperson sees two sales brewing instead of one. He can point out the sale on Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* and also inquire about the type of music the spouse likes.

Words that portray certainty are also worth scrutiny. Consider this sentence: "This is a trash can." These words state a fact that seems absolute—one that limits our perceptions and leaves no room for alternatives. Now consider this sentence: "This could be a trash can." That opens up other possibilities. If the object could be a trash can, it could also be something else: a water pail, a hat, a drum, a storage container, a cooking pot, a doorstop, an artist's canvas, a hiding place, a makeshift umbrella, a place to burn old papers, a makeshift basketball hoop for an office free-throw contest, a boundary marker for an obstacle course, or . . . well, you get the idea.

EXERCISE

Keep looking at a controversial topic

Choose a controversial topic—one you have a strong opinion about. Identify your topic and summarize your opinion here.

_____

_____

_____

Next, state a contrasting point of view on this issue, even if you disagree with it. For example, if you normally favor gun control, state the position of those who oppose gun control. Sum up the opposing viewpoint here.

_____

_____

Now, make a case for this opposing opinion, no matter how strongly you disagree with it. List at least five facts, figures, or other pieces of evidence or arguments for it. If you have trouble coming up with five items, keep looking. Do some reading or ask other people for their ideas. List supportive evidence for this opinion here.

_____

_____

Finally, describe whether or not your thinking on this issue has been modified in some way (changed, strengthened, softened) and what you learned from the exercise.

I discovered that I . . .

_____

EXERCISE

Expand your options

Describe a problem that you now have. Also write about a solution that you have thought of or that you are implementing to deal with this problem.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now ask, "What other solutions might work?" Think of at least five other solutions that could assist you in solving this problem. Don't give up. Stay in the inquiry long enough to give this exercise a fair chance. If you keep drawing blanks, ask others for suggestions. Be determined to find alternative solutions. Describe your new ideas below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I intend to...

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

EXERCISE

Turn problems into questions

One dictionary defines the word problem *as "a question proposed for solution or consideration." The word comes from the Greek word* proballein, *which means "to throw forward." Given this definition, we can see problems in a new light. Instead of avoiding them, we can accept them as opportunities for us to grow, to go forward.*

Turning a problem into a question that invites a solution has real power to throw us forward. It helps us step back and get some perspective on the situation. Suddenly the problem is not just "my" problem; it's a question that anyone could face in the course of a lifetime. A question that invites possible solutions can move us to take action.

In this light, consider any problem you have and then do some writing. First, describe a problem in your life as you currently see it. Then rewrite the problem as a question to answer. For example, the problem "I don't have any money left at the end of the month." can be rewritten as "How can I bring my expenses in line with my income?"

Problem: _____

_____

Question: _____

_____

Problem: _____

_____

Question: _____

_____

Problem: _____

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Question: _____

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Problem: _____

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Question: _____

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Problem: _____

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Question: _____

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Problem: _____

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Question: _____

_____

EXERCISE

Ask zero questions

Some people have a habit of asking questions when they really intend to make statements. The question "Don't you think it's cold in here?" is probably a disguise for the statement "I'm cold" or for the request "Can we close the windows and turn up the heat?" These kinds of questions are indirect and can be seen as manipulative. This exercise gives you an opportunity to shed some light on such questions.

For one full day, 24 hours, commit to asking zero questions. You might be surprised by what you learn. If you are in the habit of disguising statements as questions, you will find this a challenge. You can practice turning your questions into statements, which is what they really are.

If you make this commitment, there might be times when you will force yourself to make a statement when questions are clearly appropriate. For example, you might say, "I suspect there is a bathroom around here somewhere." If the person you are with doesn't get the point, you might then say, "I wonder if you know where it is."

If you want to be even more courageous, experiment with asking zero questions for one full week, 168 hours.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Reflect on your experience with "no questions"

Write what you learned during your experiment with asking zero questions. Also consider if there's anything you'd now like to change about your speaking.

I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

POWER PROCESS #11

Notice your expectations

In this chapter you'll find...

Take stock of pictures.

Most of us have pictures (mental images) of what we want or need in order to be satisfied. When these pictures stop serving us, we can choose new ones.

Create an alternative expectation-exercise.

Think of some event that you anticipate with discomfort or even dread. Notice any negative pictures about this event and replace them with new ones.

TAKE STOCK OF PICTURES

Pictures can dominate our thinking and our behavior. Most of us have pictures of what we want or need in order to be satisfied. The person who wants to be rich doesn't just want a pile of money stashed in a bank vault. She probably has specific mental pictures of what riches can bring to her life: a new Mercedes loaded with chrome, a 26-room mansion with an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a 100-acre estate lined with tennis courts and lush flower gardens, or the ability to give away lots of money to her favorite charities.

Pictures can be about anything. The person who's hungry often has a vivid mental picture of the meal that would satisfy him. ("Ah, I can just see that steaming, fresh bread and delicious vegetable soup.")

Just about any time we feel a need, we conjure up a picture of what will satisfy that need. This habit starts early. A baby feels hunger pangs and starts to cry. Within seconds, the mother appears and the baby is satisfied. What's more, the baby stores a mental picture of her mother feeding her. She connects that picture with stopping the hanger pangs. Voilá! She knows how to solve the hunger problem, and the picture goes on file. The picture becomes a powerful expectation that can guide her thinking, feeling, and behavior for a lifetime.

Keep in mind that the concept of pictures in our minds can involve all our senses. All pictures are visual, yet they can easily invoke sounds, smells, and physical sensations as well.

We could even say that our minds function like a huge photo album. Its pages include pictures of all the ways we've satisfied needs in the past. Whenever we feel dissatisfied, we mentally search the album for a picture of how to make the dissatisfaction go away. With that picture firmly in mind, we behave to make the world outside our heads match the pictures inside.

Pictures serve us—and hinder us

Pictures serve us. In fact, we need them in order to survive. Imagine trying to find our way to work without an accurate mental picture of the streets of our city. Imagine trying to find a sock without a clear mental picture of the contents of our clothes drawers.

The problem is, pictures can also get in our way. This sometimes happens when the outside world changes and the pictures in our heads stay the same. Take, for example, the college student who looks forward to returning home to see her parents at spring break. During the flight home, she pictures her mother and father in the living room nestled by the fireplace like they always are after eating dinner. She calls up a mental picture of her bedroom. Casting her mental gaze, she can see the exact location of each object in that room—the easy chair, the stuffed animals, the CD player, and the stacks of her favorite CDs.

When she finally arrives at the airport, her parents greet her warmly. After some small talk, her father delivers the news: "Honey, your mother and I decided to sell the house and most of our belongings. Since we're retired now and you're almost finished with school, we decided to live the carefree life. We bought a recreational vehicle big enough to sleep four. Wait till you see it! It has naugahyde furnishings, bunk beds, two built-in porta-potties, and even an artificial fire-

place. From now on, we're carefree vagabonds with no permanent address. And in just a few minutes you get to experience the heady freedom of life on the open road."

Our student is crushed.

Gone is her room and all the resting places for those cherished stuffed animals. She starts making up pictures about her parents' RV. In her mind she sees a cramped, clanky, gas-guzzling mobile home that smells like burnt oil.

This is just one example of how pictures and reality can be in conflict—and the negative feelings that can result from that conflict.

Any time you feel depressed, anxious, or sad, check to see how reality is violating one of your precious mental pictures.

Remodel your pictures

When pictures start to get in our way, there are two simple steps we can take. The first is to notice our pictures. That's all.

We can just open up our mental photo albums and notice how the pictures stored there influence our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Just becoming aware of what our pictures are and how they affect us can be a huge step towards decreasing their power. This simple strategy is also a practical one. Often pictures are difficult to change, and we notice them only after they've helped to create our upset.

Sometimes, we can let go of old pictures and replace them with new ones. We stored those pictures in the first place. We can replace them. That's the second step.

Return to our unhappy college student for a minute. She could take a second look at her mental pictures of her old house. When she's willing to tell the truth about that place, she remembers that her room had closet doors that never shut tight. Then there were those floor-boards that creaked mercilessly on winter mornings. What's more, she recalls that the fireplace was pretty but leaked a lot of cold air into the house.

Then she sees her parents' RV for the first time. She's pleasantly surprised. The trailer is more spacious than she expected. The furnishings are stylish and modern. The bunk beds are actually comfortable, and the stereo system is a knockout. Even the porta-potties are spotless and have a kind of rustic charm. Her old pictures of RVs as bulky, stuffy, and generally dorky just don't conform to reality anymore.

With this discovery, she creates a new mental picture of family bliss—one that's more in tune with the present. She sees herself lounging on a bunk bed, singing along with her parents to their favorite tape, as they hit the highways to Malibu.

Caution: The suggestion to notice and replace pictures is not an invitation to denial or delusion. For example, many alcoholics choose a picture of themselves that says, "I can choose to stop drinking at any time." This picture can be highly inaccurate. When choosing and replacing pictures, it pays to practice another strategy explained earlier in this book: Tell the truth.

This strategy reminds us of a crucial fact about the world: Things never stay the same. The only constant we can count on is change. When we try to negotiate life with a set of fixed mental pictures of the way things ought to be or the way they used to be, we're asking for trouble.

The alternative is clear: We can take charge of the images that float through our minds. We don't have to be ruled by an album of antique pictures. Instead, we can stay in the inquiry and keep looking for new pictures. Ultimately our pictures can become as fluid as reality itself.

EXERCISE

Create an alternative expectation

Think of some event that you anticipate with discomfort or even dread. Write about the pictures you associate with this event. You might, for example, have recently divorced and expect the upcoming holidays to be miserable.

Now replace those pictures with others that are equally realistic and more empowering. For example, just because the holidays will be different does not mean they will be a disaster. New traditions can begin to develop and new rituals can be anticipated with excitement. Describe your new pictures below.

POWER PROCESS #12

Listen fully

In this chapter you'll find . . .

Listening—a way of life.
Listening with skill can become a part of almost everything we do.

Expand what you hear.
We can listen to much more than what we can hear.

Listening fully can be scary—and worthwhile.
Powerful listening means being willing to learn from anyone and to question almost everything.

Practice listening: Discovery Statement.
Listen with only the intention to understand another person.

Wake up to the world: Discovery Statement.
Discover new sensations by paying full attention to your environment.

Set "sound" goals: Intention Statement.
Describe the kinds of sounds you'd regularly like to have in your life.

LISTENING—A WAY OF LIFE

Most people think that listening is what we do when someone else talks. Actually, listening can be much more—a way of life, a total approach to the world. When we listen fully, we take our lives to a new level. Listening fully is one way to boost our opportunities for happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Listening means receiving

Begin with a larger meaning for the word listen. Listening in this sense means receiving anything. When you listen to someone talk, you receive their words. When your stereo is playing, you receive music. When you turn on your television, you receive television programs. On your birthday, you receive gifts. When you have a headache and runny nose, you receive a message from your body about an oncoming cold. Each of these events is listening in the larger sense of the word.

Listening fully means receiving whatever the world is "sending." At any given moment, the world is sending plenty—thousands of tastes, sights, aromas, sounds, textures, bodily sensations, ideas, and bits of information just waiting to be noticed. If we are not careful and conscious, we might inadvertently tune out this symphony of sights, sounds, and sensations.

Imagine a department store with shelf after shelf of quality merchandise, all free. Imagine that these goods remain unclaimed. Gifts are there for the taking, yet people pass by, eyes cast downward, failing to notice.

This might sound like a silly scenario. Yet something like it happens daily. There's the shaft of sunlight streaming in the bedroom window, the sight of a full moon on a clear summer night, the fresh scent of the earth after a rainstorm, the sound of a sleeping baby's breathing, the wave of pleasure that spreads through your body when you bite into your favorite food. All of these are gifts from that great giver—reality. Few people receive them. Most are not listening.

Commitment comes before technique

Walk up to the self-help shelf at almost any bookstore and you'll find a row of titles about how to listen better. Many of these books are full of techniques, and many of the techniques are useful.

When it comes to listening fully, something important comes before technique. That "something" is commitment—a commitment to fully understand what others say, a commitment to fully receive the gifts that reality offers. This commitment comes into play before we do anything, and it makes us more effective at anything we do.

Easy Does It

Listening fully is about softness, yielding, openness, and willingness to receive. The idea is to be more like water (which receives your body when you jump in) than ice (which resists it).

This kind of listening is similar to something you do thousands of times each day—breathe. Each day we "breathe in" thousands of ideas and impressions from the world. In the process, all our senses come alive. What we breathe back into the world—our thoughts, feelings, and actions—reflects what we breathe in.

Actually, listening is the engine that drives many techniques. Take some of the Power Processes in this book, such as *Choose your conversations* (#15), *Keep looking for answers* (#10), and *Detach and play full out* (#14). All of these strategies begin to work when you listen fully.

Full listening is also a path to full creativity. Read the books about creativity. Find out what the experts on this subject say. Much of their advice boils down to this: Read a lot. Observe. Pay attention. The greater your fund of ideas and impressions, the more creative you can be. In short—listen.

Full listening is full attention

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word listen this way: "To make a conscious effort to hear; to pay attention; to heed . . . " Listening fully means paying exquisite, close attention.

When you pay attention, your world gets bigger. You can see this for yourself. Just put this book down for two minutes. Close your eyes and notice everything you hear at this moment. Next, open your eyes and notice all the colors you see.

Congratulations! You've just entered a new world, larger and far richer in sights and sounds than the world you inhabited two minutes ago. Of course, you didn't physically go any place new. Nothing changed but your attention, and that was enough to take you for quite a trip. The difference between your former and your present state might be as sharp as the difference between waking and sleeping.

Listening becomes important when we feel upset and don't know why. Often, something in the background, just beneath the surface of our attention, is affecting us: the rumbling of an air conditioner, the high-pitched whine of a fluorescent light, a pebble in the bottom of a shoe. In these situations, we can stop and ask, "What am I not noticing?; What am I forgetting to hear?"; and listen for the answer. A little attention and corrective action can make all the difference.

Listening reveals us

Listening to ourselves can calm us when we're irritated with others. An example is the person who resents her next-door neighbor for slamming his car door when he leaves for work each morning. One day, she notices the way she closes her car door and hears a deafening crash that could wake everyone in the neighborhood. Listening to ourselves often leads to a potent discovery: The very habits we find most irritating in others might be our own habits as well.

Listening to ourselves is one way to detect any difference between what we say and what we do. Someone who says he's a good listener might discover that in many conversations he actually does most of the talking. Someone who counsels others to be on time might notice that she often shows up for meetings 15 minutes late. Listening to ourselves helps us notice and change such gaps between our words and deeds, our actions and values.

Listening gets us in tune with the world

Human beings suffer when their actions are at odds with the way the world works. The musician who constantly plays in a different key than the rest of the band, can get fired. The person who's allergic to dairy products will get sick if he keeps drinking milk shakes. The factory owner who dumps toxic chemicals into a river can foul her own drinking water. People can get into trouble when their actions violate laws of society or nature.

One meaning of happiness is living in tune with the way things are. This does not mean that we should conform to that which is counter to our values, but we can live more effectively when we are fully aware of our world. This way of living calls for listening—moment-by-moment attention to the world inside us and outside us. When we listen effectively, we can take effective action. The better we listen, the better we can play with the band . . .or choose a different band.

EXPAND WHAT YOU HEAR

Our world offers an endless range of sounds, sights, smells, tastes, and textures—a feast for the senses. Listening fully can be sheer joy. This kind of listening is an end in itself. There is simple and profound pleasure to be had in the tinkling of wind chimes, the woosh of a warm ocean breeze, the crunch of biting into a sweet, juicy apple. Our world is full of such "music."

To begin, we can listen to ourselves—our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. We can also listen to other people—their thoughts, speech, emotions, and body language. We can even listen to many people at once. Brainstorming is one way to listen to the minds of a group as it offers up the possibilities and passions of its members.

Then there's listening to our intuition—a way of knowing that goes beyond logic and evidence. Using our intuition means tuning in to the still, small voice inside us as we make decisions. Often that voice represents what is truly wise within us. Intuition leads the business owner to offer a new, unproven product that breaks all sales records. Intuition leads the manager to hire a person without formal credentials who turns out to be just right for the job. If the term intuition is too fancy, then use some of that word's less fancy cousins—hunch, lucky guess, inspiration, discovery, or aha!

At any moment we can listen to countless conversations about almost any topic. Politics, economics, philosophy, and religion all result from the exchange of ideas and information. That exchange takes place everywhere, from face-to-face meetings to the media.

We can even listen to things that don't speak. This includes nature—plants, animals, lakes, oceans, meadows, prairies, deserts, wind, rain. Listen for the distinctive sounds of the seasons—the crunch of snow in winter, the way soft grass yields to bare feet in summer. If you observe the effects of human beings on the planet, you might even "hear" the cry of the planet Earth—the pain of polluted oceans and vanishing rain forests.

We can also listen for guidance from deep inside us or beyond us. For many people, spirituality means listening to God, Nature, the Creator, a Higher Power—whatever you wish to call the wisdom that helps you understand life and care about others.

When we understand that listening means receiving everything, we discover that there's a lot to hear.

LISTENING FULLY CAN BE SCARY—AND WORTHWHILE

Full listening springs from a special attitude, a mind that says "I don't know it all. "and "There is more for me to learn." Listening in this way can be a heady adventure—and scary.

Listening fully means putting all our opinions on the line and asking if they are accurate or useful. Listening fully means opening up to the ideas of others and being willing to change. When we listen fully, we let go of the way we believe things are supposed to be, and we let go of everything we think we know.

It's no wonder that full listening is so rare. Many people are so comfortable with what they already know that they simply shut down and stop listening rather than risk changing their minds.

Take a look at what happens in a typical discussion or debate. Each person comes already committed to a point of view and usually unwilling to change. When someone talks, the other people don't really listen; they think about what they will say next or what's for dinner that evening. It's no wonder that the word "discussion" sounds a lot like the word "concussion." During an argument, it often seems as though people hit each other over the head with their hardened viewpoints.

Our speaking and listening could be much different from this—and much more powerful. We could move from argument to dialogue. The word dialogue comes from two Greek words, dia and "logos". "Dia" means "through" and "logos" means "meaning." When real dialogue takes place, meaning "flows through" all the people present. That meaning is something new, something different from the ideas everyone first brings to the table. Dialogue is a creative act in which each person plays a part. The reward is more than conversation; it is communion, a real meeting of minds.

Opening up to dialogue is more than something nice to do. In fact, putting our cherished opinions on the line and being willing to learn may be a matter of survival. During the age of the information explosion, the "knowledge" of yesterday often becomes the superstition of today. At one one time, people "knew" that one country could win such a war. Today we have striking evidence that such a war would likely devastate the entire planet no matter which country "won".

Dialogue is a rare gift. Though we cannot guarantee it will happen, we can set the stage by listening fully. The following suggestions can help.

Let go of judgments

If you want to listen fully, then forestall the need for conclusions and certainty. Listen for kernels of wisdom from people you disagree with—Democrats, Republicans, lesbians, Christians, atheists, career army officers, pacifists, or anyone else. Consider that the person you loathe the most could actually have something useful to say to you.

Listen with two minds

If you rearrange the letters in listen, you get the word silent. Knowing this, we can remember to start listening with a quiet mind. Such a mind is still, calm, and open to fresh ideas. Full listening begins when we simply keep our mouths shut and channel all our effort into understanding another person.

There's another kind of mind that comes into play after we listen quietly. This second mind is questioning and critical. When we listen with this mind, we ask questions, such as "What's the evidence?"; "Is this idea logical?"; and "What does this mean?" We separate ideas that are inaccurate from those that are true and valuable.

Listening fully calls for both of these minds. One without the other is incomplete. In the course of a minute—even a single moment—we can use them both. Listening fully is a delicate dance where we step in and out of these two minds.

Imagine that any skilled listener owns two hats. One hat is labeled "crazy mind." While wearing this hat, the listener is willing to consider any idea, no matter how crazy it sounds. The other hat is labeled "critical mind." When listeners wear this hat, they're using all the tools of critical thinking to keep the valuable ideas and toss out the shallow ones.

The trick in listening is to be open and skeptical, nonjudgmental and critical. There is a time to accept and a time to reject, a time to agree and a time to disagree—a time to wear each hat.

Listen beyond the speaker

Most of us find it easy to stop listening when something about a speaker irritates us. When we see someone in a lime-green leisure suit or a polka dot bow tie, we might become so busy judging this person's wardrobe that we stop listening.

One solution is to listen beyond the speaker. We can notice what's spoken (the content) rather than the speaker's style (the presentation). When we do this, we might discover that the person who stutters has something important to say or that the kindergartner who's too young to "know" anything has a fresh and useful outlook.

Listen for what's missing

When we listen fully, we find creative ways to solve problems. We link facts that most people consider separate and unrelated.

Asking "What is missing here?" and "How can I provide what's missing?"can help us make such links. The answers often lead to a new product, technology, or service.

For example, take two facts. One, people like to run and jog to music. Two, conventional stereo systems are too big and bulky for anyone to carry. A team of engineers at Sony Corporation listened to both facts and supplied what was missing—the personal stereo, a cassette player and radio small enough to fit on a belt loop and go anywhere.

Listen to the way people listen

When you make a speech to a group of bowlers, you might get nowhere if you talk about "shooting straight" or "hitting a bull's-eye." Instead, switch to "making a strike," "going right down

the center of the lane," or "avoiding gutter balls." You'll probably persuade more people.

The suggestion here is to use the words that other people will relate to. Every group of people with a common interest has a particular set of preferred words, phrases, and images. Listen for their special language, learn to tap it, and you'll start broadcasting through channels that are already open. When in Rome, speak as the Romans do.

More to follow

Additional techniques for listening fully are found in Chapter One: "Receiving", in the section Love. These start on page 307. The techniques outlined in this section are focused particularly on listening to other people, but they can also be used when listening to ourselves and to nature.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Practice listening: Discovery Statement.

Enter into your next conversation with an intense commitment to full understanding. For the moment, forget about listening techniques or exercises. Just aim to understand another person's viewpoint as skillfully as you can. Do not worry about criticizing or responding to this viewpoint.

After the conversation, consider your listening skill. Perhaps you created some new listening techniques on the spot—simply from your commitment to listen fully. Describe how well you listened and specifically what you did while listening.

I discovered that I . . .

EXERCISE

Listen to something that you have never heard

For one week, practice listening to something you have never heard before. In the space to the right, write about what you are going to listen to. Pick something that generally is not considered something that could be heard. For example, you might choose to spend a week listening to your body's request for exercise. (Of course, after you have listened fully for a week, you may find that it hasn't said anything. With most bodies, that would be unusual since there is a natural desire to move vigorously.) You might choose to listen to the unread books you have purchased, but haven't gotten to. Or, you might choose to listen to someone you don't think has anything to teach you but who seems to want your ear.

Be outlandish in this exercise. Pick something that you will "listen to" that may surprise you. You might choose to pay full attention to—listen to—the sunrise every morning for the week, the requests of your children for 45 minutes every day, the thoughts you have about your own value and how these thoughts effect your self-worth, or the values inherent in each of your favorite songs.

Now record below at least two things you will "listen to" for the next week.

Wake up to the world: Discovery Statement

For one minute, make an effort to list everything you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste. Write as quickly as you can, jotting down notes in single words or short phrases. Don't worry about making a complete or accurate list. Simply capture in words whatever you can in the available time.

After one minute is up, pause briefly and relax. Then review your list. Circle any sights, sounds, or other sensations you do not normally notice. Then write about what you learned from fully listening to your world.

I discovered that I . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Set "sound" goals: Intention Statement

Describe the kinds of sounds you'd like to have in your home and work environments. Include goals relating to quantity and quality of sound, such as volume and pitch. Some examples are: "I intend to play soft classical music while I work" or "I intend to live away from busy streets with sustained traffic noise." Also describe what you will do to achieve your goals for sound.

I intend to . . .

I will achieve these goals by . . .

POWER PROCESS #13

Enjoy

In this chapter you'll find...

Maximum fun, maximum productivity.

Fun, laughter, joy, and productivity can all go hand-in-hand.

Practicing the pleasure principle.

We can set the stage for more enjoyment by practicing non-antagonistic humor, keeping joke files, looking at everyday experiences in a new light, discovering hidden pleasures, and just laughing.

Generate a belly laugh-exercise.

Practice creating the experience of laughter out of nothing.

Laugh three times daily and call me in the morning: Intention Statement.

Describe concrete steps you'll take to cultivate more humor in your life.

Decide how to spell fun: Intention Statement.

Brainstorm a list of the things you enjoy and decide how to experience them regularly.

Maximum Fun, Maximum Productivity

When it comes to managing stress, we can take a cue from a wise, patient, all-knowing, but little-known saint named Russet. Russet has a potent psychophysical technique for meeting adversity in life, and it works with almost 100 percent efficiency. When confronted with a distressing situation, Russet merely puffs up her cheeks, purses her lips, and forces air out of her mouth with sudden force. It's difficult to duplicate this sound in print—something like *pppppppppffffffffffpppppppffffth*. This technique works even better if you shake your head, slobber, and drool a little bit at the end.

When Russet does this, she sounds just like a horse, and this stands to reason: Russet *is* a horse. Russet's stress management technique has been affectionately named "horse lips." And her example is one reminder that human beings do not have a monopoly on wisdom.

We can do "horse lips" at any time. This is a great illustration of the power process, "Enjoy," which is all about finding ways to lighten up, to stop taking ourselves so seriously, to create laughter, and to start enjoying ourselves again—even in difficult circumstances.

Imagine that at a crucial meeting, your boss asks you for the answer to a pressing question. The atmosphere is charged with a murderous tension. Your job may depend on how you perform at this single moment. Meanwhile, your body is a mass of knots. Your gut is churning. You're about to despair because you have no idea what to say. Suddenly you remember Russet, and you know what to do. You pause, wait for the moment of maximum impact, and at just the right time . . . *pppppppppffffffffffpppppppffffth!*

This scenario is silly and, of course, inappropriate. Yet behind it is a serious point. Sometimes silliness is a path to sanity. Laughter can restore our perspective and renew us. Lightening up can lift us out of a dilemma and help us find new solutions to a problem. Laughter might even help heal disease by relieving tension and relaxing muscles. Its effects have been compared to those of exercise. Indeed, laughter has been described as "a kind of internal jogging."

The subject of laughter leads to a larger point. Maximum productivity can come from maximum fun. The motto "No pain, no gain". can easily lead us astray.

For example, compare two work environments. The employees in one office barely speak to each other. At lunchtime, they huddle at their desks for solitary sack lunches. By mid-afternoon, these desperate people start watching the clock. They're silently waiting for the time they can slink out the door unnoticed. Despite the

nose-to-the-grindstone atmosphere that prevails here, the company is barely profitable.

In contrast, the people who work at the other office see each other regularly. At the beginning of each meeting, they check in with each other and socialize for a few minutes. This practice paves the way for enduring friendships that extend beyond working hours. What's more, their cubicles and hallways occasionally reverberate with the sound of laughter. The prevailing spirit of cooperation and teamwork leads to sustained growth and low employee turnover.

Ask almost any skilled artist, executive, teacher, or musician what drives them in their chosen profession. They might tell you about long years of preparation or hours spent in practice rooms. Chances are, they'll also tell you how much they love their work and look forward to getting up each day.

People who enjoy their work are more likely to excel. Struggle and sorrow are not a pre-requisite for excellence. In fact, when these conditions exist, many people are likely to quit the game. It's more likely that maximum productivity comes from maximum fun.

PRACTICING THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

Telling people to enjoy themselves is a bit like ordering them to be spontaneous. Fun and spontaneity are almost impossible to produce on command. Even so, we can set up conditions that favor fun and set the stage for laughter.

Practice non-antagonistic humor

Much humor is antagonistic. Comedian W.C. Fields explained this type of humor when he said, "I never saw anything funny that wasn't terrible. If it causes pain, it's funny; if it doesn't, it isn't."

Not all comedians direct their verbal barbs at others. Humor can be self-deprecating, too. Oscar Wilde, the writer, once quipped that he spent the morning putting a comma in one sentence and the afternoon taking it out again—a very productive day. Dorothy L. Sayers, another writer, remarked, "I always have a quotation for everything. It saves original thinking."

As an alternative to antagonism toward others or ourselves, we can look for humor that is inclusive. This kind of humor underlines our common problems and shared humanity.

For example:

"When you come to the fork in the road, take it." (Yogi Berra)

"Lord, grant me patience, and give it to me now." (Alcoholics Anonymous saying)

"The scientific theory I like best is that the rings of Saturn are composed almost entirely of lost airline luggage." (Mark Russell)

Just laugh

It seems logical to laugh when we have a reason to laugh–hearing a hilarious joke or witnessing a comic stunt. It's also possible to create humor from nothing, to laugh even when there's no reason to laugh.

There are commercial audiotapes that consist solely of people laughing. Almost no one who hears such a tape can resist the urge to join in. Laughter truly is contagious.

It is possible to just start laughing, even when nothing is funny and even when you don't hear others laughing. At any time, no matter the circumstances, we can just start a giggle and choose laughter.

Sometimes laughter and levity involve simply noticing our usual tendencies and then doing the opposite. For instance, a common response to getting laid off is to complain, to protest the decision, and even to weep. Each of these responses is an understandable course of action.

Another possible response to losing your job is to throw an outrageous, festive party. Some people will say that this action makes no sense. To these people you can reply that celebrating with friends at such a time might make more sense than isolating yourself, remaining inactive, and getting mired in sadness.

Keep joke files

Because the benefits of laughter are so fundamental, it might pay to cultivate humor systematically. We can scan the comic pages for our favorite cartoonists and clip our favorite strips. We can collect recordings by our favorite comedians. When we hear a great joke, we can save it. Regularly raiding our humor stash can be a lifesaver in times of stress.

Time heals

Remember the situation that once seemed so disastrous and now seems so funny? You know the one—the time you stepped up to the speaker's podium, only to discover you were wearing two different colored socks, or the time you took a new car home to impress your mother, only to witness the hubcaps falling off as you pulled into the driveway.

The passage of time has a way of bringing out the intrinsic humor in what was once a near disaster. We can learn to compress time by looking for ways to laugh as soon as the event occurs. With practice, we can mentally zoom out from the situation and ask ourselves, "How will I view this in 20 years?" We might discover, as Lily Tomlin said, "No matter how cynical you get, it is impossible to keep it up."

Discover pleasure

It's often possible to discover enjoyment even in the most mundane tasks. For example, washing dishes can be a kind of sensual experience—a chance to enjoy the pleasurable sensation of warm water contacting your skin. Mowing the lawn can be an excuse to get outdoors on a summer day. And, buying groceries offers us the chance to gather ideas for delicious new meals we can prepare. When we keep looking, pleasure is often just waiting to be had.

EXERCISE

Generate a belly laugh

You can practice creating the experience of laughter out of nothing. One way to do this is to simply laugh with yourself. You can do this any time you are alone, and you can even include others. If you can trigger laughter by thinking of a favorite joke or funny incident, fine. If not, just laugh anyway. It's OK if you have to force the laughter to get going.

In any case, aim for more than a small chuckle or mild chortle. Laugh as hard as you can. Go for a real gut-busting, gas-passing guffaw. As comedian Merrilyn Bellghum puts it, "Laugh 'til you leak."

Do this exercise once a day for two minutes. As you gain more skill at generating laughter from nothing, see if you can increase this time to five minutes. Then experiment with applying your new-found skill at opportune moments during the rest of the day—especially if you're confronted by an unpleasant or boring task. Try it. You might like it.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Laugh three times daily and call me in the morning

Laughing changes our whole physiology and psychology, even if just for a few moments. Some people believe that regular laughter actually adds years to the length of our lives. Few stress management tools are as powerful as a good, gut-busting guffaw.

Humor is an everyday occurrence that still defies complete explanation. Sometimes it's a blinding flash of the obvious. At other times, it's an unexpected twist of events. Often it involves speaking what you think and usually don't say.

In any case, you can take concrete steps to cultivate humor. Watch funny films and read funny books. Start a joke stash. Practice memorizing and telling jokes. See stand-up comedians. Smile at random and watch your mood change. Stand in front of the mirror and laugh as loudly as you can, straight from your belly. Do this even if you don't feel like it and notice whether your mood changes.

Choose one of these strategies and use it on a regular basis. Describe specifically how you will bring more laughter into your life.

I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY 7 INTENTION STATEMENT

Decide how to spell fun

When it comes to having fun, it's important to take moderation in moderation. Calmness is great, it can be overdone. Carried too far, self-control can squash enjoyment.

Here's one way to have outrageous fun. Quickly list what you do now for fun or what you would like to do—walking, partying, listening to music, whatever. List as many items as you can. Then create two variations of each activity and figure out how to enjoy them regularly.

For example, you might enjoy preparing and tasting new foods. One way to savor this pleasure is to invite people to share your next culinary experiment. Another is to form a recipe exchange with neighbors. If you have fun dancing, join a line dancing class or invite friends to a party where everyone is videotaped dancing. Later in the party, serve refreshments and have your guests watch themselves dance on video. It's fun to watch others dance. It can be a barrel of laughs watching ourselves.

In the space below write your fun list and the variations you are adding.

Pick one of the items you just listed and do it in the next week. Then choose a few more to do in the next month. In short, set up a concrete action plan to ensure you will do the things on your fun list.

I intend to . . .

POWER PROCESS #14

Detach and play full out

In this chapter you'll find

Work hard, play hard, and lighten up.

We can put a lot of effort into making our lives work—and stay light-hearted all the way.

Don't put your role before your soul.

Our happiness can be independent of our friends, thoughts, jobs, possessions, roles, and more.

Rewrite the equation.

The source of an upset might be a hidden equation, such as: *my well-being = my career*.

Use words to rewrite the equation–exercise.

Create empowering self-talk for managing your identity, such as "I have a job but I am not my job."

Unconditional happiness: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Practice speaking about and experiencing happiness that does not depend on circumstances.

Total involvement.

We can spend much of our time fully focused and involved—even with the most "routine" activities.

Participate.

Play full out by making tasks urgent, taking risks, keeping perspective, working smarter, and choosing how hard to play.

Examine the costs and benefits of taking a risk: exercise.

List both the benefits and the costs of choosing not to take a risk.

Practice playing full out: Discovery/Intention Statement.

While doing a routine activity, pretend that every detail is crucial and you must act with great precision and care.

Choose a bigger game: Intention Statement.

Play full out on a large scale. Look for ways to participate in your family, neighborhood, community, city, country, or planet.

WORK HARD PLAY HARD AND LIGHTEN UP

The suggestion, "Lighten up!", might bring others to mind: "Be light-hearted."; "Take it easy."; "Loosen up."; " Let go."; "Laugh about it all."; "Go with the flow."; "Just accept it."; "Stand back and let it happen." Each of these sayings makes a useful suggestion. They can be summed up in one word: Detach.

The following suggestions are just as useful: "Work as if your life depended on it."; "Live each day as if it will be your last."; "Get off the sidelines."; "Effort counts."; "Everything you do matters."; "Take it seriously."; "If you don't like it, change it." These ideas can be summed up in one phrase: Play full out.

The two preceding paragraphs might seem to contradict each other. They do not. Instead of contradicting one other, these two approaches support each other. They are as necessary to each other as night is to day, as breathing out is to breathing in.

If you want to be happy, healthy, loving, and wealthy, then practice working hard and letting go. Take it seriously and laugh about it all. Change what you can and accept what you cannot change. Go with the flow and make the flow. Give it your all and don't worry about winning or losing the game. Detach and play full out.

The trick is to hold both sets of ideas in balance. There is a time to laugh and a time to cry, a time to work and a time to rest, a time to fight and a time to surrender, a time to zoom in and a time to step back. We can play life full out and not take it too seriously. While we loosen up and let go, we can work hard and play hard. We can be light-hearted even as we stay involved.

Taking things lightly doesn't mean that we get lazy, stand contentedly on the sidelines, let work slide, or refuse to get involved. When we're lighthearted, we can still perform our roles with flawless efficiency. Some people are lighthearted without being involved, and we often describe them as being irresponsible and childish. That's not the kind of attitude this power process is meant to promote.

By the same token, being fully involved doesn't mean being somber, grave, solemn, or absolutely certain. It's possible to be involved and lighthearted at the same time. Most likely, we have preferences about how we want things to turn out in our lives. We can work hard to turn those preferences into reality. Even so, we can still count on a fact: Sometimes we will win and sometimes we will lose. So we can also lighten up about the results even as we make full effort.

Throughout the first half of this chapter, you'll find suggestions for detaching. The second half presents ideas for playing full out. If you get confused, think of all these suggestions as tools and remember that a lot of different tools can fit in the same box. When the time comes to detach, you can go to the box and pull out what works. And when the time comes to play full out, you can reach in your box for a different set of tools. Just remember to practice both parts of this power process.

DON'T PUT YOUR ROLE BEFORE YOUR SOUL

Many of us accumulate roles like we accumulate clothes. Ask someone, "Who are you?" Chances are, he'll respond by listing his roles:

" . . . I'm a teacher."
" . . . a supervisor."
" . . . a married man."
" . . . a sports nut"
" . . . an BMW owner."
" . . . a good worker."

There's no harm in roles as long as we keep them in perspective. The problem comes when we let our roles take charge, when an identifier becomes an identity.

Some people are attached to what they wear as well as to what they own. They equate themselves with their clothes and their cars. Spill coffee on this person's new suit, and he'll feel personally violated. Put a dent in her new Porsche, and she'll scream as if she's injured.

Someone else feels he "is" his hair. If he loses his hair, he's lost himself. And for the person who says, "I am my job," getting laid off can be a catastrophe.

This type of attachment is one of the biggest obstacles to creating a wonderful life. The things we habitually attach ourselves to are fleeting and impermanent, so they're bound to disappoint us. Bodies age. hair falls out. joints stiffen. cars rust, and clothes go out of fashion. Fortunes are won, then lost.

Human beings who are highly attached are a lot like machines. Our language bears out this idea. When we're attached,we say that others can "push our buttons" easily. The more we're attached, the more buttons we have. This common expression is just another way of saying that other people can turn us on or turn us off, as if we were machines. When this happens, our thoughts and emotions are like reflex reactions even though they seem as if they are the most valuable or real things about us.

When we link our happiness and well-being to jobs, possessions, looks, or money, we become attached. We gain a new row of buttons. We make our roles more important than our souls.

The core idea here is that our happiness can be independent of most things we get attached to. We have thoughts, but we are more than our thoughts. We have emotions, but we are more than our emotions. We have bodies, but we are more than our bodies. In fact, we can feel an overall satisfaction with our lives even when our bodies are not well. We can also stop identifying with our accomplishments, relationships, skills, opinions, expectations, and the other circumstances in our lives.

We are more than our roles

Faced with an attachment, we can practice detachment—lightening up and letting go. We can stop investing so much in our roles and start wearing them like baggy old clothes.

This general strategy is aptly expressed by the dictionary's definition of detach: "to separate from a larger mass without violence or damage." That's an accurate description of how we can separate from our roles.

You may see yourself as a good worker. But that's not who you are. It's just something you do. You may take pride in having a Cadillac. But a car is just something you own, not who you are. Realizing such things is a big step toward detachment and all the freedom it brings.

Most of us take life so seriously. We live as if we're trying to make it out of this lifelong adventure alive. When we practice detaching, we gain a larger, more empowering perspective on life—one that goes beyond our roles.

If we are not our roles, thoughts, feelings, or bodies, then who are we? That's a wonderful question that gets to the heart of many philosophical systems and religious traditions. For now, simply consider each of us as a center of awareness endowed with choice. Like the director of a play who casts actors in certain roles, we can choose which roles to play in life. At the same time, we can avoid identifying with any of the characters we play.

We are more than our behavior

A bowler isn't a bad person because she throws a gutter ball. A tennis player isn't a bad person because he hits the ball into the net. We've heard statements like these so often, they seem barely worth stating. We know that in each case the issue is not morality or personal worth, the issue is skill.

We know we are not bad people when we make a mistake in sports. Sometimes it's harder to remember this about ourselves or others when we are late, get a failing grade in school, or make a mistake at work. It's really easy to forget this point when it comes to an even bigger game—like pursuing a life that's filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth. Almost everyone who plays in this game makes mistakes and then feels terrible about them.

People committed to personal effectiveness can still lose their tempers. They might gossip. They might blow money on trifles. They might eat fattening foods and sit for hours in front of the television. That doesn't make them bad people—just less than perfect.

Such mistakes are signs that people lack some of the skills needed for a wonderful life. Like athletes, they can simply acknowledge their current abilities, choose a strategy for improving, and then practice.

These people don't need to make a moral issue out of their practice. They can consider any problem to be an opportunity to become more skilled. With acknowledgement, commitment, and practice, the bowler can throw more strikes. The tennis player can return the ball more often. The person who is habitually late can arrive on time more often. The student can get better grades. The worker can make fewer mistakes. And, each of us can improve our skills at achieving a wonderful life.

Using the same process, the person who charges all her credit cards to the hilt every month can discover effective ways to manage money. The person who gossips can find empowering conversations. And, the person who is overweight can begin a lifelong affair with exercise.

All of us have done things we regret. While taking full responsibility for these behaviors, we can remember that no single behavior defines who we are. We are capable of a variety of behaviors, both effective and ineffective. Freed of value-laden judgments and damaging labels, we can practice and improve without self-induced hardship.

REWRITE THE EQUATION

To understand this notion of detaching from your role, borrow an idea from the field of mathematics. Whenever we're upset, we can do some "new math." We can look for a hidden equation and help the upset vanish.

An equation is any set of words or numbers joined by an equal sign (=) that forms a true statement. Most of us have seen equations like: *2 x 2 = 4* and *a + b = c*.

Equations work with words and thoughts, too. In fact, our self-image can be thought of as a collection of equations. For example, the thought, "I am capable", can be written as the equation *I = capable*. It's easy to run around with other such equations in our minds: *my happiness = my car* or *my well-being = my job*. Each equation is a tip-off to an attachment.

Often, when we're upset, a closer look reveals that one of our equations is threatened. Perhaps one person stores the equation *my happiness = my money*. If that person makes a disastrous investment and loses thousands of dollars, chances are good that she'll get upset. Losing the money is one thing. Violating her hidden equation can be even worse.

Another person's equation might be *my happiness = being the perfect father*. If this person loses his temper and screams at his daughter, suddenly the equation seems doubtful. He's miserable.

The more we're attached to an equation, the more upset we're likely to be when the equation is violated. Our happiness is especially at risk when one side of the equation is a thing—an object or a possession. People carry around equations like *my happiness = my new car* or *my well-being = the value of my stock portfolio*. Then somebody dents the car or the market crashes. Kiss happiness and well-being goodbye.

All this leads to a tool for working with our upsets: the discovery of our hidden equations. We can look for the circumstance or the idea that we link to our happiness. Once we discover the equation, we can detach. We can watch our upsets loosen up and even disappear.

Replacing our old equations with new ones may not help us escape the trap of attachments. If we get locked into changing our equations, we can remain stuck in worry and disappointment. The whole struggle just might begin again with a new equation: *my happiness = being detached*. This equation is just as much a setup as any other.

There is one equation that does makes sense and tells the truth: *my happiness = my happiness*. This is not intended to be cute. Happiness is a choice. If we think about it carefully, this is a powerful concept that can transform the quality of our lives. It can be difficult to grasp because it seems to counter our everyday experience: It implies that happiness does not really need to be connected to anything other than simply choosing to be happy.

Once we genuinely see how equations run our lives, we can start to let them go. We might discover a freedom that's beyond circumstances.

EXERCISE

Use words to rewrite the equation

The whole concept behind "detach" is that often we are not who we think we are. We have ideas, but we don't have to be our ideas. We have feelings, but we don't have to be our feelings. We have possessions, but we don't have to be our possessions.

The challenge is to notice our attachments and let them go. Simply reminding ourselves with short phrases is a powerful tool. For example:

"I have a Cadillac,
but I am not my Cadillac."

"I am married,
but I am not my marriage."

"I have a job,
but I am not my job."

"I am angry,
but I am not my anger."

Thinking this way breaks up the narrow equations, such as "I = my job" that limit our identity. Getting past such ideas can help us to be happier.

In the space below, create at least three phrases for detaching:

I have a _____,
but I am not my _____.

I am _____,
but I am not my _____.

I have a _____
but I am not my _____

I am _____,
but I am not my _____.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Unconditional happiness

After reading about managing your identity, play with the ideas this general strategy presents. Complete each of the sentences below at least 10 times.

I used to believe that my happiness depended on . . .

I now realize that happiness is simply a choice, and I intend to be happy regardless of . . .

TOTAL INVOLVEMENT

Some people spend vast stretches of time in activities they consider boring: their jobs, their hobbies, their relationships. They find themselves going through the motions, doing the same walk-on part day after day without passion or intensity. Writer Henry David Thoreau described their existence as "lives of quiet desperation."

This way of life can become so habitual that people get resigned. They expect the majority of their days to be as dull and dry as cracked cement. An occasional glimmer of excitement or joy becomes the exception that merely proves the rule.

The suggestion to play full out holds another possibility: We can spend much of our time fully focused and involved. We can experience enthusiasm and efficiency as natural parts of our daily routines. Energy and vitality can accompany most of our activities. Helen Keller expressed it this way: "Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing."

When we play full out, we do justice to our potentials. We love what we do, and we do what we love. We're awake, alert, and engaged. Instead of letting projects slide, we handle tasks immediately. If for some reason we're unable to get a job done promptly, we make a specific plan to handle it in the near future. Playing full out means living our lives as if our lives depended on it.

The problem is how to bridge the gap between desperation and adventure. When we're feeling as limp as a wet noodle, we can use the following suggestions to play full out.

Pursue excellence

Playing full out offers us the possibility of raising our expectations and pursuing excellence. Playing full out means challenging our expectations about how well we do almost anything.

When we dwell on the same task for weeks, months, or years, it's easy to accept slow declines in quality. People who've been trying for years to quit biting their fingernails have often settled for a mediocre level of achievement, one that has left the job unfinished. The same is true for people who leave a house uncleaned, a debt unpaid, an academic degree unfinished, a paper unwritten, or a book unread. When we practice playing full out, we seldom settle for results like these.

If we do lapse into mediocrity, it's counterproductive to feel bad about our performance. Instead, we can return to playing full out. We can leave ourselves no alternative other than stopping the habit, finishing the project, or solving the problem. Committed to a clear result, we draw on whatever resources are needed: getting professional help, reading self-help books, asking others how they conquered a habit, finding new strategies, or applying old strategies in new ways. In short, we can approach any problem with an attitude that no stone will remain unturned until the desired result is achieved.

When we use this strategy, we might discover that it's time to raise our standards. We could start pursuing excellence at a level we have yet to discover. Playing full out in one project could raise our performance in others. For example, deciding to read with greater comprehension could improve our writing as well, and writing better could raise the quality of our thinking, which leads to more articulate speaking. Such actions can usher in a change that ripples throughout our lives, helping small successes swell into monumental results.

PARTICIPATE

Make it urgent

We can bring a sense of urgency to whatever task is at hand. We can choose to view any activity as important, seeing if this mental shift helps us have more fun and become more fully involved. We can take notes at a meeting as if the fate of the company hinged on our records. (It is possible.) We can drive to work as if our lives were at stake. (They often are.) We can listen carefully when our children speak, believing that the quality of our attention in that moment makes a real difference in their lives. (It usually does.)

Once this mindset becomes a habit, tasks we once labeled as routine can take on a new luster. If we do this often enough, we begin to replace our old habit of resignation with a new one: playing full out. Rather than passively waiting for something exciting to happen to us, we can generate our own excitement and take it with us.

Take risks

When people want to make as few mistakes as possible, they often sit out the game. Instead of playing full out when risks are involved, they choose not to play at all.

Playing full out calls for challenging ourselves. Once in a while we can take on a project that we don't know how to accomplish. In the process we can gain new skills and a new sense of our abilities. Management consultant, Tom Peters, says that when he wants to learn about a new subject, he accepts an engagement to speak about it to a large audience. He stakes his reputation on the ability to master new ideas under pressure.

While playing full out, we sometimes bump into our limits. We make mistakes, miss a deadline, forget an appointment, or just plain blow it. Actually, such events can be causes for celebration. (If you think this sounds stupid, see "Appreciate mistakes" on page 159.) Once we find our current limitations, we can choose to accept them for now. Then we can plan how to move beyond them. Resisting our mistakes, being resigned to making errors, or resenting our failures just puts a lid on our potentials. Surpassing current limitations is one of the most enlivening experiences available to us.

Keep it in perspective

Playing full out and having fun are mutually supportive. Playing full out does not mean tackling every project with teeth-gritting, steely-eyed determination. We can be serious about a task without being solemn. We can play full out and still enjoy ourselves. We can exert effort and be relaxed at the same time. Gandhi often worked 10 hours or more a day. When asked when he was going to take a vacation, he said, "I'm always on vacation."

Remember, too, that playing full out does not mean being foolish or reckless. It is not a suggestion that you purchase more life insurance and take up bungee jumping. Sometimes playing full out includes taking more precautions, saving a task for a later time, or not doing the task at all. Like all strategies in this book, playing full out is not a panacea or a one-stop solution. It is intended to help us see the value of our lives and make choices consistent with that value.

Work smarter, not harder

Playing full out does not necessarily mean working harder or longer. We might be brainwashed by our culture to believe that the longer and harder we work, the more worthwhile we are. This idea ignores the difference between efficiency and effectiveness.

As the old saying goes, "Efficiency means doing things right; effectiveness means doing the right things right." The executive who spends 65 hours a week at the office and does the work of three people is probably being efficient. But if she skips meals, avoids exercise, and forgets to take vacations, she can end up burned-out in a year. By pacing herself, delegating tasks, and focusing on the projects that are most crucial, she could contribute mightily to the company and still keep her sanity.

Hard work is no substitute for brains. Working smarter might be more economically advantageous than working longer and harder. If you want to play full out, consider some of the time management strategies suggested later in this book. Perhaps you can maintain your current level of productivity while working fewer hours and freeing up precious time to pursue other passions.

Choose how hard to play

The point here is not to strive for perfection with every single activity. That could expand a two-minute task into two hours.

For example, we could choose to play full out when washing windows. We could invest hours in this task, approaching it with the passion of Leonardo da Vinci painting the Sistine Chapel. We could insist on using only the highest quality cloth and window spray. We could scour the local library for titles such as "Legendary Window Washers of the Renaissance", "I Can See Clearly Now", and "Windows that Changed the World". We could wash all the windows in our homes as often as we brush our teeth. We might devote as much time to washing the basement windows every day as we do to polishing the best silver for dinner guests once a year.

Instead, we can choose the level of excellence or the length of time we wish to allocate for a certain activity. Then we can play full out at that level of excellence or for that amount of time. We don't have to spend eight hours each day washing the basement windows, but we can see how clean we can get them in the 15 minutes we devote to the job during spring cleaning.

Even when using a lower standard of excellence, we can still be fully engaged. We can wash those basement windows with vigor and enthusiasm. Choosing a different standard does not mean enjoying it less or diluting our energy.

EXERCISE

Examine the costs and benefits of taking a risk

Think of something you've been tempted to do but have chosen not to because you fear looking foolish, such as going to a dance, giving a presentation, trying a new sport or game, buying a new outfit, asking someone for a date, or volunteering for a project.

In the space below, list both the benefits and the costs of choosing not to take this action. For example, the benefits of avoiding the dance might include not feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed. The costs might include not meeting new people and being bored at home.

The action I have chosen not to take is . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

The benefits of choosing not to take this action include...

_____

_____

_____

_____

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Practice playing full out

Think of a task you do every day that you think is a bit boring. Examples are doing the dishes, reading textbooks, vacuuming floors, or sorting mail.

The next time you do this activity, pretend that every detail is crucial and you must act with great precision and care. Even if you're feeling bored, move into the task with enthusiasm and animation. Put yourself in the shoes of someone who is truly passionate about this task. Really play the part. Pretend a $10,000 cash prize will be awarded for an excellent performance. Aim, in short, to play full out as you do this activity.

Describe specifically what you will do.

I intend to . . .

After doing this activity, describe what was particularly effective in helping you play full out, even if you didn't feel like it. Also describe your feelings about the task after fully devoting yourself to it.

I discovered that I . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Choose a bigger game: Intention Statement

As you completed the previous Discovery/Intention Statement, you practiced playing full out on an everyday activity. Now expand your horizons. Look for ways to participate in your family, neighborhood, community, city, country, or planet. Consider what you could contribute to solving a national problem or a world crisis—hunger, international relations, or depletion of the ozone layer. For a moment, enlarge your sphere of concern, moving from the hassles of your daily life to the problems of the planet.

There's no need to delay playing full out. The opportunities are exciting, valuable, and abundant. Describe specifically what bigger game you will choose.

I intend to . . .

POWER PROCESS #15

Choose your conversations

In this chapter you'll find...

Manage conversations.
Conversations are powerful forces in our lives and we can choose conversations that support our values.

Choose your next conversation-exercise.
Use this list of questions to initiate more empowering conversations.

Make a new choice: Intention Statement.
Choose one person you talk to frequently and consider the strengths of this person as a teacher.

Choose your teachers.
Anyone we're around can become our teacher. It pays to choose companions with care.

Use nature as a teacher-exercise.
Carefully observe some event that occurs in nature and write about what you learned from it.

Be your own mentor-exercise.
Learn by coaching yourself as you solve a problem from your past.

Stay aware of conversations: Discovery Statement.
Write about how "manage conversations" can apply to your experience.

MANAGE CONVERSATIONS

Right now, each of us is awash in a sea of conversations. Our day might start with a conversation with our spouse or children about the fact that it's time to get up. Then we have conversations with coworkers, friends, neighbors, and relatives. There are also conversations with store clerks, bank tellers, teachers, supervisors, and many others.

Now, expand your definition of the word *conversation*. The meaning of the word does not need to be restricted only to listening and talking to other people. It can just as well apply to the way we interact with books, magazines, movies, television programs, advertisements, and radio programs—any source of ideas or information.

After all, reading a book is a little like having a conversation. The author is putting across her point of view, even though the words are written, not spoken. And as we read, we have reactions to her point of view. "What a genius," we might think as we come across a glittering passage of prose. "This person is brilliant. She believes just like I do." We might even be so moved that we write to the author to initiate a more direct conversation.

Magazines provide another example. They are invitations to a bunch of conversations. The ads start conversations about how we can spend our hard-earned money. Articles beg for our attention. Editorials start conversations that aim to mold our opinions. And, in some publications, we run across "the personals," ads from people who want to start a more intimate conversation.

We can even expand the definition of *conversations* to include what we think, including the conversations that take place inside our own heads and the constant stream of images and words that flow through our minds. Even though these conversations don't directly involve other people, they can be just as powerful as any other conversation.

Conversations can cross the boundaries of time and space, life and death, reality and illusion. There's a novel about a man who keeps writing letters he never intends to send, letters to famous people both dead and alive. Even though these communications never fall into another person's hands, the writer learns a lot by putting his thoughts and feelings on paper.

Likewise, we can watch films made by directors who are no longer alive. We can read books written centuries ago. We can listen to the lyrics of singers who have long since died. In some cases, the effect on us can be just as powerful as talking to these people face to face.

Conversations are happening all around us and inside us just about every moment we're awake (and, of course, dreams can be considered yet another form of conversation). The first point of this strategy is that we human beings, always and everywhere, are participating in some form of conversation.

Remember that conversations have power

Second point: Some conversations serve us well, and others don't. Perhaps you've had some of the latter while standing around the water cooler at work.

"Sure looks like rain today," your coworker says.

"Yup," you say, rolling your eyes. All this guy ever talks about is the weather—and even then, only bad weather.

A few tense seconds of silence ensue. Then your co-worker throws out another conversational invitation.

"I hate rain," he says. "Rain makes me depressed. Always rains this time of year. I'm always depressed this time of year."

Yeah, right, you think to yourself. *And we always have this conversation this time of year. It's pretty tough when you let the weather take charge of your feelings. Gee, I'd sure give anything not to have to get involved in this conversation for once. . . .*

Think about how you feel after listening to a gripe session like this. Or recall how it feels to eat lunch with a bunch of depressed people who complain all the time about how helpless they are. Afterward, you probably won't feel empowered or enlivened, ready to sprint back to your desk to do your most dazzling work. You might even feel more like settling into a blue funk, attacking a punching bag, or taking a nap.

Now, think about other conversations you've had and then walked away feeling energized, optimistic, and fueled for effective action. Compare those conversations to the blues-at-the water-cooler conversation. There's a significant difference.

The same principle applies to the movies and television programs we and our children consume. Some of them ignite powerful conversations. Others leave us feeling dulled by irrevelance and boredom or dazed by violence. When we find these conversations insulting or offensive, we have a right to speak our minds to those who are responsible.

Conversations have power. That's an amazing thing to consider, given that most people let themselves drift haphazardly from one conversation to another as if none of them matter.

Remember that we can choose our conversations

Now, for the third major point in this conversation about conversations. Instead of falling into conversations by accident, we can choose them. Knowing that different ways of talking, listening, and thinking lead to different results in our lives, we can start taking charge.

This process is especially powerful when we choose conversations that steer us toward our goals and values. If we want to lose weight, we can start conversations with people who share our goals. We might agree to support each other as we take specific steps to shed pounds. We can call each other at times during the day when we're tempted to snack. We can also report about which low-fat, low-calorie foods actually taste decent.

If we want to begin exercising regularly, we can start talking with people who have the same objective. Better yet, we can meet three times a week to talk while jogging together. It sure beats standing around the water cooler, complaining about the weather.

Sometimes taking charge of conversations calls for diplomacy. If conversations that we are having take particularly negative directions, we can switch the topic. If that doesn't work, we can ask directly to talk about something else. And if that still doesn't work, we can leave the conversations. Even if it is awkward to leave, it might be worth doing so in order to get out of a useless or destructive conversation.

Caution: Not all worthwhile conversations have to be lofty. Sometimes, chatting about the weather or making some other form of small talk puts people at ease. It breaks the ice. It starts conversations that can then move into other areas.

In any case, we can make a real contribution to ourselves and to the people in our lives by raising the quality of our choices about conversations.

EXERCISE

Choose your next conversation

If you're unsure where to begin in creating new conversations in your life, consider the following list of questions as starters of more empowering conversations:

- *What are the three most important things you've learned about how to get along with people?*
- *What are the three most important things you want your children to learn?*
- *If you could read only 10 books during the rest of your life, what would they be?*
- *Who was your favorite teacher in school, and what was the most important thing you learned from that person?*
- *If you had only six months to live and could do so with your health and financial security intact, what would you do?*
- *What do you want your obituary to say about you?*
- *Imagine that you could take a year off from your job to do anything you please and still get paid. What would you do?*
- *What is the single most important thing you could do to eliminate world hunger? Or lower the crime rate? Or ease the threat of war? Or improve our schools?*
- *Imagine that someone is willing to pay you $1000 to free up eight hours a week. The only condition is this: You have to do so without skipping meals, losing sleep, taking time away from your family and friends, or missing work. Could you find the extra time? How?*
- *Imagine that your salary is cut by 10 percent, and you have to get by on that much less money. How could you do so without sacrificing your overall quality of life? What expenses could you eliminate without eliminating satisfaction?*

Now imagine that you have to get by on 25 percent less under the same conditions. Now 50 percent less.

Another strategy for shifting conversations is asking people to complete the following sentences. Use them as a springboard to new conversations.

A place I would like to go back to visit is . . .

The thing I like most about my job is . . .

My most valued possession is . . .

One of my secret ambitions is to . . .

My greatest strength is . . .

One thing in my life I want to change is . . .

CHOOSE YOUR TEACHERS

If we want to live effectively, it pays to carefully select our teachers. To understand this strategy, consider the full meaning of the word *teacher*. Teachers, in the traditional sense of that word, are the people who lead classes in schools at every level of the education system.

The quality of the teachers we learn from can have a profound effect on the quality of our education. Yet many people fall asleep to this fact. Often, when students have choices, they don't go to the trouble of finding out about their teachers. They don't select teachers who would be effective role models. Parents seldom check into the quality of the teachers to whom they entrust their children every day. Frequently, and unfortunately, neither parents nor students take full advantage of the choices that schools offer.

The term *teachers* can have a much broader meaning too. In fact, it can refer to *anyone* we're around. In this sense, anyone we spend time with can be a teacher—that is, be a model of what to say and do, a model of how to be.

Here we also have choices. We can choose who to be around. We can choose our models. Yet many people don't make this choice. In other words, they don't consciously choose the people they are going to hang around with every day, and they don't realize the impact others have on them.

The point is, it pays to carefully choose those we spend time with. These people are teaching us even when we're unaware of that fact. Over time, most of us become more and more like the folks we spend time with. We are dramatically influenced by the people we hang out with and the messages we hear. We can begin to talk like they do, act like they do, perhaps even look like they do. The implication is clear: Spending as much time as possible with people who model our values will have a significant impact on the quality of our lives.

Remember that there's always room to choose

We choose those we hang around with every day. Some people object: "No, I can't choose," they say. "I'm stuck with the people in my life. After all, they're my relatives." Well, we can choose how much time to hang around our relatives. We can choose our friends and co–workers. "No," some people say again, "that's the only job in town." Well, there are other towns. "But it's too hard to move to another town," goes the reply. Yes, it can be hard *and* we can still do it. We can still choose our models and teachers.

There's one more objection: "But what about my parents and children?" Yes, here our choices have some limits. Even so, we can maximize the benefits and minimize the costs when we are with them. For example, we can:

- Limit the amount of time we spend with them.
- Benefit from the experience of being around negative examples—models of what we do *not* want to be.
- Stack the deck by ensuring that certain other people (friends as well as family) will be present when we are with them.
- Set clear boundaries for ourselves and enforce them ("Mom and Dad do not buy candy for the kids until after lunch").
- If they have a problem with alcohol or drugs, we can visit them only when they are sober.

Remember that some teachers aren't human

There are other teachers, too. Television is a teacher. The songs we listen to and sing are powerful teachers. They are like advertisements for certain ideas and actions. So are the books we read.

The point is to choose our models consciously. When we leave this to chance, we get mixed results. On the other hand, when we clearly and deliberately choose our models, we can change our lives.

Learn about your teachers

If we are going to school or taking community education courses, we can investigate teachers before enrolling in a course. When choosing auto mechanics, we can choose those who know what they're talking about *and* who will help us understand our cars.

We can also look for opportunities to select teachers in the course of our daily routines—times when we would not normally look for them. This is consistent with the attitude that we are always learning and all of life is a teacher.

One of the easiest and most effective ways to learn to do something well is to go out and find someone who already does it well, observe them carefully, talk with them if possible, and then do what they do. When appropriate, we can even adopt their attitudes about what they are doing. For example, if we're struggling with time management, we can find someone who seems to get a lot done without feeling stressed, and then model what they do and how easily they do it. Even if we don't do it exactly the way they do, we might adopt some variations that work for us.

Be your own teacher

We can learn to trust ourselves. We may be our own best teachers. Handing choices that affect our well-being over to the "experts" is risky. On the other hand, never listening to what others have to say eliminates whatever advantage we gain by learning from them. Before making choices, we can weigh all the options carefully and get as much reliable information as we can. Then it's time to choose. After listening to our own wisdom and to the wisdom of others, we can choose, play full out, and have a ball.

Look for teachers everywhere

Our next teacher might appear when we're observing a construction site and see a skilled supervisor at work. He might appear while we're noticing advertisements in magazines or on television. Or she might be the next person who greets us on the street. We can consider the lessons these teachers are giving us, remembering that the most powerful teachers can come to us any time, any place.

EXERCISE

Use nature as a teacher

Nature can be a valuable teacher. Verify this for yourself. Carefully observe some event that occurs in nature and write about what you can learn from it. Example: A gloomy thunderstorm can seem threatening, yet the rain supports the blossoming of beautiful flowers and life. A possible lesson from this event is that almost any experience, no matter what its drawbacks are and no matter how frightening it is, can offer benefits.

Choose one event in nature to observe during the next 24 hours. Describe what you see and then reflect on its lesson. Include your description and reflection.

The event I observed was . . .

_____

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_____

What I learned is . . .

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EXERCISE

Be your own mentor

This exercise is based on the idea that we change as we age. We mature, we learn, we grow, we improve, and we gain experience.

Keeping this in mind, choose a time in your life when you were faced with a problem. You might choose a time when you were very young and afraid, or when you were struggling with a choice that was a major turning point in your life.

Pretend that you can return to that time, and describe it in detail. How old were you? Who else was involved? Where did this event occur? What sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or physical sensations do you remember?

In your imagination, be who you are now, with all your hard-earned wisdom and experience, and speak to the person you were back then. Pay attention to your younger self. What advice, insights, or understandings can you share with your younger self? What can you teach yourself? How can you help your younger self have a different experience? Can you listen to your younger self in a way that nobody was able to at the time? What have you learned that will help your younger self get through this experience in a way that has a more favorable outcome?

We can befriend our younger selves and, in our imaginations, change our histories.

After reliving a previous experience with your current self as a very important new character, describe your experience. Include writing what you said to your younger self.

Stay aware of conversations

Using the word conversations in the broad sense, describe two conversations you've had that were empowering and two that were not. Then write both a Discovery and an Intention Statement about how "manage conversations" can apply to your experience.

Describe two empowering conversations here:

Describe two disempowering conversations here:

I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Make a new choice

Choose one person you talk with frequently and consider the strengths of this person as a teacher. Decide whether you'd like to spend more (or less) time with this person. Then describe what you could do to act on your choice.

POWER PROCESS #16

Revise your habits

In this chapter you'll find...

Maybe it's just a habit.
The things we don't like about ourselves could be habits—beliefs and behaviors that we can change like any other habit.

Three steps to changing a habit.
Commit to change, set up a feedback system, and practice, practice, practice . . without reproach.

Changing habits—a few more steps.
Some people might think that the three-step process for changing a habit is too simple. Those people can add seven more steps for good measure.

Change the habit–exercise.
Write a detailed plan for changing one of your habits.

Use community to back up commitments.
No matter which process we use to change habits, we can benefit from involving other people in our strategies.

Thank your habits.
We can appreciate our old habits, even as we wave goodbye to them.

See the broad influence of habits-exercise.
Once you've firmly established a new behavior, look to see what changes it brings to other parts of your life.

Give the "bad"behavior a voice: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Get in touch with the part of you that wants to continue an old habit. Let it speak before you change the behavior for good.

Go for substitution, not retribution: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Often it's easier to replace an old behavior with a new one than to stop the old one.

MAYBE IT'S JUST A HABIT

Imagine for a moment that all the things you don't like about yourself are just habits. Pretend that they're simply persistent patterns of attention or action—scenes that you repeat as automatically as television advertisements for the latest soft drink.

This idea has broad implications. Our deepest emotional problems, our basic personality traits, and even those characteristics that we are tempted to label "genetic defects" might all just be habits. A fit of depression that we could blame on a childhood event—perhaps it's just a habit. That roll of fat we blame on our lack of willpower—maybe that's just a habit. And that fit of rage we blamed on our hormones—maybe that's just a habit also. Stress, fear, rage, large debts, money shortages, and a long list of other problems might be habits too—nothing less, nothing more.

Likewise, happiness, health, loving relationships, and wealth might be habits. The same could be true for the personal qualities we admire so much—playfulness, forgiveness, attentive listening, and a host of others.

Perhaps any aspect of our lives that we like or dislike is merely the reflection of a whole group of simple choices—all habits. For example, the state of being depressed involves a bunch of minute behaviors. People who appear depressed might slump their shoulders, mumble, show disinterest in everything, avoid eye contact, and move slowly and without purpose as they walk. What's more, these people might hold fast to disempowering beliefs, such as "I'm the only person who feels this way", or "Things like this always happen to me." Perhaps they spend hours mentally reliving a painful incident or plotting revenge on someone they resent. Faced with a problem, they often try to solve it in a characteristic way—one that usually fails. Or they might just cultivate the habit of resignation. All these beliefs and behaviors might just be habits.

Optimistic and effective people display a constellation of habits too. Often they stand erect, make eye contact, use animated gestures, and laugh. And chances are, they have a whole different set of beliefs than people who often feel depressed do.

If all this is true, then solving problems and getting what we want from life might be as simple as learning to fasten our seat belts or substituting water for coffee. Perhaps there's no need to rummage around in the distant past and blame those people and events who "made" us the way we are. Taking charge of our lives might be as simple as taking charge of our habits—making simple, small changes in our behavior and our beliefs. That makes the task of creating more happiness, health, love, and wealth a manageable job, one that we can begin today.

THREE STEPS TO CHANGING A HABIT

There are many possible approaches to changing a habit. The three-step strategy that follows has the advantage of being simple—and powerful.

1. Commit to change

Publically declare your intention to adopt a new behavior. Tell all the key people in your life about the change you plan to make. Put that change in writing. Make a formal contract with yourself. Then pledge to keep this promise with the same commitment that you would promise to repay a debt or tell the truth in court.

This first step is uncomfortable for many people. They argue that they have already tried to change the habit, and they fear that promising is a setup for failure. Unfortunately, until they make the promise, the next two steps are unlikely to have much effect. And, by making a committed promise, the next two steps will help ensure that the promise is kept.

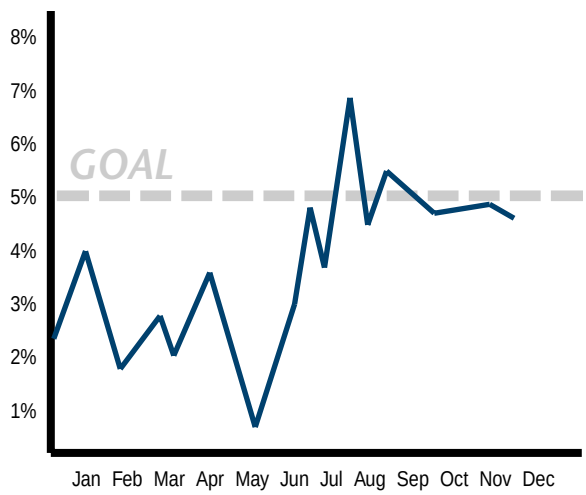
2. Set up a feedback system

Find a way to tell yourself how well you're keeping your commitment. For example, you could create a chart with spaces for each day of the week, then note how many times during the week you practiced the new habit. You could make a similar notation in your calendar. Or, get someone else to monitor your behavior and keep track of the results. If you want to change your posture, ask people to tell you whenever they see you slouching in a chair or walking with hunched shoulders.

You could give your feedback system more teeth by building in rewards and/or penalties. Whenever you exercise three times during the week, you could schedule a massage on Sunday. Or you could promise to pay someone you don't like $100 if you go for a day without fastening your seat belt.

Another way to give yourself feedback is to create pictures—charts, diagrams, and other visual aids—that display the occurrence of a behavior over time. One common format is to draw a graph that represents time on the X-axis and events or actions on the Y-axis.

Say that you want to acquire a new habit of saving five percent of your take-home pay each month. Using a graph, you could visually display your progress in acquiring this habit.



Such visuals work well for behaviors that can be counted. Other kinds of goals cannot be so easily quantified (being more patient, displaying more affection, smiling more often, being more playful). When we keep looking, we can find other ways to set up a feedback system for such goals. For example, a consultant who does most of her work over the phone could tape record her business conversations. A teacher or trainer could videotape his presentations. And we can ask key people in our lives to observe us closely and share their observations, verbally or in writing.

You can also use a journal as a mirror of yourself to discover how well you're doing in changing a habit. Simple lists in your journal can work wonders. If you want to drop the habit of complaining, just list the number of complaints you utter each day. To stop biting your nails, make a tick mark in your journal each time you put your fingers to your mouth. If you want to become more skilled at making promises, then log each promise in your daily journal and then once each day or week, review the list to see how well you're keeping these promises. Along with this, you can give yourself a daily "grade" on your overall progress in changing the habit.

You could also record your progress on a wall calendar. If it helps, buy a big calendar with beautiful photographs or illustrations and hang it in a prominent place.

3. Practice, practice, practice . . . without reproach

Be gentle with yourself. Habits often take years to develop, and they might not change overnight. It could take lots of practice. And remember that you can make mistakes without giving up on your commitment to change.

Kicking ourselves when we fail to keep our commitments consumes a lot of time and energy:

> "As usual, I forgot to exercise today."
>
> "I lost my temper with the kids again, after I promised I wouldn't. No wonder they don't trust me."
>
> "I had a third cup of coffee today. I can never trust myself when it comes to changing a habit."

That's energy we could channel into adopting a new habit instead. When our behavior falls short of our intentions, we can simply note the fact without shame or blame. Then we can get back to practicing the new behavior.

This business of reproach can get kind of tricky. When we notice ourselves falling into self-reproach, we might slip into reproaching our reproach: "Not only did I bite my nails 20 times today—I got really angry about it. I'm so disappointed in myself when I can't accept my humanity." Comments like these just add another layer of reproach to the problem and impede our efforts to change. Self-reproach at any level is simply another habit that we can choose to change.

CHANGING HABITS—A FEW MORE STEPS

Some people might think that the three-step process for changing a habit is too simple and might not work. Those people can use this more elaborate and complex 10-step procedure:

1) Tell the truth

Our habit of shaming ourselves when we make mistakes tempts us to keep those mistakes hidden. The trouble is that mistakes that are in hiding can seldom be corrected. If we want to fix problems, we can start by seeing them for what they are.

For instance, if we value fitness, but exercise only once a month, we can tell the truth about it. Or, if we value keeping a journal, but seldom find the time to write, we can tell the truth about this too. The more thoroughly we tell the truth about any habit, the greater the chance we'll be able to change it.

2) Define a goal

To define an effective goal, take the fuzz out. For example, when planning a trip, we can choose where we want to arrive, when we intend to get there, and with whom we want to travel. Or, instead of stating, "I want to get better at time management," we can say, "Starting next week, I will free up one hour each day for reading."

As a tool for achieving precision, put the goal in writing. Writing is an effective way to capture a thought accurately, specifically, and completely.

3) Commit to the goal

The strength of our commitment often determines the level of success we have in reaching our goals. To strengthen our commitments, we can write down a list of benefits that result from reaching our goal. Consider physical, social, spiritual, and economic benefits. We can list the amount of extra time we'll have, the extra money we'll make, the extra boost of energy we'll experience, or the added meaning and satisfaction that reaching the goal can add to our lives. Frequent reminders of these benefits can go a long way in keeping our commitment levels high.

4) Plan a strategy

To create an effective strategy for reaching our goals, we can begin by generating a list of things we need to do to reach them. Then we can add a due date for taking each action. In short, we can climb the path to our goals by taking "baby steps"—actions that are simple, small, and concrete. We can choose behaviors that we can implement immediately.

This idea works for changing just about any habit. Say that a goal is to tell our children at least once a day that we love them. The strategy could include listing specific times, places, and ways we could do this. We could even mentally rehearse what we'll say.

Remember that finding teachers, coaches, classes, books, and trainings can also be useful in planning a strategy to change habits. Strategies used by other people might also work well for us.

5) Implement your plan

Now that we know what we want and how to achieve it, we can begin to carry out our plans. We can actually do it!

For ideal results, our plans can hinge on actions *we* control. If reaching our goals depends on the actions of other people, we might set ourselves up for failure.

Say that you decide to acquire the habit of regular exercise. As part of your plan, you adopt the "buddy system" and enlist someone to exercise with you three mornings each week. In addition, you devise a "Plan B." In this plan, if your partner cancels a session, you have in mind several other people you can call at a moment's notice. That way, you don't have to abandon *your* commitment to exercise if your partner backs out. When you're armed with an alternate course of action, you can stay on track for changing the habit.

6) Monitor results

The essence of this step is stepping back and looking at the process as a whole. The questions we want to answer here are: "Do our actions align with our stated intentions?" and "Is our behavior consistent with our plans?" To answer these questions, devise a system for getting feedback. There are many options: Every time we practice the new behavior, we can note that fact on our calendars. Or, we can create a wall chart for this purpose. If our strategy involves other people, we can ask them for feedback about how we're doing in carrying out our plan.

At specific intervals—daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly—we can make some observations about our progress in changing the habits. We might write these observations down in a journal devoted to this purpose.

7) Design and implement appropriate changes in our plans

This is the "back to the drawing board" step. Given the feedback we get in step #6, we might find that adjustments in our plan are needed. Sometimes we carry out a plan faithfully, give it adequate time to work, and still find that we're missing the mark. That's when it's time to try something different.

On the other hand, if we *are* getting the results we want, we have at least two choices. We can change nothing and keep the plan intact, or we can look for ways to make the plan even more effective.

8) Monitor the results

This step involves monitoring the results we are getting from the newly revised changes in the same way we monitored the results in step #6.

9) Repeat steps #7, #8, and #9 until you achieve the goal

Changing habits sometimes requires persistence. A true commitment to change requires continual reflection, revision, and implementation. Once we achieve our goal, we can move on to step #10.

10) Celebrate and begin again

Succeeding at changing a habit is a wonderful accomplishment, and you can be proud of it. Take some time to celebrate.

Life seems to be a never-ending exercise in learning, changing, growing, and improving. Mastering one habit can raise our energy level for adopting other effective behaviors. Each of our accomplishments is a stepping stone that leads to the next adventure.

EXERCISE

Change the habit

Choose a habit you want to change. Using the three-step process, write a detailed plan describing how you will change it.

Now, referring to the same habit, write a detailed plan describing how you will change it using the ten-step process.

USE COMMUNITY TO BACK UP COMMITMENTS

No matter which strategies we use to change habits, we can benefit from involving other people.

Most of us have had the experience of being very committed to changing a habit, planning how we would do this, giving it our best shot, and having the whole effort fizzle out long before we have achieved much.

When this happens, people usually resort to a tempting explanation: "I just don't have any willpower."

Well, willpower might not be the answer. Perhaps there are more powerful conversations to have when we fail at changing a habit or carrying out a plan.

One way is to replace willpower with community. It's usually easier to follow a plan and change a habit when we are in the company of like-minded people who have the same plan. If we want to stop smoking, lose weight, quit drinking, exercise regularly, or change almost any other habit, doing it alone is the hard way. Harnessing the support of others is often easier and increases the odds of success. Willpower can be enhanced by community.

The next time you choose to change a habit, you can find several other people to support your efforts. You could ask those individuals to call you once a week to see if you're carrying out your plan. Or you might meet with these people several times each week to practice the new habit together.

Group support can take us further down the road toward achieving our goals than all the teeth-gritting determination and "I'll never turn back" willpower we can muster. Besides, it's usually a lot more fun.

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

(Please send more examples of others who you can get to help you keep your commitments.)

THANK YOUR HABITS

Another strategy that can assist us in changing habits is to thank our old habits before bidding them goodbye. A behavior we want to change, anything from biting fingernails to mainlining heroin, must have some payoff for us or we'd have given up the behavior long ago.

Acknowledging the payoffs of any "bad" behavior does not mean that we need to continue to indulge in the behavior. It's just that we gain nothing by dividing our personalities into "good self" and "bad self." This just perpetuates a kind of internal war that robs us of energy that we could otherwise put to use in helping us change.

To avoid this trap, we can first promise to stop using the "bad" behavior as the powerful resource it has been. This opens the space for a behavior that serves us better. We can then create or discover a new behavior that has similar payoffs—without the cost.

Distinguishing between the behavior and the *intention* of the behavior can help clarify the benefits of the habit. Even when it is difficult and challenging to thank the "bad" behavior, the intention behind it is usually positive. For example, doing drugs might help us see the world in new ways, smoking cigarettes can deliver a sense of ease and comfort, and pumping ourselves full of caffeine might boost our productivity for a while. There's nothing inherently wrong with wanting to feel pleasant sensations or to get more things done. These could be the worthwhile intentions behind "bad" habits.

> ***Curious things, habits. People themselves never knew they had them.***
>
> –Agatha Christie

EXERCISE

See the broad influence of habits

Commit to change one small habit. Once you've firmly established the new habit, look to see what change it brings to other parts of your life. For example, organizing one cupboard in your kitchen might lead you to reorganize your financial records. Writing neatly in your checkbook could improve your handwriting as a whole. And, changing how you greet people at work might change how you interact with anyone you meet for the first time.

In the space to the right, describe a habit you changed and any effects it had on other aspects of your life.

Give the "bad" behavior a voice

Pick a behavior that you don't like, one that you would like to change. Describe that behavior here.

Now give the part of you that wants to continue this behavior a voice. Let it speak. Converse with it. Have a dialogue (written or spoken) with that part of yourself. Ask that part of you what it is trying to accomplish, what benefit it is seeking to deliver.

Once you have had the dialogue, write a description of the payoffs.

I discovered that the benefits of this habit include . . .

Once you have determined the payoffs for this behavior, look for other behaviors that can offer the same or similar benefits. For example, the person who wants to experience altered states of consciousness can learn to meditate instead of taking LSD. Or the person who uses alcohol to relax can ask a friend for a massage instead.

Finish this Journal Entry by describing in detail the new behavior you want to practice and how it will continue to provide you with benefits similar to those of the old habit.

I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Go for substitution, not retribution

Goals that are stated in a positive way are more likely to be achieved. When people say, "I want to quit eating chocolate," they're stating a negative goal. They might also be setting themselves up for failure or reinforcing a sense of deprivation: "I'll really miss the taste of chocolate." Often it's easier and more effective in the long run to substitute a new behavior for the behavior we want to stop. In this case, for example, we could say, "I will keep a supply of flavored yogurt on hand and start eating one whenever I desire chocolate."

This is especially useful when it comes to changing habits. Instead of saying, "I want to stop smoking," we could say, "I will enjoy cleaner teeth, fresher breath, and all the money I'll save, and especially the improved health I will experience by living a smoke-free life." Or instead of saying, "I want to stop being such a couch potato," say, "I will get outside over the noon hour and walk briskly for 15 minutes." Substitute biting into a carrot for biting into a brownie. Reach for a book instead of reaching for the remote control for the television.

In short, if we want to shed an old behavior, it is useful to replace it with a new one. Starting a new behavior can make it easier to stop an old one.

Right now, pick one behavior you would like to change. Describe it here, along with the times and places you typically engage in the activity:

The behavior I would like to change is . . .

The times and places I usually engage in this activity are . . .

Now describe a new behavior you can substitute for the behavior you just listed. Be sure to choose an activity you can perform at the same time and in the same place as the behavior you want to stop.

I intend to . . .

POWER PROCESS #17

Appreciate mistakes

In this chapter you'll find:

Failure is not fatal.
Our mistakes can be the most powerful teachers we have.

Use mistakes to practice
Use any of the power processes in this book to benefit from your mistakes.

Make mistakes your teacher: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Write three interpretations of a mistake you've made. Then choose the interpretation that is most empowering.

FAILURE IS NOT FATAL

Mistakes are no reason for misery. Goof-ups do not need to result in teeth-gnashing. In fact, our mistakes can be the most powerful teachers we have.

Mistakes are usually more instructive than our successes—and often far more interesting, besides. The lessons we learn from making mistakes often stick with us for a lifetime. We can translate that learning into new values and behaviors that make a profound difference.

If people truly realized the value of mistakes, the world would operate much differently. We'd realize that mistakes are as important as successes. In addition to all the rewards and celebrations for successes, our society would recognize and celebrate mistakes. Politicians would wage campaigns by claiming that they made more mistakes than their opponents. Job applicants would submit "failure résumés"—highlights of their most fascinating goof-ups and what they learned from those experiences. (They would save tales of their biggest mistakes for the job interview.) Marketing executives would brag about all the new products they pioneered—especially those that the public overwhelmingly rejected. And athletes would fondly recall the times they got trounced by opposing teams.

There's one sure way to avoid making mistakes, and that's to avoid life. The writer who never finishes a book will never have to worry about getting negative reviews. The center-fielder who sits out every game is safe from making any errors. And the comedian who never performs in front of an audience is sure to avoid telling jokes that fall flat. The possibility of succeeding at any venture increases when we're comfortable with making mistakes.

Mistakes have a way of focusing our attention and putting crucial problems right in our faces. Mistakes light a path for us. When we own up to our mistakes, we often know exactly what needs doing next.

If we constantly criticize ourselves for the mistakes we make, it is less likely that we will continue to recognize them. There are organizations where retribution for errors is so great that people cover up and deny mistakes. It is difficult to fix the mistake unless it is acknowledged.

Sometimes mistakes are a kind of blessing. Imagine, for a moment, that a part of you is in contact with the source of wisdom and compassion. (Call that source God, Higher Power, Buddha, the soul, or whatever you will.) Failure can be a message from this part of yourself, a signal that you're off track and heading in a wrong direction. When a project fails, this can be a sign that it was unwise for you to even begin the project in the first place. When your attempt to change careers fails, this can be a signal that the choice was unwise for now. Sometimes, of course, mistakes are just that—mistakes—and nothing more. At other times, though, failure is a kind of love letter from your deeper self, a request for you to change directions or make new choices.

Imagine working in a situation where it is impossible to make a mistake. That could happen only at a company where mistakes are not distinguished from successes, a company that had no standards and where no one is held accountable for errors. Projects could go perpetually unfinished and no one would say anything. Profit margins could fall through the floor and no one would flinch. We could turn in the sloppiest, crudest pieces of work we'd ever done and they would bej treated the same as our

best work. We'd never be able to count on having the supplies we need because no one would complain when vendors failed to deliver. Paychecks could be constantly issued late because people in the payroll department might call in sick every other day. The working environment that sounded like heaven ("You'll always have a job here, no matter what you do.") could turn out to be a living nightmare.

The point is simple: In an atmosphere where there's no difference between failure and success, the word *mistake* would be without meaning. Mistakes can happen only when people are truly committed to making things work.

The greater our capacity to contribute to other people and make a positive difference in the world, the greater our potential for making mistakes. The chief executive of a corporation can make a decision that costs millions in lost revenue. The president of a country can make policy blunders that double the deficit or ignite a war that leads to the deaths of thousands. During an operation, a surgeon can make an error which leads to loss of life.

Keep in mind that there's a flip side to all this. The people in the previous examples can also be a force for good. A president can articulate a vision that unifies opposing political factions, executives can lead their companies into prosperity, and surgeons can save lives. In each case, people with the power to succeed also have the ability to fail. The two are inextricably woven together.

Benefiting from mistakes is not the same as setting out to make them. Benefiting from mistakes involves wisdom. Setting out to make mistakes involves willful incompetence. Effective people don't set goals with the idea of sabotaging their efforts. Rather, they aim to reach those goals while, at the same time, accepting the potential for error.

USE MISTAKES TO PRACTICE

We can use mistakes to practice the other 20 strategies presented in this section of *Human Being*. More details follow.

Determine what you want

The word *mistake* derives meaning only by comparison to what we desire. Mistakes are possible only when we're committed to lives that are filled with happiness, health, love, wealth, and whatever else we value. Noticing and admitting our mistakes helps us get in touch with our commitments—what we really want to be, do, and have.

Tell the truth

Mistakes offer us opportunities to practice truth telling. This act generates the rewards of honesty and candor, including self-knowledge and the capacity for change.

Practice acceptance

We can accept the fact that we are human, and humans err. When it comes to making mistakes, each of us has plenty of company.

As we tell the truth about our mistakes, we can practice releasing shame and blame. Fixing the mistake and preventing it from happening again is the main agenda.

Examine moment-to-moment choices

Big mistakes often start as small errors. Over time, tiny choices that run counter to our values can accumulate into colossal breakdowns. When we look closely at the integrity of our moment-to-moment choices, we can put the skids on the whole self-defeating cycle.

Investigate your role

Sometimes our instinctive reaction to a mistake is to fix the blame elsewhere: "It's not my fault." "Somebody should have told me about this a long time ago." "The weather did not cooperate."

It's usually far more empowering to look for our role in the mistake. Taking responsibility for a goof-up may not be fun. Yet the very act of doing so points out what we can do differently next time. Investigating our role reminds us that our choices and our actions have a huge influence on the quality of our lives.

Focus your attention

Mistakes offer us a gift. They grab our attention. They point out that something needs fixing. It's as if breakdowns come wrapped in a package that says, "open me first." This urgency can yield clarity and bring problems and possible solutions into the light of our awareness.

Speak candidly

Many people find it natural to sweep mistakes under the rug, to fatten up their store of secrets. An alternative is to practice telling lots of people about our mistakes. Bringing them out into the open can help us defuse our shame and move on.

Make and keep promises

Mistakes often take the form of promises we failed to keep. At these times, we can recommit to our practice of integrity. Perhaps we gave our word to take on a project, to make a phone call, or to complete a task by the due date. Mistakes can be a signal that our words and our actions are out of alignment. In that case, we can re-examine our intentions, reconsider our commitments, and adjust our actions. Afterward, we're likely to find that our lives work better.

Surrender

Noticing our mistakes is a great path into the practice of surrender. Sometimes even our best efforts just don't cut the mustard. We might do everything possible to achieve a certain result and still face failure, time after time. At those moments we can surrender—admit that we're stuck.

There's real magic in this admission. Telling the truth about our limitations and mistakes paves the way to resolving problems. Admitting that we can't go it alone opens up a new space in our lives. People, resources, and solutions have a way of showing up, especially when we ask for help.

Keep looking for answers

Mistakes are letters from reality. When we experience the consequences of mistakes, we get a clear message about which of our efforts are working—and which are not. The feedback we get from our mistakes can be the most pointed, specific, and powerful feedback we'll ever get. There's nothing like an overdraft notice from the bank to tell us that our spending is out of control.

One way to gain maximum benefit from mistakes is to examine them through the filter of powerful questions: "How can I use this experience?" ;"What will I do differently next time?";"How will I be different in the future?" Questions like these lead to an inquiry that invites solutions.

Notice your expectations

When mistakes occur, it may be time to examine our expectations. Perhaps we set goals that were too high. Maybe we promised to get too much done in too little time. Or perhaps we lunged headlong into a project while overlooking a critical lack of resources. When this happens, we can readjust our sights, scale back our intentions, or ask for help. Doing so raises the possibility of success.

Listen Fully

When we notice mistakes, it can be one signal that we are listening fully. People who do not pay close attention to themselves, to others, or their environment, will never notice when something has gone astray. Each time we discover a mistake, it could be our signal to practice this unusual type of full attention to what is going on around us.

Enjoy

We can fully appreciate ourselves, even while acknowledging breakdowns. It is possible to laugh long, hard, loudly, and often at our mistakes and then work like mad to correct them.

Most of us have a long history of putting ourselves down when we blow it. Now is a great time to break this habit and start appreciating ourselves, mistakes and all.

We can really play this up into a big deal. Celebrate mistakes. Offer cash prizes to the employees who took on the most ambitious projects and made the biggest mistakes. Throw parties and serve cake if we flunk tests. These actions underscore the value of noticing mistakes.

Detach and play full out

When we discover that we have made many mistakes or very large mistakes, it is a great time practice remembering that we are not our behaviors. We are more than our mistakes. We can remember that our history does not have to predict our future. And then remember that we have an opportunity to play full out—to participate fully.

Many people, when faced with a big mistake, begin to pull back—to retreat. Instead, we can use the breakdown as evidence that we are growing, risking, and stretching to meet our potential. We can remember that we are not content to play it safe.

Choose your conversations

Admitting mistakes can open up whole new areas of conversation in our lives. When we're candid about the areas of our lives that don't work, others often feel greater permission to speak about their hopes and disappointments, too. We can learn from each other's struggles and successes. Disclosing our mistakes can bring us closer to the people we love.

Revise your habits

Many times we can trace mistakes to recurring patterns of belief or behavior—things we do, say, and think over and over again. When we spot and change a habit that's out of whack, we might find that many areas of our lives change for the better, all at once.

Choose courageously

Admitting and correcting mistakes is the hardest work human beings can do. It also gives us a chance to practice being courageous. This path of courage creates heroes and heroines everyday. Facing mistakes often takes us straight to the heart of our fears, forcing us to empty a few skeletons from our closets. Yet, the rewards are profound. A fear that's experienced fully and faced squarely often disappears.

Manage your associations

Look at the words that people often associate with mistakes: *failure, defeat, sadness, hopelessness*. No wonder we find it difficult to "fess up" to our errors.

All this can be changed. It's possible to associate mistakes with a long list of empowering concepts: learning new behaviors, setting goals, making improvements, confiding in others, being honest, asking for help, and many more. Mistakes offer us creative opportunities to manage our associations.

Contribute

Our mistakes give us a chance to practice contributing to others. People may be inspired when we make our struggles public. They might decide to live differently. When a lifelong smoker who's dying of emphysema talks about the value of being smoke-free, we're apt to listen. When someone who's permanently disabled from a drinking and driving accident talks about the importance of staying sober, many take notice. The same kind of contribution also occurs when we speak candidly about less serious mistakes.

Define your values, align your actions

Mistakes can lift our eyes to the horizon. They can drive us back into our commitments. Breakdowns often begin with actions that run counter to our values. We might say we value health, even as we eat high-fat, high-cholesterol foods. We might say we value integrity, even as we continue to break promises and tell little white lies to the Internal Revenue Service. This duel between words and deeds is something we can learn to notice and change. It can begin with using mistakes to practice.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Make mistakes your teacher

Recall a mistake you made—the bigger, the better. In the space below, describe specifically what you did and the consequences:

Now write several contrasting reactions to this mistake. (Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.) Write three possible interpretations of this event and then choose the most empowering one. If, for example, you ran out of gas, you could write "1) I'm stupid and forgetful; 2) If my boss would have given me a raise, I would be able to put more than a few dollars worth in at a time; 3) I could use some kind of reminder to check the amount of gas in the car so this doesn't happen again."

Write three possible interpretations below.

Now decide what you will do differently in the future to avoid making the same mistake: (In the example above, you could put "check auto gas" on your weekly shopping list.)

I intend to . . .

POWER PROCESS #18

Choose courageously

In this chapter you'll find...

Everyday heroes.
Courage is something each of us has experienced. We can search out examples in ourselves and others.

The art and science of courage.
Acts of courage take place when we feel fear and choose to take action anyway.

Celebrate your courage-exercise.
Celebrate a time when you acted courageously.

Pair feelings with new actions: Discovery/Intention Statement.
We can create new connections between feelings and what we habitually do in reaction to those feelings.

EVERYDAY HEROES

Courage is an old-fashioned word for an old-fashioned virtue. Traditionally, people have reserved that word for acts of the high and mighty—the campaigns of generals and the missions of heroes, the selfless acts of rescue workers during a disaster, and the steely will of a surgeon who undertakes a risky operation to save a life.

This concept of courage is fine, but it can be limiting and rob us of seeing courage in everyday actions. Everyday life is about ordinary people who exemplify tremendous courage in their daily adventures and struggles. Courage is the kindergartner whose heart is pounding with fear as she waves goodbye to her parents and boards the bus for her first day of school. Courage is the 40-year-old man who registers for college courses after 20 years away from the classroom. Courage is the woman who leaves her secure job with a public relations firm to work from her home as a freelance writer.

What's common to all these examples is that courage is demonstrated by everyday actions of ordinary people.

What each of us can do is search out constant examples of courage in ourselves and others. By noticing, talking about, and celebrating these everyday acts of courage, we increase the chance that courage will reoccur. When we heighten our awareness of courage, we begin to realize just how bravely we tackle each day of our lives.

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

(Please send several examples of your everyday heroes and heroines)

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COURAGE

Courage is not the absence of fear.

Many equate courage with feeling brave and fearless. When they feel fear before taking a risk, some people conclude that they're cowards. We gain a far more powerful perspective when we see courage as doing what we choose to do, even when we feel afraid.

Most people who ascend to the top ranks of their field feel fear. A famous actor can quake in his boots with stage fright before the curtain rises. A concert violinist can find her hands trembling and her armpits dripping with sweat before she sounds the first note of a concerto. A skilled teacher can anxiously dread the first day of school even after 30 years in the classroom. Even after decades of success, these people might find that their careers sometimes scare the socks off of them. They feel fear and choose to do what they fear anyway.

Most of us have had this kind of experience at one time or another. We've gone for job interviews, scared so silly that we're not sure if we can remember our name. Yet we go through the ordeal anyway—and even get hired. As students, many of us entered exam rooms convinced that our only hope for passing the test lay in divine intervention. Yet we plodded through and earned passing scores.

If we comb our personal histories, most of us can recall scores of times when we acted independent of our fears. These times exemplify the essence and meaning of courage. These are the times when we felt the fear and still did what needed doing.

Don't worry about fixing feelings

The notion that courage is about our behaving in the face of fear is so basic, so obvious, that it may barely seem worth mentioning. Think again. We've gone through several decades of self-help books, tapes, and seminars that focus on feelings. A common theme of these self-help messages is that we should get in touch with our feelings. Express our feelings. Own our feelings. Pound our fists. Shake. Scream. Cry. Above all, feel our feelings.

This advice is useful. When people go around stuffing their feelings for years, they can go a little crazy—sometimes a lot crazy. Yet, attending to our feelings can be taken to an extreme. It can cajole us into thinking that we have to fix our feelings before we can do anything effectively—or that feelings are the major factors to consider in making a decision.

Consider another view: We don't have to fix our feelings. We can feel our feelings, celebrate being in touch with our feelings, and know that most feelings are likely to change soon.

Feel the feelings—then act anyway

Feelings seem to be beyond our direct control, as fickle, unpredictable, and unstable as the weather. What's more, feelings can be totally unrelated to external circumstances. People can have thousands of dollars in the bank and still feel poor. They can have a stack of party invitations and still feel lonely. They can have five degrees and a wall full of diplomas and still feel ignorant.

Actions are much different from feelings. While feelings often elude our direct control, we can always claim full responsibility for our actions. We can feel depressed and still choose to do the laundry. We can feel homesick and still choose to do homework. We can feel lazy and still choose to mow the lawn. We can feel fear and still choose to confess our mistakes.

This ability to act independently of our feelings means we don't have to be pushed around by them. We can fully experience our feelings, know all the details about them, and even celebrate them. And, we don't have to obey the pushes and pulls of our feelings all the time.

This comes in handy when we feel the tenacious grip of negative feelings, such as fear or anxiety. If our prehistoric ancestors had retreated from activity every time they felt fear, we'd probably still be living in caves. It takes courage—the ability to act independently of fear—to propose a new idea or create a new piece of technology.

What's so remarkable about this ability to act independently of fear is that we already possess it. There's nothing we have to do first in order to gain courage—nothing we need to learn, no one we need to pay to teach us this skill. All that is required is for us to use the skill we already have and apply it to more and more situations in our lives.

Sometimes fear is a useful signal and we are wise to choose actions that seem likely to reduce it. Walking around a frozen lake rather than across thin ice is a good example. At other times, when fear is present, we might choose to act in ways that are likely to increase it. Accepting an invitation to speak in front of a large group might be such a time. The point is that we have the ability to choose to act independently of our feelings.

Courage is not a mysterious quality that's denied to the masses and dispensed to a chosen few. In reality, courage is a gift each of us has already been granted. We have used it before, and it is waiting to be used again whenever we choose.

EXERCISE

Celebrate your courage

Write about a time when you acted courageously. a time when you took some action that you knew was "right", even though there was some amount of risk involved. If you have trouble thinking of one, ask those who know you well to help.

Now, design a way to reward yourself and celebrate your courage. It might be something as simple as a bubble bath or as elaborate as throwing a party or taking a trip. Whatever you do, use it as a way to acknowledge yourself for having acted, even though you were afraid.

Write your reward in the space below. Writing your reward will help ensure that you get it.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Pair feelings with new actions

This Journal Entry follows from the observation that most of the time we can directly control our actions, even if we cannot directly control our feelings. This means that we can break the connection between feelings and what we habitually do in reaction to those feelings.

Sometimes the links between feelings and our current behaviors are so strong, they seem nearly impossible to separate. In that case, we can do something bizarre to interrupt the pattern and break the link. When the feeling surfaces, we don't need to repeat our old behaviors. Instead, we can do something—almost anything—different. We might shout, bark, laugh, jump, twirl, dunk our heads in a sink full of cold water, or do cartwheels. We can do anything that sends a message to our brains: "Get ready to do something different."

This exercise is deceptively simple. It may even sound silly (especially the suggestion involving a sink of cold water.) Yet, it gets at one of the fundamental problems of life. Much of our unhappiness results from failed attempts to change what we feel or to change what we do in reaction to feelings. The point of this exercise is to show that we're still in charge of what we do, even when feelings—like fear, loneliness, rejection, sadness, and inadequacy—seem overpowering.

Complete the sentences below with as many examples as you can think of from your own life. Enter a specific feeling in the first blank and describe a specific action in the second blank. Example: "When I feel anxious, I usually eat."

When I feel	, I usually
When I feel	, I usually
When I feel	, I usually
When I feel	, I usually
When I feel	, I usually

Now write Intention Statements that allow you to create new relationships between feelings and behaviors. Using the same feelings described above, choose different behaviors. For instance: "The next time I feel anxious, I intend to take a short, brisk walk."

The next time I feel	, I intend to
The next time I feel	, I intend to
The next time I feel	, I intend to
The next time I feel	, I intend to
The next time I feel	, I intend to

POWER PROCESS #19

Manage your associations

In this chapter you'll find...

Turning chocolate cake into fat—It starts in your head.

If we link a desired behavior to pleasure, we might begin doing it all the time. If we pair an unwanted habit with pain, we can watch that behavior disappear from our lives.

Start taking charge of associations-exercise.

Practice linking pleasure to a new behavior that you want to adopt.

Evaluate new associations:

Discovery/Intention Statement

Assess how well the previous exercise helped you to manage associations.

Turning Chocolate Cake Into Fat: It Starts In Your Head

Three scenarios

To get the hang of this strategy, consider three short scenarios.

Scenario #1: Jason's family has just finished the main course of a huge, sumptuous meal. The turkey was mouth-watering and the dressing was even better. It's time for hot pumpkin pie with whipped cream. Most of the family is already savoring the sweet aroma of nutmeg and cinnamon.

When Jason is offered a piece, he says, "No thanks." Everyone else at the table is curious. They're concerned that he doesn't feel well or that he's on some crazy diet. "What's the problem?" they ask.

Jason explains that he doesn't eat sweets anymore. Everyone compliments him on the strength of his willpower. It must be difficult, they say, to deny himself the pleasure of eating sweets. They are impressed.

The truth is, it requires no willpower at all. When Jason sees something sweet, he remembers how sick, uncomfortable, and lethargic he gets every time he indulges in sugary foods. These memories make his choice clear and easy. The thoughts and sensations he associates with pumpkin pie are unpleasant. Toughing it out or exercising willpower is simply not involved here. His natural and immediate reaction is "No way."

Scenario #2: Joanne used to hate exercising. When she was in junior high school, her gym teacher's favorite activity was forcing the class to run laps around the field. Joanne always finished last, and she has vivid memories of both the physical and mental torture she felt.

While in her mid-thirties, Joanne became close friends with Sara, a colleague at work. Sara, an avid runner, invited Joanne to join her for a morning's exercise. Joanne explained that she hated running and would just slow Sara down. Sara suggested they go for a brisk walk instead. With some reluctance, Joanne agreed.

On the following Saturday morning, the two friends met at the park. They enjoyed a rewarding conversation while walking around the lake, stopping twice to lean against a tree and just laugh for a few minutes. Soon they began walking together several times each week. Joanne looked forward these times. She enjoyed the exercise and noticed that she felt more energetic during the day.

One day, Sara suggested that they jog for a brief stretch. Joanne agreed. Afterwards, they began jogging along this stretch every time they walked. It wasn't long before Joanne was asking Sara about 10-kilometer runs in the community. Joanne's new associations with running—friendship, fun, and increased energy—led her to become a consistent runner.

SCENARIO #3: Jack and Mike work for a large corporation. Their boss is retiring, and both Jack and Mike are in line for a promotion. When they learn that management has decided to hire someone from outside the company for the job, they get upset. To add insult to injury, they also discover that their new boss is a young recent graduate of a prestigious business school. They imagine that their new boss will be a know-it-all snob. They dislike her before they even meet her.

Jack and Mike are mildly shocked when they meet this person. She is friendly, bright, and sensitive. She encourages everyone in the department to become a valued member of the team.

Weeks later, Jack is enjoying his job. He is working on a new project and is an active participant in his department. Mike, on the other hand, has not been able to detach from his initial expectations. He still believes that his new boss is a pretentious snob. He criticizes the way she dresses, finds fault in her decisions, and refuses to share his ideas with her. He resents the change in supervisors and longs for the way things used to be. Soon, he is so unhappy about the new situation, he quits his job.

Consider what happened in this scenario. Jack was more open to different ways of experiencing his new boss. He let go of his expectations and allowed himself to take advantage of the new situation. Mike was stuck. He was unable to let go of his initial associations with a new boss. His unhappiness was due more to his associations than to the reality of his situation.

Here's the point

One theme unites these three homespun tales. If we want to change our behavior, we can simply change the associations that we link to the behavior. If we link a desired behavior to pleasure, we might begin doing that behavior all the time. If we pair an unwanted habit with pain, we can watch that behavior disappear from our lives.

The point is to consciously choose which behaviors we associate with pain and pleasure. Otherwise, we live mechanically, merely reacting to external stimuli and random or historical associations.

We can learn to recognize when our associations are limiting and self-defeating. When we are unhappy, when our relationships are not working well, when we are not satisfied with our lives, we can pay attention to our associations. By learning to manage our associations, we can create new and more useful options.

When most people see a piece of chocolate cake, they associate it with pleasant taste and the immediate stimulation they get from the chocolate and sugar. Another option is to associate the chocolate cake with extra unwanted body fat.

To make this association more effective, you can really play it up in your imagination. Imagine that as you look at the chocolate cake, you see past the first layer of dark brown, rich chocolate into its core, a murky, yellow-brown mass of wiggly, layered fat.

Imagine the putrid odor of the extra weight as it prepares to sag on the sides of your body.

After thinking of chocolate cake in this way for just a few minutes, it will require no willpower to say "No thanks."

The welcome news is that we have a great deal of control over our associations, no matter what life tosses our way. And the basic idea is unbelievably simple: Link what you want in your future to what you already like. And link what you don't want to what you already don't like.

By learning to manage our associations, we can approach life with more satisfaction and choice. What people perceive as steely-eyed willpower or superhuman motivation might be nothing more than the ability to manage associations.

EXERCISE

Start taking charge of associations

Describe a habit that you'd like to change. Some possible examples are smoking, overeating, drinking coffee, or reading the paper while your spouse is trying to talk to you. Describe your habit here.

Next, list all the costs of continuing this habit. Be specific. Describe exactly what pleasures you will be missing and what benefits you will have to forego if you keep this behavior. Link the habit to a result that you find painful. For example: "Smoking stains my hands, makes my breath smell like rotten garbage, and isolates me in social situations. And, oh yeah, a couple other things, it shortens both my breath and my life."

Next, describe a behavior you can use to replace the behavior you want to stop. Then link as much pleasure to the new behavior as you can. Write as if the change you desire has already taken place: "I lead a smoke-free life, my life expectancy is longer, I have an extra $20 each week to spend, and I feel at ease when meeting new people."

Finally, put your new associations to work. Every time you think about the unwanted behavior, remember the costs involved. Then think about the new desired behavior and visualize or affirm the benefits. For a week, practice changing the behavior you described. Then complete the following Journal Entry.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Evaluate new associations

Assess how effective the previous exercise was in managing associations.

After experimenting with managing my associations, I discovered that I . . .

If this strategy worked, then describe how you will apply it to another habit you'd like to change.

I intend to . . .

If this strategy did not work, describe how you might improve it and try it again on the same (or on a different) behavior.

Power Process #20

Contribute

In this chapter you'll find...

Share the bounty.
After contributing to our own happiness, a natural next step is to contribute to others.

Strategies for contributing.
Begin with passion and purpose, hang around skilled contributors, notice what really contributes to others, and begin now.

Review a past contribution: Discovery Statement
Describe a time when you contributed and recall the feelings of satisfaction that accompanied this act.

Plan to contribute again: Intention Statement
Decide how to make contribution a regular part of your life.

SHARE THE BOUNTY

If you're not careful, something might happen to you when you really use this book. You might get full. That is, you might fill yourself up with happiness, health, love, and wealth—far beyond what you ever thought possible.

You might notice that you gave up the ways of thinking and acting that perpetuated your old feelings of sadness and fear. As you make and keep promises, refine your values, change habits, and use other strategies, something new can happen. You might discover that you're generating new results. You might notice that your life is really working.

The wonderful thing about filling yourself up is that it never needs to stop. It's difficult to imagine an upper limit to joy, fulfillment, or fun.

Selfish people do it

Filling ourselves up with lots of happiness, health, love, and wealth leads to a delightful problem. How do we share what we've gained.

Imagine pouring water into a cup until it starts to overflow. At that point, you can let the water spill onto the floor, or you can start to share the bounty and fill other people's cups. That's what this article is about—filling the cups of others.

It is difficult to imagine a person who becomes so joyful that he decides to isolate himself from others. A person who jealously guards his happiness by not sharing it with others, makes himself a prisoner of his own joy. We can spread the wealth. After contributing enough to our own happiness, the natural next step is to contribute to the happiness of others.

In one sense of the word, we can consider contribution to be something that is selfish. If it brings us joy to give to others, then contribution becomes a selfish act. If we are selfish, we will give part of what we have to others.

Caring people take care of themselves

While practicing contribution, we can avoid becoming martyrs, sacrificing our own health and sanity in the quest to make life better for others. We can also watch out for the motive of contributing just to look good, which might result in superficial and fleeting satisfaction. We can also give up the expectation of getting something in return. This can trigger burn-out and frustration.

The world awaits your contribution

Most of us have, no doubt, received letters and phone calls from charities and nonprofit groups. Most of them boil down to one question: Will you donate some money to them? At times, these groups want more than our money; they want our time, too. They ask us to knock on doors, circulate petitions, stuff envelopes, or make a few fundraising calls.

The practice of donating ourselves goes beyond that. We can donate money to a worthy cause. That's great. We can donate our time. That's wonderful too. And we don't have to stop there. We can see everything we do and say as a potential contribution to the welfare of others.

There are plenty of places to begin. At every moment, there are thousands of opportunities to contribute. We already know the details—the children who die every day of starvation; the homeless people who sleep on the streets while inhaling car exhaust; the people addicted to alcohol who drink themselves to death; the teenagers slain by gang members; the people imprisoned without trials; and the women who are raped while passersbys pretend not to notice.

The purpose of bringing these facts to mind is not to depress ourselves or to complain about how terrible the world is. Rather, the point is that we can begin making a difference with the choices we make in our lives. There is much to be done, and we can begin now.

Watch your problems shrink

Something usually happens when we take on big problems: Our other problems shrink. Sometimes they even disappear.

Imagine that you wake up one day with two things on your to-do list: mow the lawn and write to your mother. Tasks like these have a way of expanding to fill the time allotted to them. If you have only these two things to do, you could spend the whole morning wiping off the mower blades, going to the service station to buy gas, checking the oil, and maybe taking the mower into a local small-engine shop for a tune-up. That leaves the afternoon for finding paper, scrounging up a pen, schlepping to the post office to buy just the right stamp, and writing several drafts of a letter to your mom. And that doesn't include a 20-minute round trip to the mailbox and back.

Consider what happens when your to-do list expands by just one item. In addition to mowing the lawn and writing to your mother, you also promise to put in a two-hour shift at the local food shelf. With some friendly pressure from that commitment, you go about your other tasks with more focus and intensity.

Watch what happens when—in addition to mowing the lawn, writing the letter, and working at the food shelf—you also plan to buy groceries. Now the problem of how to get it all done has grown bigger, and you get to come up with new solutions.

All this is a way of saying that problems are like a gas: They expand to fill the space allotted to them. One way to shrink our current problems is to decrease the amount of space we give them in our lives.

Of course, it's possible to overdo this process. We can saddle ourselves with so many commitments that we sabotage ourselves. The idea is to stretch our limits gradually and discover what we're truly capable of accomplishing.

From this perspective, the whole strategy for dealing with problems is not to rid ourselves of them. Instead, we can take on bigger problems—huge projects that make a significant contribution to the happiness of others and the health of our planet.

Problems are always going to be with us, so why not take on problems that become adventures? Some people insult themselves by taking on problems that are too small. We are worthy of big problems. We can choose problems that are worthy of us and give them our time and energy.

When we practice contributing and taking on bigger problems, we can watch our old lists of worries begin to fade like disappearing ink.

STRATEGIES FOR CONTRIBUTING

Now that youv'e seen the value of contribution, the next question is how and where to begin. The answer is different for everyone. If we're truly willing to contribute, we can keep looking, remain alert, and trust that opportunities to contribute will make themselves known. In the meantime, here are a few guidelines to keep in mind.

Begin with passion

As you look for how and where to begin contributing, you can access your passion. You can ask yourself; What is my abiding passion in life? Many times, the answer will light a path to contribution. Your passion might be animals. If so, then you might choose to work for an animal rights organization or volunteer at the animal shelter. Your passion might be helping people overcome suffering. That might lead to helping drug addicts get sober, getting kids off the streets and back into school, helping youngsters master reading skills, or assisting dying people to live out their last days with dignity and insight.

Sometimes we can discover our passions, and new ways to contribute, by examining our actions. Gradually the motivating force behind our careers or hobbies becomes clear. Perhaps all our tinkering with old car engines and reading about alternative energy sources means we ultimately want to contribute by inventing an efficient solar-powered car. Or, our successful experiences with managing money might motivate us to create a free seminar on how people can reduce their debt and start saving.

Look in your mailbox

Another strategy for finding ways to contribute is to look in your mailbox. You can ask which of the organizations that regularly send you fund-raising letters are worthy of your contributions. Instead of merely tossing off a check to Amnesty International, the Red Cross, or the Girl Scouts, you could show up at their door with a promise to contribute your time and your skills.

Hang around skilled contributors

One of the most efficient ways to acquire any new behavior is to associate with people who are skilled at that behavior. Seek out people who regularly donate their time, money, and talents. These people teach contribution by one of the most skillful means possible—example.

By watching how other people contribute, we may learn where and how to begin. We can notice the specifics of how they assist others. We can watch how they manage their time, talk to people, spend their money, and use their talents.

Ask people what they want

Helping others is not the same as deciding what they need or imposing our personal agendas on them. If we really want to contribute to others, we can increase our chances of success if we plan to spend a lot of time listening to them and following their lead. We can consider their requests. Our efforts to help can be much more effective once they are grounded in reality and in tune with the wishes of the people we are helping.

Caution: Giving others what they want might not always be the most useful contribution. One obvious example is giving drugs to an addict. Another is continually loaning money to people who go into debt carelessly. Sheltering others from the consequences of their behaviors deprives them of the chance to learn.

Begin now

Any of us can practice contributing, even if we're poor, disadvantaged, or pressed for time; even when we feel overwhelmed with family, job, or classes.

This is where some people object. "There's no way I can do anything for others at this point in my life," they say. "I'm up to my eyeballs in alligators. I'm barely staying afloat." If that's true, we can often find a small way to give to someone else. It can be as simple as preparing a meal for someone, picking up the garbage in a neighbor's yard, giving directions to someone who is lost, giving a bigger tip to a waitress who provided good service, or slowing down in heavy traffic for someone who is trying to change lanes. Contributing to others, even when we're feeling overwhelmed, can put our personal problems in perspective and change our emotional state in a flash.

The whole point of contributing is to commit ourselves to something beyond ourselves. Outrageous satisfaction begins as we rise to a calling that transcends us.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Review a past contribution

Describe a time when you contributed. Perhaps you volunteered time to a charitable organization. Perhaps you listened to a friend's problem and offered a suggestion that made a real difference. Or perhaps you performed a simple act of kindness that had an immediate effect, such as pausing to open a door for someone in a wheelchair; mowing a neighbor's lawn, unasked; or filling the gas tank in a friend's car.

Describe specifically what you did to contribute.

Now describe the feelings of pleasure or satisfaction that accompanied this act of contribution. Be specific. When contributing on this occasion, I felt . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Plan to contribute again

Consider that you can enjoy contributing again simply by making it a regular part of your life. State specifically what you will do within the next week as an act of contribution. State exactly how you will contribute your time, talent, and/or money. After you do, decide if you want to continue this method of contributing. If not, think of some new way to contribute.

I intend to . . .

POWER PROCESS #21

Define your values, align your actions

In this chapter you'll find...

Start from values.
One of the most powerful ways to get what we want is to define our values and then align our actions with them.

Live your values.
To live consistently with your values, stay in contact with them, seek out those who share your values, notice internal struggle, and remember that techniques are no match for commitment.

One set of values.
To get ideas for your own list of values, consider these possibilities.

Align your values: Discovery Statement
Define your commitment to various "ways of being," such as being loving, patient, accountable, and forgiving.

Clarify habits with values-exercise.
If you regularly take action consistent with what's most important to you, you're more apt to get the results that you desire in life.

Sing a new song: Discovery/Intention Statement
Think about the music you listen to regularly and consider the values this music represents.

START FROM VALUES

Value*: any object or quality desirable as a means or as an end in itself . . . to consider with respect to worth, excellence, usefulness, or importance . . . intrinsic excellence or desirability.*

Consider the importance of values

Values are our fundamental commitments, our highest principles, the things in life we consider worthy for their own sake. Values influence and guide our choices. And our moment-to-moment choices ultimately determine the quality of our lives.

Some people have thoughtfully adopted a set of well-defined values. Others are guided by values automatically adopted from others, or by values that remain largely unconscious.

Either way, our choices give us clues to our values. If we choose not to hold grudges, we might value forgiveness. If we consistently choose to be on time, we probably value punctuality. If we choose to eat wisely and exercise regularly, it's a good bet that we value health. If we choose to spend lots of time and money on clothes, we probably value looking good.

Think in terms of "be-do-have"

Most of our choices fall into one of three categories. We can 1) increase our material wealth (what we have); 2) improve our skills (what we do;, or 3) develop our "being" (who we are).

Most people devote their entire lifetime to the first two categories. For them, the quality of life hinges on what they have and what they do.

Another option is to look beyond our possessions and beyond our skills to focus on who we are.

It is no accident that we are called human beings. We could have been called "human havings" or "human doings." We weren't. Human being is the name of our species, and it is a name we can live up to.

Many people act as if they are "human havings." They devote most of their waking hours to getting more and more—more clothes, more cars, more relationships, more degrees, and more trophies. A "human having" defines himself and measures his well-being by listing what he owns. His self-worth is determined by what kind of house he has, what kind of job he has, and what books, gadgets, and club memberships he has. Life is a series of accumulations, a journey focused on getting, acquiring, collecting, and possessing.

Yet, ultimately, what we have does not ensure that we will experience a wonderful life. There is little direct correlation between material possessions and happiness. People who live on $10,000 a year can be content. People who live on $100,000 can be suicidal.

Many people escape this materialist trap by adding another dimension to their identities. In addition to living as "human havings," they also live as "human doings." A "human doing" is focused on what she does. Her goal is to do everything well. She defines herself by how well she does her job, how effectively she does parenting, how active she is in clubs and organizations, and how successfully she performs in various games. Her thoughts are constantly

about methods, techniques, and skills. To be worthwhile, her life must be a series of accomplishments and achievements.

It is impossible, of course, to live our lives without having things and doing things. Focusing on our "ways of being" does not mean becoming a vegetable-like zombie who sits in silence and stares blankly into space. It merely suggests that we balance our attention and give more focus to our values and who we are.

Create your own values

Your values can be a clear, consistent guide to who you are and who you want to become. Investing time and energy to define your values and then aligning your actions with them is a pivotal suggestion in this book.

When we define our values, we can avoid creating values through opposition. An adolescent, for example, might adopt values by reaction. If her parents value cleanliness, she might refuse to straighten up her room. If her teachers value punctuality, she might consistently show up late for classes.

The problem with this approach is simple, though not always obvious. When we adopt values by reaction, we put others in charge of our lives. To automatically do the opposite still leaves our choices of values up to others. We give up our own capacities for original thinking and independent action.

Even if you create your own values, you might discover that they have an uncanny resemblance to your church's creeds, the lectures you used to get from your parents, or the scouting code of honor. That's fine. What matters is that you freely chose these values after examining the alternatives.

Declare your values in an instant

It's possible to create your values in a moment, seemingly from nowhere. For example, a smoker can choose–in an instant–to make her health a primary value. She then decides she's had enough. It's time to quit. Smoking is no longer an option for her. She declares herself to be a healthy person, and as a non-smoker, she cuts off the possibility of ever smoking again.

At that moment—the time it takes for that thought to flash across her mind and those words to leave her lips—she is declaring the value of health, and she is a non-smoker. True, it will take concerted action to maintain that decision. Yet her declaration was the crux of the matter. The moment of declaring was the moment her life changed.

To be a non-smoker, this woman doesn't need to log a certain number of months or weeks of remaining cigarette-free. She doesn't need to call forth friends who will testify that she's quit. She doesn't need to pass any physical examination to provide evidence that she stopped smoking. Creating herself as a non-smoker doesn't come from history, testimony, or evidence. It springs solely from her solemn declaration.

That declaration is an act of pure creation. We can declare the result we want to achieve. We can announce the habit we want to change. And when our intentions and behaviors are thoroughly aligned with our words, we can often harness the power of our declarations and make the change with minimum effort.

Draw from many sources

As you begin to define your values, consider those who have gone before you. In creeds, scriptures, philosophies, myths, and sacred stories, the human race has left a vast and varied record of values. Be willing to look everywhere. The Girl Scout code of honor might eloquently describe some of your values. So might the mission statement of your company or club. When it comes to choosing values, you don't have to start at step zero. Instead, you can draw on existing wisdom.

LIVE YOUR VALUES

With your values firmly in mind, use them to guide your daily actions. Here are some suggestions for living consistently with your values:

Stay in contact with your values

We can commit our values to writing and revise them periodically. We can type them or render them in calligraphy. We can even frame them and display them. All these strategies are ways of staying in daily contact with our fundamental principles and commitments.

Seek out those who share your values

A related strategy is to talk about your values, especially with people who share them. This technique is well known to members of self-help groups and professional associations—everyone from Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers™ to the American Bar Association. All these organizations recognize the powerful support that's generated when people who hold similar values gather together.

Notice internal struggle

Being authentic can be defined as telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is the opposite of being false, fictitious, or counterfeit. When we are authentic, our values, words, and actions are aligned and working in tandem.

When we are having difficulty reaching a goal or completing a project, one of the first places to look for obstacles is inside ourselves. Sometimes, we can be our own enemies. At one moment, we might be on target, making progress, aware of our clear intentions, and know exactly what we want and where we're going. At other times, debilitating doubts and reservations stop us cold. If this happens, we can take a second look at our authenticity.

When we are authentic, internal struggle often disappears. We proceed on the path we have chosen and on no other. When doubts and internal struggles do arise, as they do in even the most committed people, the depth of our commitment can carry us through.

For example, a single mother decides to change careers and go back to school. She has more energy and ambition than her current job requires. She also wants to provide her children with more financial security. She is willing to make temporary sacrifices in order to improve her long-range job prospects.

If she is not authentic about her decision to go back to school, she can let doubts stop her. She might worry about being foolish and irresponsible, knowing that she'll take on some hardships for the next several years. She might question her academic abilities and worry about failure. She could doom her adventure before it even begins.

If, on the other hand, she is authentic about her decision, there's little internal struggle. She's aware that she might face challenges such as managing her time; applying for financial aid; budgeting her money; balancing her life between work, school, and children; or letting go of a romantic relationship for now. Yet her sense of commitment is so strong, she's willing to take it all on.

For this woman, doubts become reminders to take preventive action. When she questions her academic ability, she seeks out other single mothers who are in school and asks for guidance.

She visits instructors to ask about course requirements. She previews textbooks before classes start. And she forms a study group to provide both personal and academic support for its members.

When a decision leads to sustained internal struggle, we can take a second look at our authenticity. Perhaps, if we're not fully committed to the task, it's wise for us to check out other options.

Remember that techniques are no match for commitment

One impassioned commitment can be more powerful than dozens of proven techniques.

Techniques are like the tools of a carpenter—neutral objects until they're picked up and used. A committed carpenter can use tools to create a well-constructed, solid, and beautiful structure. A carpenter who doesn't care might use those same tools to create one that is both unsafe and unattractive. In the right hands, tools and techniques can be powerful and effective. Used by someone who doesn't value quality, tools and techniques can be useless or even dangerous.

Stand-up comedy offers a related example. It's difficult for someone to be funny if she just recites a comedy writer's lines like a robot. The performance of a skilled comedian—the gestures, tone of voice, and timing—comes from a place that's much deeper. Commitment to humor makes the difference between telling jokes and being funny.

In many circumstances, our commitments play far more significant roles in the outcome than our strategies do. Actions which do not spring from clear values can be mechanical and lifeless, little more than following the rules or going through the motions.

A powerful path to effectiveness is to define our commitments with care, to choose our values as carefully as we choose our clothes or a car. Then our actions can be on track with what we want—and more natural as well.

ONE SET OF VALUES

Following is a sample set of values. This list is intended to summarize core wisdom from the world's great traditions, both Eastern and Western.

Think of each value that appears in italics as a way to complete the sentence, "I value being . . ." Listed under each value are a set of words or a few sentences that further define its meaning. Use these ideas as a starting point in developing your own written list of values.

Accountable

This means being:

- Integrous
- Reliable
- Trustworthy
- Dependable
- Responsible

Being accountable includes making and keeping agreements.

Loving

This means being:

- Affectionate
- Dedicated
- Devoted
- Equitable
- Accepting

Being loving includes appreciating ourselves and others—being gentle, considerate, forgiving, respectful, friendly, and courteous. It also includes being non-antagonistic, non-resistant, inclusive, understanding, compassionate, fair, and ethical.

Self-generating

This means being self responsible and the creator of our internal experiences—regardless of external circumstances. We cease being victims; we stop blaming others. Instead, we choose how to interpret and respond to our circumstances.

Promotive

This means being:

- Nurturing
- Contributing—charitable; thrifty; generous with time, money, and possessions
- Frugal—achieving the results with the fewest possible dollars
- Helpful
- Encouraging
- Reasonable
- Judicious
- Cooperative—working as a member of a team or community
- Appreciative

Candid

This means being:

- Honest
- Authentic
- Genuine
- Frank
- Outspoken
- Spontaneous
- Sincere
- Free of deceit
- Avoiding false modesty without arrogance
- Self-disclosing
- Open about strengths and weaknesses

Detached

This means being:

- Impartial
- Unbiased
- Experimental
- Satisfied
- Patient (not resigned)
- Open-minded
- Without distress
- Adaptable
- Tolerant
- Trusting
- Surrendering
- Joyful—fun-loving, light hearted, humorous, happy

Detachment includes being separate from, but aware of, our thoughts, emotions, body, health, accomplishments, roles, skills, relationships, possessions, values, opinions, and expectations.

The opposite of detachment is being addicted (physically or emotionally), dogmatic, bigoted, absolutely certain, prejudiced, anxious, grave, or somber.

Involved

This means being:

- Committed
- Participating
- Focused
- Attentive to detail
- Precise
- Enthusiastic—having intense or eager interest
- Enduring—persistent, persevering
- Courageous—vulnerable, willing to risk, trusting
- Energetic
- Productive

Energetic means displaying the capacity for action or accomplishment; being vigorous, robust, hardy, rugged, and strong.

Productive refers to putting yourself at risk, operating with something at stake, pursuing excellence, acting with a sense of urgency without panic, and allowing projects to matter.

Aware of the Possible

This means being:

- Creative
- Imaginative
- Resourceful
- Inventive
- Foresighted
- Holistic
- Visionary
- Inquisitive
- Audacious
- Exploring

Being aware of the possible means expecting great things of ourselves and others.

> ***The thing in life that must survive you is not just your practice, but the principles that are the basis of your practice.***
>
> –Bernice Johnson Reagan

E X E R C I S E

Align habits with values

If you regularly take action consistent with what's most important to you, you're more apt to get the results in life that you desire. Demonstrating this for yourself is the purpose of this exercise.

Begin by referring to the list of values you generated in the previous Journal Entry. Then generate a list of habits that are consistent with each value. Ask: If I were living consistently with these values, what would I do on a regular basis? For example, a person who values health could eat low-fat foods and exercise at least three times a week. A person who values wealth could make a habit of saving 10 percent of her income each month and making regular investments in a mutual fund.

To get the most benefit from this exercise, keep your list of values and habits as "alive" as possible. Review it monthly, weekly, or daily, using it as a tool for making choices in your life.

In the space below, list three of your most important values along with at least one habit that aligns with each value.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Clarify your values

This Journal Entry provides you with an opportunity to clarify your commitment to various values. This is not a time to consider specific attainable goals (things to have or do) but rather a time to reflect on more fundamental decisions about who you are and who you want to be. For example, you might commit to being loving, patient, accountable to your word, or forgiving. Complete the sentences below. For ideas and suggestions, review the article "One Set of Values."

I am committed to being . . .

This means . . .

I am committed to being . . .

This means . . .

I am committed to being . . .

This means . . .

Next, use a dictionary to look up the words you have used and find synonyms that might further develop or more accurately reflect your values.

After studying what you have just written, take a sheet of paper and list your values and define them with words that will remind you of who you intend to "be" as a Human Being.

Consider your value sheet to be a living document. Revisit it periodically as your life progresses and you gain more insight and experience.

Sing a new song

Think about the music you listen to regularly, and consider the values this music represents. This can be an eye opener (or ear opener, as it may be.)

Often we hear a song lyric that runs counter to our values. People who are committed to a healthful diet might find themselves singing the jingle for a fast-food chain. Those who are committed to empowering relationships, might find themselves humming songs with disempowering themes: If you leave me, I'll die; Without you I'm nothing at all, and the like.

Listen again to some of your favorite songs, paying special attention to the lyrics. In the space below, briefly describe which values the songs seems to promote.

Now, examine your list of values and habits from the previous exercise. Look for areas of overlap between the lyrics and your values. Also identify areas of inconsistency. Describe any intentions that follow from this insight.

I intend to . . .

LIFE CAN WORK.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE as much happiness, health, love, and wealth as you choose.

You can feel happy and fulfilled no matter what your current circumstances.

Each of us can be essentially free from insecurity, depression, fear, worry, jealousy, aggression, turmoil, anxiety, boredom, vanity, hostility, irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and frustration.

Within a short time, and with some new skills, you can experience vitality, satisfaction, joy, serenity, health, contribution, fun, confidence, happiness, pleasure, love, peace, effectiveness, and security far beyond your current expectations. These positive experiences are always available and can be developed when you tell the truth about your current experiences and when you practice creating new ones. You are invited to use the techniques in this book to create a life filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Co-authored by Dave Ellis, author of *Becoming a Master Student* which has sold over two million copies.

HAPPINESS

A MANUAL FOR HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH

DAVE ELLIS and STAN LANKOWITZ

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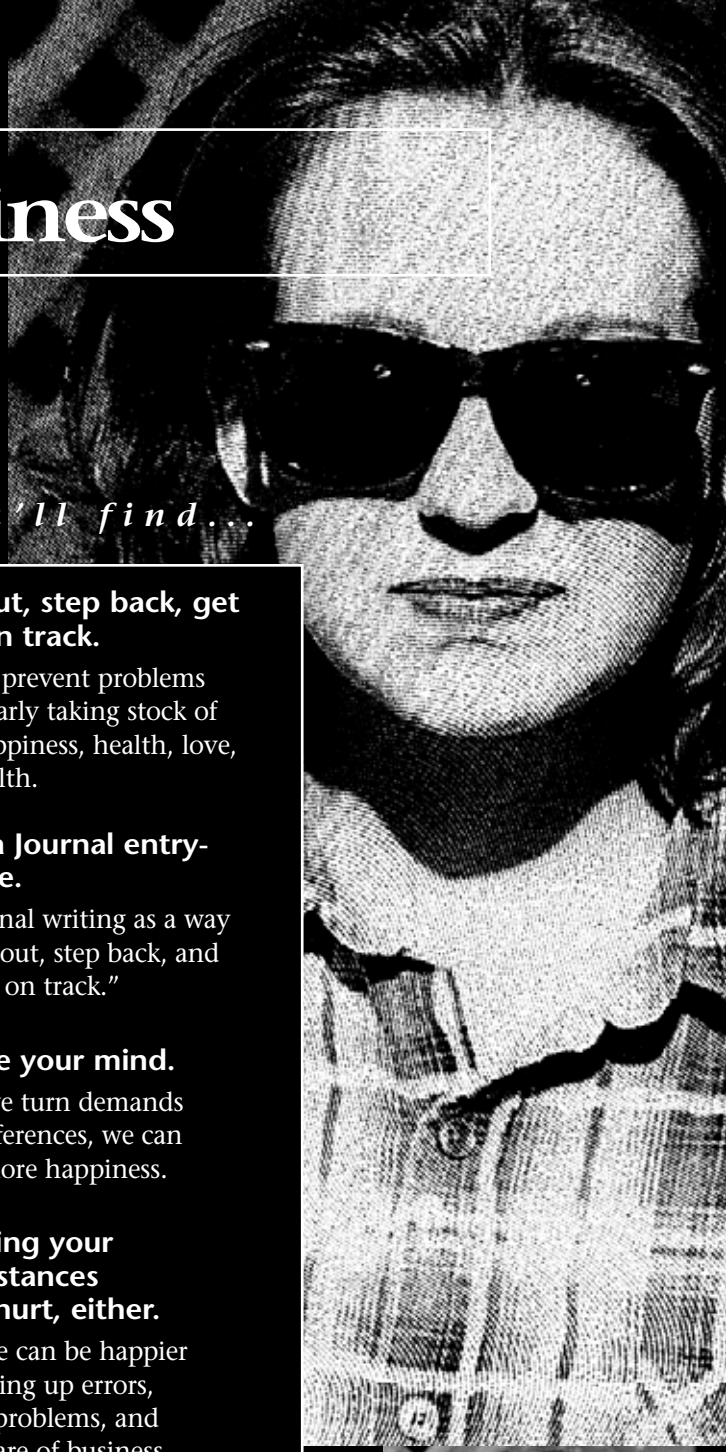
Chapter 1

Unhappiness



In this chapter you'll find...

Accept it.
One path to happiness starts with accepting unhappiness.

Experience it.
You can unleash the energy in even the most negative emotions.

Move from reaction to response.
While you may not be able to choose your emotional reactions, you can choose your behaviors and your focus of attention.

Liberate behaviors from feelings: Discovery Intention Statement.
Describe several behaviors that you could choose to accompany a feeling.

Step out, step back, get back on track.
You can prevent problems by regularly taking stock of your happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Write a Journal entry-exercise.
Use journal writing as a way to "step out, step back, and get back on track."

Change your mind.
When we turn demands into preferences, we can create more happiness.

Changing your circumstances won't hurt, either.
Often we can be happier by cleaning up errors, solving problems, and taking care of business.

ACCEPT IT

No kidding—this section on happiness starts with a chapter on sadness, anger, fear, and all the other emotions we associate with unhappiness. There's logic behind this. After all, one path to greater happiness is to effectively deal with each unhappy feeling. Change begins by accepting and allowing the feelings we have right now.

Remember that unpleasant feelings are OK. Being happy includes accepting and even celebrating all of our emotions—even those considered negative. Emotions, once fully experienced, have a tendency to disappear or dissipate. When that happens, we're free of any lingering residue. We don't need to carry around the excess baggage of stuffed emotions as they struggle to find an avenue for expression.

Feeling guilt, shame, fear, terror, anxiety, depression, rage, or resentment is no crime. We can experience them without concluding that we're worthless failures. Genuine, loving, and accomplished people experience these feelings too. It's just that they make skilled choices about how to respond when unpleasant feelings crop up.

It helps to make a distinction between what's under our control and what's not. Feelings—pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral—are programmed into us. It's part of the package of being human. We have gut reactions and instincts. Even if we learn strategies for handling negative emotions, it's unlikely that we'll ever be in full control of them. We're going to experience a wide range of feelings whether we want to or not. As such, our main job is to accept, allow, and permit them.

Notice how you stuff feelings

People can experience trauma many times in their lives. To be healthy and happy, it often helps us to discharge the pain, embarrassment, guilt, and other residue of any trauma.

Unfortunately, that's not the way most of us were trained. As children, we learned not to discharge. We might have been told, "Big girls don't cry." or "Take it like a man."

Many of us learned to stuff our emotions at an early age. The ability to grin and bear it was considered a sign of virtuous strength. Many of us grew up watching our favorite big screen heroes gallantly fight back tears in the midst agony and sorrow.

For some of us, stuffing our emotions has become so natural and common that we might not be aware we are doing it. By being diligent, by paying close attention over time, and by asking others to support our efforts, we can wake up to the emotions we habitually suppress.

Gender sometimes played an important part. If a woman broke down and cried, it was more expected and accepted. A man doing the same was often labeled a wimp or a sissy.

These messages take a toll. Unexpressed emotion is like static on a two-way radio: It makes listening and speaking difficult. We are usually less spontaneous when we carry around unfinished business.

The problem with a stuffed emotion is that it hangs around and becomes mischievous. We pack it away somewhere deep inside. Even though it cannot be seen, heard, or directly experienced, it does not disappear.

There are countless reasons we use to justify stuffing our feelings and to avoid discharging them. For example:

- Sometimes we analyze, rationalize, give excuses, and tell stories: "I intended to talk to someone about how I felt, but . . . ."
- Maybe we make ourselves feel wrong for being upset.
- We fear that once we loosen the floodgate of feelings, the feelings may not stop. We fear losing control, getting violent, or going crazy.
- We may worry about how others will assess our character—that we won't "look good" expressing our emotions.
- Sometimes we fear losing a relationship, even if the relationship is dysfunctional.
- Maybe we believe that showing emotions is a sign of weakness and that others might take advantage of us.
- We might worry that tears will make our mascara run.
- We might even believe that if we ignore the emotions long enough, they will go away and everything will be better.

Befriend the feeling

One way to be free of tough emotions is to befriend them, to totally experience them. To accept the sadness, we can let it come to the surface and notice what happens to us when we feel sad. When we give sadness this kind of forgiving and focused attention, it often shrinks or even disappears.

You can demonstrate this for yourself. The next time you're feeling sad, angry, or fearful; take a quick inventory. Let the feeling come fully to the surface. Then notice and describe the body sensations that accompany the feeling; perhaps a tight stomach, tension in the face, or sweaty palms. Also notice the words and images that flash through your mind.

When you do this, chances are that the feeling will lose some of its intensity, some of its grip on you. This not only provides relief, but also gives you a cooler head as you decide what action to take next.

We can also befriend our feelings by renaming them. The feeling we call "anxiety" can also be called "charged and ready to act." Physiologically, the two experiences are pretty much the same. What we call "depressed" may be the same as "needing a rest." Remembering this allows us to rename negative emotions as effective emotions.

Put feelings in perspective

It's easy to let feelings go too far. A man loses control of his car on an icy street during winter and hits a child. To feel guilt and remorse about that event is expected and normal. But for that man to feel enduring shame over the event for years is not helpful.

A woman's husband dies of cancer. To intensely mourn his death is a normal process, one that leads to getting on with her life. If, years later, she's still isolating herself and unable to work, the process is no longer natural and healthy.

Such reactions are paralyzing. One particular feeling that we often allow to go too far is regret. It can linger and turn into shame.

Regret can be defined as sorrow or remorse over an event. Shame, on the other hand, involves feelings of incompetence, indecency, dishonor, and disgrace. There's a difference between regretting something we've done and experiencing shame. Regret relates to what we do—mistakes, behaviors that harm others, actions that violate our values. Shame relates to who we are—the feeling that we're worthless or don't deserve to live.

Given that we're all imperfect, we'll make mistakes. When we do, it's often appropriate to feel some level of regret. We can use these experiences to learn, to grow, and to improve.

Regret tells us when we're off course—when we've broken a promise, fallen short of our standards, or missed a goal. Regret can be positive when it reminds us of our values and leads us to apologize or make amends. Regret can be a natural part of the learning process.

Shame can result when we let regret go too far. Shame goes beyond our behaviors to the very fabric of our being. This feeling demoralizes us and inhibits our growth. Shame involves huge costs that are disempowering.

Let it pass

Feelings are dynamic, constantly in a state of flux. Feelings never stand still. They come in waves; a crest is followed by a fall. What feels most intense at one moment can subside in the next. When all else fails, we can count on one thing: Our feelings are going to change.

Knowing this is a cause for celebration. When we're gripped by anger, sadness, or fear; we know it will pass. When we're feeling pleasure; we know that it, too, will pass. This can remind us to experience the pleasure fully while it's present.

An old story from Alcoholics Anonymous makes this point. A young man, a recovering alcoholic, found a wise mentor, an older woman, who had been in AA for many years. Shortly after they met, things started to get difficult for the young man. In fact, his family left him and he was fired from his job—all on the same day. He called his mentor and described what had happened. She listened patiently and said, "Don't drink. Keep going to AA meetings. And, this too shall pass."

Those words sounded ridiculous to the young alcoholic—almost cold. He decided to act on them anyway; he had no idea what else to do.

A few months passed, and his life started to turn around. He released his resentments and managed to forgive his family and the person who fired him. He also made amends to the people he'd harmed when he was drinking. All this cleared his head and bolstered his confidence. His old employer noticed the change and offered to re-hire the young man—this time for a job with more responsibility and more money.

The young man was proud of himself, convinced that this was only the first chapter of an endless success story. He called his sponsor with all the good news. She listened patiently and said, "Don't drink. Keep going to AA meetings. And, this too shall pass."

When we allow and accept our feelings—both pleasant and unpleasant—we can begin to enjoy the emotional roller coaster. We can celebrate the highs without getting attached to them. And we can last through the lows without feeling trapped by them. In either case, we can appreciate the flow of feelings, enjoying their richness and variety.

EXPERIENCE IT

When we express our emotions and completely experience them, they lose their grip on us. Knowing this, we can find nondestructive ways to discharge feelings and unleash their energy.

Discharge feelings

It can be useful to divide emotional experiences as three separate parts:

1) the event,
2) our feelings about that event, and
3) how we discharge or release our feelings.

For instance, a person gets laid off from her job; that's an event. She feels anger, frustration, sadness, and fear. All those are feelings about the event. Faced with those feelings, she might allow herself to cry, scream, or punch a pillow. Those are actions that discharge the emotion.

When we separate our emotional experiences into these three parts, we're apt to handle tough emotions in a new way. While we cannot always control events or our feelings about them, we can choose how to discharge those feelings.

Discharging our feelings clears the way for us to think much more clearly. It takes a lot of energy and brainpower to ignore, deny, suppress, and otherwise lock up our feelings. If we allow ourselves to discharge our emotions, we free up all that energy and mental capability. Our thinking is clearer; our perspective is renewed.

Releasing emotions is something children do naturally. Laughter releases light fear and embarrassment. Tears and sobbing release grief. Trembling releases fear. Yawning releases tension, and animated talk releases boredom.

There are many ways to discharge our emotions. We can simply talk about them in the moment we experience them. We can complete the sentence, "Right now I am feeling _____."

Another option is to set up environments where it is safe and acceptable to scream, shout, cry, or laugh about the emotion-related event without causing problems for anyone. For example, we can see a therapist or ask a friend who's particularly skilled at listening to hear us out. During this time, we can even hit pillows or beat our beds with a rolled towel.

When it comes to discharging emotions, we can shut the process down at anytime. We have the safety valve called "choice." Even when experiencing intense feelings, we can choose not to express them or act on them in ways that cause harm.

Knowing the benefits of emotional release, we can also be of genuine service to other people when we give them an opportunity to discharge their emotions. We do this by giving others our full, undivided attention. As we do this, we can avoid the temptation to get caught up in their emotions, to change the subject, to give advice, or to refute what the other person is saying.

Unleash the energy

Emotions are energy. They can pump us up and recharge us. They can also drain and deplete us. Knowing this, we can unlock the energy present in any emotion and use it to create something new.

To do this, reconsider what feelings mean. For example, fear is often treated as something to avoid or get rid of. In fact, it can be useful. Fear can mobilize our energies, focus our attention, and propel us to action. Fear can remind us to avoid certain people, places, or actions. When we're afraid, we can feel our hands shaking and our hearts racing. Instead of trying to avoid fear, we can use it to our advantage: Oh, good, here's an extra shot of adrenaline. Boy, I'm really awake! Now, I can choose what to do about it.

We can also use anger to fuel action. If we are angry about a social injustice, we can use this feeling as a motivator to help solve the problem. We might attend a city council meeting, write a letter to our legislators, form a group to take action, talk to our neighbors, or circulate a petition. When we learn to accept and fully experience our emotions, they can become our teachers and friends.

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Several future editions of Human Being will be published. Each new edition will reflect not only improved writing and graphics, but also new ideas for creating a wonderful life. Please send your suggestions.

Move from reaction to response

People often resist their feelings because those feelings are linked with undesirable behaviors. Consider the man who breaks a dish every time he's angry. After a while, he makes himself wrong for feeling angry. When he does feel angry, he resists that feeling. After all, it costs too much to keep replacing all those dishes.

His way of thinking misses one point: When he gets angry, he doesn't have to break dishes. In fact, there are a lot of things he could do instead: He could yell. He could take a brisk walk. Punch a pillow. Play a tuba. Anything but break a dish.

Once we understand that a feeling does not necessarily lead to any particular behavior, we can give ourselves permission to open up to the full range of our feelings. We can have any feeling at all and then choose how we want to respond.

Choose what to do next

Feelings are for feeling. That's all. There's no reason to judge them, explain them, justify them, fear them, or stuff them. Feelings are natural events, just like the weather. To condemn a feeling is like saying that rain is immoral. We can feel any feeling without acting in ways that damage ourselves, others, or our environment.

It is liberating to discover that actions and feelings can function independently. We do not have to feel strong, powerful, or motivated before we take constructive action. We can do what needs doing in our lives without fixing our feelings first.

That's fortunate. Our feelings constantly shift with the flow of outside events. When the baby is screaming at 2 a.m., the boss is in a bloodthirsty mood, or the weather is overcast and rainy for days on end, we can feel low, even depressed. We can find ourselves just reacting to other people's reactions: someone insults us, we fire back a nasty remark; rain falls, we sink into sadness; the car has a flat tire, we seethe with rage. If we thoughtlessly react to those feelings, we'll find ourselves constantly at the mercy of the circumstances that triggered our feelings.

Instead, we can notice our feelings, accept them, and choose what to do next. Instead of lamenting the rainy weather, we can call a friend or curl up with a favorite book. Instead of complaining about what a jerk the boss is, we can look for the underlying problem that sparked her anger and find a way to solve it. We can even attend to the screaming infant, knowing that we can feel sleepy and still attend to business tomorrow morning.

It's to our advantage to have a clear sense of what we can control—and what we can't. The weather and other people's reactions are two examples of items that belong in the latter category. Instead, we can let go of such things and focus instead on what we can control—our focus of attention and our actions. Remembering this offers a stable and lasting source of happiness.

Remember that like begets like

Yes, it is a challenge to be loving when others aren't. It's easy to react in kind when someone is rude, caustic, or resentful—easy and ineffective. Sinking to a lower level merely adds to the environment of tension, upset, and misery.

Being happier involves letting others have their feelings and not taking it personally. Feelings, whether they happen to us or someone else, are not right or wrong—they just happen.

When another person is angry or rude, they aren't broken and we don't have to fix them. If we want to be happier, we can accept the other person, notice our feelings about them, and then choose what to do next. Unhappiness is contagious. Awareness, attention, and action offer the antidote that protects our system from further unhappiness.

> ***"Happiness is not a possession to be prized, it is a quality of thought, a state of mind."***
>
> –Daphne Du Maurier

Liberate behaviors from feelings

Recall a time when you blamed one of your behaviors on a particular feeling. For instance: "I was so mad that I hit him." Describe the feelings involved and then describe the behavior that followed.

Now describe several alternative behaviors that you could have chosen to follow these same feelings.

STEP OUT STEP BACK GET BACK ON TRACK

We can't always see where we "are" from where we stand right now. To get an accurate picture of our lives, it pays to get away and gain some perspective. Doing this is one of the most powerful ways to increase our personal effectiveness.

Note that "to get away" means doing whatever allows you to see your life objectively, as a neutral observer would. This doesn't mean that you have to move out of town, say goodbye to your friends, or sit on a mountain top for a year (although that can work well.) Getting perspective can be as simple as spending 15 minutes alone to write in your journal.

Different areas of our lives can deteriorate so slowly that problems become strangely invisible. Abusive relationships often start slowly and eventually escalate to a point that people accept the intolerable. Money problems often start with small debts that mushroom into stifling obligations. We can nip these difficulties in the bud when we take the time to notice them early on.

A story about frogs and boiling water makes this point. If you put a frog into a shallow pan of cool water, the frog is likely to enjoy it and sit there for a while. If you take the frog out, heat the water to boiling, and then put the frog back in, the frog will jump out immediately. But if you put cool water in a pan, put the frog in, and then slowly heat the water to boiling, the frog's nervous system will not register the changing temperature. The frog will sit there until it dies. If the frog had the ability to register the gradual changes as they were happening, it might live to endure another experiment.

Luckily, we humans can jump out of the pan before the water boils. We have the capacity to step back and gain perspective before the heat gets intolerable.

The benefits of regularly taking time to step back and get on track are numerous: relaxation, fresh perspective, and renewed energy to build a life with more happiness, health, love, and wealth.

There are many possible strategies for doing this, including those that follow.

Take a retreat

Some religious traditions stress the value of scheduling a regular time for spiritual retreats. These provide a time for people to be alone, reassess their direction in life, reflect on the gifts that they've received, and choose how to give something back to the world.

Each of us can set aside time for a personal retreat and give it the same respect we give other important appointments. Even a few minutes of solitude can help.

Take some time off from a behavior

For some selected period of time each year, you can take complete break from a key behavior in your life. It usually works well to stagger these breaks. For example, in January avoid sugar for one week. In March, take a 10-day break from seeing any relative. In April, avoid all television

for three weeks. And, in May, be celibate for two weeks. June might be the month you choose to eat only vegetarian foods. These breaks offer an opportunity to experience life with fresh eyes and to experiment with new options. These exercises in changing your normal routine can be powerful reminders that you have the ability to make whatever other changes in your life you deem worthwhile. Writing your intention to take such breaks and planning them into your life will greatly increase the chances that they will occur.

Describe your life to someone else

Choose someone who can be objective and describe your life in great detail to this person. You can do this verbally or in writing. Then request feedback. Ask this person to reflect on the major themes, issues, failures, and successes in your life. Also ask if this person sees any problems surfacing that you may not recognize.

See yourself through the eyes of another

Pretend that you're someone else who knows you well—perhaps a close friend or family member. Mentally stand in that other person's shoes and then write a description of yourself. Describe yourself the way that other person would. Follow up with some Discovery Statements about what you learned and some Intention Statements about any behaviors you want to change.

Coach yourself

When faced with a problem in your life, first put it into words. Describe the problem to someone or put it in writing, defining it as carefully as you can. Then, pretend that someone else is having this problem and write down several suggestions for this person. Afterwards, ask yourself if any of these suggestions might work for you. This is one way to start being your own coach.

Another option is to pretend that you're describing your problem to a wise person. Then, play the role of this wise person and offer a response. You don't have to know in advance what you'll say. Just trust that after you've described your problem, a wise part of you will come to life. You might be surprised at the insights you uncover.

Reread journal entries

One advantage of keeping a journal is the joy of rereading what you have written. See if you can spot recurring patterns in your thinking and behavior. Notice how you solved problems in the past; perhaps an old strategy can work again. Be sure to take a few moments to savor the sweet memories and celebrate your successes.

EXERCISE

Write a Journal Entry

This exercise provides you with an opportunity to use journal writing as a way to step out, step back, and get back on track. If you have never kept a journal, this exercise will give you a chance to begin. You can choose to make journal writing a regular habit. If you already keep a journal, you now have an opportunity to spend some more time writing in it.

All you need to complete this exercise is pencil and paper. If you want, go the extra mile and get a special notebook, diary, or journal to experiment with.

Select one issue is your life and write about it. Note any of your thoughts, emotions, or behaviors that are associated with this issue. If you get stuck, review the guidelines for writing Discovery and Intention Statements on pages 13 to 15.

CHANGE YOUR MIND

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought," said an ancient sage. To put it simply, unhappy people are filled with thoughts that promote misery. If there's one skill that happy people consistently demonstrate, it's the ability to monitor and manage their thinking. This skill can be a life saver, and it starts with a simple act of paying attention.

Choose where to focus your attention

If you want to be happier, you can begin by habitually asking one question: Where is my attention right now?

This question is based on two fundamental ideas. First, most of the time we can exert some choice over where we place our attention. Second, where we place our attention has a lot to do with how happy we are.

If we were to set aside a specific time to remember all the details of many exciting, wonderful, and joyful experiences, it is a good bet that during that time we would feel happier. If, however, during that same time period, we were to choose to remember all the details of various painful, unpleasant, and depressing events in our lives, we are more likely to feel sad.

Now, take this single choice about where to place attention and remember that we make this choice scores of times every day. Such choices add up to our experience of life—happy, sad, or indifferent.

What we choose to focus our attention on accounts for many of the differences between people. One person picks up the morning newspaper and attends to all the stories about war, accidents, and homicide. Another person focuses on the sports page, the comics, and a feature story about a man who survives cancer. Our first reader might well say, "There's nothing good in the paper. The world is going to hell in a handbasket." The second person is more likely to say, "I enjoy reading the paper. Almost every day, I can find something useful there." Even if these two people live in the same house, they live in two different worlds. And it's easy to guess who is happier.

Some people might argue that this suggestion is promoting denial—that if all we did is look for the good, we'd miss what's really happening and live in a fantasy world of our own misguided fabrication. We would then not be able to deal very effectively with troubling issues that need attention.

It's true that there are many troubling circumstances in the world. It is also true that there are many examples of courage, wisdom, and love. We can be balanced, fully aware of it all, and still choose where to focus our attention. We can also choose where to invest our emotional, spiritual, and physical energy.

This suggestion is not about denial. It is about a general approach to managing the way we see the world. The point is that we can make moment-to-moment choices about where to place our attention.

Choose new thoughts

If we want to be miserable, we can take certain beliefs to heart and base our actions entirely on them. Psychologist Albert Ellis points to three beliefs in particular that can instantly undercut our happiness:

- Other people must always do exactly what we want them to do.
- Events must turn out exactly as we want them to.
- We must never disappoint ourselves or act contrary to our expectations.

These three ideas are behind many of the comments we hear from people who are upset: "I hate rainy weather; it always makes me sad." "I can't believe what a jerk that guy is." "People ought never to say those things." "I'll never learn how to speak in public." "I always panic at the last minute." "I can't be happy because I'll always have to take care of my sister." What's common to each statement is the unspoken demand for life to conform to their expectations.

Language can sound the alarm that we are living by the irrational beliefs Ellis describes. Listen especially for the words, "always", "can't", "never", and "have to." Such words imply that we are victims, bound by circumstances we cannot control.

The good news is that we can start to turn our minds around by replacing the beliefs listed above with their antidotes:

- Other people may or not act the way we want them to. We don't have to invest our well-being in other people.
- Sometimes, despite our best efforts, events will turn out in disappointing ways. We don't have to invest our well-being in how things turn out.
- Even when our lives are going well, We still have flaws. We might make mistakes now and then. We don't have to invest our well-being in performing perfectly.

As writer Ken Keyes puts it, we can soften our demands into preferences. That's likely to lead to a whole new way of talking: "Yes, that guy insulted me, but I don't have to let it get to me. People do that sometimes." "I prefer sunny skies over rain. I'll just change my plans for today." "I don't like getting nervous before a speech, but I'll survive. With enough practice, I'll improve." "My sister is unhappy much of the time. I'll help her where I can and remember that I can't fix her life for her."

Trying to force old thoughts into a new groove can involve a lot of struggle—like trying to paddle a canoe upstream, outfitted only with wooden spoons. The more we resist irrational thoughts, the stronger they can become.

One solution is to not scold ourselves when we detect any of the three irrational beliefs creeping into our thinking. Instead, we can simply notice how these beliefs are reflected in our speaking. Then we can gently change our speaking and start to align our actions with our new words. This strategy is more like rowing with the current. After all, it's easier to control our speaking and behavior than to control our constant stream of thought.

There's no reason to live with thoughts that don't serve us. Just as we chose foods that promote health, we can choose thoughts and speaking that promote happiness. Sometimes, the path to well being starts, not with changing our circumstances, but changing our minds.

CHANGING YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES WON'T HURT EITHER

One of the messages of this book is that happiness can be independent of circumstances. That is, we can be happy even when we don't have all the money, time, relationships, or experiences we want. From this point of view, happiness is not about freedom from problems; it's about learning how to live with problems.

This idea is a powerful one—except when it isn't. Look folks, this whole "happiness doesn't depend on circumstances" thing is just an idea. Life is larger than logic, and every idea has limits.

Yes, it's often true that we can be happy no matter what our circumstances are. People have even been happy in jail, in poverty, and while dying. It is also true that, in most cases, happiness can be enhanced when we alter our circumstances. Sometimes a powerful way to be happier is to solve a problem, to earn some more money, to fix the car, to change our eating habits, or to repair a relationship.

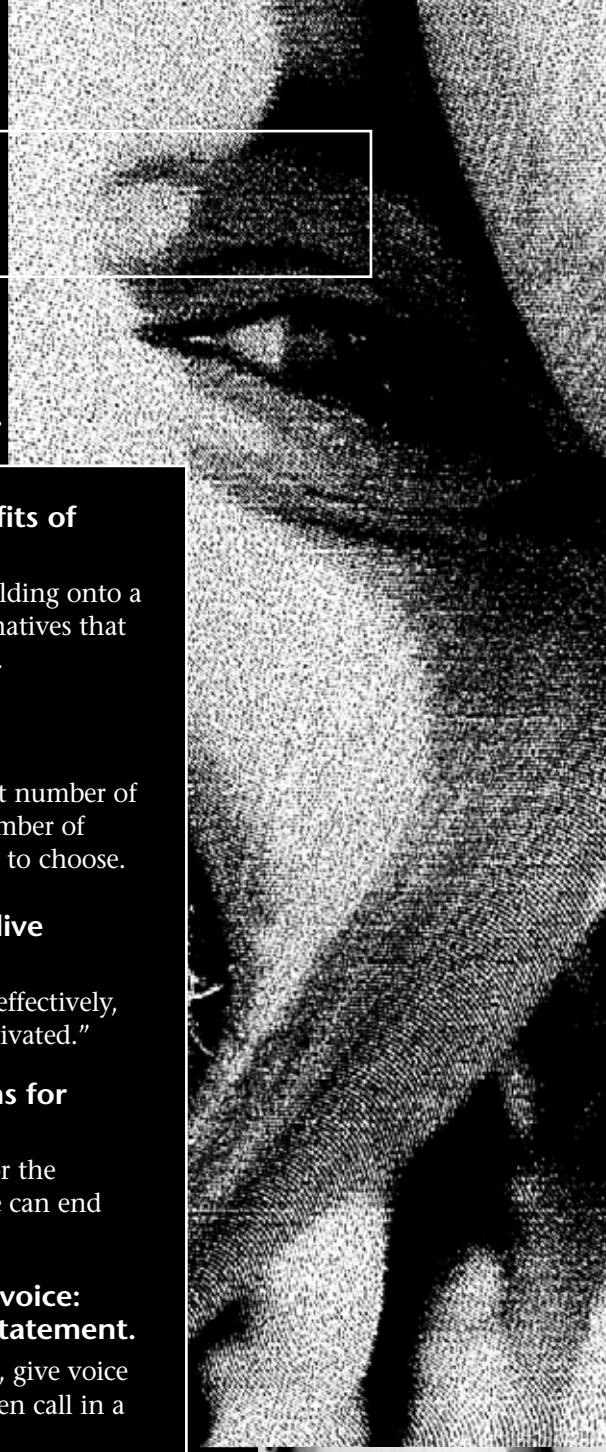
Negative feelings are often a wake-up call, a pointer to something that needs doing or a circumstance that needs changing. For instance, guilt is a natural accompaniment to breaking a promise, telling a lie, or doing something else that's inconsistent with our values. Anger might be linked to letting others take advantage of us. Irritability might be associated with harboring a grudge against another. Loneliness can happen when we refuse to say what we're really thinking and feeling.

In each case, we can take some kind of action to clean up the problems. We may need to make amends, to apologize, to pay off a debt, to set and enforce our personal boundaries, or to be more assertive. We may need to set goals and create a new plan of action. All these strategies can pave the way for more happiness.

Since solving problems can be such a wonderful way to promote happiness, this topic deserves our attention. For more ideas, see the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Problems



In this chapter you'll find.

Eight ways to keep our problems.

Denial, avoidance, resistance, blaming, resignation, righteousness, and playing the martyr are some ways we stay stuck with problems.

Ask whether you're holding onto problems: Discovery Statement.

Observe carefully to see if you're using any of the eight ways to perpetuate problems.

Embrace the problem.

Define difficulties clearly, tell the truth, and be willing step up close to a problem.

Embrace a problem, then dance with it: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Choose a strategy to help you embrace your problem.

Solve the problem.

You can use a traditional five-step process—define it, brainstorm solutions, evaluate possibilities, act, and repeat the process—to tackle almost any problem.

Find the hidden benefits of a problem.

Look for any payoffs in holding onto a problem, then create alternatives that deliver even more benefits.

Consider the costs of a solution.

The option with the largest number of benefits—or the fewest number of costs—may not be the one to choose.

Create motivation or live without it.

We can act decisively and effectively, even when we're not "motivated."

Reconsider the reasons for your behaviors.

When we scour the past for the causes of our problems, we can end up fooling ourselves.

Give your struggles a voice: Discovery/Intention Statement.

As you consider a problem, give voice to all sides of the issue. Then call in a mediator.

Eight Ways to Keep Our Problems

Many people are far more skilled at keeping a problem in place than resolving it. Commonly, they use the following eight strategies to hold on to their problem.

1. Deny it

Some people respond to trouble by denying that the problem exists. Not only does the problem continue—it's buried under an additional problem called denial. This makes the problem harder to uncover and, consequently, more difficult to handle.

When we are in denial about something, we navigate our way through life with a blind spot. Then we wonder why we keep bumping into things and getting bruised. Denial helps ensure that a problem will stay with us.

Assume, for example, that someone is afraid to speak in front of group, even if it's a small group. Assume that this person denies he has a problem. Because he is denying the real problem, he might find himself making some ridiculous excuses for his choice not to give speeches. He might say, "No one wants to hear what I have to say," or "I really have nothing to say that will make much difference."

Denial perpetuates a lie. Until we can tell the truth about our troubles, we are unlikely to be able to do much about them.

2. Avoid it

Another way people respond to trouble is by avoiding it. Avoiding a problem is often nothing more than postponing the inevitable showdown.

One problem with avoidance is that fear is always with us, and we are usually on guard. The problem, along with our attempts to avoid it, is actually controlling us. We might be able to avoid the direct experience of our problem for a while, but we can never escape the constant threat of having to face it.

Note that avoiding a problem and denying it are two different things. If we avoid a problem, we can acknowledge that it exists, be fully aware of it, and then still choose to avoid it. Denial, on the other hand, is fooling ourselves about the existence of the problem and not even allowing ourselves to be aware of it.

Avoiding a problem can consume even more time and energy than tackling it head on. Avoiding trouble can limit our full participation in life. We cheat ourselves (and others) of rich, full lives. We restrict where we go, what we do, and who we hang out with.

Return to the example of the man who is afraid to speak to a group. Even if he stops denying the problem, he could still avoid it. He might refuse to join clubs, to get involved in politics, or to attend meetings. He might scrap plans for further education or limit his career options. Even if this man is able to structure his life so that he seldom speaks to groups, his fear is always just below the surface. He is short circuiting many opportunities for satisfaction, fulfillment, and happiness.

3. Resist it

Another strategy for dealing with trouble while keeping it in place is to fight the unpleasant emotions associated with it. We resist. We struggle. Using willpower and sheer determination, we attempt to overpower our emotions, and drive them from our lives.

Sometimes this works. More often, the harder we fight against our emotions, the harder they fight back. The man who avoids public speaking can grit his teeth and try to choke off his feelings of fear. Chances are, the more he tries to suppress the feeling, the stronger it gets. That leads to more suppression, followed by more fear, and so on.

There's a general formula for this kind of vicious cycle: Resistance = Persistence. The harder we resist, the more the problem persists. When we attempt to wrestle our problems out of existence, they often win the match.

4. Fix the blame for it

Some people, when confronted with trouble, follow a simple rule: When trouble comes, assign the blame quickly

Knowing and declaring who or what is to blame helps some people feel better. They can go to sleep at night with a clear conscience and experience self-righteous indignation about the source of the trouble. Nevertheless, when they wake up in the morning, the trouble is still present. But at least they can continue to take comfort by fixing the blame.

Again, back to the man who's afraid of public speaking. He might remember that during show-and-tell in his first-grade class some students laughed at his favorite toy, a ragged teddy bear. He remembers deciding right then and there that he would never get up in front of a group again. Years later, he can find it easier to blame his problem on those other first-graders than to choose how to move beyond it.

5. Explain it

To some people, a good explanation can be as satisfying as a suitable outcome. Besides, explaining usually takes less work. Anyone who hears a logical, reasonable explanation for a problem and still insists on asking for a change, might be considered unreasonable or sympathetic. Never mind the fact that things aren't working. At least there's a good reason for it.

The reason someone might give for being afraid to speak in public might be, "People in general are judgmental and critical, and anyone in their right mind–any rational, reasonable person–would logically be leery of speaking in front of others. I would just be setting myself up for criticism."

The net result of this convincing argument is a huge cost. This "rational, reasonable" person is missing the opportunity to share his good ideas with lots of people who would be interested and nonjudgmental.

These explanations are another pitfall in solving problems. When logic and reason prevail and trouble is explained away, everyone loses.

6. Be "right" about it

The desire to be right is a powerful force. In cases involving deeply felt convictions, many people choose being "right" over being happy. Self-righteousness wins.

The man who refuses to speak in public might experience some happiness or satisfaction because he is right about people being judgmental. Or, he can let go of being right, explore public speaking, become a more effective speaker, and enjoy a fuller, richer, and more satisfying life.

7. Be resigned about it

Resignation is an obvious way to allow a problem to persist. To be resigned means to throw up our hands, shake our heads, turn away, and give up. When trouble is too big, too hard, or too hopeless, we sometimes admit defeat and quit.

The advantage of resignation is that the battle ends. We can turn our attention to something more pleasant. That benefit comes with a cost: We often give in long before we have come close to applying all the resources at our disposal. When we're resigned, we often feel like victims and cheat ourselves of the opportunity to resolve the trouble.

Frequent resignation leads to a dynamic the psychologists refer to as learned helplessness. Assume that we've experienced repeated failure trying to solve a problem. We conclude, sometimes painfully, that our attempts are futile. We might learn this lesson so well that we automatically fall into resignation even under different circumstances, when our chances of success are great. We don't even bother to try, because we've learned to be helpless.

The person who does not speak *in public* might be resigned about his problem. After struggling for years, trying all sorts of approaches to solve his problem, he just throws in the towel and gives up.

Let's assume he's been invited to join some friends for a weekend camping trip. His resignation about speaking in groups might be so deeply ingrained that the thought telling stories around a campfire is more that he can handle. He declines the invitation and spends the weekend alone.

This person has learned resignation so well that he's applying the skill to many situations that go beyond public speaking. Carried to an extreme, his learned resignation about public speaking might expand in such a way that he avoids all contact with the public. He might even become fearful of leaving his own home.

There are times when it does pay to surrender to a problem. Maybe we've given it our best shot and worked hard to solve the problem. After investing years of effort, we have nothing to show but the physical and emotional scars from the battle. Instead of continuing to beat our heads against the wall, we can just leave it alone. There's an old saying: "When your horse is dead, dismount."

Surrender in this way is different from resignation. When we surrender to a problem, we let go of our old, failed methods for solving a problem. That allows us to ask for help and become open to a new approach. Even in surrender, there's an ongoing relationship with the problem. When we resign, we sever that relationship and choke off any chance of a future breakthrough.

8. Be a martyr about it

One definition of a martyr is: A person who makes a great show of suffering. The payoff is gaining sympathy and attention. Meanwhile, the original problem goes unsolved.

If enough sympathy and attention is forthcoming, some people would rather let problems fester than be solved. The man who avoids public speaking might lament his troubles in melodramatic ways that bring him undue attention. If he were to handle his problem, he'd have to give up the sympathy he gets from others.

Ask whether you're holding onto problems

The previous article explained eight strategies that people use to keep problems in place. To complete this Journal entry, think about these methods and about how you have used them. Write an example for each of these strategies.

If you are not able to come up with an example right away, give it some more thought. Or, ask friends or relatives if they can supply an example for you. It might be useful to keep examining your history or your current circumstances until you find a different example of each strategy from your own life.

1. Denying a problem

2. Avoiding a problem

3. Resisting a problem

4. Fixing the blame for a problem

5. Explaining a problem

6. Being "right" about a problem

7. Being resigned about a problem

8. Being a martyr about a problem

Follow up with a Discovery Statement about ways you might be holding onto a current problem.

I discovered that I . . .

EMBRACE THE PROBLEM

In their quest to be happy, many people see problems as things to avoid. That's understandable. We've all experienced problems. Few would argue that they're fun.

We can count on problems being present in our lives—even when we have happy lives. Happiness lies not in banishing problems, but in having the resources to meet any problem head-on. Problem solving is a skill that can be learned and practiced.

Following are ways to embrace and dance with problems. The words dance and embrace might seem strange when talking about problems. Yet, consider the power of this approach. When we mentally dance with a problem, we get close to it, learn all the details about it, and focus our attention and action on it.

Keep in mind that embracing and dancing with "trouble" does not mean seeking it out. Most of us already have more than enough trouble to stay challenged and busy. The words dance and embrace point to what we can do when problems show up uninvited.

The advantage of embracing and dancing with problems is that we gain a clearer idea of what they're all about. When we're no longer resisting them, we can decide what to do about them. We're far more likely to choose and implement powerful strategies for solving them.

Tell the truth

Embracing problems begins with telling the truth. In doing so, we go to the heart of the problem. We avoid getting distracted or skirting the issue. Usually, the most direct approach to a problem is to walk up to it and shake hands with it.

If the truth is that we are afraid to speak in public, we can start by admitting it. That simple truth can stand alone, without evaluation, blame, justification, excuse, rationalization, or explanation. It can take on the status of a simple fact: Rocks are hard, water is wet, the sun rises in the east, and we are afraid to speak in public. Naturally, our feelings about public speaking are probably more charged than our feelings about rocks. Even so, we can tell the simple, factual truth.

We can do the same with a host of other problems: unhappy marriages, low self-esteem, financial worries, job stress, illness, and many more. Whatever our troubles, we can begin with truth telling.

Embrace problems and bring them close

We will know that we're embracing a problem when we experience it and still feel reasonably comfortable. It's unrealistic to pretend that we'll have loving, enlightened reactions to every problem we face. As happy people, we can still experience fear, anger, upset, and frustration. The key is to not let our reactions turn into debilitating anxiety, reduce us to inaction, or render us ineffective.

Here comes a tricky part. Embracing something does not necessarily mean agreeing with it. We can accept something, understand it, and even be relatively comfortable around it—all the while disagreeing with it.

Our spouses, for example, might complain that we never show affection. We can accept that this is their genuine experience and that it is not a lie. We can even express our regret that such feelings are true for our spouse. At the same time, we can make specific plans to demonstrate our love more frequently.

Move even closer

Standing squarely in front of our troubles requires courage and can result in discomfort or anxiety. Our unwillingness or inability to deal with these feelings might tempt us to choose one of the eight ineffective strategies described previously.

One way to move closer to a problem is to examine our thinking. This can reveal irrational beliefs and unreasonable demands, such as expecting every single person we meet to like us or expecting everything we do will be perfect.

We can also examine our emotions with this kind of precise, focused attention. We can remember times when we've experienced the same emotions and look for similarities in the circumstances. We could rate the intensity of the emotion on a scale from one to 10—one being barely noticeable and 10 being outrageously out of control.

Close attention to the physical sensations in our bodies can reveal much about the very nature of emotion. The "meaning" of fear can be sweaty palms, shortness of breath, dizziness, shaking knees, chest pains, nausea, or a host of other physical events. Close examination often decreases the sensations. In some cases, the sensations and the problems even disappear when examined with close attention.

> ***It's only a thought, and a thought can be changed***
>
> –Louise May

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Embrace a problem, then dance with it

Choose a current problem in your life. Describe in detail how you could use the three steps in the preceding article to embrace and dance with that problem. Then choose a specific strategy to use and write an accompanying Intention Statement.

My current problem is . . .

I could embrace this problem by . . .

I intend to . . .

SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Consult the literature on problem solving and you'll find a vast array of suggestions and strategies. Despite their variety, most of these strategies are simply variations of an age-old tried-and-true method for solving problems. This method involves the following five steps:

1. ***Define the problem***
2. ***Brainstorm solutions***
3. ***Evaluate possibilities***
4. ***Take action***
5. ***Repeat the process***

1. Define the problem

Clearly outline the problem in writing. Define the problem in a way that eliminates all of the judgments and evaluations about the problem. Stick with the facts.

Keep in mind that a problem is a difference between what we have and what we want. If someone working as an accountant wants to make a living as a professional actor, that's a problem. If someone wants to retire in five years and has no savings, that's a problem, too.

In essence, problem solving is about closing the gap between these conditions. Closing the gap successfully involves putting on two distinctly different thinking caps.

The first cap could be labeled "Open up." This is the cap to wear while working through the first two steps of this process. Begin by generating as many ways of stating the problem as you can. Often the more specific we can be, the closer we can come to reaching a solution.

For example, someone who has chronic financial problems might get stuck in saying, "I just can't seem to get ahead financially." This statement is a fine place to start to define the problem. The next step is to get down to details. The specific problem might be any of these:

> *I consistently charge the maximum on my credit cards.*

> *I often buy things on impulse, trusting that I'll find a way to pay for them later.*

> *I don't like paying bills, so I put off the task until I have to pay a late charge.*

Allow time for this exploration. Stopping too soon can keep a dimension of the problem hidden from us. Staying in the inquiry helps us tell the whole truth about the situation.

It has been argued that a clearly defined problem is 50 percent solved. Compare the power of these two problem statements:

> *I just can't seem to lose weight.*

> *I tend to finish every meal in 10 minutes or less. I eat so fast, I end up with second and third helping before I even realize it. Then I feel stuffed and sorry that I ate so much.*

The second problem statement points to many solutions. They include finding an effective way to eat more slowly, posting reminders to slow down at the dining room table, pausing for 15 seconds between bites, and walking around the house before taking a second helping. These are just a few examples. Such options are not obvious when the problem is still fuzzy and vague, as in the first statement.

A clearly defined problem goes a long way toward eliminating ineffective solutions. In fact, the way we define a problem often determines the solution we choose.

What's more, a clearly defined problem stays in the forefront. We often deal with a problem only when it hurts. When it stops hurting, it's easy to lose sight of the problem. The best time to fix a leak in the roof is when the sun is shining. Once we define a problem clearly, it's much harder for us to deny the problem or pretend that it's gone.

Writing can be a big help here. Putting our problem statements and solutions on paper helps us spot errors and gaps in logic. A solution that sounds reasonable might look like wishful thinking after we have clarified it enough to put it in writing. Working out the bugs on paper ahead of time can be a lot simpler than patching up errors later.

2. Brainstorm solutions

After the problem has been clearly defined, the next step is to brainstorm as many possible solutions as you can for each of your problem statements. Here, you are continuing to wear the cap called "Open up."

Sometimes, it's hard for people to make the transition from talking about the problem to talking about the solution. When people are standing knee-deep in difficulty, their conversation is often centered on what's wrong. They might focus almost exclusively on the problem. They might complain, excuse, justify, or simply resign themselves to being miserable.

There is another option. We can choose our conversations. If our conversations have focused on the problem 90 percent of the time (and on solutions for only 10 percent), we can turn that focus around. We can focus our attention on possible solutions 90 percent of the time.

When brainstorming solutions to the problem, remember that quantity, not quality, is the key to generating creative solutions. During this step of the problem-solving process, no possible solution is too outlandish. Even the most wild and crazy can inspire an effective solution.

3. Evaluate possibilities

This step calls for a new thinking cap, one labeled "Narrow down." After creating a list of problem statements and possible solutions, we're well on the way to putting the problem behind us. The next step is to look over the whole list of wonderful, creative solutions that you generated for each of the problem statements and pick the ones that seem to have real potential.

4. Take action

Coming up with solutions is a big step toward solving our problems. Now, an equally crucial step remains: Backing up thinking with action. The most powerful and precisely stated solution is of little value when it just sits on the shelf. The world responds to what we do—not merely to what we say or think we'll do. Our problems usually spring from ineffective behavior. If we want solutions, it pays to behave in new ways.

5. Repeat the process

If you've followed the first four steps, you're meeting the problem head-on. Even so, you're not finished with problems yet.

At times, solutions fix problems—for a while. Then conditions change or we change, and our problems resurface. At other times, our solutions introduce new problems of their very own. And, at still other times, the solutions we have implemented just don't work.

When this happens, we get even more opportunities for problem solving. It's then time to repeat the cycle of defining, brainstorming, evaluating, and taking action.

Effective human beings are not problem-free. Instead, they can consistently take on problems that are worthy of their time and talents.

FIND THE HIDDEN BENEFITS OF A PROBLEM

Conventional wisdom states that people want to solve their problems. This might not be true 100 percent of the time. Sometimes, people fear change so much that they're willing to live with an old upset or put up with a current source of misery.

Look for the payoffs

All behavior, no matter how it may look on the surface, has a positive purpose. This even includes behaviors like overeating, getting drunk, or even becoming addicted to cocaine. Often the aim is to overcome pain, stop feeling empty, or get past loneliness—in short, to get a better quality of life. Even though these actions may fail miserably in the long run, they often work in the short term. All behavior has some payoff.

This point of view gives us a powerful way to change behavior. We can look for the payoffs in destructive behavior. Then we can look for other ways to get the same payoffs with fewer costs. Example: Instead of taking cocaine to lift us out a depressed state, we can take a brisk walk, do some calming yoga stretches, or learn to meditate. Each of these actions can alter our consciousness without the costs of pumping ourselves with drugs (of course, this is an oversimplification of one strategy that can be used as part of a comprehensive treatment plan for addictive and compulsive disorders.)

This way of seeing a problem can help people overcome regret about giving up a habit that brought them pleasure. Instead of giving up the payoff, they are merely finding a different means to the same pleasure. Instead of denying themselves, they are gaining a strategy that works even better.

CONSIDER THE COSTS OF A SOLUTION

It seems natural to apply cost-benefit analysis to business and financial decisions. Cost-benefit analysis can be equally useful in making personal choices and solving personal problems.

Analyzing costs and benefits can be a powerful tool in any sphere of life, from deciding which brand of peanut butter to buy to deciding which person to marry. Writing can help. Simply list the various alternatives, list the costs and benefits of each one, and make a choice.

One caution: The option with the largest number of benefits—or the fewest number of costs—may not be the one we choose. Sometimes, a long list of advantages leads people to feel they should choose an option they don't really want.

The point is not to tally up the costs and benefits and then mechanically choose the option with the highest "score." Rather, the aim is to get clear about what the costs and benefits are before choosing.

A married couple is deciding whether or not to have a child. They think about the sleepless nights, the extra expense, the midnight feedings, the constant demands a baby can bring. Their list of costs gets pretty long.

On the benefit side is only one entry: Watching the miracle of new life come into being. Even though this benefit is the only one and sounds pretty vague, they choose to have a baby anyway. These people realized that they were in charge—not their cost-benefit list.

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Please send additional examples for this article and the preceding one.

CREATE MOTIVATION OR LIVE WITHOUT IT

I'm low on motivation today.

I've got a bad attitude.

I just don't have the will power to get it done.

I never had much self discipline.

I just lack dedication.

I'm feeling lazy today.

Guess I'm not very ambitious.

All these lines are different ways of saying that something is missing from life. That mysterious something is dubbed "motivation." The lack of it is a reason for not getting things done, for failing to be all we can be.

Pretend for a moment that there's a conspiracy to keep us passive, afraid, and resigned to live at 10 percent of our potential. To do this, the conspirators know they have to take over our minds and hearts. The best way to do that may be to install a new belief system . . . one that requires people to have motivation.

"We've got to have people believe that they cannot move themselves into action by their own power," say the crouched figures plotting to take over the nation. "We'll tell them that they need something outside themselves, yet we won't tell them how to find it—or how to make it last, even if they do find it. What's more, we'll tell people that they can only take action when they feel like taking action. And when the feeling subsides, we'll tell them that the only way to make it come back is to hire expensive motivational speakers at a per diem plus expenses. Yes, that's it! We'll make them believe in motivation."

Yes, it's a screwball scenario. Yet millions of people act as if the corny scenario were true. They refuse to take constructive action until they have motivation.

Maybe the belief that we need motivation is a myth. This idea may upset a lot of people. It means giving up hope that someone or something outside of us can magically infuse us with energy, enthusiasm, vigor, or vitality. That can be hard news.

There is good news: We don't have to depend on others to motivate us. We can generate consistent and powerful action by ourselves, relying on our own choices and creativity. You can start now with the suggestions on the next page.

Just give your word—and keep it

If we wait for motivation to strike us before we change our lives, we could well end up waiting forever. Instead, we could give our word and, of course, mean it. We can promise to start exercising, get that reading done, complete that project, or stop eating desserts. We can promise these actions to other people and ask them to hold us accountable.

Perhaps people don't have varied amounts of willpower, they just have different histories and habits about giving their word and keeping it. Maybe motivation is nothing more complicated than a promise: "I will get it done; you can count on it."

What we call motivation might be just a habit. It comes simply from making clear decisions and acting on them. Self-discipline, willpower, motivation—the lack of these mysterious attributes need not get in our way. We can just make promises and keep them. Using this strategy, we can create motivation from moment to moment.

Keeping your word sometimes means doing tasks you'd rather put off. And that can lead to discomfort. If this happens to you, then befriend the discomfort. Notice the thoughts running through your head and speak them out loud: "I'd rather walk on a bed of hot coals than do this. This is the last thing I want to do right now."

Also observe what's happening with your body. Are you breathing faster or slower than usual? Is your breathing shallow or deep? Are your shoulders tight? Do you feel any tension in your stomach, neck, or jaw?

Once you're in contact with your mind and body, stay with the discomfort a few minutes. Don't judge it as good or bad. Resisting thoughts and body sensations allows them to persist. Accepting them robs them of their power, and then they might stop being a barrier for you.

Find a motive

Instead of looking for an abstract attribute like having motivation, you can simply find a worthwhile motive. Simply remind yourself about the long-term benefit of your planned action. The next task on your to-do list could be one step toward a degree, a promotion, or an improvement in a relationship. It could mean satisfying your curiosity or meeting a new challenge.

Remembering the benefits of an action can help us get moving.

What people call motivation often springs from being clear about what we want in life. Being clear about our life purpose and long-range plans can give us all the energy we need to play life full out.

Raise the stakes

Think for a moment about a change you'd like to make in your life right now, anything from losing five pounds to changing careers. Pick a change that you haven't been motivated enough to complete. Now, imagine that someone offered you $250,000 to get the task done. That's one-quarter of a million dollars! Do you think you might approach the task a little differently? Do you think the chances of your being successful would improve?

This mental exercise is useful even when there's no rich benefactor in our lives. It teaches us that we can really get the job done if the stakes are high enough.

A variation on this strategy is to impose a realistic and severe consequence for not reaching your goal: "I promise to finish my report on the due date. If I miss the deadline, I will give up my vacation." Or, promise to write a check for $1,000 to someone you don't particularly like. If you really want to turn up the pressure, ask someone else to enforce the consequence. Give the airline tickets for your vacation to a trusted friend; make that person promise to give the tickets away if your report is not finished on time. Or, make out

the $1,000 check and give it to your friend with strict instructions to deliver the money if you fail to come through.

You can raise the stakes even more. Simply imagine how you would behave if your life were in immediate danger and the only way you could save it was to keep a significant promise.

Too many people act as if their actions make no difference, as if their promises don't matter. Instead, we could act as if our lives were at stake—if not our physical existence, then the quality of our lives. Happiness rests on making sound choices, living consistently with our values, and keeping promises.

Develop momentum

Consider for a moment the flywheel, a humble and powerful mechanical device. This is a heavy wheel that, once set into motion, is difficult to stop. Once the flywheel is spinning, it takes only small boosts of energy to keep it going. Investing the energy to develop the momentum of the flywheel pays off in the long run.

We can apply the same principle to motivation. Once we have it, it takes only small bursts of energy to keep it. To get the flywheel of motivation spinning, we can start by just doing one task toward a goal, no matter how small the task. This alone may not yield sudden excitement or inspiration, yet it's one step a way from feeling stuck in procrastination. We can follow this small task with another, then another, and even more. Often, the combined effect of these small tasks is all we need to fuel our motivation—to get our flywheels spinning. Action itself inspires more action. Motion creates motivation.

Use a different strategy

When faced with no motivation to complete a difficult task, it's tempting to grit your teeth, forge ambition of steel, and declare, "I'm going to just get through this with sheer willpower. I'm going to be more motivated." Yet, the problem may not be a lack of motivation. It may just be that your chosen strategy isn't right for this particular situation. If that's true, then there's little virtue in trying harder.

Take the person who has a yard full of dandelions. She chooses to get rid of them by mowing her yard twice a week. That doesn't work, so she decides to try harder: She mows every day. When that fails, she decides to mow every hour. Now, she can't see any dandelions, but she loses her job and gets little sleep besides. And when she takes a day off from mowing, there they are again. Clumps of dandelions keep appearing no matter how often she mows.

This example might sound silly. Yet, something similar can easily happen in our lives. We have a problem. We choose a strategy to solve the problem. So far, great. But the solution persists, so we try harder, repeating the same strategy over and over again. If that fails, we just feel worse. Faced with ultimate failure, we give up and excuse ourselves: "Well, I can't make this work. I just don't have enough willpower."

It would be far more effective for this dandelion hater to choose another strategy: sprinkle some weed killer (non-toxic and all-natural, of course) on her lawn. With a new strategy, she could root out those dandelions at the source. Willpower and sweat are no match for an effective strategy.

Suppose a person wants to stop biting his fingernails. His first strategy is to use willpower and just stop biting his nails. That fails. When he gets absorbed in some task, like working or watching television, he finds himself distracted—and with his fingers in his mouth. Instead of trying harder, he could:

- Punish himself with a small punishment each time he is biting his nails. Something simple could do: Snap a rubber band on his wrist, or put quarters in a jar that he'll later give to someone he doesn't like much.

- Keep a written log, simply making a small tick mark every time he finds himself biting his nails. Faced with the stark facts in black and white, he might find his nail biting decreasing naturally over time.

- Wear finger caps or gloves all the time. (Well, some ideas are better than others! Keep reading.)

- Replace the habitual action with another one. Every time he feels an urge to bite his nails, he could snap his fingers, massage his palm, rub the tip of his finger with another finger, file his nails, or shout something nonsensical like "All's well in the world tonight!" In fact, he might choose to do almost anything that's safe and legal—as long as it's not biting his nails.

- Stop and repeat an affirmation: "I have changed this habit and I am learning to be successful at what I choose."

- Get a manicure. That way, he knows he's destroying something valuable when he bites his nails, and wasting money besides.

- Stop biting his nails one finger at a time. After all, success breeds success. As soon as he realizes that he can avoid biting one fingernail, he learns that he can do it for all his nails, one at a time.

- Wear bright fingernail polish as a reminder to stop nail biting. (keep reading.)

- Dip his fingertips in an obnoxious-tasting solution many times each day.

- Reward himself at the end of each bite-free hour.

Choosing a new strategy interrupts the pattern. The point is simple: There is almost always another option. And, if that one doesn't make it—don't worry, be happy. Just choose another.

Take care when feeling overwhelmed

One antidote to not having motivation is to stop trying for a while. Besides providing a much needed rest, taking a break might loosen up thinking and help find another strategy.

Do something mindless. Walk. Call a friend. Nap. Watch a television show. Do an easier part of the same job. You just might release some reserves of hidden energy—of hidden motivation.

Just do it

Acknowledge and accept any feelings of aversion to doing a task. Then carry out your plan. Act on your intentions. You don't have to wait until you feel motivated before acting. In fact, moving into action might create all the "motivation" you need.

RECONSIDER THE REASONS FOR YOUR BEHAVIORS

Most of us have grown up in a culture that reinforces our search for why we behave the way we do. Sometimes it can be useful to know what leads to a particular action. The insight might suggest how we can make changes. However, sometimes our search for why we behave the way we do can keep us stuck in self-destructive behaviors.

We can spend months, or even years, exploring our histories so that we can figure out why we behave in a particular way, or why we are afraid of what we are afraid of, or why we want what we want. The problem with this exploration is that it can take the place of action. We might feel as though we have to understand the reasons for our behaviors before we can make a change to a new behavior. We might even falsely believe that once we find the reason for our behaviors or emotion, our behavior will change automatically.

Another danger is that when we do find the reason, we may use that reason to justify our continued behavior. A possible solution to all of this is to quickly assign a reason (several follow) and then move on to do whatever we need to do to improve our lives.

If you have a history of wanting to make sure that you know "why" you behave a certain way before you make a change, review the following list and pick your favorite reason:

Our parents taught us to do it that way.
Our heredity made us do it.
We were born without the necessary attributes.
It's the best possible reaction, given our history.
It's the path of least pain.
It's the path of least resistance.
It's the path of greatest pleasure
It's the best we can do.
It's a habit.
It's not a habit.
We're not morning people.
We're not evening people.
Our behavior was shaped by our culture/society.
Our behavior was shaped by political forces.
Our behavior was shaped by economic forces.
Somebody else made us do it.
We're tired.
We tried too hard and overdid it.
It's what we learned when we were children.
We haven't learned it yet.

We've been eating the wrong kinds of foods.
It's what our parents did.
This always happens in this kind of weather.
It's because the kids were bouncing off the walls today.
It's because of the full moon.
It's because of our biological instincts.
It's due to the powerful influence of TV and other media.

Now you have selected the reasons, you can really get to work. Whatever the cause of our behavior, it is still up to us to take action—to love, forgive, or move on.

> ***Happiness is that state of consciousness that proceeds from the achievement of one's values.***
>
> –Ayn Rand

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Give your struggles a voice

Take some problem that you are struggling with right now. Pretend that there are two parts of you, one on either side of the struggle. Give a name and a voice to each of these parts, ask them to debate with each other on paper. For example, the dialogue might start like this:

ADVENTURER: I want to take on this new project because, in the long run, everything will work out much better. I think you're just afraid.

CONSERVATIVE: Yeah, maybe. But the risks could ruin the whole thing. I think you're nuts.

After these two parts of you have fully expressed their points of view, bring in a third imaginary character: a mediator. Now, write or speak a dialogue that includes all three characters and notice what happens. Remember, you don't have to know how it is going to turn out before you begin this three-way conversation. The outcome will be revealed as you continue to engage in this dialog.

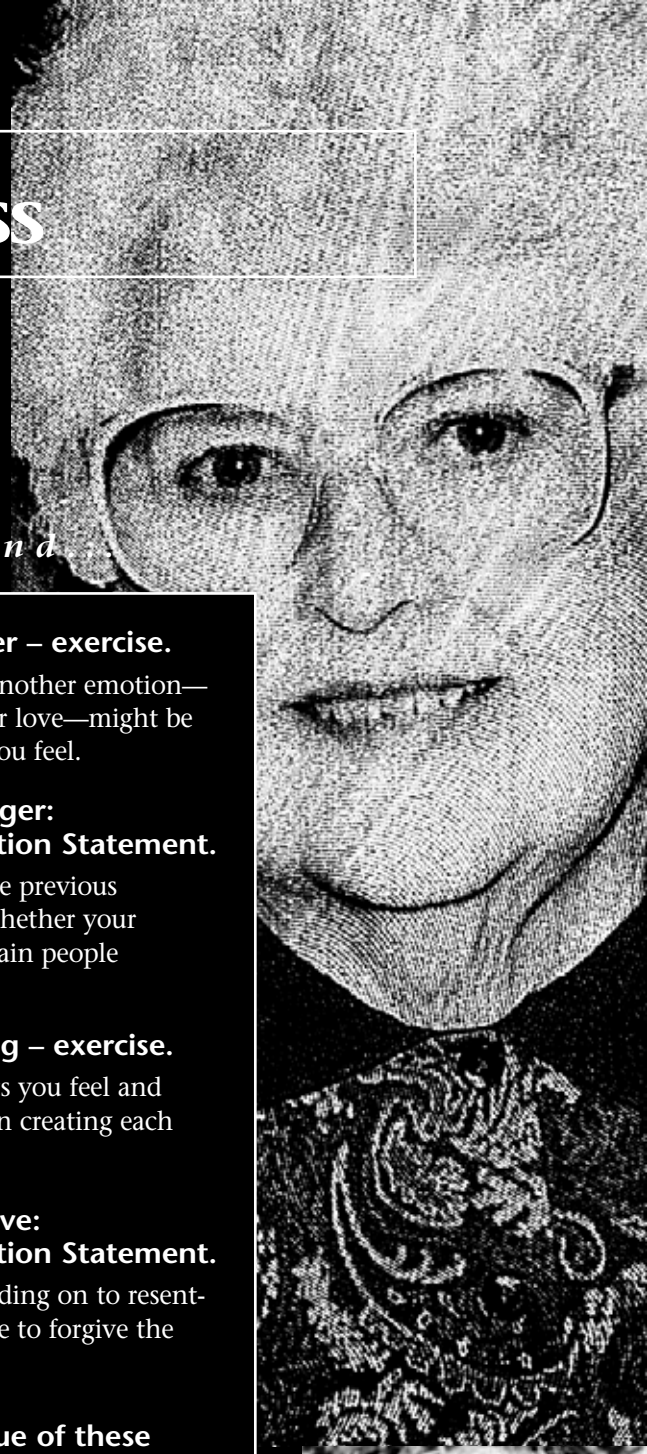
Now write a Discovery Statement describing what you learned from this writing or speaking and an Intention Statement that declares any actions you plan to take.

I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

Chapter 3

Happiness



In this chapter you'll find . . .

Practice creating happiness—any time, any place.

You can begin experiencing more happiness at any moment by considering the possibility that it does not depend on possessions, skills, or circumstances.

Create happiness by focusing attention: Discovery Intention Statement.

Remember a time when you felt happy. Make the scene as bright, detailed, and vivid as possible in your memory.

Create happiness now – exercise.

Practice generating happiness without "fixing" any part of your life.

Choose the freedom of forgiveness.

Forgiveness frees us from the weight of resentment.

Investigate anger – exercise.

Consider whether another emotion—including sadness or love—might be behind any anger you feel.

Look beyond anger: Discovery/Intention Statement.

After completing the previous exercise, consider whether your feelings toward certain people have changed.

Practice forgiving – exercise.

List any resentments you feel and consider your role in creating each resentment.

Promise to forgive: Discovery/Intention Statement.

List the costs of holding on to resentments and set a date to forgive the people you resent.

Multiply the value of these strategies – exercise.

Find several different applications for suggestions from this part of the book.

PRACTICE CREATING HAPPINESS ANY TIME, ANY PLACE

"LEARN THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS!!!"

Most of us have seen or heard this headline in an advertisement. Whether it's implied or suggested directly, the secret usually involves the purchase of books, tapes, self-improvement seminars, magazines, clothes, cologne, washers, dryers, liquor, recreational drugs, cigarettes, saddles, cars, and. . . well, you name it.

Sometimes advertisements make it seem like we can buy happiness or create it with lots of time and effort. These messages suggest that we're deficient and that the path to happiness requires us to acquire possessions or attributes that we lack.

Sometimes, the message we get is that we would be happy if we had different circumstances in our lives. This idea makes a lot of sense and is widely accepted. Certainly circumstances—the cars we drive, the houses we live in, the jobs we have, the people we're involved with, the amount of money in our bank accounts—can be powerful influences on the way we feel.

This section of *Human Being* proposes an alternative to the notion that happiness comes from new possessions, additional skills, of different circumstances. Maybe, we can separate these two conversations—the conversation about possessions, skills, circumstances and the conversation about happiness. By separating them, it's possible to be more powerful in both areas of life.

The problem with the "happiness depends on circumstances" view is this: We can't always fix our circumstances. Some things really are beyond our control. People die. Jobs disappear. Whole industries vanish. Hurricanes destroy homes. The stock market crashes. People develop cancer or another life-threatening illness for reasons that defy explanation. Nothing and no one, it seems, stays the same. There's one thing that doesn't change: The fact that everything changes.

If our happiness depends on fixing the people, places, and things in our lives and keeping them fixed—well, we're headed for problems, because nothing stays put. Sometimes, in spite of our best efforts, things don't turn out the way we want them to. And people always don't act the way we want them to.

If, on the other hand, happiness is a matter of choices that are always within reach, the whole picture shifts. We can work like mad to fix broken circumstances. And even if that doesn't work, we can still be happy.

In short, happiness does not have to depend on _____ (fill in the blank with your own favorite hobby, possession, job, person, or circumstance.) It's possible that we have everything we need to be happy right now. Happiness can be something we create—by choice. We don't have to do or have anything before we experience happiness. We can be happy right now, in no time—no money down, no payments ever.

If this idea sounds outlandish, that's because it is. It flies in the face of everything most of us have been taught about happiness. No wonder the idea might sound foolish and unworkable.

If you are considering writing off this idea, just stay on for a few pages more. First, be practical. Even if "happiness is a choice" is a crazy idea, it

just might work. We have so much to gain if this idea is true—and so little to lose—that we owe the idea a fair test. So we can try it on for a while, remembering that we can let the idea go if it doesn't work and maybe try it again later.

Second, think about which viewpoint gives us more options. If happiness depends on circumstances we can't always control, then there will definitely be times when we might wind up feeling like victims. But if happiness depends on choices we can control, you're more likely to feel empowered.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Create happiness by focusing attention

Create two pictures in your mind. For the first one, remember a time you were frightened. Perhaps you were in school five minutes before an Algebra test. Or, perhaps you were entering the hospital for surgery and feeling afraid of the outcome. Or, perhaps you came close to having an automobile accident. These are just a few examples; you can find your own. Whatever you choose, re-create the scene in as much detail as you can. In your mind's eye, totally relive the experience. Also, notice how you feel when doing so. Do this now.

Now, wipe the screen clean and create a new picture. Remember a time you felt happy. Recall what you were doing at that moment. Bring to mind the place and time. Add in any people who were with you. Make the scene as bright, detailed, and vivid as possible in your memory. Include sights, sounds, smells, and sensations.

Perhaps, for example, you are walking barefoot on warm sand on a beach near the ocean. You feel the sun on your back. You hear the waves as they gently lap over your toes. You walk arm-in-arm with someone you were thrilled to be with. . . talking, laughing.

Perhaps you are getting a shoulder massage from someone who cares about you. That person's hands are strong, yet warm and gentle. As she touches you, your skin tingles with pleasure. You can feel tense muscles melting like butter. Create this visualization now.

Notice the difference between the experience of fear and the experience of happiness. Chances are that the first picture triggered feelings of stress and anxiety. When you focused on the second picture, those feelings probably changed to pleasant sensations.

Reflect on what you learned about the relationship between your attention and your feelings.

I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Create Happiness Now

We have far more choice in determining our level of happiness than most of us realize. In most situations, even those we label neutral or unpleasant, it's possible for us to generate an experience of happiness. We can be happy almost anywhere, anytime; there's no reason to wait. This seems impossible for most people to comprehend until they have experienced it for themselves.

Do not do this exercise unless you are ready to be happy right now. Sometimes it seems appropriate to be unhappy. If that's the case for you right now, then come back to this exercise later.

The following steps suggest a process for creating happiness. Initially, happiness can be present for a few seconds per minute, then for a few minutes per hour, then for a few hours per day, and then for days in a row. Eventually, you might get to the point where happiness is your predominant experience of life.

Begin with a genuine commitment to be happy. Then experiment with the following steps.

Step 1: Create a few seconds of happiness without fixing anything.

The first step in this exercise is to create the experience of being happy no matter what is happening in your life. You can begin this now and practice many times in the next few days. Create yourself feeling happy. Do it now.

Could you do it? If not, try again now. Still didn't work? Then try it again. Take about five seconds to see if you can generate some happiness.

If you have difficulty creating a few moments of happiness at any time, experiment with the following suggestions:

- *Remember a time in the past when you were happy and remember how you felt at that time. Re-create the experience as vividly as you can. It possible, re-enact the scene in the present.*

- *Imagine a time in the future when you believe you will be happy. Imagine how you will feel at that moment and capture that feeling for the next few moments. Picture an event that you anticipate with joy.*

- *Reflect for a few moments on the kindness that others have shown you. Focus on a single period in your life and be as specific as possible. Name the people involved and describe to yourself, in detail, the experience.*

- *Look like a happy person. Position your body in a way that you usually position it when you are happy or when other people you know are happy. Put your face in an expression that is consistent with the way you are when you experience happiness. Move like a happy person. Sing. Sit up straight. Smile. Laugh. Run. Jump for joy. Do with your body what happy people do with theirs, then let your emotions catch up.*

- *Fake it until you make it. Pretend you're happy. Think of yourself as an actor on stage, playing the role of a happy person. Once you have artificially created the experience of happiness, take that small step and notice if you are actually being happy, if only for a few seconds. Is this lying? No, just prematurely telling the truth.*

- *Plan a to give someone a gift. Picture the recipient of your gift and choose specifically what you will give that person. Imagine how it will feel to give your gift.*

- *Imagine receiving a wonderful gift. Pretend that it is something you have wanted for a long time. Savor the experience you generate as you imagine this delightful surprise.*

Step 2: Expand the moments of happiness to one minute.

Once you have discovered that you can create being happy for a few seconds in a row, practice creating those individual moments of happiness in succession several times in a row. Once you do this, you have the ability to create happiness for a minute . . . and then two . . . and then three.

Step 3: Create happiness while doing something else.

Many people can quickly achieve the first two steps of this exercise, which involve the ability to set other concerns aside for a short time and create a moment-by-moment experience of happiness. Doing this helps us glimpse a powerful possibility—that we could create happiness any time in the midst of our active daily lives.

Now, practice creating happiness for a few seconds, or even a couple of minutes, while you are doing some activity that generally is not linked to being happy. For example, if you are generally not happy when cleaning the house, then do this exercise while you are cleaning. Practice generating the experience of happiness, first for a few seconds and then for a few minutes in a row.

With sustained practice, you can develop the skill of generating happiness at almost any time, during almost any activity.

CAUTION: This exercise is not a suggestion to retreat from everyday life or ignore other emotions when they are present. Dealing head-on with problems and fully experiencing all of our emotions are important pieces of a well-rounded person. They can also assist us in being happy over the long haul.

This exercise has a different purpose. It raises the possibility that we can be happy under many circumstances—far more than we've ever imagined.

CHOOSE THE FREEDOM OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness has power. Think about the costs of failing to forgive: retaliation, isolation, revenge, retribution, reprisal, vindictiveness. These emotions call for a constant supply of defense, suspicion, and anger. It takes a lot of physical and emotional energy to keep our resentments alive and well.

Some people complain about the amount of resentment they feel; yet, ironically, they hesitate to give up their resentments. They act as if it is not within their power to let go of their anger–to forgive. They might even seem to derive some strange comfort from nurturing their resentments like cherished pets.

Resentment promotes a certain view of the world: the idea that we are manipulated by circumstance and pushed around by other people. The problem with this viewpoint is that our thinking relegates us to the status of victims. If the actions of others determine our happiness, then our own choices make little difference in the quality of our lives.

The persons we resent come to dominate our thoughts. They take up much of the space in our heads—rent free. That can be true even for people who have moved away or been dead for years. Sadness and depression often relate to nursing grudges—dwelling on times when someone really "stuck it to us." It's easy to replay these incidents endlessly, like a videotape recorder that's stuck showing the same scene over and over again. Such thinking doesn't change the person we resent; it only makes us miserable.

If you want to let go of your resentments, here are some strategies that can assist you to forgive others:

Consider the benefits of forgiveness

Forgiveness is not always easy. Reviewing the costs of keeping resentments, along with the benefits of forgiving, might help.

Forgiving others—and ourselves—provides a stable foundation for happiness. Releasing resentments can feel like unburdening ourselves of a 200-pound weight. It's a path for feeling lighter and freer.

We can also remember that we're not practicing this forgiveness business to benefit other people, even though that's a worthy goal in itself. Forgiveness is a selfish act that benefits us as much as anyone else.

Through forgiveness, we might even improve our physical health. There is evidence that holding grudges relates to illness.

Forgiveness is also a contribution. Our forgiveness can help people forgive themselves and others. And that can pave the way to sustained happiness.

See the difference between forgiveness and absolution

Sometimes forgiveness can be a mask for judgement, especially when we forgive with a holier-than-thou attitude: "You were a real jerk. But because you struggle with so many faults, I forgive you."

When forgiveness has this flavor, it becomes absolution. There's an underlying arrogance that implies we have the right to judge others. Instead of healing relationships, this approach to forgiveness alienates people. When we forgive, we can practice releasing our judgements along with our resentments.

Notice resentments

When we feel resentment, we can be aware of it. We might make verbal or mental notes. We can also write Discovery Statements in our journals each time we start nursing a grudge.

Simple awareness of how much and when we feel resentment can go a long way toward defusing the feeling. As we do this, it's important not to judge ourselves. Imagine that we're psychologists in white lab coats doing some impartial, scientific observation—we just note the feeling and move on.

Wish something positive for the people we resent

Even in the midst of a resentment, we can say a prayer or make a positive wish for the people we resent:" I wish that this person would be released from her anger"or "I wish that this person would find a job he loves, along with deeply fulfilling relationships." This method often works because it's difficult for our minds to sustain a resentful thought and a positive thought in the same moment. The positive thought literally crowds out the negative one.

We can continually look for the effects of resentment on our own happiness and then make a clear commitment to give up this mental habit habit of resentment. We can practice forgiveness.

EXERCISE

Investigate anger

Once you have fully experienced your anger about other people, it is often possible to discover that you also have a variety of other emotions regarding these people as well. This exercise gives you an opportunity to explore this possibility.

1. List three people you are mad at right now and then describe why you are mad at them.

*I am angry at*_____
*about*_____.

*I am angry at*_____
*about*_____.

*I am angry at*_____
*about*_____.

2. Consider the possibility that you have been focusing so much on your anger that you have been unaware of other emotions that are also present. For example, in addition to being angry, you might also feel hurt, sad, or afraid. While thinking about the three people you listed, complete the following sentences:

*Besides being angry at*_____
*I also feel*_____.

*Besides being angry at*_____
*I also feel*_____.

*Besides being angry at*_____
*I also feel*_____.

3. The next step in the exercise is to consider the possibility that all of your emotions about these people are based on the fact that you have some level of respect or even love for them. After all, if you didn't care about their opinion and had no respect for them, you probably wouldn't invest much energy in being upset with them.

It might be a challenge to admit these more positive feelings. Letting go of anger long enough to recognize them can be an enlivening and freeing experience. It can set the stage for you to move on to more satisfying and empowering relationships.

Again,while thinking about the three people you have listed, complete the following sentences:

When I look deeper into my emotions regarding
_____*, I discover that I also*
*feel*_____.

When I look deeper into my emotions regarding
_____*, I discover that I also*
*feel*_____.

When I look deeper into my emotions regarding
_____*, I discover that I also*
*feel*_____.

4. The final step in investigating your anger is to consider finding a specific time to tell these people what you have learned. Communicating with them about the full range of your emotions can open the door to more honest and satisfying relationships with them in the future. Complete the following sentences.

I will talk to _____
*on*_____*at*_____.
(day) *(time)*
I will talk to _____
*on*_____*at*_____.
(day) *(time)*
I will talk to _____
*on*_____*at*_____.
(day) *(time)*

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Look beyond anger

Once you have completed the previous exercise, consider whether your feelings toward the people you listed have changed. In the space below, describe any of those changes.

I discovered that I . . .

EXERCISE

Practice forgiving

One way to get started at forgiveness is to make a list of resentments.

List the people you have not forgiven, describing the specific actions that you resent. Take enough time with this and make it as complete as you can.

Making a list, even though it seems like a mechanical exercise, can promote forgiveness for a couple of reasons. For one, people with a lot of resentments see that they have a long list. They often get a clear sense of how much mental and emotional energy they pour into their grudges. They might then decide that it's not worth it and begin letting go of so many resentments. In addition, the simple act of writing can help us get perspective and neutralize the negative feelings.

Once you've made a list, ask yourself, "Have I done anything to help create the situations I resent?" For instance, the person who's recently been fired and resents her employer can ask about the quality of her job performance. The person whose spouse has moved out can ask what role he played in her decision.

Sometimes, we played no role in what happened to us. Rape, incest, physical and psychological abuse, and crimes are possible examples of where we might have played no role. Getting to forgiveness in these cases can be more challenging. Perhaps learning to accept these events, with or without forgiveness, is the appropriate goal. If you are faced with these types of problems, professional help can be useful. Get started with your list by filling in the columns below.

*Person I resent*_____

*Action I resent*_____

*My role in this situation*_____

_____

*Person I resent*_____

*Action I resent*_____

*My role in this situation*_____

_____

*Person I resent*_____

*Action I resent*_____

*My role in this situation*_____

_____

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Promise to forgive

Three people I have not forgiven are . . .

List the costs of holding onto each resentment. For example: "My resentment of this person dominates my thinking." or "I never allow myself to visit my family because the person I resent might be there."

The costs of holding on to each resentment include . . .

Now describe the benefits of forgiving these people. An example is, "I get to stop fretting about an incident that happened long ago and move on with my life."

The benefits of forgiving include . . .

Next, write Intention Statements with timelines that state your commitment to forgive each person. For example: I promise to forgive Mary by May 4th for . . .

I promise to . . .

EXERCISE

Multiply the value of these strategies

Take any suggestion in this section of the book and write about one way to apply it in your life. Be specific about what you intend to do and when you will do it. Then think of two other ways you can use the suggestion. For instance, if you find a strategy that works for dealing with your emotions in one area of your life, see if you can also apply it to dealing with emotions in a different area of your life. Or if you find a strategy for dealing with relationships with others, be creative and find a way to use it to help you deal with your relationship with yourself.

Describe your strategy and various applications here:

LIFE CAN WORK.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE as much happiness, health, love, and wealth as you choose.

You can feel happy and fulfilled no matter what your current circumstances.

Each of us can be essentially free from insecurity, depression, fear, worry, jealousy, aggression, turmoil, anxiety, boredom, vanity, hostility, irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and frustration.

Within a short time, and with some new skills, you can experience vitality, satisfaction, joy, serenity, health, contribution, fun, confidence, happiness, pleasure, love, peace, effectiveness, and security far beyond your current expectations. These positive experiences are always available and can be developed when you tell the truth about your current experiences and when you practice creating new ones. You are invited to use the techniques in this book to create a life filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Co-authored by Dave Ellis, author of *Becoming a Master Student* which has sold over two million copies.

HEALTH

A MANUAL FOR HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH

DAVE ELLIS and STAN LANKOWITZ

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Caution: Start with professional guidance

Begin this part of Human Being *by taking an essential step: see your physician before making any significant changes in your diet, exercise program, or other health habits. The suggestions given in this chapter are not offered as a substitute for professional health care. No strategy in this book is a call to ignore traditional medical advice. When faced with a health problem it's wise to consider several perspectives, to get a second opinion (maybe a third or fourth), and to take common-sense precautions.*

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Chapter 1

The process of change

In this chapter you'll find...

Five ideas that could promote your health.
Our bodies are wondrous machines. Health is more than the absence of disease. We can expect fluctuations in health. The body and the mind are an inseparable whole. And, every body is different.

Change is tough—and people do it.
Our actions often don't produce quick results, so it can be tough to change health habits. Even so, people do change.

Identify a habit to change: Discovery Statement.
Choose one new habit that could significantly improve your overall health.

Look past "I don't want to": Discovery Statement.
By carefully observing yourself, you can move past debilitating feelings to constructive action.

Cross off your excuses: Discovery Statement.
We can be aware of all our excuses—and choose not to use them.

Change a habit by managing associations: exercise.
Imagine in detail a reward or pleasurable feeling that you can associate with a new health habit. Also, practice linking something unpleasant or painful to a current habit you'd like to change.

Advertising: Learn how the hype can hurt.
When advertisers dispense advice about how to manage your health, you don't have to buy it.

Notice how advertising affects you: exercise.
Even when advertisers declare that they know what's good for your body, you still have the final word.

Use the Discovery/Intention Journal System to promote your health.
Change in health habits can come as we tell the truth about our current condition, set goals, and implement our plans.

Five Ideas That Could Promote Your Health

The path to greater health often starts not with a new diet or exercise program, but with a change in thinking. The power of our beliefs is enormous. Outmoded or inaccurate assumptions can undermine even our best efforts to experience a higher level of health. Carefully considering and replacing these ideas can free us from needless obstacles.

This article lists several ideas about health for you to consider before you begin any efforts at personal change. These ideas come with a disclaimer: They are not proven truths but emerging ideas that have both detractors and supporters. Each assertion is for you to critically evaluate.

1. Your body is a wondrous machine.
Any suggestion that the human body is a machine is bound to turn some people off. But we can hold this idea even if we believe in a soul or spirit that distinguishes human bodies from machines.

The body-as-machine analogy leads to several valuable perspectives. One is that we often abuse our machines. We sometimes run them too hard. At times we try to fuel them with junk food. We pollute them with empty calories and let them sit idle for long stretches of time.

We know that people can prevent damage to their cars by performing simple maintenance procedures, such as regular oil changes and tune-ups. It's amazing that many of us take better care of our cars, dishwashers, air conditioners, and furnaces than we do of our bodies. We can change this. We could spend as much time learning about health as we do reading the owner's manual of a new car.

It would be easier if each of us received an up-to-date owner's manual for our bodies at the moment of birth. Unfortunately, no such manual exists. Our challenge is to create a personal guidebook to health based on our own observation, study, and experience.

2. Health is more than the absence of disease.

Ask 10 people to define the word *health*, and you're likely to get 10 different answers. For all the millions of words that have been spoken and printed about health, we're often in the dark as to what it really means.

Our language offers a place to start understanding health. In terms of their origins, the words *health, whole, holy,* and *hale* are remarkably similar. Implied in these words are the qualities of zest, vitality, and vigor. We can think of someone who has these qualities as complete, sound, alert, robust, and hardy. All these are aspects of that mysterious concept we call health.

There are many degrees of health. Think of a continuum, or line. On one end of the line is premature death. On the other end is well-being in all aspects of life—emotional, social, mental, and physical. Centered between these two extremes is a state of average health. People at this point are often not sick enough to require medical attention. Yet, many of them are not thriving, either physically or mentally. Though they have enough energy to meet their daily responsibilities, they can be lacking in the zest for living and the vigor we associate with high-level health.

Think of the healthiest people you know. Chances are that they function well in many areas. Their relationships are fulfilling and mutually satisfying. They have a wide range of interests and enjoy learning. They have a strong sense of purpose and see a clear connection between their values and daily activities.

Often these healthiest people love their work and give freely of their time and energy to others. They are generally optimistic about their ability to solve problems. Chances are that they manage stress well, laugh frequently, and just plain enjoy themselves much of the time.

In addition, very healthy people are skilled observers of their mental and physical condition. When the symptoms of illness appear, these people take prompt corrective action. They have more than enough energy and vitality to respond to everyday demands. In this sense, even people with disabilities or chronic illnesses can be healthy.

All this can lead us to a working definition: Health is a changing state of overall well-being that helps us function effectively in many areas of life. This definition certainly goes beyond a common definition of health which is the absence of disease. As you read the chapters that follow, test this broader definition against your own thinking. You might then create a definition of health, that's more in tune with your personal experience.

3. We can expect fluctuations in health.

The many organs and systems that make up our bodies are in a constant state of flux. These systems are so complex and interdependent that we cannot assume they'll work perfectly all the time. Some periods of illness or injury are the norm—even for the healthiest human beings. These fluctuations can range from the common cold to a long-term, chronic illness such as diabetes.

Many of the smaller discomforts do not require medical help. Our job is simply to notice them and watch for signs of a more serious condition. We can consider minor changes in our health to be merely adjustments our bodies make to achieve the state of dynamic equilibrium we call health.

In short, the one thing about our health that we can count on is that it will change. Some people might take this as a cause for pessimism; they might focus on the fact that their relative health could change for the worse. Actually, the dynamic nature of our bodies is a basis for optimism. We can remember that when we are sick, that will change also. Often, illness is a temporary stopping point on a path to greater health.

4. Mind and body are an inseparable whole.

Today there is growing interest in the connection between mind and body, especially as it relates to the origin of disease. Emotional problems can have roots in improper nutrition, inadequate exercise, insufficient sleep, or unreleased sexual energy. Likewise, the wear and tear of excessive stress and other painful emotions can lead to a wide variety of physical illnesses.

Sometimes, what we hear and read about this topic borders on the fantastic. For instance, people have experienced spontaneous remissions of chronic illness such as cancer. Sometimes large tumors shrink and even disappear. Under hypnosis, people have developed the symptoms of burns after touching a cool object that the hypnotist merely suggested was hot. Others have been cured by visits to shamans or have grown gravely ill when subjected to a voodoo curse. Yoga masters have demonstrated conscious control over their circulatory and respiratory systems, altering many functions that were considered involuntary. There is also research indicating that prayer can affect the course of an illness. And people have experienced long-lasting cures after taking placebos—harmless pills, often a mixture of sugar and water. There have been documented cases of people with Dissociative Identity Disorder (formerly called Multiple Personality Disorder) who require different eyeglass prescriptions, or are allergic to different foods, depending on which personality is presenting itself at any given time.

These events form a powerful argument for the role of the mind in healing. The main factor promoting successful medical treatment is the belief in its effectiveness. Even some conventionally trained physicians assert that all disease is psychosomatic and that medicine is primarily a history of the placebo effect.

This is where traditional and alternative medicine come into real conflict. Traditional Western science asserts that our thoughts are byproducts of our brains, that our feelings are byproducts of chemical reactions. Matter reigns supreme over mind. Other people hold the exactly opposite opinions: that thought shapes matter, that our mental states are the primary influence on our physical health. According to this school of thought, it's mind over matter.

Perhaps it's most accurate to say that disease has both physical and mental components. After all, humans have bodies and minds. When people are sick, their psychology and physiology are affected. Likewise, when treating illness, we could benefit by considering both mental and physical factors.

Adherents of alternative medicine talk about the power of mental imagery, laughter, meditation, prayer, and related practices as a force for healing. They also speak of the role of stress and negative emotions in illness and injury. Taken too literally, these ideas can lead to anxiety or even shame. People might feel that disease represents a personal failure or moral weakness on their part, that they are guilty of thinking "bad" thoughts or practicing "stupid" habits.

These viewpoints are counterproductive. While there's fascinating evidence for the link between physical and mental health, there is not a direct, one-to-one relationship. Spiritual masters can die of cancer, priests can become alcoholics, and people steeped in holistic medicine can catch colds. Disease and injury happen even to the happiest, most enlightened, loving people among us.

5. Every body is different.
There's a saying that medical students sometimes encounter: "We dress the wound; God heals it." Behind this simple homily is the sophisticated theory that medical treatment works mainly to clear a path for the body's natural healing mechanisms to take over.

There is much we can do to set the stage for these healing mechanisms. One is to remember that every body is different. It's obvious that people have different facial features and body structures. What's not so obvious is that their internal organs and systems differ, too. There is as much difference among people's lungs, kidneys, and hearts as among their eyes, noses, and ears.

The notion of individual differences applies to habits, also. One person may swear by a glass of milk each day; another person can be allergic to all dairy products. Some people love to eat nothing but fruit all morning; others who try this find themselves with stomachaches.

You possess a genetic code that is utterly unique. The type of exercise and diet that's right for you can be disastrous for someone else. What's more, your needs and preferences might be vastly different five years from now. Although there are some general guidelines and principles of health that apply to almost everyone, it's important to find the truth about your own unique body and not to rely on generic, across-the-board, absolute health prescriptions. You can become the expert on your health.

The ideas mentioned in this article lead logically to two types of action. One is to closely observe your mind and body, cultivating attitudes and behaviors that promote your individual health. Another is to make choices today that can prevent serious health problems tomorrow. The following chapters are dedicated to helping you accomplish both goals.

Look upon this section of *Human Being* as an opportunity to start treating your body as well as you would a valued and expensive machine. Use this part of the book to make commitments and start behaviors that could keep your machine in top shape for decades to come.

> ***As I see it, every day you do one of two things: build health or produce disease in yourself.***
>
> –Adelle Davis

CHANGE IS TOUGH AND PEOPLE DO IT

Of all the tasks that humans undertake, changing their health habits can be one of the toughest. Our old habits relating to exercise, diet, smoking, stress management, and safety seem unbreakable at times.

It stands to reason. Many people discover formidable obstacles to overcome when improving their health. One problem is that feedback on our efforts is often delayed. It can take weeks or months to see any dramatic benefits from exercise or sensible nutrition. Even then, there may be no obvious signs of improvement. Another problem is that occasionally people experience catastrophic illness even after practicing rigorous health habits for years. Simply put, there's no guarantee that our efforts to change will pay off.

Another reason that change of health habits can be tough is that the transition to higher levels of health can also be associated with pain or loss of pleasure. For example, people who begin exercising can develop injuries, and those who undergo treatment for addiction often experience feelings of grief. They have become so intimate and infatuated with their drug of choice that kicking their habit feels like losing a lover.

Still another problem is that we confront the force of inertia. Habits are highly efficient. We've repeated our habitual actions many times and experienced benefits from them. Naturally we resist changing these behaviors.

Those who urge us to improve our health may gloss over the real difficulties involved in making the necessary changes. The resulting disillusionment can tempt us to chuck the whole project or put it on indefinite hold.

In the face of all this, people do change. Lots of people have made dramatic improvements in their health habits. These people stop smoking, start buckling seat belts, shed dozens of pounds, overhaul their diets, and do much more.

So, change is tough—and we can do it. Holding both of these ideas in mind is no small trick. Many of the general strategies listed in Part One of this book can come to your aid. It could be especially helpful to review "Manage your associations" and "Revise your habits." In addition, experiment with the following strategies when changing your health habits:

Admit the difficulty

Tell the truth up front about the possible frustrations involved in acquiring a new level of health. View wellness as a long-range project—one that will last your entire life.

Be willing to change

Some people invest hundreds of dollars in all the right exercise equipment, clothing, and paraphernalia. They spare no expense to join the right health club. Even with all that preparation, they might not be truly willing to change yet. As long as this is accurate, health club memberships can remain unused and exercise bikes might end up as coat racks.

Moral: When it comes to improving our health, most of us already know what to do. What we might lack is a sincere willingness to change.

That's understandable—old ways are often comfortable and they work to some extent.

It's not reasonable to expect new results from repeating the same old thoughts and actions. Once we see the ineffectiveness of the old habit and truly let it go, we've set in motion a powerful force for personal change.

Acknowledge the power of your choices

Some people have naturally sleek bodies or a metabolism that allows them to eat lots of rich food without gaining weight. Within the limits imposed by biology, however, there is room for each of us to make choices that profoundly affect our level of health.

Celebrate small gains

Give yourself an occasional reward for results achieved. For instance, go see a movie after losing a pound or take an extra vacation day after exercising consistently for one month.

Raise the stakes

If the delay between the effort and the results discourages you, set up some artificial feedback. Make it dramatic. For example, promise to give a lot of money to someone you don't particularly like if you don't follow through.

Remember the power of awareness

Destructive habits thrive on unconsciousness. People who smoke may have no idea how many times each day they light up. Those who overeat often have no clue about how many times they snack each day. Often, keeping detailed logs of such behavior is all we need to change the habit.

Form a partnership

Find an exercise buddy and plan to jog together at certain times each week. Plan to trade recipes with another person who wants to change his diet. Join a support group for people who want to lose weight. When it comes to choosing health, there's a big benefit in joining others.

Move from health to healing

It's easy to see health as a thing that some of us have and some don't. We tend to think of health as an endpoint, a state that we reach once and for all. All it takes is eating a lot of wholesome food and sweating through hours of aerobic exercise. Never mind that both of these can be bland, boring, or even unpleasant. That's the pain we have to endure to gain health.

When we change the topics of conversation to healing, however, the whole picture changes. Healing is not something that happens once. Rather, it is a process that we practice constantly, a lifelong opportunity. Healing engages the mind as well as the body. Instead of talking about arriving once and for all at that magical and mysterious state called health, we can choose healing attitudes and behaviors every day. This change in thinking can take us out of the "no pain, no gain" mindset and help us design a flexible ongoing health program that we can enjoy for a lifetime.

Practice no shame, no blame

Be willing to release the shame that accompanies any habits that detract from your health. Practice no shame, promise no blame, and you'll free up energy for taking charge of your health. Finding excuses and beating ourselves up for failing to exercise can be more draining than swimming a lap or taking a brisk walk. Instead of using energy to berate ourselves, we can use it to get moving.

Play with it all

The whole area of health seems to infect people with terminal seriousness. This only adds to the layers of guilt and anxiety that people bring to the subjects of exercise, nutrition, and stress management. Refusing to take ourselves so seriously can start to free up all that negative energy.

It pays to loosen up emotionally, as well as physically. Swim at a public pool, even if you're 30 pounds overweight and you normally refuse to wear shorts in public. Dance, even if other people are tempted to call 9-1-1 when they see how you move on the dance floor. Buy that dress that only a 20-year-old would wear. Such actions demonstrate that you're changing health habits with a light heart and that you're willing to laugh at yourself besides.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Identify a habit to change

Choose one habit that you could change to make an improvement in your overall health. Describe in detail the benefits that would result from making this change.

I discovered that I could change . . .

The benefits resulting from this change would include . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Look past "I don't want to"

The point of this Journal Entry is to discover that we do not have to be controlled by our wants. We can exercise, eat well, and do work—even at times when we don't want to.

Discovering this might convince us not to let "wants" be the only reason for behaving the way we do. This could be one of the most liberating discoveries we make. And it merely awakens us to an ability we already have—the ability to act independently of our wants.

Below, in the column on the left, describe actions you took at various times during the last 24 hours. In the right column, list what you were wanting to do at the time you took each action. For example, "Did laundry." could go on the left and "Watch television." could go on the right.

What I did	What I wanted to do

Follow up with a Discovery Statement. Describe what you learned about the relationship between your actions and your wants.

I discovered that I . . .

Cross off your excuses

Many attempts to change habits fail when people find excuses and settle for them instead of results. People go to great lengths to explain why they're not getting what they want. They invent endless lists of reasons that sound so reasonable. And, in the end, all these reasons produce the same results: They keep them from reaching their goals.

There is an alternative. We could be aware of all our excuses. We could speak them and even put them in writing. And then we could choose not to let them stop us.

If you're unwilling to give up an excuse, that's OK. You can keep it. That means releasing any ideas of changing the habit for now.

So, you get to choose: You can keep your excuse, or you can change the habit.

You can start right now. Describe a health habit you'd like to change or any new behavior you'd like to practice. Then list every explanation you can think of for not taking your intended action. Be sure to include your favorite excuses.

When you're finished, scrutinize your list. Then literally and boldly cross out each excuse. Cross off "being tired" as an excuse. Cross off "not wanting to" as excuse. Do the same for "I didn't feel like it" and "I'm too old to change."

Follow up by writing a Discovery Statement. Describe what you learned about yourself by laying your excuses out in the open. Ask yourself if you're truly willing to give up each excuse, and describe in detail the benefits of doing so.

The health habit I'd like to change is . . .

My excuses for not changing this habit have included . . .

After examining my excuses, I discovered that I . . .

The benefits I stand to gain by giving up my excuses include . . .

EXERCISE

Change a habit by managing associations

Imagine in detail a reward or pleasurable feeling that you can associate with a new health habit. For example, you could associate feeling more energetic and being more attractive with eating less.

Also practice linking something unpleasant or painful to a habit you want to drop. You might, for instance, associate feeling bloated and tired with overeating.

In the space to the right, describe the new habit you want to practice or the old habit you want to drop. Also, list the perceptions of pain or pleasure that you will link to the habit.

Vivid associations work most effectively. Imagine in detail the link between what you want to change and what you associate with it. Involve all of your senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste.)

As you practice changing the habit, give this strategy plenty of time to work. Repeat making these associations many times daily for several weeks and see if it helps you change your behavior.

Come back to this exercise occasionally during this experiment to write about how well this strategy is working for you.

The habit I want to change is . . .

The association I intend to link to this habit is . . .

ADVERTISING: LEARN HOW THE HYPE CAN HURT

Much advertising is designed to change your health-related behaviors. On television, we see celebrities who embody beauty and success sipping wine or consuming high-sugar breakfast cereals. We see young men swigging beer, flanked by women in bikinis. Young healthy athletic "beautiful people" are shown smoking. Advertisers know that such images can be powerful. By linking their products to scenes of glamour, sexual conquest, and affluence, they hope to alter your everyday choices and actions.

The message underlying much advertising seems to be this: You are not complete unless you own the right deodorant, drink the right liquor, wear the right jeans, or drive the right car. Success is not a matter of who you are but what you own and how you look.

Media hype has brainwashed many to think that happiness is synonymous with having a young, athletic, thin, tall, gorgeous body. We might find it hard to even imagine being happy if we have a body that does not conform to this standard. (And for most of us, conforming to this standard is next to impossible.) The "body beautiful" concept of health excludes millions of people—the elderly, people with chronic illnesses or disabilities, and anyone who doesn't look like a fashion model.

Advertising agencies might object to these points, claiming that they merely provide information that helps consumers choose among the thousands of products available today. In fact, much advertising conveys few facts and offers little relevant information that can help us distinguish one brand from another.

There's also evidence that the influence of advertisers extends beyond the advertisements themselves. Case in point: Through their financial clout, liquor and tobacco producers can influence the editorial content of magazines. Many magazines rely heavily on revenues from cigarette advertisements to make ends meet. The editors of these publications may avoid articles that document the dangers of smoking or drinking alcohol, fearing that they will lose advertising dollars. Check this yourself by scanning popular magazines. You're most likely to find hard-hitting and sustained coverage about nicotine addiction in publications such as *Reader's Digest* and the *New Yorker*—neither of which accepts cigarette ads.

There's a saying that skilled consumers regularly consider when making purchases: "*Caveat emptor*" (Latin for "Let the buyer beware.") The same strategy works when it comes to "buying" the claims of advertisers. You can use the following strategies to separate fluff from fact in advertisements and health news:

- Practice healthy skepticism and critical thinking. Be open to new ideas, but also look for the evidence that supports any claim.

- Notice the source of the information. If a study that disputes the addictive property of nicotine comes from a major tobacco company, that's a signal to read other research. If evidence about the need to drink three glasses of milk per day comes from American Dairy Association, you might want to search out other opinions. Beware of reports that quote only one expert or celebrity.

- To get a better perspective on the latest medical breakthroughs, go beyond the popular magazines. Publications such as Science News and the news section of the Journal of the American Medical Association are places to start. There are also health newsletters from well-known universities and the medical and science sections of major daily newspapers, including the New York Times and Washington Post.

- Turn to print as well as television or radio. Many broadcast news shows claim to offer "in-depth reporting" on health topics. Yet the limited time these shows devote to any single story can give us little more than headlines. To get the rest of the story, consult books and periodicals. When it comes to conveying detailed, factual information and opposing points of view, the printed word is hard to beat.

While reading, consider this viewpoint: Health is not something we have, but something we do and something we are. When it comes to health, what counts is not the tautness of our stomachs or the bulge of our pectorals. Far more important are the health habits we practice daily and the attitudes we have about our minds and bodies. Forgiveness, openness, humor, and the willingness to make simple changes in daily behavior are more important than attaining a photogenic physique.

EXERCISE

Notice how advertising affects you

During the next 24 hours, carefully observe your responses to advertising. Note whether an ad prompts an automatic, unthinking response on your part—perhaps an urge to buy something you don't need or a craving for junk food. Notice in particular what part of the ad seemed to prompt this response: the visuals, the promised benefit, your prior experience with a product, and so on.

In the space below, summarize what you learned about your personal relationship to advertising, and write about how you can use your own personal power when choosing what is good for your body.

USE THE DISCOVERY INTENTION JOURNAL SYSTEM TO PROMOTE YOUR HEALTH

The cycle of discovery, intention, and action is a potent tool for changing your health habits. This is an underlying theme in many of the Journal Entries in the following chapters.

Discovery Statements are the first step in the process. These exist to help you tell the truth about your current health practices in a given area, such as nutrition, exercise, stress management, or safety.

Following the Discovery Statements are Intention Statements that ask you to make a commitment to change. Use Intention Statements to channel your insights into new behaviors.

Finally, back up your intentions with action. Practice actually doing what you intend to do. In the process, you'll master this simple but surprisingly powerful method for taking charge of your health.

Many people find that it works well to focus their efforts by changing one habit at a time. Then they come back to their Discovery and Intention Statements about health and choose a new habit to adopt.

As with every part of this book, the Health section of *Human Being* is meant to be a "living" document. You can return to it continually as you transform your health habits.

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

(This book has been proofread three times and there are still misplaced commas, misspelled words, grammatical errors, and extra spaces between words. These will be corrected in the next edition.)

Chapter 2

Fuel your machine

In this chapter you'll find...

Choose your fuel.

There is wide agreement about what healthy eating means—and some areas of disagreement are worth noting.

Take a look at how you fuel your machine: Discovery Statement.

Tell the truth about what you put into your body.

Choose your nutrition habits: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Based on the previous Discovery Statement, write about any changes in nutrition that you will make.

CHOOSE YOUR FUEL

Few topics in the health field are as laden with emotional controversy as the subject of what to eat. Chances are, your family members and friends have plenty of advice about what you're supposed to eat. One says to eat only poultry and fish for protein. Another touts the virtues of steak. A third person argues that a total vegetarian diet is the best. Putting these people at the same dinner table could really heat up a meal. Add to this a testimonial from a recent interview with a 106-year-old Russian woman. Asked about the secret to her longevity, she replied, "I never eat vegetables."

It can be equally confusing to turn to the authorities on nutrition. For example, one expert says that you need plenty of milk for calcium. Another warns about the cholesterol in dairy products and urges you to avoid anything even remotely associated with a cow. It's no wonder we feel paralyzed by what could be a simple decision: what to put into our stomachs.

One way to gain some clarity is to divide the whole subject of nutrition into two areas. One is the consensus: widely accepted ideas about what to eat. The other includes the points of controversy: emerging ideas that are not generally accepted but worth noting. With knowledge of both areas, you can discover what works best for you.

The consensus

Several years ago the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition adopted several guidelines for healthful eating. This committee's work summarized ideas that many people still accept. These include the following:

- Eat a variety of foods. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, breads, cereals, milk, cheese, yogurt, meats, poultry, fish, and eggs in your diet.

- Maintain a healthy weight. Overweight people tend to have high blood pressure, heart disease, strokes, common diabetes, and certain cancers. To lose weight, eat less sugar and fat. Avoid alcohol. Eat slowly. Avoid second helpings. Eat smaller portions. And be sure to engage in a regular program of exercise.

- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. This is a good idea even if you are not overweight. High blood cholesterol is a health risk. Lean meat, fish, poultry, dried beans and peas are low-cholesterol sources of protein. Limit

your intake of eggs, organ meats, butter, cream, shortening, and oil. Broil, bake, or boil rather than fry. Cut off excessive fat before cooking meat.

- Choose a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grain products. Include at least three servings of vegetables, two servings of fruit, and six servings of grain (preferably whole grain) products daily.

- Use sugars in moderation. Obesity, impaired circulation, tooth decay, and other health problems relate to excessive sugar in the diet. Be cautious of prepared foods that list sugar as the first, second, or third ingredient on the label. Sometimes sugar is called corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, maltose, sucrose, honey, or molasses.

- Use salt and sodium in moderation. Your body needs sodium chloride (salt.) However, you need much less than most people eat, and reduction will benefit those people whose blood pressure rises with salt intake. Use salt sparingly, if at all, in food preparation and at the table. Limit your intake of salty foods like pretzels, potato chips, cheese, salted nuts, pickles, and popcorn.

- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation. Moderate drinking is no more than one drink in one day for women, two for men. Some people should not drink at all. Too much alcohol may cause cirrhosis of the liver, inflammation of the pancreas, damage to the heart and brain, high blood pressure, hemorrhagic stroke, and may increase risk for many cancers.

The controversy

Some people who have studied nutrition extensively would agree with many of the ideas just listed—and then add a few points of their own:

- Consider a vegetarian diet. Animal flesh can be high in saturated fat and cholesterol. This is often true of poultry and fish as well as beef.

  In addition, physiological evidence suggests that the human body might digest a vegetarian meal more efficiently than a meal containing meat. Animals who survive on meat typically have short intestines and strong stomach acids that quickly digest decaying flesh. In contrast, the human body is similar to that of animals that live on fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. Our intestinal tracks are long—about 12 times the length of our bodies. We do not have the type of stomach acids that meat eaters do. This means that we digest meat slowly, and any toxins in meat are likely to be absorbed into the body.

  What's more, eating meat can perpetuate world hunger. According to well known nutritionalist and author, Frances Moore Lappé, 20 vegetarians can be fed on the same amount of land it takes to feed one person consuming a meat-based diet.

  If you're looking for meat substitutes, consider beans and rice. These two foods can deliver the kind of complete proteins found in meat. Also consider nuts and soy products, such as tofu and tempeh, which can be turned into dishes that entice even the most die-hard steak lovers.

- Eat fresh foods. When food comes dried, frozen, canned, or microwave-ready, it's more likely to contain questionable additives and excess salt, sugar.

- Moderate or eliminate dairy products from your diet. Like meat, foods made from milk can be high in fat and cholesterol. Many people are allergic to dairy products without realizing it. They often experience congestion after a dairy-laden meal. In addition, the lactose and sugar in milk can be difficult to digest.

- Eat fruit alone, preferably on an empty stomach. Even though fruit is relatively easy for most people to digest, our bodies use different juices and acids to break down fruit than to break down other foods. An excellent time to eat fruit is in the morning, when your body is still working to eliminate waste from the previous day's meals. In general, avoid combining fruit with other foods.

- Pay attention to *how* you eat. The way you eat can be just as important as what you eat. To get the full benefit of a meal, eat slowly, savoring the taste and aroma of every bite. Resist the temptation to read or watch television during meals. Pour attention into the act of nourishing yourself. Besides increasing the pleasure you gain from food, these strategies can help you eat less.

- Relax while you eat. You might light some candles, play soft music, and save difficult conversations for after dessert. The emotional climate you create at mealtime can affect your digestion.

Discover what works for you

Along with listening to what the experts say about proper nutrition, you can practice listening to and observing your body. Rather than staying away from chocolate only because it's "bad" for you, you can eat some chocolate and then listen to what your body tells you: Do you get a slight caffeine high from eating it? Are you using it to alter your mood or to ward off depression? Do you feel lethargic an hour later?

Answering such questions can help us make the transition from just following others' opinions to noticing the actual effects of certain foods on our bodies. When we tune in to the feedback our bodies constantly offer us, we gain the kind of insight that makes for long-term changes in our eating habits.

> ***"If you have formed the habit of checking on every new diet that comes along, you will find that, mercifully, they all blur together, leaving you with only one definite piece of information: french-fried potatoes are out."***
>
> –Jean Kerr

Look at how you fuel your machine

As you read these statements, think about whether they apply to you. In some cases, an appropriate response is a simple "yes" or "no." In others, you can write, "This is sometimes true of me," "This is often true of me," or "This is never true of me." Other possible options are "I agree with this statement as it applies to me," or "I disagree with this statement as it applies to me."

I am aware of some basic nutritional guidelines for a healthy diet.

I have tried to change my eating habits without much success.

I know I eat in healthy ways.

I drink more soft drinks than are good for me.

My cholesterol levels are within normal limits.

I am overweight.

I eat more than I should.

I don't eat foods that I know I should.

I eat foods that I know I shouldn't.

I am concerned about my eating habits.

I have tried a variety of different diets.

Over the months and years, my weight has fluctuated a great deal.

I eat enough fruits, grains, and vegetables.

I often eat between meals.

I limit snacks during the day.

I am aware of how much fat I eat.

I am too busy to pay much attention to what I eat.

My moods seem to vary according to how much sugar I have eaten.

I would never consider becoming a vegetarian.

I stop eating when I feel satisfied.

I eat slowly to enjoy the taste of each bite and to avoid overeating.

I rush through meals.

I am satisfied with the way I eat.

I am satisfied with my weight and appearance.

I eat on the run almost every day.

It is possible that I have an eating disorder (such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa).

I can eat anything and it won't affect me much.

I drink coffee with caffeine.

I smoke even though I know it is bad for me.

I am careful about how much sugar I consume.

Occasionally, I know what it is like to feel a little hungry.

I never feel even the least bit hungry.

I eat fast foods almost every day.

I rarely eat out.

I read the labels on the foods I buy and know what I am eating.

I take vitamins to supplement my diet.

My doctor has suggested that I change my eating habits.

I take diet pills.

I chew sugarless gum.

My family or friends have suggested that I change my eating habits.

I have a sweet dessert after most of my evening meals.

I often feel bloated after a meal.

I drink at least three glasses of water daily.

Use the space below to add any additional statements that are relevant for you.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Choose your nutrition habits

Sum up your responses to the nutrition checklist on pages 257-259 by completing the following sentences:

I was surprised to discover that I . . .

I am proud of the fact that I take care of my nutrition by . . .

I am concerned that I am undermining my nutrition by . . .

The most important habit I can develop to promote my nutrition at this time is to . . .

Regarding nutrition, I intend to . . .

Chapter 3

Move your machine

In this chapter you'll find...

Do some oxygen.

We could exercise as if the quality our lives, if not our very lives themselves, depended on it. Chances are they do.

Take a look at how you move your machine: Discovery Statement.

Put your exercise habits under a lens and describe what you see.

Choose your exercise habits: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Decide on effective ways to keep your essential parts moving.

DO SOME OXYGEN

Aerobic exercise increases the body's demand for oxygen. (The word *aerobic* means "oxygen-laden.") Aerobic exercise is generally the most useful in promoting fitness. The message is simple: If you want to be healthy, do some oxygen on a regular basis.

The consensus

There's widespread agreement that exercise promotes health and longevity by helping to prevent a host of diseases. In addition, exercise can be a rewarding activity in its own right. Some people speak of running, jogging, walking, or cycling as "positive addictions"—habits that generate feelings of pleasure and well-being with little or no risk.

The traditional wisdom on exercise is that we should adopt a program that meets the following three criteria:

1) Strength—the ability to endure tasks that involve lifting, pressing, pushing, and pulling.

2) Cardiovascular capacity—the ability of the heart and lungs to pump oxygenated blood efficiently throughout the body.

3) Flexibility—a sufficient range of motion allowed by our joints and muscles.

Taken together, having these criteria constitutes physical fitness—an overall ability to meet the demands of daily life with energy to spare. Being fit helps us to cope with periods of unexpected emotional stress and physical tension.

No pain–still gain

Though many people tout the virtues of exercise, relatively few of us get our bodies moving very much. Despite the fitness boom, there's evidence that the vast majority of North Americans still don't engage in regular exercise. To them, exercise seems too boring, too expensive, and too time-consuming. And, at the same time, many of them feel a constant, gnawing guilt about neglecting their health. Several factors are at work here.

One is obligation. If your exercise program is a boring routine fueled by obligation or fear, you might be doing yourself little good. Yes, some people truly enjoy running, rowing machines, calisthenics, aerobic routines, weightlifting, sit-ups, and stationary bikes, and that's great.

Other people would rather eat live worms than do any of these things. Regularly drenching ourselves in sweat or straining to the point of exhaustion might not relieve stress; in fact, it could actually promote distress. No wonder some people avoid the whole enterprise. Health clubs collect a lot of money from people who seldom take advantage of their memberships.

Fortunately, there is another option. It is possible to be fit without a high-intensity workout that's set apart from the activities of daily life. In fact, we can gain many health benefits from including physical activities of moderate intensity into our daily routines. Examples are gardening, walking, raking leaves, hanging laundry, and taking stairs instead of elevators. We may not get the same spectacular benefits from such activities as those who undergo rigorous physical training, yet, we can derive enough physical benefits to enjoy general well-being and maintain a reasonable weight.

Combined with a low-fat diet and stress management, this approach to fitness might be as powerful in the long run as strenuous daily exercise. Having a positive outlook on life and eating sensibly are often more important than being able to run 1.5 miles in 12 minutes or less (one popular definition of fitness.) And for most of us, sporting a strong heart is more crucial than being able to bench-press 100 pounds.

In short, many of us could do well to leave the barbells to others and pick up a hoe instead. We can start to heal ourselves without hurting ourselves.

By taking this approach, we're following the example of our ancestors. They would have laughed at any advice to start an exercise program. For them, daily life afforded plenty of chances to develop strength, cardiovascular capacity, and flexibility. People who regularly hunted, fished, and worked in the fields did not need exercise videos.

Do what works for you

No matter what approach to exercise you adopt, consider the following strategies for making it fun:

- Admit up front that starting an exercise program can be a drag. If you notice feelings of boredom or aversion, avoid scolding yourself. Such feelings are normal. Simply accept and allow them, then get moving.
- Vary your activity. There's no need to stick with a single form of exercise. Experiment with walking, running, jogging, hiking, biking, dancing, rope jumping, trampoline jumping, and more. Also combine several of these activities in a single exercise session.
- Vary your surroundings. Exercise indoors one day and outdoors the next. In either case, choose a visually interesting environment and take pleasure in its sights and sounds.
- Exercise with someone else. Combining exercise with the pleasures of friendship can keep us moving.
- Add music to your routine. Many people find that doing so helps them get into the rhythm of movement.
- Consider air quality. The airborne toxins produced by modern culture could be a factor in many ailments. Whenever possible, exercise in places that have a minimum of smog, car exhaust, acid rain, asbestos, carbon monoxide, and formaldehyde.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Take a look at how you move your machine

As you read these statements, think and write about whether they apply to you. In some cases, an appropriate response is a simple "yes" or "no." In others, you can write, "This is sometimes true of me," "This is often true of me," or "This is never true of me." Other possible options are "I agree with this statement as it applies to me," or "I disagree with this statement as it applies to me."

I exercise regularly.

I sometimes walk up stairs instead of using the elevator.

I know how to lift objects without unnecessary back strain.

I become short of breath even after minimal exercise.

I have good balance and coordination.

I stretch before and after I exercise.

I have good posture.

I am aware of the relationship between exercise and heart disease.

I am aware of the relationship between exercise and depression.

I am aware of the relationship between exercise and weight maintenance.

I know how to exercise effectively and regularly without joining an expensive health club.

I am aware that exercise promotes healthful levels of cholesterol.

I am a "couch potato" too much of the time.

I feel guilty because I don't exercise.

I am aware that exercise can help prevent high blood pressure.

I am aware that exercise can prevent depression and lower stress.

My resting heart rate is within normal healthy limits.

I know my most effective heart rate for moderate exercise.

I am aware that exercise can prevent heart disease.

I know that some forms of weightlifting can tone my body and build endurance.

My behavior suggests that watching television is a higher priority for me than exercising.

I have exercise equipment (e.g., bicycle, rowing machine, stair stepper, etc.) that I don't use.

I participate in leisure sports activities regularly (e.g., tennis, basketball, bowling, horseback riding, skiing.).

I would exercise but there is no place in my house that would work.

I am getting too old to exercise.

I am young and in good shape, so I don't need to exercise.

Physical problems (e.g., bad knees, bad back, asthma, etc.) prevent me from exercising.

As I grow older, I intend to remain very active.

I have experienced what is referred to as a "second wind" while exercising.

I avoid exercising, but when I do, I feel great.

I sometimes wonder why I don't exercise more often.

I am embarrassed about the way my body looks.

I have clothes that don't fit me anymore.

I sleep more soundly after I exercise.

Use the space below to add any additional statements that are relevant for you.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Choose your exercise habits

Make plans to exercise effectively. Complete the following sentences:

When it comes to the general amount of time I devote to exercise, I discovered that I . . .

When it comes to the general effectiveness of my exercise, I discovered that I . . .

The kind of exercise that appeals to me most right now is . . .

I intend to exercise regularly by doing the following:

Chapter 4

Rest your machine

In this chapter you

Hello stress, goodbye distress.
Stress is our ally up to the point that it becomes distress.

Listen to stress: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
View stress as a signal to make positive changes in your life.

Remember what you know about stress: exercise.
You're managing stress right now. Reflect on and take advantage of what you already know.

Deal with worry.
Yell "Stop!", daydream, remember what you enjoy, and consider the worst that could really happen. Also zoom out, recognize limits, manage your self-talk, and refocus your attention.

Deal with tension.
Breathe, exercise, scan your body, pamper yourself, and visit a favorite place in your mind.

Breathe to relax: Exercise.
Slowing and deepening your breathing can focus and calm your mind and body.

Scan your body to relax: Exercise.
Melt points of tension by searching them out and releasing them.

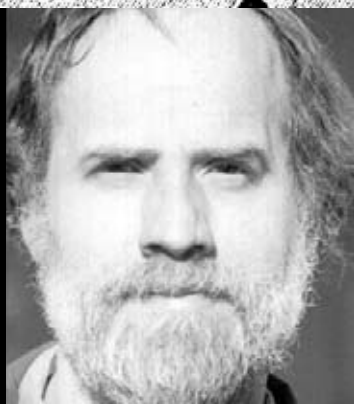
Become a camcorder: Intention Statement.
Registering sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures in our immediate environment can be a source of healthy distraction.

Take a trip: Exercise.
Enjoy the immediate benefits of a mental vacation.

Meditate.
By focusing your attention and carefully observing your body and mind, you can alleviate the deepest sources of distress.

Take a look at how you rest your machine: Discovery Statement.
Take stock of how well you currently manage stress.

Choose new habits for managing stress: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Take new actions to free yourself from distress.



HELLO STRESS GOODBYE DISTRESS

Stress gets bad press. That complex experience of thoughts and feelings that we call stress can be valuable, even wonderful.

Stress is simply our response to change. In fact, stress and excitement are almost the same physiologically. Our stress response can be evoked by pleasant as well as unpleasant events. The extra surge of adrenaline, the bracing for action, the heightened pulse rate—all can be responses to a dressing down from the boss or to undressing before sex. Stress can be a power surge, an extra bolt of energy that moves us into action. Seeing an old friend for the first time in years, embarking on a new career, going on vacation to a new part of the country—all these can trigger the kind of stress that's healthy.

When it goes too far and lasts too long, stress becomes distress. That's when we might start to notice a toll on our health and ability to solve problems. It's easy to confuse the two concepts. People almost always mean distress when they use the word *stress*. If you want to be healthy, keep stress, avoid distress.

We can choose to heed "distress" as an invitation to change some aspect of our thinking or behavior. We can interpret distress as a signal that one of our current habits is not serving us. We can even see distress as the excitement and energy needed to make those changes.

When stress becomes excessive and you are ready to say goodbye to distress, start with your attitude toward it. Consider the possibility that distress is never the result of external circumstances. Nothing and no one "makes" you feel distressed—not even the supervisor who chews you out or the store clerk who insults you. No event is inherently distressful. Distress is most often a function of how you interpret and respond to other people and events. With some practice, you can learn to choose new responses, before stress cycles downward into distress.

Distress comes to us in many guises, including anxiety, burn-out, and boredom. Through all the fireworks, we can identify two basic types of distress—one that primarily affects the mind (worry) and another that centers on the body (tension). The strategies in this chapter suggest a variety of ways to deal with both types of distress.

As you read about the stress management techniques that follow, you may encounter some ideas you've heard before. That's great. One of the most important things a book or teacher can do is tell us what we already know but forget to put into practice. For most of us, the gap between knowledge and action applies to many areas of life beyond stress management—money management and time management, for example. With a few reminders and lots of practice, we can close this gap and wave goodbye to distress forever.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Listen to stress

Remember a time when you felt stressed. Then see if you can view that stress as a signal to change some of your attitudes or behaviors. Describe that personal change.

I discovered that my stress is a signal for me to . . .

Now write an Intention Statement about how you can avoid similar stress in the future.

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Remember what you already know about stress

All of us have experienced stress. And by now, you've probably developed some personal strategies for coping with these feelings and thoughts.

In the space to the right, brainstorm a list of all the ways you currently respond to stress. Include stress management techniques you already know about and could to use in the future.

Spend at least 10 minutes making this list, and include as many ideas as you can.

DEAL WITH WORRY

It usually does little good to walk up to a stressed-out person and say, "Worried? There's no need. Just be happy!" Often people want something more concrete. The strategies listed in this article and the following article about tension are places to start.

Zoom out

When you're in the middle of a situation that triggers a lot of stress, take a trip. You don't have to physically leave the scene; just do the traveling in your head. Mentally zoom out, the way film directors do when they dolly a camera out and away from an action scene. Imagine that you're floating away and viewing the stressful situation as a detached, outside observer. If the situation is extremely distressing, let your imagination take you even farther. See yourself rising above the scene, so that your whole community, city, nation, or planet is within view. From this larger viewpoint, ask yourself whether the situation is worth worrying about. This is not a license to belittle or avoid problems; it is permission to gain some perspective.

Another option is to zoom out in time. Imagine yourself one week, one month, one year, one decade, or even one century from today. Assess how much the current situation will matter to you when that time comes.

Yell "Stop!"

Thoughts can race faster than a speeding bullet. Sometimes the only way to bring them to a halt is to give a direct order. Just yell "Stop!"

When appropriate, yell the word out loud. If that's not wise, then do it mentally or just move your lips without making a sound.

Either way, notice what happens to your thoughts. An unusual response like this one can be just what you need to derail an unwelcome and stress-producing train of thought.

After you yell "Stop!" and the worry ceases, momentarily fill your mind with pleasant thoughts. This may be just the time to practice on page 278.

Write about it

Writing is a great way to slow thoughts down. Since the hand is slower than the mind, attempting to freeze our thoughts on paper really puts the brakes on our racing thoughts. Writing is also a way to gain perspective. When our thoughts are sitting obediently in front of us on a piece of paper, they often are less stressful. Choosing to crumple up that piece of paper and throw it away might help us toss the disturbing thoughts out of our minds as well.

Recognize limits

Being a perfectionist is taking a virtue (attention to detail and a passion for quality) to an extreme. Much stress results when we set ourselves up for failure by setting our expectations too high. Instead, we can practice perfection in moderation. The most powerful goals are those that both stretch us and engage us in a task we can actually accomplish—goals that are both high and realistic. Once we acknowledge that there are limits on our time, talents, and energy, we can focus on the most essential tasks, set realistic expectations, and let the rest go.

Manage self-talk

There's a conversation that goes on 24 hours each day and exerts a major influence on how we feel and behave. That conversation is the one inside our heads. It is the constant stream of words and images that our brains manufacture, even while we sleep.

When we're stressed, that stream of words starts sounding like a low-budget horror movie. Thoughts such as "This is terrible," or "This is the worst thing that could ever happen to me," are accompanied by mental pictures of impending disaster. At these moments, we are focusing on the worst possible outcomes.

Worry, goes the old saying, is a down payment on a debt we may never have to pay. Most of the catastrophic scenes we picture never come to pass. This offers a resounding argument for noticing our anxiety-producing mental conversations and replacing them with positive images of the future.

Talk about it

Finding a sympathetic ear can work wonders when we're stressed. Talking to a friend, family member, or counselor can be powerful. Unburdening our woes to a pet or even a plant might sound weird, but it can help, too.

If we're desperate, bereft of friends, and low on cash, we can remember that almost every major city offers telephone hotlines for people in crisis. Through these services, we can gain immediate access to free counseling or an understanding listener. Another option is to call on ministers and community mental health centers. With all these resources, there's no reason to experience our pain alone and in silence.

Imagine the worst and be OK with it

Sometimes we can manage stress by exaggerating the tendencies of a racing mind. If our minds want to imagine the worst, then we can let them. The trick is to be sure we take this line of thought to the absurd extreme.

Example: "If I don't get this job, I'll run out of money, then I'll have to go live with my parents, then everyone will laugh at me, then my parents will kick me out, then I'll be homeless and live in a cardboard box on the street, then I'll starve or freeze to death."

Once we imagine the very worst, we can backtrack and usually find a realistic scenario. From there, freed from the devastations of unrealistic expectations, we can start to devise workable plans to manage our current reality and solve the stress-related problem.

This is not a suggestion to laugh away our stress or ignore our problems. It is a suggestion to find a reasonable level of concern. When we've discovered that level, we can state the problem objectively and see new solutions.

Rehearse success

Instead of imagining how badly things might turn out, take a few minutes to mentally rehearse success. Picture yourself sailing through income tax audits, work evaluations, or any other events you typically dread. Hear yourself performing well at presentations or during meetings. Feel what it would be like to overcome obstacles, accomplish goals, and resolve conflict. Anticipating success can increase the chance that it will happen. It also does wonders for our level of confidence.

Focus on the external world

It's easy to live in our minds, trying to figure out why we feel the way we do. We can get so focused on ourselves that we become self-centered, forgetting that the outside world even exists.

Sometimes a simple change in our focus is all that's needed to break the cycle of distress. Instead of endlessly probing our own psyches, we can take an active interest in the world around us. We can shift our attention from "What am I feeling?" to "What needs doing?" Asking the latter question might lead us to vacuuming the living room, apologizing to a friend, finishing a project, or doing volunteer work. Even simple shifts of attention—noticing the colors in a room or the sounds on a nearby street—can lower our stress levels.

As our attention embraces the world beyond ourselves, we can feel refreshed and more able to handle the waves of feeling that wash over us.

Focus on today

This is a strategy well known to members of twelve-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous. To a person recovering from alcohol addiction, the thought of a lifetime without booze can trigger feelings of abject despair. The thought of getting through the rest of the day without alcohol sounds a lot more manageable. We can apply the same strategy to any behavior or attitude we want to change . . . one day at a time.

When we give total attention to what we are doing right now, we are less able to focus on people and events that unnecessarily upset us. We can merge with the task at hand, giving it our full attention, and then do the same with the next task . . . and the next . . . and the next. In the meantime, feelings of upset and stress will often subside.

Caution: Like any other strategy, this one can be misused. Some people use the idea of "one day at a time" to prolong an unacceptable situation. In harmful circumstances—such as being in an abusive relationship or working for a tyrannical boss—we might resign ourselves to tolerating just one more day of suffering or humiliation. The problem comes when that "one more day" turns into weeks, months, and years. In these situations, there never seems to be a good time to take the drastic steps that are needed to set our boundaries and enforce them.

When we find ourselves putting up with the unacceptable, day after day, we can ask ourselves, "If not now, when?" Sometimes it takes a great deal of courage to change today. Telling the truth, finding support from others, and choosing to make a specific change can be the first steps toward more happiness.

Postpone worry

Here's one situation where the ability to procrastinate comes in handy. Instead of worrying now, put it off. Schedule a time to worry later, and tell yourself you'll get around to it if you feel

like it when the time comes. Some people like to actually pull out their calendars and pencil in a time to worry. This gives them permission to enjoy some peace of mind for the time being.

When we apply this strategy, a joyous discovery awaits us. Much of the time, the things we worry about never come to pass. By postponing worry, we save ourselves needless mental wear and tear.

Work hard

Stress is often a signal to do something. A project at work is almost due; it's time to buckle down and finish it. There's dirty laundry sitting in great heaps; now's the time to get it done. Sometimes all the stress management strategies in the world are no substitute for seeing a task to completion.

Work can be healing in and of itself. The activity gives us something new to think about and yields a sense of mastery and control. When we start crossing items off our to-do lists, we can often say, "Now I'm really getting somewhere with this problem." You just might see feelings of stress shrink to nothing.

Ask for help

There are over five billion people on this planet. All of them are potential allies in helping us get what we want.

Stress is needlessly multiplied when we try to solve problems alone. When other people know about the stress we're under, many are willing to lend a hand. Often the first thing they say is, "How can I help?" Taking them up on the proposition is one way to defuse distress.

Say no

Much of our stress results from our resistance to use a simple two-letter word: no. Uttering this tiny word can work big miracles. It can banish projects that serve no real purpose. It can keep pesky people from monopolizing our time. Most people will appreciate the honesty in a statement such as "I'll pass. My plate is full and I don't want to do that right now."

Set priorities

One of the most precious gifts we can give ourselves is a set of realistic expectations. When we schedule five hours of meetings and five hours worth of additional tasks all in an eight-hour work shift, we're two hours behind before we even start the day.

We can stop this form of self-sabotage by asking some questions: "What's top priority for today?"; "What's the worst that could happen if this didn't get done?"; "If I could get only three things done today, what would I choose them to be?"; "What activities are most in line with my purpose and values?" The answers we get can help us separate the wheat from the chaff in our daily schedules.

Delegate

Another powerful question to ask when managing overwhelm and distress is, "Could someone else do this as well as I can—or even better?" Often, it's effective to tackle only the projects that are uniquely suited to our abilities. The other tasks can be handled in almost no time by delegating them to someone else.

Chant or sing

Words have the power to relax us. Sacred phrases and prayers are intoned by the adherents of many religions. Singing and chanting are ways to steady the mind and body.

You can use this principle when confronted with worry. Bring to mind a favorite saying or prayer and repeat it several times. You can also speak these words out loud or write them down. Sometimes the sentiment expressed in these words is enough to restore our perspective. In addition, the sheer repetition of them can have a calming, hypnotic effect.

DEAL WITH TENSION

While the mental aspect of distress manifests itself mainly as worry, the physical aspect surfaces in a variety of ways. Stress can register as tight shoulders, stomach cramps, or clammy palms. As the techniques explained below demonstrate, we can respond by doing something different with our bodies.

Do "horse lips"

When it comes to managing stress, we can take a cue from horses who purse their lips and then vibrate them with a forceful exhalation. The resulting sound is one that any equestrian will immediately recognize.

Imitating this sound is one way to relax in the midst of a stressful situation. Some people do this instinctively when they're feeling tense. By tensing and then relaxing the muscles of the face and forcing us to take a deep breath, doing "horse lips" gives us an edge on stress.

Laugh

The physiological benefits of a belly laugh can be profound. Laughter affects our heart rate and breathing. It also relaxes muscles in various parts of the body. After a prolonged bout of laughter, we usually feel a wave of well-being and relaxation.

Learning to laugh on cue is a useful skill in managing tension. It pays to keep a stash of jokes, cartoons, and humorous quotes. During times of stress, we can bring these goodies to mind and enjoy the results.

Describe it completely

When feeling tension, locating and focusing on the particular body sensations involved can often reduce or even eliminate the sensation.

To do this, scan your body. Notice any areas that are in pain or discomfort. Look for tingling, numbness, or tightness. Then get to know these sensations in great detail. Is the sensation localized or does it fan out to several different parts of the body? Does the sensation have clear starting and stopping points, or are its borders undefined? What is the quality of the sensation—sharp, hard, or wavelike? If you could imagine a color for this sensation, what would it be?

All these questions are ways to help you investigate the tension in microscopic detail. By the time you reach that level of awareness, you'll often find that the sensation has faded or even disappeared.

Work your body

When we're stressed, it often pays to deal with it on a totally physical level. Think of the human being as a machine with three centers of activity—thought, emotion, and action. To relieve stress, we can switch centers: We can stop thinking and feeling and start moving.

It sometimes helps to find some physical activity that floods our bodies with calming, pleasant sensations. There are many examples. Hugging, massage, gardening, and deep breathing are great for starters. Exercise, even a brisk walk or a mild jogging session, releases pain-blocking chemicals in the brain that relieve stress naturally.

One of the most powerful things we can do when in distress is to take care of our bodies. That's not what many people do. When they're under pressure at work or in the midst of strained relationships, they neglect sleep and nutrition. Often they look to junk food or drugs for relief. Our machines can cope better with stress when we do just the opposite: stick to a regular meal schedule, get adequate sleep, and minimize or eliminate alcohol, sugar, caffeine, and tobacco. Cardiovascular exercise is a particularly potent antidote to stress.

Re-label the sensation

We can discover alternative labels for various physical sensations—even those we associate with stress. The sore muscles we used to complain about after a hard physical workout can now be enjoyed as "signs of getting into shape." The physical sensations we normally label "fear" (increased heart rate, sweaty palms, trembling knees) can instead be described as "excitement." Our first attempt at skydiving can be transformed from a "dreaded folly" to an "adventure." In each case, we experience new effectiveness as we keep looking for new ways to code our experience with new words.

Do something constructive

If we feel upset at any time, we can choose a constructive task to accomplish and then dig in. We might wash the dishes, weed the garden, complete an item from our to-do lists, exercise—these are just a few examples. And when we notice any lingering feelings of upset, we can gently return our attention to the task at hand. Upset has little room to maneuver when our attention is focused on accomplishing a goal.

If this sounds like a suggestion to distract ourselves—well, it is. Distraction can be useful, especially when we've been mired in a problem for days or weeks, and no solution is in sight. And, the change of pace that comes with refocusing our attention can actually give us a fresh perspective on the difficulty, one that can yield new insights.

Use lots of relaxation exercises

Today we could fill an entire store with books and tapes that explain how to relax. This is valuable literature, and we can benefit by using it.

You will have an opportunity to practice two simple and effective relaxation techniques in the exercises that immediately follow this article.

Use guided imagery

Most of us have a favorite place, a location associated with feelings of calm and contentment. For some it may be a sunny tropical beach. For others, it's a favorite room in a house or the scene of a shared meal with friends. In any case, we can fly across the boundaries of time and space and travel there any time in our minds.

To help manage stress, we can create mental images of our favorite places. Imagining these in vivid detail helps us re-experience the emotions associated with the scene. We can see the sights, hear the sounds, and notice the smells and other sensations associated with this place. We might even wish to sketch it or write about it. Like other skills, the more we practice, the better we get at it.

Set aside time for fun

People often forget to have a good time. It's not just that they take too little time for relaxation and recreation. Rather, large numbers of people have no idea what to do even when they do take time off.

Today, the pressures of competition at work and making enough money to maintain an increased standard of living are taking a toll on us. No wonder we feel burned-out sometimes.

An alternative is to set aside definite times each day and week when we're off task—freed of the expectation to compete, produce, or

accomplish anything. At first, if finding these times is difficult, it can pay to schedule them, to block them out on our calendars.

If we feel anxious or unsure about what to do during these times, we can realize that we're not alone and forgive ourselves. With a little time and practice, we can remember how to have fun. We can commit ourselves to having fun whether we like it or not.

EXERCISE

Breathe to relax

Sometimes the simplest relaxation techniques are the most powerful. One technique involves purposefully slowing down your breathing and taking deeper breaths. The speed of your thoughts and the level of tension in your body are frequently connected to the pace of your breathing. By slowing it down, you can often moderate tension and racing thoughts. Closing your eyes while you pay attention to your breathing can help you learn to breathe more deeply and more slowly.

Practice slowing and deepening your breathing right now. Pay very close attention to any physical or emotional changes and write your observations in the space below. The next time you are in a stressful situation, remember to practice this exercise and notice its effect on your level of stress.

When I breathe deeply and slowly, I notice that I . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

EXERCISE

Scan your body to relax

One stress-reducing exercise is called the body scan. Lie down on a bed or a carpeted floor and close your eyes. If possible, dim the lights in the room. Then systematically focus on each part of your body while allowing it to relax. Start with your toes and move slowly up to your head. At each point, if you notice any spots of tension, mentally relax them. To accentuate the effect, you can tense each muscle group and then relax it.

With practice, you can apply this technique while sitting, standing, or walking. You can even learn to relax while going to the dentist or filling out tax forms.

Practicing this technique will improve your ability to relax. Practice it several times in the next few days. As you get better at it, you might choose to make it a regular habit.

Become a camcorder

You may have used a camcorder—one of those portable video cameras with a built-in microphone. These gadgets have a simple function: to record the sights and sounds that occur in the spot that the lens and microphone are pointed. Camcorders do this without editorializing or making any judgments whatsoever.

When we are under a lot of stress, there are times that it pays for us to function in the same way. Just registering the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures in our immediate environment can be a source of healthy focus when we're stuck in a problem or stressed out. We can do this without making any judgments. Like the camcorder, we can simply register the data in a neutral, objective way. Besides lowering our stress, doing this might help us learn something about the world and discover unexpected sources of pleasure.

When our attention is chronically focused inward, we can lose perspective and increase our anxieties. When we shift our attention to the outside world, we can often get some immediate relief from distress.

Though this exercise might seem forced or artificial at first, it's based on a powerful principle: We can choose the focus of our attention and increase our skills of observation. Writers, artists, researchers, and detectives can attest to the value of this skill.

Here are some examples of things to focus on:

- The number and condition of the steps between your front door and the sidewalk.
- The colors and textures of the clothes that your spouse, partner, or children wear.
- The names and locations of objects in a room.
- The names and descriptions of plants, flowers, and trees in your neighborhood.
- The varieties of sounds in your environment: traffic, voices, air conditioners, furnaces, machines, and so on.
- The smells, colors, textures, and tastes of foods that you eat often.
- The colors of the sky and the shapes of the clouds.

You can no doubt think of other details to focus on. Describe how you will focus your attention and what specific details you will "record" the next time you are distressed.

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Take a trip

In as much detail as possible, describe one of your favorite places. You can put this description in words or draw or paint a picture of it. This can be a place you have actually visited or a place created in your imagination. Keep this place in mind so that you can mentally return there the next time you feel distressed.

Describe and/or draw your favorite place in the space below.

As a variation of this exercise, create a list of 20 things you love to do. The next time you feel stressed, imagine that you are experiencing one of these enjoyable activities.

MEDITATE

The word *meditate* comes from the Sanskrit word *medha*, which means "to locate your center, your inner wisdom." Meditation is now taught and endorsed by people in all walks of life, gurus and priests, herbalists and physicians. Many of our contemporary ills—tension headaches, high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety, irritability, lack of self-confidence, blocked creativity—have made the benefits of meditation more attractive than ever.

Meditation can provide a deeper form of relaxation than sleep does. Pulse rate and oxygen consumption may drop as much as 20 percent during meditation. It can restore energy and promote self-healing. Meditation is one way to promote inner peace, the value of which can be easily overlooked as we scramble toward other goals.

Meditation is a technique, not a doctrine. It does not need to conflict with any religious beliefs. In fact, meditating might enhance current religious practices.

You can meditate in the midst of an active life. It is not a limiting or isolating activity.

Meditation has special relevance to managing stress. Some psychologists tell us that the most we can hope for is to manage stress—not be rid of it. Some highly skilled mediators disagree. They say that we could be free of stress most of the time. This can happen when meditation goes deep enough to work at the very roots of stress in the mind and body.

Consider three aspects of meditation

At the heart of meditation are three practices. One is learning how to focus attention, such as explained in "Focus your attention" which is Power Process #6 on page 67.

Human beings are famous for their ability to be in several places at once, at least in their minds. While eating dinner, we can be thinking about bills, writing letters, and regretting not completing the tasks on today's to-do list.

Skilled meditators remind us that always approaching life in such a mentally scattered fashion forces us to miss out on many moments of joy. Our activity becomes a mere means to an end—some vague notion of a future happiness or fulfillment that constantly eludes us. Instead, we could view many activities as ends in themselves. Walking, working in a garden, talking to friends, eating delicious food, and even washing the dishes can become fulfilling activities in their own right. The key is fully attending to them.

A second meditation practice is to be fully aware of what goes on in our minds and bodies. Many people go through life with only a dim understanding of the nature of their thoughts and feelings. Skilled meditators, on the other hand, can tell you that a feeling of fear registers in them as a tightness in the chest, sweatiness in the palms, and tension in the stomach. They can often describe the words and images that flash through their minds as they experience a strong emotion.

This kind of precise description can yield a lot of insight. A common perception among meditators is that feelings and thoughts are constantly changing. Even the strongest physical and emotional sensations don't last long. Feelings of pain can be followed by waves of relief and even joy.

This awareness can change the way we relate to pleasure and pain—two of the fundamental forces in our lives. Through meditation, we learn that feelings of pain are constantly shifting. That means we don't have to fear pain or go to great lengths to avoid it. In addition, feelings of pleasure flow through us many times each day. That means we don't have to become attached to any individual pleasure or desperately try to make it last. In the midst of pleasure or pain, we can experience a sense of spaciousness and freedom. The highs are sweeter, and the lows don't seem as devastating.

Third, meditation often involves an attitude of acceptance. While meditating, we don't have to censor any thought or resist any feeling. Events taking place in the mind and body simply float to our awareness. We can assist the process by refusing to judge them.

There are many different ways to meditate, any of which can open the door to a wonderful new dimension in our lives. Here are a few guidelines to get you started:

Pay attention to your breathing

Sit in a comfortable position, your spine erect. Notice your breath as it flows gently in and out of your body. Imagine yourself breathing in calmness, relaxation, and well-being. Visualize yourself breathing out frustrations, tensions, and negative emotions.

Notice thoughts

Thoughts will continue to pop into your head as you meditate. Notice them and let them go. You also can concentrate on something to lessen distractions and help you stay focused. Repeat silently a word or a phrase that has special meaning for you. Or, stare at the flame of a candle or at a point on the wall or floor. Each time a thought enters, just notice it, gently let it go, and return your attention to whatever you have chosen to be the focus of your attention. Another thought will soon enter; let it float away like a stray cloud in an endless sky.

Notice feelings

Some people think that meditation is all about feeling good, getting blissfully spaced out, or dozing off. Actually, skilled meditators practice focusing their attention and bringing their internal experience into sharp focus.

This is not always pleasant. While you meditate, you might feel strong negative emotions. Anger, sadness, anxiety, fear—all these feelings may erupt to the surface. That's fine. The idea is to fully allow and experience any feeling, pleasant or unpleasant.

Whenever a feeling arises, just put it under the spotlight of awareness and get to know it as well as you can. Notice what physical sensations are associated with the emotion. For instance, you might feel fear as a tightness in your stomach; sadness might be a heaviness in your chest and limbs; pleasure might be a tingling sensation that washes over your whole body.

As we do this over time, compulsions and negative emotions start to lose their grip on us. We discover that the very habit of repressing certain thoughts and feelings gives them a kind of power. We begin to free up a lot of energy when we change this habit.

What's more, meditation reveals that every thought and sensation is impermanent. They come, then they go. Like waves, they rise, crest, and subside. Knowing this, we can feel free even in the midst of unpleasant feelings or cravings; we know that even these will pass. Likewise, we can experience pleasant feelings without getting addicted to them; we know that another wave of pleasant sensation is on the way. Actually, we can enjoy pleasure all the more when we don't try to force it or make it last. This is just the beginning of the insights we can gain from meditation.

Make a commitment

Most of the benefits of meditation come from regular practice. The fragmented schedules and general hustle and bustle of life can make it difficult to do anything regularly unless we make a clear commitment. Write your intention down. Be specific about when and where you will meditate.

Meditate at the same time and place

When you are consistent about doing an activity in one location, at one time of day, your body and mind know what to expect. If you don't have a special place to meditate, set up other signals, like wearing a special shirt, lighting a candle, burning incense, or playing a certain tape or record. Meditate for at least 20 minutes a day.

Consider taking a class

Local churches, synagogues, meditation centers, YMCA's, and community education programs teach a variety of meditation styles. Check them out. Meditating with other people is a powerful incentive to learn.

> *To be somebody you must last.*
>
> –Ruth Gordon

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Take a look at how you rest your machine

As you read these statements, think about whether they apply to you. In some cases an appropriate response is a simple "yes" or "no." In others, you can write, "This is sometimes true of me," "This is often true of me," or "This is never true of me." Other possible options are "I agree with this statement as it applies to me," or "I disagree with this statement as it applies to me."

I notice that I get irritated at insignificant events.

I have health problems that I suspect are related to stress.

I know how to do a progressive body scan relaxation exercise.

I meditate regularly.

I enjoy having quiet time alone several times each week.

My work is stressful, and I take it out on my family when I get home.

My life is stressful and there is nothing I can do about it.

Sometimes my life feels out of control.

I can relax when I listen to music.

I can relax when I read.

I can relax when I watch television.

I can relax when I . . .

I have stress-related headaches.

When I feel stressed, breathing slowly and deeply helps me relax.

Practicing yoga helps me relax.

There are good listeners in my life who understand and accept me.

I need to take medication in order to relax.

I need an alcoholic beverage after a hard day in order to relax.

I sometimes find myself clenching my jaw or tightening my facial muscles.

I often experience muscle tension, aches, or soreness.

I sometimes take a deep breath and feel my whole body relax.

I am under a lot of stress because . . .

I am under a lot of stress because of my marriage or relationship.

I often become restless.

I tire easily.

I often experience shortness of breath or smothering sensations.

I have difficulty concentrating, and sometimes my mind goes blank.

I often feel keyed up and on edge.

I have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.

I sleep far more than I should.

I am mildly depressed most of the time.

I spend a lot of time avoiding situations that are stressful.

Generally, I expect things to work out well.

I fear being in certain social situations.

Use the space below to add any additional statements that are relevant for you.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Choose new habits for managing stress

When it comes to my overall effectiveness in managing stress, I describe myself as . . .

Stress could get out of control in the following areas of my life:

When considering the role that other people play in my stress, I discovered that I . . .

The most important things I can do right now to effectively manage stress are . . .

Chapter 5

Protect your machine

In this chapter you'll find...

Accidents waiting to happen.
Threats ranging from car crashes to sexually transmitted diseases can devastate our health almost immediately. Prevention is in order.

Protect yourself against violence.
Although we live in a society that is prone to physical violence, there is much we can do to protect ourselves.

Observe your machine.
Your machine is sending constant messages about the state of its health. They're worth heeding.

Drugs and alcohol can be fun—and costly.
Chemicals deliver the goods—at least sometimes. They usually also include huge costs.

Consider the costs and benefits of a current behavior: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Think about whether some of your behaviors are addictive.

Consider signs of alcohol or drug addiction: exercise.
Telling the truth helps us keep healthy pleasures from turning into painful habits.

Take a look at how you protect your machine: Discovery Statement.
Assess what you currently do to shield yourself from harm.

Choose habits that protect yourself: Intention Statement.
Decide on some new actions that can keep you alive and healthy for years to come.

Accidents Waiting to Happen

Imagine how someone who is trying to take revenge on an enemy could set up hazards in a home and car. This person could remove seat belts, store matches near sources of heat, and install electrical wiring that's frayed and not up to code. He could litter hallways and stairs with toys and small sharp objects. He could store hazardous chemicals in food cupboards. He could crank up the thermostat on the water heater so that bath water comes out scalding hot, and put dead batteries in the smoke detectors.

It's a bizarre scenario. Yet thousands of people live in such dangerous environments. Though they're not the victims of a vengeful plot, these people suffer by neglecting their surroundings. They put up with workplaces and houses that are filled with danger.

It's not surprising that accidents claim over 24,000 lives each year and lead to 25 million injuries annually. This toll on lives and health increases when we take into account the number of people who fail to protect themselves from common illnesses and sexually transmitted diseases.

By neglecting to observe our environment carefully and take simple precautions, we sometimes invite accidents, injuries, and illness into our lives. It's worth taking a few minutes to review some time-tested prevention strategies. Too often people think, "Oh, I already know all that stuff." They probably do. Much of what follows is just common sense. But we often fail to act on what we know. Common sense is not always commonly applied.

Read the following lists of strategies with the questions "How will I use this?" and "What will I do differently?" in mind. Then use the Journal Entries in this chapter to write specific Intention Statements about the steps you will take to protect yourself. Try making notes in the margin next to the ideas that you will implement right away.

While at home

- Remember that combining household cleaning agents can lead to dangerous chemical reactions. Follow the instructions that come with these products and wear gloves when using them.
- To avoid the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning, keep stoves and furnaces in good repair. Be sure that doors leading from your garage into your house are spring loaded to close automatically. Buy carbon monoxide detectors for sleeping areas.
- Install a smoke detector on each floor of your house or apartment. Also keep a fire extinguisher on hand and learn how to use it.
- Create a plan for how to escape from your house during a fire.
- Post emergency numbers near your phone. Know how to quickly reach your local poison control center, police, fire department, and personal physician. When in doubt, call 9-1-1.

- Childproof your living space to protect infants and toddlers. Keep drugs, matches, poisons, and medications on shelves that are out of children's reach. Put pans with boiling water on the rear burners of your stove. Avoid indoor plants with poisonous bulbs. These include crocus, iris, lily of the valley, and hyacinth. Install covers on electrical outlets so young children cannot insert metal objects and electrocute themselves. Install gates or barriers at the top of stairs or wherever a child might fall off a ledge.
- Wash knives and cutting boards to prevent the spread of organisms from uncooked meat, poultry, and fish.
- Wash produce to remove pesticides.
- To prevent the spread of bacteria, keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

While on the road

- Always wear a safety belt, if you ride a bicycle or motorcycle, wear a helmet.
- Avoid driving after consuming alcohol, even if you only had a drink or two. Refuse to ride with a driver who's even mildly intoxicated.
- If you feel tired, pull over immediately and rest. Accidents caused by fatigue are second only to those caused by drinking.
- Schedule maintenance for your car or truck regularly. Follow the recommendations in your vehicle's owners manual.
- Drive defensively. Imagine that the drivers in other cars are not paying attention and may make a dangerous move at any time.

While at work

- Inspect work areas for adequate ventilation.
- Carefully label and store toxic materials. Dispose of these according to the manufacturers' instructions.
- Do not eat or smoke while working with chemicals or operating mechanical equipment.
- When appropriate, use protective gear: respirators, goggles, gloves, helmets and the like.

Before, during, and after sex

- Be sure your partner is free of sexually transmitted disease. Avoid having sex with people who've had many sex partners until you are confident that they are free from STD's.. Next to abstinence, the safest route is having sex with only one person who has no other sex partners.
- If you are heterosexual, choose and use a method of contraception that's consistent with your values and lifestyle. Options include condoms, intrauterine devices, foams, jellies, creams, birth control pills, diaphragms, and contraceptive sponges. Natural family planning, the rhythm method and sterilization are also options. See a physician or a family planner for help in choosing and practicing the method, that's right for you.
- If you have intercourse with more than one person, be sure to use latex condoms and have yourself checked for sexually transmitted diseases at least once each year. Do this even if you're free of symptoms.

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST VIOLENCE

Each year in the United States, 20,000 people are murdered. Hundreds of thousands more are raped or assaulted. Often the acts of violence are random and unpreventable. However, there is much that we can do to increase the chances that we will be safe.

Following is a list of precautions that we can take to minimize the risk of rape and assault. As in the previous article, much of this is common sense, but we forget to apply it.

- Stick to streets and parking lots that are well lit. Look carefully for danger spots, including empty buildings and alleys.
- Many worksites and schools offer escort services for people who work or attend classes at night. Use them.
- If you're in doubt about the safety of your environment, walk or ride with someone you trust. Avoid traveling alone.
- Be assertive about what you will and will not do while on a date.
- Consider providing your own transportation to and from the place you meet your date.
- Be cautious around a dating partner who appears intoxicated, preoccupied, or disoriented.

In general

- If you use drugs while in the company of others, don't share needles. If you end up sharing needles, rinse them thoroughly with bleach and water first.

- Stay out of the sun during the hottest times of the day, generally between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Use sun lamps and tanning salons rarely, if at all.

- Keep on hand the supplies you'll need to treat emergencies. These include:

  Adhesive tape
  Antibiotic ointment spray or cream
  Bandages
  Cotton balls and swabs
  Peroxide
  Scissors
  Sterile gauze pads
  Syrup of Ipecac to induce vomiting

- Take a first-aid and safety course. Know how to handle common emergencies:

  Breathing problems
  Broken bones
  Burns
  Choking
  Concussions
  Drowning
  Electrical shock
  Heart attack
  Internal bleeding
  Nose bleeds
  Open wounds
  Poisoning
  Seizures

- Undergo regular exams to detect signs of cancer. These include mammograms, Pap tests, breast exams, testicular exams, and digital rectal exams. While you're at it, have your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and immunization records checked.

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

(There are several resources available to assist people who are violent and who have been harmed by violence. There are also many ways to prevent violence. Please send resources and suggestions.)

OBSERVE YOUR MACHINE

Your body has its own language and methods of communicating with you. Yet,even when bodily signs are easy to read, it's possible to ignore or deny them.

You are the person in the best position to observe your own warning signs of illness or injury. In general, the earlier you spot and respond to a problem, the less time, money, and energy you'll need to devote to solving it.

The following signs are worth noting, even if they don't require treatment:

- Abdominal pain
- Any bleeding or unusual discharge
- Back pain
- Bleeding from the breasts, vagina, or penis
- Changes in bladder or bowel habits
- Changes in the color or consistency of feces or urine
- Changes in a wart or mole
- Difficulty in swallowing
- Discomfort during bowel movements or urination
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Fever
- Insomnia
- Itching
- Joint pain and stiffness
- Muscles that remain sore long after strenuous activity
- Nausea
- New moles, lumps, and bumps
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Persistent and severe headaches
- Persistent cough
- Rashes
- Rectal bleeding
- Sore throat that lasts more than one week
- Sores and scabs that do not heal
- Sustained fatigue
- Unplanned weight loss
- Vision difficulty
- Vomiting

If you're in doubt about any of these signs, consult your health care provider. Such signals might indicate that a marvelous machine is in need of repair.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL CAN BE FUN—AND COSTLY

For centuries, human beings have devised ways to change their feelings and thoughts by altering their body chemistry. The Chinese were using marijuana five thousand years ago. Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, wrote about a group of people in Eastern Europe who threw marijuana on hot stones and inhaled the vapors. More recently, during the American Civil War, people could buy opium and morphine across the counter. A few decades later, Americans could buy soft drinks that contained cocoa—the plant from which cocaine is derived.

Perhaps drugs have such a timeless appeal because human beings face two perennial problems. One is how to cope with unpleasant moods, cravings, and compulsions. The other is how to cope with difficult circumstances, such as sickness, poverty, and death. When faced with either type of problem, it's tempting to bypass suffering with a chemical fix.

Mood-altering drugs are not necessarily bad. Through the "pharmacy within" (our brains and endocrine systems) all of us have access to mood-altering chemicals. Adrenaline occurs naturally in the human body, providing us with alertness and energy. Endorphins that circulate in our brains have pleasure-producing effects that are stronger than morphine.

It's true that drugs such as alcohol, nicotine, cocaine, and caffeine come with built-in dangers. Abusing them can lead to various forms of addiction, illness, injury, and even death. Yet these chemicals can deliver a sense of well-being, though it may be temporary. Even when the pleasure is short-lived and laced with danger, taking drugs can be fun.

We live in times when reaching for instant comfort via chemicals is not only condoned but approved. If you're tired, you can down a cup of coffee. If you're feeling blue, you can ask your physician for an antidepressant. If you're bored, tense, or anxious, you can drink a can of beer or a glass of wine. And these are only the legal drugs. If you're willing to take risks and part with more money, you can pick from a large selection of illegal street drugs.

Acknowledging that drugs can be fun infuriates a lot of people who might assume it is the same as condoning their use. But the point is this: Denying that drugs are fun and just lecturing about the dangers usually does not convince people to stop using nicotine, alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs. People are more likely to abstain when they're convinced that using drugs leads to more pain than pleasure over the long run.

And the pain can be enormous. There's the danger of overdose, infection, lowered immunity to disease, and addiction—all of which can be fatal. Long-term alcoholism damages every organ system in the human body. People have died of heart attacks induced by amphetamines. And each year, almost 400,000 people die from the effects of cigarette smoking. Add to this the loss of money, family, and friends that drug addicts often suffer.

When the pain of drug and alcohol use exceeds the pleasure, you can take immediate action to turn the situation around.

- Tell the truth. Addicts and alcoholics are often skilled at denial. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, these people might be fully convinced that they can quit drinking or using drugs at any time. The illusion can be fatal.

  Step One of the Alcoholics Anonymous recovery program offers a life-saving alternative: "We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable." When people tell the truth and admit their powerlessness over a chemical, they open themselves up to help.

- Avoid blame. People who drink don't set out to become an alcoholic. Those who use other drugs don't plan on becoming addicted. For reasons that we don't fully understand, some people just seem unable to use mood-altering chemicals safely.

- If you show signs of addiction, remember that this does not make you a moral failure. It could mean that you have a condition that demands and deserves treatment.

- Get help. Today a wide variety of help is available to people with addictions. These range from self-help groups, individual counseling, and group therapy to residential and outpatient treatment programs that include all these elements. Many of the programs combine the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous with medical care, including detoxification. If AA doesn't appeal to you, then check out organizations such as Rational Recovery Systems, Women for Sobriety, or the Secular Organizations for Sobriety.

Consider the costs and benefits of a current behavior

For the purpose of this exercise, consider an addiction to be any continually repeated behavior that satisfies some immediate, short-term need to seek pleasure or avoid pain, even though it results in serious long-term harm.

Remember that not all behaviors conform neatly to the categories of "addictive" or "not addictive." Some unhealthy behaviors are not addictions. This exercise offers us a chance to evaluate our behaviors and to place them somewhere on a line running from "healthy" to "addictive."

All of us have some behaviors that belong on the "healthy" side of the continuum. We also have behaviors that fall toward the middle: eating too much chocolate or watching more television than we intend. And some of us have behaviors that belong on the "addictive" side. These can go beyond addiction to alcohol or other drugs to compulsions involving work, sex, food, exercise, gambling, and more.

1. On a separate piece of paper, draw a straight, horizontal line. Label the left end of the line "healthy" and the right end "addictive."

2. Think about all the significant behaviors in your life. Keeping in mind the definition of addiction offered at the beginning of this exercise, place each of the behaviors somewhere along this line. To add value and perspective to this exercise, ask close friends or family members to look over your line. Ask for their perceptions about your behaviors. Perhaps there are some they would relocate or add to your chart.

3. Select one of the behaviors you noted on your line and give it some special attention. Describe both the benefits and the costs of this behavior.

I discovered that the benefits of this behavior include . . .

I also discovered costs, including . . .

4. Now consider whether this behavior is costing you more than it delivers. If so, write an Intention Statement that describes another way for you to derive the same payoffs with fewer costs. For example, the next time you feel sad you could lift your spirits by exercising instead of drinking alcohol.
I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Consider signs of alcohol or drug addiction

Doing this exercise is not the same as undergoing a careful assessment or getting a formal diagnosis. It is just a way of seeing your relationship to alcohol or other drugs more objectively.

Write "Y" before statements that accurately describe you, "N" before statements that do not describe you, and "NA" before statements that do not apply to you.

_____I have tried without success to cut back or stop using alcohol or other drugs several times.

_____ Sometimes I cannot go to work or see friends unless I first have had a drink or use drugs.

_____I spend time every day thinking about the next time I'll drink or use drugs.

_____I often drink or use drugs when I'm alone.

_____I have a stash of drugs or alcohol that no one knows about.

_____ If I don't drink or use drugs daily, I start to feel sick or anxious.

_____After I start drinking or using drugs, it's hard to predict when I'll stop.

_____I have recently experienced blackouts after drinking or using drugs.

_____I continue to drink or use drugs, even though it has disrupted my relationships or has led to my getting fired.

_____I've found it necessary to increase the amount I drink or use in order to get high.

_____I feel uncomfortable, afraid, or hostile when people start talking about drugs or alcohol; I'd rather change the subject.

_____I have missed work because of my drinking or drug use.

_____When I've stopped using alcohol or some other drug, I've experienced withdrawal symptoms.

_____I spend a great deal of time in activities that are necessary to obtain my drug of choice.

_____I have given up or limited important activities in my life in order to drink or use drugs.

_____I continue to use drugs even when it becomes physically dangerous to do so. I've had several legal problems related to my alcohol or drug use.

A "Y" to any of these questions indicates that you might have a serious problem with chemical use. Talk to a physician, counselor, or trusted friend about what to do next.

Take a look at how you protect your machine

As you read these statements, think about whether they apply to you. In some cases an appropriate response is simply "yes" or "no." In others, you can write, "This is sometimes true of me," "This is often true of me," or "This is never true of me." Other possible options are "I agree with this statement as it applies to me," or "I disagree with this statement as it applies to me."

I have smoke and fire detectors in my home.

I smoke in bed.

I wear seat belts whenever I'm in a moving car.

I have a fire extinguisher in my home.

At night in public places, especially when I'm alone, I stay in well-lighted areas.

I never drink and drive.

I sometimes ride in a car when the driver has been drinking.

I avoid areas where there is a lot of cigarette smoke.

I always drive within the posted speed limits.

The walkways outside my home are kept clear of ice, toys, and other objects that might cause people to trip, slip, or fall.

I know how to get help in an emergency.

My family occasionally holds fire drills.

I know the telephone number of the poison control center.

I lock my doors and windows at night.

I always look to see who is at the door before I open up.

Whenever I'm driving. I lock my car doors.

I have a first-aid kit and keep it handy

I keep my car in good repair.

I keep hazardous materials (like gasoline and lighter fluid) safely stored.

The electrical wiring in my home meets safety standards.

I know how to swim.

I am careful and follow safety guidelines when I use tools and shop equipment.

I know how to stop the bleeding if someone has been hurt in an accident.

I know how to do CPR.

I know how to perform the Heimlich maneuver.

The appliances in my home are in good repair.

The gas lines in my home are free of obstructions.

All of my gas appliances are cleaned and inspected annually.

I know what safety equipment to take in my car if I'm going on a trip, especially if there is a possibility of a winter storm.

I keep dangerous items out of reach of children.

My children know a neighbor's number to call if they need help.

If I have infants or toddlers in my home, my electrical outlets are plugged.

If I have infants or toddlers in my home, there are gates, barriers, or railings at the top of stairs and in other dangerous areas.

I store ashes from my woodstove or fireplace in a metal container.

My chimney is cleaned annually.

I avoid running as fast as I can into brick walls.

I practice safe sex.

Now create a list of additional ways that you protect yourself.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Choose habits that protect yourself

If someone asked me to describe how well I protect myself from accidents, I'd say . . .

Areas of my life that are potentially unsafe include . . .

The most important actions I will take to immediately increase my safety include . . .

Chapter 6

Resources

In this chapter you'll find:

Consider alternative health care.

To sort through the plethora of health care options, keep an open mind—and keep asking for evidence.

Think critically about health: Discovery Statement.

Practice critical thinking by reflecting on what you've read about health in this book.

Define health: Discovery Statement.

Explain what the word health means to you.

Look here.

There are hundreds of organizations that can assist us with improving your health.

Multiply the value of these strategies: exercise.

Find at least three applications for a suggestion from a section of this book.

CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE

When it comes to knowledge about health, we're in the best of times and the worst of times. You can now choose from a dizzying array of treatments—everything from foot reflexology to aromatherapy. You can jog, chant, drink herbal tea, lie on a massage table, get your spine aligned, or bake in a sweat lodge. You can stretch into scores of yoga positions or sit in meditation for hours.

The previous options are only the beginning. Think of all the professionals you can turn to for health care.

Acupuncturists
Applied kinesiologists
Aromatherapists
Chiropractors
Clinical kinesiologists
Dentists
Family practitioners
Herbalists
Homeopaths
Hypnotherapists
Iridologists
Naturopaths
Nutritionists
Massage therapists
Ophthalmologists
Optometrists
Orthodontists
Osteopaths
Pharmacists
Physical therapists
Physicians (general practitioners)
Physicians (specialists–dozens of varieties)
Podiatrists
Psychiatrists
Psychologists
Rolfers
Sex therapists
Surgeons

This is just a partial list of the available options. People are expanding their choices. A 1992 survey published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that one out of three Americans had visited an alternative health practitioner during the previous 12 months. The National Institute of Health, a federally funded agency, recently established a department of alternative medicine. Some centers that treat people for drug addictions or chronic pain now offer meditation, massage, and acupuncture in addition to standard medical treatment. And millions of television viewers tune in to programs that examine the influence of emotions on physical health. Approaches to health care that once seemed the property of "fanatics" or "fringe elements" are now making their way into the mainstream.

Consider features of conventional medicine

Conventional Western medicine often excels at treating infectious disease. Taking advantage of the scientific method, it has virtually eliminated such deadly diseases as typhoid fever and cholera. Scientific medicine has also developed an impressive array of responses to traumatic injuries and emergency medical conditions.

However, conventional medicine might not enjoy this kind of success with other problems.

Western-trained physicians can falter when treating diseases of the immune system (such as AIDS and lupus), chronic illness (such as diabetes and multiple sclerosis), mental illness (such as pedophilia and borderline personality disorder), and addictions (such as alcoholism). So far, conventional medicine has been unable to widely prevent or cure the conditions that kill most people today, including cancer, heart disease, and stroke.

Consider features of alternative medicine

Members of what is loosely called the alternative health movement often say that modern medical care has become too costly, too focused on drugs and surgery, and too dependent on high technology. Some alternative providers also contend that conventional medicine ignores the role of the mind and spirit in healing.

Actually, alternative medicine is a blanket term that's applied to people with scores of differing theories. Practitioners might prescribe a wide range of practices as alternatives to drugs and surgery. These can include everything from prayer, yoga, and meditation to herbal tinctures and acupuncture.

A common philosophy of many alternative practitioners is the idea that disease is not an enemy but a wake-up call. Illness can be a kind of love letter from a deeper part of ourselves. Diseases might be reviewed as requests from our bodies for a change in our thinking and/or behavior. According to this viewpoint, health is an active, vital force—one that's constantly seeking expression. And disease is not always an alien invader, but is often a misdirection or cessation of our natural, ongoing expression of health.

Choose for yourself

The whole area of health is fraught with misinformation, vested interests, conflicting claims, and quackery. Medical science and other health professions are evolving. Many areas are uncertain and under debate. We cannot assume that an alternative treatment will be more effective—or less effective—than conventional medical care. Careful examination of the evidence is crucial.

Sorting through health care options calls for a rare combination of two qualities. One is having an open mind. The other is having a skeptical mind. On one hand, it can pay to put your preconceptions on hold and try an approach that's totally new. On the other hand, it can be wise to say, "No, that's not for me right now."

It will be some time before wide areas of consensus emerge in alternative health care. In the meantime, we can adopt the viewpoint that the different approaches to health and healing have special areas of strength and weakness. Many schools of thought can claim successes. All of them can admit failures. Perhaps no one school deserves our unquestioning faith or our outright rejection.

Fortunately you don't have to wait for all the experts on health to agree. You can begin to take charge of your health through careful observation and planning. Start by looking carefully at yourself, choosing new behaviors, taking action, and experimenting to see what works.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Think critically about health

The precision required for writing can help clarify and refine our thinking. Experience this for yourself as it applies to your thinking about health. Select a message that has appeared in this section of *Human Being*, then, on a separate piece of paper, state whether you agree or disagree with this message. Support your conclusion with evidence and logical reasoning. As you write, notice if your point of view shifts in any way.

I discovered that I . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Define health

In the space below, write your definition of the word *health*.

For me, health means . . .

If you were living consistently with this definition, what health habits would you regularly practice?

The health habits I would regularly practice include . . .

Reflect on the difference between your current health habits and those that you just described, and then write about what you discovered.

I discovered that I . . .

LOOK HERE

If you want to improve your health, there are hundreds of organizations willing to help. Remember that any one of the resources listed to the right can lead you to more.

Addictions

Alcoholics Anonymous
World Services
475 Riverside Drive
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
1-212-870-3400

Institute on Black Chemical Abuse
2614 Nicollet Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55408
1-612-871-7878

National Asian Pacific Families Against Substance Abuse
6303 Friendship Court
Bethesda, MD 20817
1-213-617-8277

National Association of Native American Children of Alcoholics
PO Box 18736
Seattle, WA 98118
1-206-467-7686

National Black Alcoholism Council
1629 K Street NW
Suite 802
Washington, DC 20006
1-202-296-2696

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drugs Information
1-800-729-6686

National Coalition of Hispanic Health & Human Services Organizations
1030 15th Street NW
Suite 1053
Washington, DC 20005
1-202-387-5000

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.
12 West 21st Street
New York, NY 10010
1-212-206-6770

National Hispanic Leadership and Policy Department Institute
1500 Farragut Street NW
Washington, DC 20011
1-202-723-7227

National Institute on Drug Abuse Hotline
1-800-662-4357

PRIDE Drug Information Line
1-800-677-7433

Rational Recovery Systems
PO Box 800
Lotus, CA 95651
1-916-624-4374

Secular Organizations for Sobriety National Clearinghouse
PO Box 5
Buffalo, NY 14215
1-716-834-2922

Women for Sobriety
PO Box 618
Quakerstown, PA 18951
1-215-536-8026

AIDS

Centers for Disease Control National AIDS
1-800-342-AIDS
(in Spanish, 1-800-344-7432
TDD: 1-800-243-7889).

National STD Hotline (1-800-227-8922) or
National AIDS Hotline (1-800-342-AIDS)

Eating disorders

American Anorexia/Bulimia Association, Inc.
418 East 76th Street
New York, NY 10021
1-212-734-1114

Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc.
PO Box 5102
Eugene, OR 97405
1-503-344-1144

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders
PO Box 7
Highland Park, IL 60035
1-708-831-3438

General information

Ask-a-Nurse, This free phone service available in 38 states. Call 1-800-535-1111.

American Holistic Medical Association
4101 Lake Boone Trail
Suite 201
Raleigh, NC 27607
1-919-787-5146

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

(Please send complete addresses of additional organizations that you know are particularly effective.)

EXERCISE

Multiply the value of these strategies

Take any suggestion in this section of the book and write about one way to apply it in your life. Be specific about what you intend to do and when you will do it. Then think of two other ways you can use the suggestion.

For instance, if you find a strategy that works for improving your health, see if it can also apply to increasing wealth or the number of loving relationships you have.

Describe your strategy and the various applications here:

LIFE CAN WORK.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE as much happiness, health, love, and wealth as you choose.

You can feel happy and fulfilled no matter what your current circumstances.

Each of us can be essentially free from insecurity, depression, fear, worry, jealousy, aggression, turmoil, anxiety, boredom, vanity, hostility, irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and frustration.

Within a short time, and with some new skills, you can experience vitality, satisfaction, joy, serenity, health, contribution, fun, confidence, happiness, pleasure, love, peace, effectiveness, and security far beyond your current expectations. These positive experiences are always available and can be developed when you tell the truth about your current experiences and when you practice creating new ones. You are invited to use the techniques in this book to create a life filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Co-authored by Dave Ellis, author of *Becoming a Master Student* which has sold over two million copies.

LOVE

A MANUAL FOR HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH

DAVE ELLIS and STAN LANKOWITZ

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Chapter 1

Receiving

In this chapter you'll find...

Understanding is valuable—and rare.
Speaking and listening are commonplace and complicated. Our skill at these everyday tasks makes an enormous difference in our relationships.

Send or receive: exercise.
Get two 3x5 cards, then label one card "sender" and the other "receiver." Trade cards only after the sender agrees that the listener has fully understood the message.

Receive Fully.
Listening begins with the willingness to fully receive another person's message, to truly understand it before we begin speaking our own point of view.

Verify the message.
While listening, stop periodically, sum up what you think the speaker is saying, and ask for corrections.

Bombard others with attention: exercise.
The focused, nonjudgmental, and sustained attention of another person or a group can free up fear and allow other people to share what's really on their minds.

Pay attention to discrepancies: Discovery Statement.
Practice paying close attention to both the verbal and non-verbal messages people send you.

Accept declarations and compliments.
When listening, it pays to accept declarations without question and compliments with grace.

Notice how compliments are received: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Give 10 sincere compliments to 10 different people. Notice how your compliments are accepted.

Listen for statements disguised as questions.
Questions can be a disguise for assertions and requests that we're afraid to make.

Remember that techniques are not guarantees.
Listening strategies are often powerless unless they're fueled by a clear intention to understand.

UNDERSTANDING IS VALUABLE AND RARE

Most of us would agree that nothing is more important to us than the quality of our lives. What we may not remember are the following two points:

1. The quality of our lives depends largely on the quality of our relationships. When relationships with spouses, children, employers, and friends are satisfying, we're more likely to be happy. When we're angry or unhappy, something in our relationships has usually gone awry.

2. To a large extent, the quality of our relationships depends on the quality of our communication. We are more likely to be in a satisfying relationship with others when our communication is complete, honest, and skillful.

To sum up: The quality of our lives depends on the quality of our relationships. And in turn, the quality of our relationships depends on the quality of our communication. If this is true, we'd be wise to devote serious attention to improving our communication skills.

Although the word *communication* points to a crucial aspect of our lives, the word is often used in a vague, confusing way. Counselors and therapists say they want to help us communicate better. People who publish books, create films, or produce television programs say they're in the communications business. So do the people who run the telephone company and the people who build computers!

For the purpose of this section of *Human Being*, *communication* refers to the practices of speaking and listening. It's through speaking and listening that we can dramatically affect the quality of our relationships.

The following pages offer a number of strategies for speaking and listening effectively. Added to them are specific strategies for relating to friends, lovers, parents, children, and other key people. Taken together and regularly applied, these strategies can dramatically raise the "love level" of our lives.

See the payoffs in listening well

Most of us want satisfying and happy relationships. If the quality of our relationships is directly related to the quality of our communication, then listening well is one of the best ways to get what we want.

Listening effectively requires energy. Focusing our attention and being committed to understanding are not always easy. But, there are many payoffs that make doing both worth the effort.

Any time relationships are important, listening makes a difference. Effective listening is a valuable business skill. Salespeople are discovering that listening can be as effective as talking when it comes to closing a sale. Listening can also enhance our social lives. Good listeners are valued social companions. Others feel acknowledged and appreciated when we understand them. Through listening, we learn. Listening carefully can help us discover options and solve a wide variety of problems.

We can improve our listening by grasping the many levels of it. Understanding the weather report on the evening news requires a different skill and commitment level than understanding someone who is angry or sobbing. The strategies that follow can help when listening gets tough.

Remember—communication at best is difficult

Few people devote serious energy to improving their communication skills. Unless there's an obvious barrier, (a hearing impairment or a language barrier), communication is often taken for granted.

It's easy to assume that others understand things the same way we do. It's also possible for this assumption to be off base.

Consider the simple word *chair*. Upon hearing this word, some of us immediately think of the standard, four-legged object sitting next to a kitchen table. Others think of an overstuffed recliner. Then, there are rocking chairs, folding chairs, swivel chairs, highchairs, antique wooden chairs, leather chairs, poolside aluminum chairs, and electric chairs. Let's not forget the person leading a club meeting or taking charge of the board of directors. She is also a chair. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* gives us yet another definition of chair: ". . . a metal block that supports and holds railroad track in position."

If a simple word like *chair* can be misunderstood, it's easy to see how more complex statements can wreak havoc.

Consider this sentence: "I didn't say she stole the money." At first glance, the meaning might seem clear. Think again. Say the sentence aloud, emphasizing the word *I*: "AAIIEE didn't say she stole the money." This seems to point a finger at somebody else, implying that although "AAIIEE" didn't say anything about her being the thief, somebody else did.

Now make this statement again and emphasize the word *say*. The meaning of the sentences shifts again: Although the person speaking didn't actually say the woman stole money, he believed or implied it was true.

You can continue this example with emphasis on the words *she, stole,* and *money.* With different words being emphasized, the sentence takes on different meanings. Try it. It's fun, and it illustrates how the same words can convey a multitude of meanings. When tensions are high and emotions are strong, meanings can become even more muddled.

Given the frequency of misunderstanding, it does not pay to assume that we are communicating clearly. Knowing this fact alone can help us raise the quality of our speaking and listening.

Be a sender or a receiver

Many people commonly assume that the foundation of effective communication rests solely in getting their message across. In reality, this belief is a hazardous barrier to effective communication. Effective communication includes effective listening.

Whenever two people are trying to send messages at the same time, their chances of being understood take a nosedive. This is true even when they use truly effective speaking strategies. Both people are talking; neither is listening. Both people are sending; nobody is receiving. Typical result: confusion.

Effective communication is a two-way street. People take turns sending and receiving. When one person is talking, the other just listens. Then they switch roles. This continues until they reach a shared understanding.

Imagine a culture with sophisticated radio transmitters. Everybody is proud of owning state-of-the-art transmitter technology. The airways are flooded with brilliant commentaries and melodic music.

Imagine this same culture placing little value on radio receivers. Their receivers are obsolete and run-down. Hardly anyone is interested improving radio reception. Receiving equipment rarely functions well enough to tune in a particular frequency. Even when it does, the reception is intermittent, garbled, barely audible, and full of static.

This scenario might seem amusing and far-fetched. Yet something like it is revealed when we pay close attention to our own speaking and listening habits. Many people work hard at

transmitting their messages. Fewer devote much energy to their skills at receiving.

If two people are trying to get their messages across at the same time, the chances are that nobody is listening. When we put our message on hold and really listen, our partners are likely to feel understood. Once they feel heard, they might be more willing to listen. Listening with an open mind helps ensure that later, when we speak, our ideas will be heard.

Listen to yourself listen

It's easy to cross the line from receiving to sending. Someone starts talking about her ski trip and we reply, "That sounds terrific. Just like the time I was skiing in this terrible snow storm and . . ." We start spinning our tale, and the other person feels shut down.

Listening to ourselves listen requires paying close attention. When we intend to be listening and discover that we're talking, it's time to apologize, shift gears, and return to listening. Instead of sending our own message, we can practice fully receiving the message that's already heading our way.

There are times we get distracted when we're listening. We might be rushed for time. Maybe the other person is turning a simple story into an epic drama. Perhaps a personal problem is begging for our attention. Or perhaps we're at a party, pretending to be in one conversation and actually listening to another.

At such times we can find tactful ways to disengage ourselves from the conversation. Honesty is often the best policy: "Listen, John, that sounds like an interesting story, and I don't mean to be rude, but right now I'm very distracted. My dad has a serious health problem and I'm worried. I'm going to call to find out how he's doing. I'll come back in a little while, when I can really listen, and we'll take it from there." When listening, it often pays to either be genuine or be gone.

Yet, no suggestion is absolute. In certain cases, there can be compelling reasons to continue the facade. Say that at the weekly staff meeting, the boss is once again lecturing about motivation. We could say something like, "We've heard all this before. Let's move on to something else." It might be wiser to appear to be listening during the meeting and later make the point in a private conversation with the boss.

Even when the message is familiar, we can gain from listening again. We might discover a fresh insight or a new way to apply an old idea.

Above all, the point is to pay attention to our listening. Then we can make conscious, deliberate choices rather than falling prey to old habits of sending when it makes more sense to be receiving.

EXERCISE

Send or receive

This exercise helps to slow conversations down and ensure that genuine communication is taking place. It is especially useful when there is potential for arguments or misunderstandings.

Find a partner who is willing to participate in this exercise with you. Get two 3x5 cards; label one card "sender" and the other "receiver." Ask your partner to take one card while you take the other. The person with the "sender" card gets to speak first. Trade cards only after the sender agrees that the listener has fully understood the message. Trade cards again only after the new sender feels understood.

RECEIVE FULLY

Listening begins with the willingness to fully receive another person's message—that is, to truly understand it before we begin speaking our own point of view. This is a complex act with many dimensions and possible pitfalls. Practicing the following suggestions can help us master the necessary skills.

Use silence

Consider a typical conversation. Moments of silence are rare. As soon as person A takes a breath, person B jumps in. While person A was still speaking, person B was not really listening to everything because, for part of the time, he was preparing his remarks. At the very moment B stops sending his message, A wastes no time getting his on the airwaves again. This is known as "listening with your answer running." And when it happens, the people involved could just as well be talking to mannequins.

One strategy that can help you avoid this situation is the almighty pause. Before responding and sending your message, allow a few moments of silence. When we are truly intent on listening, we usually digest what is being said before deciding what we'll say. We postpone preparing our response until after the sender has come to a complete stop, and we've taken time to understand her message.

When we allow a little silence, we might discover that the sender hasn't really finished her thought; she has more to say. But if she doesn't say more, we can use the moments of silence to prepare our own words.

Silence slows a conversation down. It helps ensure that there is both a sender and a receiver present. Often the result is cooler tempers and increased understanding.

Sometimes this strategy is inappropriate. Someone runs up to us and hurriedly asks, "Where's the bathroom?" This is probably not the time to allow several long moments of silence.

In most other situations—especially when emotions are high, tensions are great, or accurate understanding is critical—allowing a few moments of silence is a gift. It gives people time to switch between the roles of sender and receiver and perform both with more skill.

Remember that understanding is not agreeing

"He didn't even hear me."

"How do you know he didn't hear you?"

"Well, he didn't do it the way I suggested."

A conversation such as this one suffers from the flawed assumption that if the other person understands our point of view, he also agrees with it. In reality, understanding and agreeing are two different things.

As listeners, our job is to totally understand the other person's point of view. Listening means receiving an accurate version of the message the other person sends to us. Once we understand that message, we're free to respond in any way we choose. One possible response is to disagree.

In confrontational situations, when we feel defensive, we often act as if careful listening is a sign of weakness. We might fear that taking the time to understand another's viewpoint means giving up our own. That's just not true.

It is a challenge to put our own ideas on the shelf and listen carefully, with a genuine intention to understand a new point of view. Yet, skilled listeners do this routinely. Successful debaters can argue their opponents' point of view as well or better than their opponents can. This does not mean that they agree with their opponents.

Generally, until other people feel understood, they are less likely to be willing to invest much energy in trying to understand us. And until we feel understood, we typically have little interest in trying to understand someone else. As a result, almost everyone loses. Communication breaks down. Relationships are strained, if not broken.

In those rare moments when meaningful communication does take place, one person has usually taken the risk to practice understanding first. When we remember the difference between understanding and agreeing, we can be the person to move a conversation forward.

Listen with your body

When you pay attention to others, they will usually notice it and speak more fully. If you face them, stand or sit in an open position, nod your head occasionally, and look at them with an attentive expression, they'll know you are interested. They can easily feel accepted and valued. They are not distracted and discounted by your fidgeting, looking away, eating, tapping your fingers, or picking your teeth.

In short, you can use body language that invites other people to speak. When you're making eye contact and facing the other person directly, you're usually communicating: "I'm awake, I'm here, and I'm interested in what you have to say."

Listen with your eyes

Our eyes play a major role in both sending and receiving messages. All of us gather a great deal of information by consciously or subconsciously observing the facial expressions, body movements, gestures, and postures of others. Remembering this can open a new dimension in our communication.

Eyes have been called the windows to the soul. Often we gain insight into what other people really mean by noticing their eyes. Eyes that meet ours squarely and directly usually mean something different from eyes that are cast downward or to the side.

To get the most from this suggestion, temper it with some cultural sensitivity. Many of us find intense prolonged eye contact uncomfortable. In some cultures, direct eye contact is considered offensive and a sign of disrespect. While paying attention to people with our eyes, it is wise to be appropriate. We want our attention to be appreciated and not perceived as a violation of personal boundaries.

Listen as if you're the only listener

When you are in a meeting or a group, imagine that there are only two people in the room: you and the speaker. You're sitting front row, center—an audience of one. Under these circumstances, the chances are that your listening skills would rise to new heights. You'd automatically apply many of the techniques explained in this chapter. Doing this mental exercise offers a shortcut to powerful listening.

Let the speaking move you

Even the most powerful and penetrating ideas go to waste when we greet them with thoughts such as "I already know this." or "What can this person say that's really worth hearing?" Instead of listening with evaluations, we can listen while constantly asking ourselves how we can use what we are hearing.

We can also view every interaction as a chance to refine listening skills, to explore a new point of view, or to simply further understand an opinion that we choose not to hold for now. In the process, we open ourselves to the prospect of learning something new.

Compare verbal and nonverbal communication

Communication consists of both verbal and nonverbal messages. Verbal messages are conveyed through words. Nonverbal messages are conveyed through behaviors that accompany the words: actions, body postures, facial expressions, and tone of voice.

When words convey one message and behaviors convey another, that's a signal worth our attention. What we see the other person do usually speaks louder than his words. If someone claims that he cares about our opinions and yet repeatedly stares at a television when we talk, he sends a mixed message. It usually doesn't take long before we trust his behaviors more than his words.

There are other examples. Someone is smiling, giggling, bouncing up and down, and speaking in animated tones. If she also claims to be depressed, we're more likely to trust her behaviors and question her words. If someone is habitually late, we'd be foolish to count on his promise to be on time.

Learning to notice nonverbal messages can help us determine the relative importance or value of a statement. For example, we might hear someone say, "I'm disappointed." She sighs, shakes her head, shrugs, and immediately turns her attention to something else. In this case, we could safely assume that her disappointment will be shortlived. If someone says the same words and begins sobbing hysterically, we easily realize that she is more than a little disappointed.

Put your agenda on hold

Each of us has an agenda. When we're talking, our personal concerns (what we want, what we need, and what we're interested in) are usually on the front burner.

The problem is that other people are giving their items top priority. It's no wonder, then, that genuine listening is so rare. We want to cover all the items on our agenda, and others want to do the same with theirs. We're all trying to step up to the podium at the same time.

Putting our agendas on hold so that we can really listen to another person can be difficult. Even so, it's almost impossible to listen effectively until we do.

When our own agenda is up front, everything we hear is filtered through it. When we detect an idea that fits, we agree with it. If we hear an idea that counters our agenda, we ignore it, discount it, or alter it. Our listening becomes distorted.

Unlearning this habit has tremendous rewards. Our relationships improve. We gain new additions to our aging stock of ideas and information. People start to say, "Thanks. You're a good listener."

Postpone your response

Even if we successfully put our agenda on hold, we often have a response to what the other person says. Our tendency is to jump in and send that response. Our listening is enhanced when we wait.

Postponing our response is not the same as never responding. It is important to let people know what we think about what they have said. It's just that we can enhance the communication when we listen to the full message before we respond.

Sometimes postponing a response is difficult. We may fear that we are going to forget what we wanted to say. In this case, it may enhance our communication to jot ourselves a note while listening. We can write down a key word or two to remind ourselves that we want to come back and respond to that portion of the sender's message.

Sometimes forgetting our initial response may be OK. Often times, a person doesn't really get to his message until he is near the end of the communication. If we had responded to the first part of the message, we would not have been responding to the important part.

Follow the lead of an idea

One common response to a new idea is skepticism and doubt. A new idea must be proven before we will even give it a chance. We generally use this approach to keep from getting duped. However, in this process, we often kill a potentially useful idea.

An alternative is to accept whatever people say as if it were true. This way of listening honors the speaker and avoids antagonistic conversation. It opens up possibilities that disagreeing and doubting squelch.

The practice of brainstorming is based on this process. People skilled at this technique realize that even the most outlandish, unworkable suggestion can lead to a solution that everyone has overlooked.

This suggestion offers a great way to handle assertions that are bizarre. Say that someone walks up to you and says, "Hello. I am Napoleon."

"Oh, well if that were true," you say, "then you must be very old."

"Yes, I'm 243."

"Oh, well if that were true, then you must be very famous—the oldest living person and one of the greatest military strategists of all times."

"That's right."

"Well, if that were true, then there must be many articles about you in medical journals and news magazines. I'd like to read some. Can you refer me to a few?"

You get the idea. In this process, foolish ideas die a natural death. We don't have to fear being conned. We might even be pleasantly surprised. Sometimes wonderful ideas emerge when we're willing to be playful and follow someone else's lead.

Democracy, free speech, freedom of religion, human rights—all were once considered dangerous and crazy ideas. When we follow the lead of an idea by asking, "What if that were true?", we open the way for major advances in thinking.

VERIFY THE MESSAGE

When others want to share their experience with us, they select words to accurately describe that experience. In seconds, they mentally translate the most complicated thoughts, feelings, and experiences into language. This process is called encoding. After encoding their experience, they speak those words to us and hope we are listening.

At that moment, an equally complex process takes place in us as listeners. We scan our memory banks and match the words we hear with personal experiences of our own. This process of listening to words and translating them to match memories of similar experiences is called decoding.

Communication, then, is a process of encoding and decoding. The trick is to come as close as we can to understanding each other's experience—no small feat.

One method to help both encoding and decoding is called active listening. When we practice active listening, we make our decoding public. That is, we repeat in our own words what we thought the speaker said. Now the speaker can make any corrections that seem appropriate: "No, that's not quite it. What I really meant to say was." or "You got it. I couldn't have said it better myself." Without this opportunity for the speaker to correct or validate our understanding, we might be receiving messages the speaker never intended to send.

If we pay close attention as we practice active listening, we're likely to notice an almost universal signal of understanding: Whenever we accurately sum up their message, they nod their heads and say, "yeah."

Investing time and energy to practice active listening bothers some people because they are sure they understand messages. They argue that they are intelligent, good listeners, and they know what the other person said. This may be the case, but maybe the other person didn't mean what she said. In this case, verifying the message can give the sender the opportunity to hear what she said and maybe realize that's not what she meant. She can then resend a more accurate message.

EXERCISE

Bombard others with attention

This exercise is a gem to use at family meetings or at work. Ask the people you're with to sit in a circle. Go around the circle, giving each person a fixed amount of time to talk—say, two to five minutes. When someone is speaking everyone else has the job of just paying attention to the speaker and listening—no criticism and no piggybacking (adding to what the speaker says.)

After all speakers finish, each group member may offer appreciative comments. Those comments can focus only on what the person said or the way she said it. It is important that people not use the time to give advice or to disagree with what was said. This is a time only for compliments.

The logic behind this exercise is simple: Focused, nonjudgmental, and appreciative attention of a group can free up fear and allow people to share what's really on their minds. Creative thinking gets impaired when people fear being judged. And when people are afraid, they tend to shut up. The experience of being truly heard can be affirming and even liberating. This is a gift worth giving to the people we care about.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Pay attention to discrepancies

Reflect on both the verbal and non-verbal messages you have sent people over the past week. Write about any discrepancies between the two and what you intend to do differently.

ACCEPT DECLARATIONS AND COMPLIMENTS

Accept declarations

Assertions can be thought of as statements that we can question and examine. If someone asserts something, we can reasonably ask for evidence. Statements such as, "People on welfare are draining the federal budget" or "You can make more money by investing in the stock market than by buying savings bonds." are examples of assertions. In each case, we can ask for facts and figures that prove these statements.

Declarations, on the other hand, can be thought of in a different way: as statements within the speaker's realm of authority. They need no proof in order to be valid. We each have total authority in some areas. For example, someone can say, "I'm tired." That's a declaration anyone can make. It makes no sense to challenge it. Likewise, the owner of a business can declare that someone is fired. A teacher can declare the due date of an assignment. Congress can declare war. Any one of us can declare an internal experience (e.g. feeling sad or happy). And any one of us can declare our personal tastes: "I don't like strawberry ice cream" or "I love avocados."

When listening, it pays to accept declarations without question. Suppose someone says, "I'm hot." Another person responds by saying, "I don't believe you." The first person might feel angry and discounted. He might think, "Oh really? You've got a lot of nerve. Who do you think you are?" That's an understandable response.

The same idea applies when you say, "I love you." and the other person says, "I don't believe you." Or when you say, "I'm excited about the future" and the other person shoots back, "I don't believe you." Or, when the boss says, "Friday is a holiday; everyone has the day off." and an employee says, "I don't believe you." In each case, it's off base to dispute the declaration.

When we accept other people's declarations, we honor them and lay a foundation for understanding.

Accept compliments

Some of us are just as uncomfortable receiving compliments as we are receiving criticisms. Many believe that it's somehow impolite to accept a compliment without discounting it in some way. To avoid appearing conceited, we might think we should discredit the compliment.

In reality, discounting a compliment is an insult—not only to ourselves, but also to the person giving it. Here are some typical comments that have this effect:

It was really nothing.
It wasn't that good. I goofed up in several places.
This old thing? It's such a mess.
If you really knew the truth, you wouldn't think it was so great.
Well, thanks, but I really don't deserve it.

Each of these comments is a subtle way of telling the complimenter that he doesn't know what he's talking about.

When we have an unfavorable self-image and we hear a message contradicting that image, the message is difficult to accept. As a result, compliments get shut out and the one who compliments feels shut down.

An effective strategy for accepting compliments is to remember that we are lovable, worthy, and capable. Accepting a compliment acknowledges both ourselves and the person who offers it.

A simple and graceful way to accept a compliment is to say, "Thank you. I appreciate that." (Or, if we want to risk taking the acceptance a little too far, we might say, "Thank you, you are very perceptive.")

When we receive a compliment for some achievement and others played a role in helping us, it's appropriate to acknowledge that fact. This does not mean dodging the compliment or suggesting that we're unworthy. It does mean telling the truth about others who helped achieve the goal. We can accept a compliment and, at the same time, share the credit with others who deserve it.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Notice how compliments are received

Look for opportunities to compliment people in genuine and sincere ways. During the next few days, give 10 sincere compliments to ten different people. Before you begin, predict how many of the 10 compliments will be received graciously and how many will be discounted in some way. Write your predictions below. After you have given all the compliments, record how they were accepted.

I predict that out of 10 compliments I give, _____ will be received graciously and the other _____ will be discounted in some way.

My experience was that out of 10 compliments I gave, _____ were received graciously and the other _____ were discounted in some way.

After you have completed the exercise, write both a Discovery and an Intention Statement about giving or receiving compliments in the future.

After doing this exercise, I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

Listen for Statements Disguised as Questions

Questions can be powerful. They can be a path to liberating ways to learn. Knowledge is borne of questions. Questions can also be a disguise for assertions and requests that we're afraid to make.

We can verify this by rephrasing questions as whatever statement is actually on our minds:

"What do you think you are doing?" becomes "Please don't do that."

"Do you like his new haircut?" becomes "I don't like his new haircut."

"Don't you think that's silly?" becomes "I think that's silly."

"This doesn't work, What should we do?" is actually, "Please fix this for me."

"When do you need your car back?" becomes "I want to keep your car until 10:00 p.m., if that's OK."

When we ask a friend, "Would you like to go to a movie tonight?", it's a safe assumption that we're not just taking a survey. When we ask, "Isn't it cold in here?", most people assume we're not simply asking out of curiosity. They reasonably assume that we want something, even though we are not asking.

Most of the time, asking questions that are really statements doesn't create problems. Sometimes, however, this practice can come across as deceptive or condescending. People might feel manipulated. They might not know exactly why, but they end up feeling uneasy.

This is especially true if the person asking the "question" is in a position of authority. If a boss asks, "Would you mind working a little late tonight to finish this job?", most employees are likely to think they're being given a direct assignment. They could even resent the question, preferring that the boss just talked straight.

Even in more intimate relationships, statements disguised as questions can lead to problems. Consider asking a spouse, "Don't you think it was rude to ignore me all night?" He might not think he was rude at all, and the result could be a fight about what really happened.

An alternative to asking a question is to use a five-part "I" message (see page 322). We could say, "I felt ignored tonight at your parents' house and I didn't have any fun. I'd like to talk with you about it to find something we can do so that I'll feel more comfortable the next time we visit your family." Although there are no guarantees, a mutually agreeable resolution is more likely when we speak straight.

When we hide our opinions, desires, and requests behind questions, we are not taking responsibility for them. Maybe it's just an unconscious habit. Maybe we feel it's too risky to be forthright and candid. Whatever the reason, we pay a cost and our relationships with others suffer.

We can be aware of questions that are really statements and begin to practice speaking the truth. When we do this, we build trust in others. People learn that they don't have to second-guess us or play mind reading games. They are probably more comfortable being around us and appreciate knowing exactly where we stand on issues.

Now, really, don't you think this is a great idea and a better way to communicate?

REMEMBER THAT TECHNIQUES ARE NOT GUARANTEES

Listening strategies are often powerless unless they're fueled by a clear intention to understand. If we are genuinely committed to understanding, we are 90 percent of the way home. The specific listening strategies we practice can help us cover the remaining 10 percent.

Imagine that you have something urgent to say and that you can choose between two listeners. One has an advanced degree in interpersonal communications but doesn't give a hoot about what you think. The other person knows few, if any, formal listening strategies but is tremendously interested in your ideas and fully committed to understanding. Most of us would choose the interested person.

In short, intention and interest are often stronger than strategy. The more committed we are to understanding what someone else says, the more we automatically follow the best advice about listening. Strong intentions allow us to adopt effective strategies naturally.

We often use effective listening strategies without knowing it. We're too interested in what is being said and too intent on listening to worry about whether or not we're following a prescribed technique.

Most of us have had the experience of talking to someone who uses all the "right" listening techniques and yet seems distant and out of touch. Their behaviors seem automatic and inauthentic. Sure, they're looking at us. They seem to be focusing on what we say. But we feel we'd gain more by visiting the local animal shelter and talking to a friendly dog.

Perhaps the most effective listening strategies are to be genuinely interested in others and sincerely committed to understanding. Our interest and commitment are likely to point us in the right direction.

> ***Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone, it has to be made, like bread; re-made all the time, made new.***
>
> –Ursula K. LeGuin

Chapter 2

Sending

In this chapter you'll f

Speak from "I."
Messages that state our observations, thoughts, feelings, wants, and intentions can prevent our listeners from responding defensively.

Practice saying "I": exercise.
Think of a situation containing the potential for conflict and upset. Practice speaking about it with "I" messages.

Give compliments.
Giving people credit and acknowledging their specific contributions is one way to build trust.

Ask for help.
Far from being a sign of weakness, asking for help can enhance our creativity and effectiveness.

Practice asking for what you want: exercise.
Think of something in your life that is missing. Then talk to someone who could provide it.

Align words and behaviors.
When our words and behaviors are consistent, people are more likely to trust the messages we send.

Speak assertively—not aggressively.
Our speaking can help us move relationships from win-lose to win-win.

Practice being assertive: Intention Statement.
Choose and apply one or more of the strategies for being assertive.

Just say it.
Recognize the difference your words can make and discover what keeps you from speaking candidly.

Explore a "withhold": exercise.
Write about something you've been holding back. Then consider sharing it with the person involved.

Practice total transparency: exercise.
Consider sharing five of your secrets.

Speak to promote change.
What you say can help others take constructive action.

Love, accept, and promote change: Intention Statement.
Describe how you could speak to promote constructive change in someone's life.

Love yourself without conditions: exercise.
Take time to nurture yourself.

Start a "no secrets" relationship: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Speak to someone who is willing to be in a secret-free relationship.

Don't say it.
Think twice about advice, beware of excuses, and consider holding back comments that might be antagonistic.

Manage your appearance.
Appearance sends a strong message—one we can control.

Change your looks - exercise.
Experiment with changing your appearance.

SPEAK FROM "I"

Trying to send a message to someone who feels attacked is like trying to chat about the weather with a person whose house is burning down. That person has other priorities. We might as well save our breath.

When people feel attacked, they instinctively become defensive. And when they're defensive, protecting themselves becomes their primary agenda. Often there is no way they'll put that agenda on hold. It is impossible for many people to feel attacked and listen at the same time.

There is a way to send a message that helps reduce the chances that the person listening will become defensive. It's called an "I" message, originally developed by Thomas Gordon. It is especially useful when tensions are high and we suspect a potential conflict.

The five-part "I" message has another advantage. It helps us focus on those areas of a situation over which we have some control. This can help us to stop perceiving ourselves as victims of circumstances.

In contrast,"You" messages generally blame others for the problems in our life. For example, "You made me mad." says that our upset is caused by the other person. Another problem with "You" messages is that they communicate judgment or shame.

Here's how it works:

Part 1: Report observations

We can notice facts and events and then describe them. We can report just the observable realities—those that we can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. Direct observations do not include judgments, interpretations, or opinions.

For example, "There were eight pieces of dirty clothes lying on the bedroom floor." is an observation. "You are an inconsiderate slob." is a judgment that goes beyond the facts.

Part 2: Disclose thoughts

Communicating our thoughts can be tricky. All statements beginning with an "I" do not necessarily qualify as an "I" message. Consider this statement: "I think you're lazy." Even though the sentence starts with "I," it is a judgment and invites defensiveness.

Part 3: Share feelings

We can describe our own feelings. People are generally willing to listen when we share that we feel hurt, frustrated, or angry. They get defensive when we accuse them of causing that hurt or of being ungrateful or selfish.

Sharing our feelings can provide others with valuable feedback. We may have strong feelings, and our reasons for them may be clear to us. Even so, it is unfair to expect others to read our minds and automatically know how we feel. They might appreciate knowing how their behavior affects others.

Part 4: Acknowledge wants

Expressing our desires is one way to be assertive without making demands. Again, it helps to remember that people are not mind readers. We are far more likely to get what we want when we ask for it. When our wants are reasonable, most people will help us. On the other hand, demands are often met with blatant or hidden resistance.

The words we choose make a difference. Instead of saying, "You'd better . . . " or "I demand that you . . . ," we can get better results by saying, "What I would really like is . . . "

Part 5: Declare intentions

When we focus on what others do (or don't do) and wait for them to take care of our problems, we can feel discouraged, resigned, and disempowered. When we instead focus on what *we* can do, we are likely to feel more in charge of our lives. Having a plan that doesn't depend on other people gives us more control of the outcome.

If we say, "I could be happy if only you would get your act together," we give away our power. An alternative is to say, "I aim to be happy, and here's what I intend to do about it."

For example

Some of us face troubling and persistent problems with our spouses or partners. A five-part "I" message in such cases might sound like the following:

> Report observations: "Last night when I asked to talk with you, you said you were too tired. This morning when I asked to talk about a problem I was having, you said you were late for work. Just now, when I invited you out to dinner so that we could discuss something very important to me, you said you didn't want to miss a television show."
>
> Share feelings: "I've felt all kinds of emotions in the last few weeks. Last night I was frustrated and angry. This morning I felt hurt and sad. Right now, I'm confused because I don't really understand what's happening. Mostly, I'm frightened about our future together."
>
> Disclose thoughts: "I think our marriage is in trouble. Talking about our problems might be the only way we have to solve them and be happy together."
>
> Acknowledge wants: "I love you and I want this marriage to work out. I want to be happy, I want the kids to be happy, and I want to help you be happy, too."
>
> Declare intentions: "I intend to schedule an appointment with a marriage counselor and go see one. I invite you to come with me."

Other options for declaring intentions include the following:

- "I intend to talk with you about this problem. This is so important to me that until we can find the time to talk about this, I don't want to talk about anything else."
- "Since we can't seem to find the time to talk about this, I am going to write you a letter and ask that you write back."
- "I'm going to stay with my brother for a few days. Perhaps that will give us both some time to think this through and decide when we can talk about this."
- "I intend to ask our friend Kate to come over and help us work this out. If you have a better idea or if you'd rather I ask someone else, please tell me."

Sometimes it becomes very cumbersome to communicate all five parts of the "I" message. It often is sufficient to just send one or two of the messages. In particular, telling others what we observe (part 1) and what we want (part 4) will often do the trick.

GIVE COMPLIMENTS

Most of us enjoy getting compliments. We might forget how much fun it is to *give* compliments. This business of giving compliments can become a practice of its own. The rewards are obvious. Those who receive our compliments often feel noticed and acknowledged.

Compliments change the giver as well as the receiver. The next time you give a compliment, notice what happens to you. See if you release a little tension in your body. Notice whether you soften resistance to another person or shed a resentment. See if your breathing becomes a little slower, a little deeper. There are few prescription drugs with more positive effects. Granting compliments can be a healing gesture, for others and ourselves.

When you compliment someone, also see what happens to your attention. For at least a few seconds, you shift your point of view. You notice something in the world that works. This can be as small as complimenting the person who opens a door for you. It can be as large as thanking the person who opens up a new career to you.

Giving compliments is a way to choose the world we live in. It's possible to wake up in the morning and notice everything that fails—the toaster that chars breakfast toast to a blackened crisp, the fuel gauge that's hovering above empty, the headlines about murder and mayhem. That's one world. It's also possible to savor a tall glass of fresh orange juice, to write a thank-you note to the person who delivers your newspaper each morning, and to compliment the attendant who fills your gas tank. From this vantage point, the world looks entirely different.

This is not a suggestion to put on rose colored glasses or adopt a greeting-card mentality. The idea is to balance our perspective and get the full picture. Effective, happy people are in touch with things that don't work well. They also notice when life is delivering the goods on time.

Compliments work when they're genuine. We can generally sense when someone is "sugar-coating"—giving a compliment that's insincere. People even use insincere compliments as a way to hedge hard news: "I really like the way you perform your job . . . By the way, your position is being eliminated today. Thanks for all those wonderful years of service." This is not a way to become more credible with compliments.

Effective compliments are also specific. They point to actions. "You're so considerate." is pleasant. "I appreciate the way you clear the table after dinner each night." is more powerful.

When you know that a compliment is well deserved, remember that you don't have to feel grateful before giving it. Experiment with giving an authentic compliment even when you don't particularly feel like it. Then, observe your emotions. Giving thanks might create a feeling of thanksgiving.

Another advantage to sending compliments is that the more we send, the more we are likely to receive. Seize the next opportunity to float a compliment out into the world. Then notice what happens.

ASK FOR HELP

If we're stuck with a serious problem and unable to think of solutions, we can always ask for help. This may seem obvious, but many people rule it out. They abide by some old fashioned ideas:

Asking for help is a sign of weakness.
Other people aren't interested in my problems.
They can't really help.
They wouldn't help, even if they could.
I don't want to be a bother and impose on others.

We can release these thoughts before they compromise our happiness. The alternative is simple: Ask for help.

The person we ask for help might be a friend, a member of our family, a religious leader, a colleague at work, or a professional counselor. Any of them can be objective observers and help us create fresh alternatives. Our creativity and effectiveness are enhanced when we experience the support of others.

EXERCISE

Practice saying "I"

Think of a situation containing potential for conflict and upset. This could be an event from your past, your present, or even one you anticipate for the future. The situation could be real or hypothetical. Just imagine yourself being irritated at another person.

Now think of a typical "You" message you might send in response to this irritation. On a separate piece of paper, write the message and describe a likely outcome.

Next, create another response to the same incident. This time use all five parts of an effective "I" message. Then describe the events that are likely to follow.

EXERCISE

Practice asking for what you want

Think of something in your life that is missing—a fact, skill, service, or resource that could solve a continuing problem. Now think of someone who could provide what you want. It could be simple (asking someone else to do the dishes tonight so that you can rest) or significant (asking someone to marry you.) Write about your request here:

I intend to ask _____ *to . . .*

_____

_____

Align Words and Behaviors

Words are only a part of the messages we send. Our behaviors also convey a great deal of meaning. When our words and behaviors are consistent, people generally feel more trusting. They can be comfortable in knowing who we are. They feel they can trust the messages we send. When our words and behaviors are inconsistent, people can become confused, suspicious, and mistrusting.

When words and behaviors conflict, most people tend to rely more on the message of the behaviors. If a friend repeatedly says he will be on time and is consistently late, we'd be foolish to make important plans that depend on his being on time. When we say we are interested in what's going on and appear bored, or when we claim to be calm and appear frantic, people tend to believe what the behaviors, not the words, convey. Our friends and relatives might have reason to be skeptical if we claim to value frugality and then squander large amounts of money on expensive cars, trips, and jewelry.

Even minor behaviors we don't consciously notice, like facial expressions, tone of voice, and posture, can have dramatic influences on communication. People assign meaning to where we sit, the direction of our gaze, the position of our feet, and what we do with our hands.

The more we remember these things, the more effectively we can communicate. Then we can make conscious and deliberate choices about the full range of both verbal and nonverbal communication.

It can be instructive to monitor our own behaviors to determine if they are aligned with our words. It can also be helpful to ask others for feedback.

One of the most effective ways to ensure that our behaviors are aligned with our words is to speak genuinely and authentically. When our words are insincere, our behaviors are likely to betray them and reveal the truth. When we speak the truth as we truly experience it, we can have more confidence that our inflections, gestures, actions, and words are all sending similar messages.

SPEAK ASSERTIVELY NOT AGGRESSIVELY

Being assertive and being aggressive are vastly different approaches. The dictionary is clear on this point: To be assertive means "to affirm positively or declare with assurance." To be aggressive means "to attack, assault, commit an act of hostility, or to begin a quarrel or controversy."

Aggressive acts happen if the operating rule is "win-lose." According to this rule, when one person wins or gets what she wants, another person loses.

Assertive acts take place when the context changes to "win-win." When we are assertive, we can be confident and respectful of others. We can ask directly for what we want without feeling embarrassed or inadequate. We can know that getting what we want does not have to mean others lose. We can work hard to get what we want, and we can work hard to help others get what they want. We can speak effectively and listen fully. Following are some guidelines for speaking assertively and avoiding the conflict that often comes from being aggressive.

Separate the map from the territory

To be assertive, it helps to be precise.

Language is a way to represent or describe reality. Words are symbols or labels for experience. Language and words are not the same as reality and experience.

To understand this, think of the relationship between a map and the territory it depicts. The map merely portrays the territory. The map and the territory are two different things. Similarly, words and reality are different. Reading a menu is not the same as tasting the food.

The word *fear*, for instance, is a label for an experience. And that experience can be entirely different for each of us. As a concept, fear can be defined and analyzed, compared and discussed. As an actual experience, fear can only be lived.

Knowing this, we can look carefully at how accurately our words describe our experiences. The more accurate we are, the less likely it is that we will end up in conflict. Perhaps there are more accurate or precise ways to describe what we think and feel. As Mark Twain pointed out, the difference between the right word and the wrong word is as important as the difference between lightning and a lightning bug. If we say we're confused when we're actually too tired to listen, we can easily send a garbled message. The same can happen when we say that we're undecided instead of uninterested, or anxious instead of sad.

We can also frame our message in a way that acknowledges our listener's map of the world. For example, instead of talking to a compulsive shopper about the virtues of being frugal, we can talk about getting the most for our money. Knowing where our listeners stand and meeting them there can increase our chances of assertively getting what we want without being aggressive.

Say what you are not saying

Consider starting a conversation with what you are not saying. This strategy often works particularly well in times of high emotion, when the conversation is generating lots of heat and

little light: "I am not saying that I want you to move out. I am saying that I'd like you to respect my desire for privacy."

Agree to disagree

Sometimes it's worthwhile to keep talking until an agreement is reached. At these times, disagreement is a signal that we need to stay in the conversation. We can gain from each other by persisting in a search for shared meaning.

It's also fine to disagree. This is not the same as surrendering, and it does not mean that you are not being assertive. Sometimes the energy it takes to reach agreement may not be worth it. We can walk away from the table for now and admit, "Well, I guess we just don't see eye-to-eye on this. We agree to disagree."

Know that people are eager to help

Most people, when asked with sincerity and respect, are willing to help out. In fact, our requests for help can be gifts to others. This kind of request conveys trust and confidence in their abilities.

If we feel awkward about asking for help, we can still accept our feelings and then choose to do what makes the most sense anyway. Whenever appropriate, we can choose to base choices on our commitments and values rather than on our temporary feelings of discomfort.

Expect to get what you want

Our expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies. When we expect to succeed, our chances for success improve. When we expect to fail, our chances for failure improve. Whether we think we can or we can't, we're probably right. Being assertive includes operating from the point of view that we will get what we want.

Be persistent

Being assertive just one time with a person is often not enough. If you are truly committed to getting what you want, you might have to repeat your message a number of times. Find out which people are in positions to truly help and talk with several of them. If you choose this strategy, also keep the next suggestion in mind.

Respect others

Other people's opinions and desires are important. When we respect others, they are more likely to respect us. Having an open mind, being tolerant, and looking for win-win outcomes increase our chances of success.

It pays to respect other people's time. When calling someone, for example, we can ask if this is a good time to talk or if we can arrange a more convenient time.

Respect yourself

This is a potent strategy for being assertive. When we respect ourselves, we can have the courage to set boundaries and enforce them. We can stand up for ourselves and refuse to settle for less than we deserve. Our opinions and desires are important. If we don't respect ourselves, it's difficult to expect others to respect us.

Get back to common ground

This is a great tool for negotiating and assertively getting what we want. In most disagreements it is possible to find at least one point that everyone agrees with. If we focus on the basic principles, the people involved can find common ground. That shared ground lays a foundation for future agreement.

The person who argues for nuclear disarmament at a gathering of Pentagon officials can start by saying, "I agree with you wholeheartedly about the need to keep our country safe and secure. I'd like to suggest a way to rely less on nuclear deterrence and more on diplomacy as a tool for achieving what we all want."

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Practice being assertive

Choose one or more of the strategies described in the previous article to use in an area where you could be more assertive. Describe specifically what you intend to do.

I intend to . . .

JUST SAY IT

There are times when it pays to just speak. Say it. Let it out. Lay bare what's there—no matter what the thought or feeling is and no matter how unpolished we think it might sound..

When we do so, there's no reason to sugar-coat what we say. There's no need to soften it so we can avoid conflict. There's no need to process, refine, shape, filter, or improve what we're thinking to make it come out "right." The fear "I won't say it right," is one of the things that promotes withholding. The alternative is to just speak.

Besides getting things out in the open, there's another reason for just speaking: clarity. When we try to get ideas "right" before we speak, those ideas pass through an invisible series of filters: "How much can I really tell this person?" "Does she already suspect what I'm thinking?" "What's safe to say, and what do I dare not say?" "Wouldn't it be better to say this at another time?" After all of these doubts, our ideas can become so strained and lifeless that they sound incomplete, unclear, and out of context. People may not know what we're talking about. When we reveal what's really going on inside us, people get the big picture. Then it's easier for them to understand what we mean.

It can also help to remember that shyness is not necessarily a virtue. Often shyness is being unwilling to take risks, refusing to speak for fear of appearing a fool. Actually, shyness can be used to manipulate others. When we're shy, others will not engage us as equals; they might be tempted to take care of us instead. Shyness can be another example of withholding what we feel and think, of choking off the truth.

While some of us might talk too much, it's more likely that most of us don't talk enough. The experience of having something to say, thinking it would be valuable to say, wanting to say it, and then remaining silent is too common. Much of the time, we think the risks are too great and choose the safer route of keeping quiet.

If we have some fear or concern about sending a message, we can be aware of it and send it anyway. The fear or concern doesn't have to go away before we speak.

When we speak candidly, it's possible that our words may not come out smoothly. We might say things that are inappropriate or even dead wrong. When that happens, we can apply a second idea: Say it again. Then we can clean it up or apologize.

People forget much of what they hear. They forget almost nothing about what they feel. So if we speak from our hearts, people will sense the sincerely and intensity of our feelings. That's what people will understand.

We can speak whenever we have something, valuable or useful to say. When we anticipate failure, we might destroy an idea before it has a chance. When we speak apologetically, we dilute our message.

The more we pay attention to our speaking the more we can gain confidence and learn to speak clearly, concisely, eloquently, and powerfully.

Look for the payoffs—and the costs—of withholding

The most common way that many of us avoid conflict is by withholding. That is, we hold back what we're truly thinking and feeling.

It's true that withholding works—at least in the short run for part of the time. For the present, at least, we can avoid conflict. Feelings aren't hurt. People don't get riled up. The conversation stays nice and friendly—even if it is shallow. Those are the short-term benefits of withholding.

Withholding also carries certain costs. You can see this for yourself. The next time you withhold your feelings or thoughts in order to keep the peace, notice what happens inside. Monitor what happens in your body. For some people, withholding brings on a tightness in the chest, clipped breathing, and/or a sinking feeling in the stomach. Forget for a moment what hiding your deepest thoughts and feelings does over time to your relationships. Just think of the long-term effect of these physical reactions on your body.

What's more, withholding to protect others can be one of the most arrogant things we do. Withholding carries a judgment about other people: "You can't handle what I have to say." "If I tell you what I'm thinking, you'll fall apart." "You're not ready for this." "You're not strong enough to handle this yet."

We withhold, in part, out of the best of intentions. We want people to be happy. We want relationships to go smoothly. Behind all these glowing intentions, however, can be another factor: fear. We're afraid of what will happen when we get down to the facts. People might get mad. They might be hurt. They might cry. They might even leave us. And all that would be terrible.

The upshot is that we may not be saints when we withhold—only chickens.

Speaking to the person involved

Sometimes, our choices regarding what to do about a problem are to:

- Deny it and pretend that it doesn't really matter or exist.
- Avoid the problem by putting it off or refusing to deal with it.
- Put up with it and make the best of a bad deal.
- Take matters into our own hands and do what we think is best without asking anyone else.
- Speak about it with people who are in a position to make a difference.

One of these options contains more possibility for resolution and happiness than the others: the last one. Remembering this can help us generate the courage to move past barriers to speaking.

Talking to someone even when we don't want to can help us become more successful and happy. A candid conversation with a friend, business associate, government employee, landlord, or family member might help us resolve a problem that is getting in our way of being happy. Saying what's on our minds can resolve conflict and move us forward. If we remain silent, we get to put up with our problems even longer.

Recognize the difference your words can make

Consider the possibility that withholding our thoughts and feelings is a sellout. When we choose not to speak, we rip people off. In the name of protecting them from conflict, we may deprive them of an insight that could bring them closer to having a more wonderful life.

Perhaps it seems arrogant to think that you could say something helpful or important. Think for a moment about what this means. It implies that you have little to contribute to other people, nothing that can make a difference in another person's life. Withholding implies that you have no insights to share, no observations to offer—nothing to give.

Things can be different. You can operate from a different attitude: "What I say to people contributes to them." And when you adopt this attitude, changes in your speaking can follow naturally. Even if this attitude seems alien or uncomfortable, you can still say what's on your mind.

With some practice, you can gradually re-train yourself. You can change "I have nothing important to say," to "What I say can make a difference." When this happens, notice the changes in yourself—the way you stand, the way you look at people, the way you speak, what you say—even the tone of your voice. All of them can be colored by a core idea: "I can often help myself and others toward the goal of having a wonderful life. I speak my mind with grace and ease."

The point is this: Everyone is entitled to our opinions. True, some people abuse this idea by dominating a conversation or perpetually standing on a soapbox. Used with care and balanced with a willingness to listen, the practice of sharing our thoughts has the potential to contribute.

Get past fear of others' reactions

Fearing others' reactions is a common excuse for not speaking. Almost everything we do, say, think, and feel can be diluted when we ask, "Will I look stupid if I say it?" If the answer is "maybe," we keep the thought to ourselves or speak a watered-down version that is not nearly as powerful as our original thought. The problem is that the answer *is* often "maybe," and we too often end up keeping thoughts to ourselves.

Rejection isn't the only reaction we might fear. If we suspect someone will become angry, upset, sad, antagonistic, vindictive, cold, withdrawn, or unpleasant in some other way, we might think it's not worth it. We stuff our thoughts and feelings instead.

Risk Failing

Not many of us like to fail. Sometimes it can seem more comfortable to swallow our words and not know if our ideas would be successful. Withholding seems less of a risk than failing.We can play it safe or we can contribute to ourselves and others. Often, this is a mutually exclusive choice. Risk requires coverage, we can choose to go for it.

In the long run, having the courage to just say it is more likely to result in a win-win outcome for everyone involved.

Handle the fear of natural consequences

There are times when it's a safe bet that our speaking will result in something difficult or unpleasant. If, for example, our friend has a habit that drives us crazy and we know he is sensitive about it, we might try to ignore it or excuse it rather than bring it up for conversation.

Don't assume that they already know

We make thousands of assumptions about others every day. We assume people know which side of the road to drive on. When we ask a friend, "Do you know what time it is?" we'd be surprised if she simply answered, "Yes." We assume she will tell us the time. Likewise, we assume that police officers will ticket traffic violators, grocery store clerks will total our items at the checkout stand, dentists will know how to fill our cavities, and cooks in restaurants won't poison our food.

Although we do it all the time, assuming things about people can go too far. This is especially true when we use our assumptions to prevent us from speaking. We assume that our spouses know we love them, that our bosses understand what went wrong, and that store clerks know we're in a hurry. These assumptions could be mistaken.

Sometimes, if we've already said something, we assume people will remember it and know it forever.

It's wise to question such assumptions, especially if we use them to avoid saying something awkward or difficult.

We can use the old adage, "Better safe than sorry," and verify our assumptions. If we're wondering or have any doubt, it's generally wise to check it out.

EXERCISE

Explore a "withhold"

Think of one secret you have from a friend or a relative—something you have not shared with this person. List the costs and benefits of continuing to withhold that information or idea. (It can be helpful to find someone you trust to help you explore these costs and benefits.)

The costs of continuing to withhold my thoughts include . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

The benefits of continuing to withhold my thoughts include . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now write a letter that you might send to that person in which you disclose what you have been withholding. After you write the letter, choose whether or not to send it. You might also consider sharing your thoughts in person.

EXERCISE

Practice total transparency

Brainstorm a list of important people in your life: coworkers, friends, family, customers, competitors, and lovers (current or former.)

Pick five of these people and brainstorm a list of secrets—things you've avoided telling each of these people. Write each person a letter revealing the secret.

Now you have several options. One is to send one or more of the letters. Another is to meet with each of the people involved and reveal the secret. Or, you can throw the letters away and continue to keep the secrets.

Please do not judge yourself if you choose the last alternative. There are no right or wrong choices in this exercise. If you genuinely search for the option that contributes most to yourself and others, trust your choice.

Write your list of people and secrets in the space below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SPEAK TO PROMOTE CHANGE

What if one of your friends is in deep denial of a serious problem? You see the problem. Others see it. The evidence is both abundant and convincing. Everyone is aware of the problem except your friend. She refuses to admit there's a problem.

This can happen to people in a variety of ways. Maybe there's a huge gap between what she does with her life and what she could be doing. A person capable of tremendous contribution and fulfillment might not be scratching the surface of her potential. Or perhaps she's developed a harmful habit that compromises her health. Her sense of resignation and her refusal to change are generating great costs to herself and others.

Even when a friend's denial is firmly entrenched, we have options for communicating our concern and bringing about change. Some ideas follow.

Allow "hitting bottom"

Sometimes people benefit over the long run when they "hit bottom"—that is, experience the full consequences of a self-defeating behavior. For example, losing a job, being left by a spouse or a lover, or going broke are some ways that alcoholics can wake up to the full extent of their drinking problem. Sometimes it is only after an event of this magnitude that people become willing to take appropriate action.

Share sadness

Genuine friendships can accommodate straight talking. If we experience regret and frustration about a friend, we can say so, openly and honestly. Maybe our speaking is simply the tool our friend can use to create beneficial changes in his life.

If our friend showed up one day with large fluorescent spots all over his face that flashed purple, yellow, and orange, we'd certainly tell him the truth about his appearance and help him find a way to change it.

When a person has a truly serious problem—drug or alcohol abuse, an abusive relationship, or some other clearly harmful behavior—we often resist telling him the truth. We value the friendship, and we may fear that telling the truth will compromise it. What irony! Day by day, our friend may be moving headlong into disaster. Out of misplaced loyalty and commitment, we sometimes choose to stand by silently and watch.

Advertise continually

Given people's tendency to deny the truth, we can take a lesson from the advertising industry. That is, we can point out what we see and express our concern, over and over again. Sometimes people need to hear something many times, in a variety of ways, from a variety of people, before they really let the message soak in.

Advertisers know the value of advertising continuously. They bombard us with the same messages day after day, week after week, year after year. They would not invest great sums of money in doing so unless it paid off.

We might need to continuously "advertise" the problem we see until our comments are acknowledged. We might need to continuously advertise solutions until action is taken and we start seeing results. Once change begins, we can continue our advertising campaign to help ensure that those changes continue.

We are creatures of habit, and changing habits is often resisted. One way to overcome this exasperating attribute of human beings is to advertise continuously.

In case you didn't notice, the past few paragraphs were an example of a continual advertisement for advertising continuously. And so is the next.

Advertising continuously can increase the odds of getting a message across.

Use modeling

There is a natural, easy, and effective strategy for change that is almost always available to us. We began to use it when we were infants. In fact, it was one of our primary modes of learning. We continued the practice through our childhood and adolescent years. It accounts for a significant amount of our adult learning. Yet this strategy is often overlooked. It's called "modeling."

Modeling works in two ways. First, we can act as a model for others. Perhaps the best way we can encourage someone to change is to model the change we are promoting. A parent who spanks a child while telling the child to stop hitting presents a confusing lesson. The words say one thing; the model teaches the opposite.

Second, we can spend time with people we consider to be worthy models. Hanging around people who demonstrate the skills we seek can remind us of what's possible in our own lives. Then we can practice what we see being demonstrated.

Modeling can work at both conscious and unconscious levels. Even if we consciously refuse to see the truth, our unconscious mind can still get the message. Modeling communicates to all levels of our being.

Make requests

We share our planet with more than five billion human beings. Each of these people represents a potential resource in our efforts to make our lives, and the world, work better. Making requests is one way we can tap into this incredible resource. Often, we do not get results until we request something.

A request assumes that something is missing. Perhaps a task needs to be completed. Perhaps a message has not yet been delivered. Maybe an item cannot be found or a solution waits to be discovered. If nothing is missing, if there are no problems, then requests are not needed.

A request also assumes that the person on the receiving end has the ability to grant it. We would be foolish, for example, to ask a lawyer to perform open-heart surgery or to ask a two-year-old to write a term paper.

When requesting something of someone else, keep in mind that she also has more than five billion people she can ask for help. If she grants our request, she doesn't have to do it alone.

Include a time-line in your request. This can make it more useful than one with no time frame. Misunderstandings, hard feelings, and missed opportunities can be avoided if there is an agreed upon due date.

Another way to increase the power of a request is to clearly specify the criteria for satisfying it. These are the signs that the request is genuinely fulfilled. Observable conditions often work better than vague expectations.

Compare the following two requests:

Will you work harder tomorrow?

Will you finish this report before 4:00 p.m. tomorrow?

The first request contains no conditions for satisfaction. The second specifies clearly what result will fulfill the request. Notice that it also includes a time-line. The variety of interpretations possible with the first request can easily lead to questions, confusions, and disagreements. The second request is clear and far more likely to yield the desired outcome.

Love the other person without conditions

Here is a critical and paradoxical element in promoting change in another person: We can love and accept the person, unconditionally, and at the same time, we can work like mad to change that person.

These ideas might seem contradictory. If we totally love and accept people just the way they are now, how can we possibly work to get them to change?

We find our way out of this paradoxical trap when we distinguish people from their behavior. We can totally love and accept the person, and we can refuse to accept a certain behavior. While accepting the person, we can help to change his behavior. To a child we can say, "I love you and accept you, and I will not allow you to hit your brother." To a friend we can say, "I accept you, but I cannot accept your abusive drinking."

Unless we practice loving and accepting the other person, our strategies to help them change can fall flat. Without acceptance, everything else we say or do may make little difference.

Rarely does growth take place in an antagonistic environment without huge costs that accompany it. If people feel unloved, they might retreat and avoid the people who ask them to change. When people feel threatened and operate out of fear, they are less likely to succeed.

If they feel loved, they are far more likely to accept feedback. They will be more willing to practice new skills.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Love, accept, and promote change

Think of some way that a friend or family member could improve the quality of his or her life. It might be something as significant as staying sober or something as intimate as using a mouthwash. Now describe how you could speak in a loving way to help this person make this change and then write an intention statement.

Write what you plan to say here.

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Love yourself without conditions

Many of us find it easier to love others than to love ourselves. We may think that if we love ourselves, we are conceited, egocentric, or selfish. Or, maybe while growing up we received messages, both overt and covert, that we were not lovable.

Perhaps we can love others only to the extent that we love ourselves. Maybe we can give to others only that which we can give to ourselves. We cannot share water from a dry well.

Perhaps the most unselfish and loving thing we can do for others is to first love and accept ourselves unconditionally. This kind of selfishness can be a virtue.

Think of something wonderful that you can do for yourself. Possibilities include watching a favorite video, taking a bubble bath, hiking to a special place, getting a massage, cooking your favorite meal for yourself, looking at an old picture album, taking a vacation, or getting a babysitter so you can spend an evening away from the kids. Describe something that you would truly enjoy. Write about what you could do.

I could . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now do it—and remind yourself that you deserve this gift from yourself. Keep in mind that giving yourself a gift is only a token of the love and acceptance that you can give yourself every day. The purpose of this exercise is to practice loving yourself without conditions—every day.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Start a "no secrets" relationship

Telling the truth calls for courage.

Think about the benefits of taking that risk, even on a broad scale. Consider a world in which people were totally candid, all or most of the time. Imagine a world in which people kept few, if any, secrets.

We may not be able to create such a new, "no secrets" society overnight. Yet, we can create this society on a smaller scale with our loved ones and close friends. When people you know say, "Don't tell anybody, but . . ." or "Do you know how to keep a secret?" consider stopping them. Ask them to consider the advantages of giving up secrets.

Choose one person who would be receptive to a secrets-free relationship. Then set a time and place to discuss the idea with this person. Experiment with this strategy for a stated amount of time and write a Discovery Statement about the results.

I intend to talk to _____ about a "no secrets" relationship on _____/_____/_____.

After experimenting with this idea, I discovered that I . . .

DON'T SAY IT

This strategy may seem to contradict the previous suggestions to speak candidly and say it all.

No suggestion is absolute. There are times when keeping our mouth shut is probably a good idea. These include times when our comments:

- Would be antagonistic or hurt others unnecessarily.
- Would interfere with a conversation that is making progress and take that conversation in a harmful direction.
- Are inappropriate or offensive and not serving any useful purpose.

At such times, it's probably best to keep quiet. Speaking every thought we have can create all kinds of needless upset and trouble in our lives. Withholding some of those thoughts can be useful.

The underlying idea is this: We almost always have a choice about whether to say what's on our mind. Most of us err too often on the side of withholding our thoughts and feelings. We could safely and effectively say far more than we do. But the idea is to speak only in a way that serves ourselves while contributing to others.

Along with a commitment to speak candidly, we can temper our speaking by considering the following ideas.

Think twice about advice

Advice—an opinion offered as worthy to be followed in a particular situation.

Suggestion—to bring to the mind for consideration or to propose as a possibility.

People might ask for your advice. Much of the time, the most effective strategy to help them is to turn down the request. Sometimes, giving advice implies that others lack the ability to spot problems or discover solutions on their own. Sometimes, people interpret advice as a kind of parental direction or recipe to follow blindly. That puts them in a "one down" position. What's more, these people might spend more time critisicing our advice than generating their own solutions.

In short, giving advice can be more harmful than helpful. Often it is wise to withhold advice and let others work out their own problems.

Suggestions, on the other hand, can be empowering. A suggestion is an option, a possibility. Offering suggestions is like taking a friend to a smorgasbord. You point out your favorite dishes and then your friend chooses what to eat. In the same way, we can present several strategies for solving others' problems and then let them choose what to implement.

One way to generate suggestions is to help people give themselves advice: "I'm not sure what you should do. What do you think you can do?" or "Suppose the problem you're having right now was happening to someone else. What would you suggest that this person do?"

This idea about advice is not an absolute rule. Sometimes advice works, especially when you listen effectively. When giving advice, consider sharing ideas only in your area of expertise and being.

Beware of stories

If we want our speaking to be efficient and help things get done, we can let go of excuses.

All of us are bound to make mistakes. If some of our choices and behaviors have been ineffective, we can simply tell the truth about that. We can acknowledge our mistakes and get

on with the business of correcting them. Excuses are beside the point. They just waste time.

There's a difference between what actually happened, which can be useful information, and a long story about what happened. Often the latter is an attempt to save face and get off the hook.

There's a story that illustrates this point. A private pilot in a single engine plane was in the traffic pattern at a small airport when he got an important message. It was someone at the control tower telling him that his approach was too low.

This pilot responded by telling a long story. He began to explain his circumstances: "Oh . . . well . . . you see . . . there was a heavy crosswind during my base leg, so I increased my power a little and started to extend my flaps. Then, when I turned into my final approach, the wind died down and . . ."

The traffic controller actually started to laugh. He told the pilot that his story didn't matter because the ground didn't care about his reasons for being too low. Rather than giving excuses, this pilot could have simply acknowledged the message and taken corrective action to avoid landing in a cornfield.

Excuses don't make much of a difference. Things either work or they don't. The story behind it all doesn't matter much.

The trouble is that complicated stories and convincing excuses can be so seductive. Reasons can sound so . . . well, reasonable. This is especially true when intelligent and articulate people indulge in storytelling and excuse making. They can obscure their mistakes with gobbledygook. When some people speak, even nonsense sounds plausible. In the end, however, they can still end up landing in the cornfield. All the "right" excuses still can't generate the right results.

MANAGE YOUR APPEARANCE

The more I get to know her, the prettier she gets.

Boy, he was a hunk until he opened his mouth and spoke.

Such comments point out that there's a lot more to being attractive than good looks. Some people were born with beautiful features. Most of us were not.

There is a lot we can do about how we look. Even if we're not endowed with the physique of a super model, we can take care of the details. We can experiment with hairstyles, jewelry, clothes, and shoes. Through diet and exercise, many of us can change the shape of our thighs or flatten our tummies if that is important to us.

Even when we don't choose any of those options, we're still in charge of our attractiveness. Who you are—what you bring to others as a human being—can overshadow the most distorted features within minutes.

There's an even deeper dimension to this idea. Remember that our appearance sends a strong message to others about who we are, what we do, and what we value. We may not like what people "hear" when they notice our appearance. We might even say, "Well, if people are going to judge me by how I look, that's *their* problem." Actually, it's not just their problem. It's ours too. Barriers between ourselves and others, regardless of their source, can often limit our opportunities to achieve happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Instead of ignoring these tendencies to discount how others perceive us or dismissing them as unimportant, we can use them to our benefit. We can give careful attention to the way we show up in the world. This applies not only to our choice of clothes and hairstyles but also to our tone of voice, gestures, mannerisms, and ways of making eye contact. We can manage our appearance in a way that's generally consistent with our values and purpose.

EXERCISE

Change your looks

Many of us talk around the idea that we are stuck with how we look. Even though tens of billions of dollars a year are spent on fashion and cosmetics, most of us still operate as if we can't fundamentally alter our appearance. But, maybe we can.

List below the aspects of your appearance that you now like and that send an accurate message to the world about who you are. This list can include your clothes, hairstyle, body shape, facial expressions, style of speaking, ways you hold your body, ways you walk, your manner of greeting people—everything that others can notice about you.

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Now make a list of the aspects of your appearance that you would like to change. Include those items you feel do not correspond with your basic values and your purpose in life. Once again, this can include your clothes, hairstyle, body shape, facial expressions, style of speaking, ways you hold your body, ways you walk, your manner of greeting people, and everything else that others can see.

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Now that you have identified those areas of your appearance (how others see you) that you would like to change, develop a series of action plans. These plans can go far beyond buying a new outfit. They might even include dramatic changes, from how you wear your hair to how often you smile to your proficiency in correct grammar.

If you want to be particularly courageous, get others involved in this exercise. Ask a few other people for their suggestions regarding what you might change about your appearance. You could also ask them to provide ongoing feedback as you transform how you present yourself to the world.

Chapter 3

Parenting

In this chapter you'll find

Happy children are no accident.
Happy, healthy, nurturing families might not happen naturally. It's more likely that they require careful attention and effort.

Help your children learn.
Strategies for setting limits include using time-outs, backing words with actions, enforcing a few carefully chosen rules, focusing on behavior, and allowing mistakes.

Evaluate consequences: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Be clear about the consequences you'll enforce when kids test limits.

List escalating consequences: exercise.
While considering one of your child's behaviors that you would like to change, write a list of logical consequences in order of increasing severity.

Let your child teach you.
Raising children can provide an educational equivalent to a Ph.D. if we stay alert to all they have to teach us.

Try something new: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Replace an ineffective parenting strategy with one that could work.

Get a second opinion: Discovery/Intention. Statement.
Invite a family member or a trusted friend to give you some feedback about your parenting.

See the pitfalls of criticism and praise.
Often it's effective to replace praise and criticism with specific feedback about a child's behavior.

Practice giving specific feedback: exercise.
Just state the plain facts about the behavior you might have praised or punished.

Handling special situations.
Adopt strategies for handling specific problems, such as enforcing bedtime and curfews.

Evaluate your skills as a parent: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Explore your current levels of knowledge and skill relating to parenting.

Ask what is missing: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Discover resources you can use to supply what is missing from your children's experience.

Resolve it with your parents.
Accepting and forgiving our parents can help us get on with the task of raising children.

Acknowledge your parents: exercise.
Thank one or both of your parents for something they did that you appreciate.

HAPPY CHILDREN ARE NO ACCIDENT

Parents are as important to society as physicians, lawyers, or teachers. Yet many of us spend more time learning to drive than we do learning to parent. There is a lot to learn about parenting—and it is seldom taught.

Being a parent has never been easy. And today, with hundreds of books filled with coaching about how to be a parent, we can drown in contradictory advice.

Many people assume that because they have all the right biological equipment to become parents and because they watched their parents for years, they must automatically know how to be parents. In addition, most of us have fairly strong opinions about the way we were raised. So, we model after our parents and do it the way they did it; or we reject their ways and do the exact opposite. Either way, we might miss out on alternatives that are far more effective.

Happy, healthy, nurturing families might not happen naturally. It's more likely that they require careful attention and a lot of work. Maybe it's thoughtful planning and sensible choices, rather than a matter of luck. Devoting some committed time and energy to communication, responsibility, respect, and discipline could result in our being far more effective parents.

The following ideas are general principles from which we can operate when parenting. They are reminders of the approaches we can take as we are learning more about parenting. Following this article are specific suggestions for the day-to-day interactions we have with our children.

Recognize that misbehavior can be a cry for help

All kids misbehave. Most of the time, this is a natural part of testing limits and of growing up. Yet, there are times when misbehavior suggests something else. Sometimes, misbehaviors are expressions of hurt, anger, or frustration that have no other outlet. These behaviors are signals of deeper problems that need attention.

This does not mean that we should ignore the overt behaviors. It does mean that we can deal with the behaviors and also move beyond them to deal with deeper emotional issues. If our efforts fail, it is probably time to get professional help.

Sometimes misbehaviors are cries for help. They can be signals that call for outside interventions. By heeding the call, we can assist children in resolving these hidden issues by talking with them about any hurt, anger, or frustration they are experiencing. We can also develop action plans with them to deal with their upset in ways other than misbehaving.

Remember that handling the problem is only the beginning

When we are faced with children who are misbehaving, getting them to behave is too often our only goal. We might believe that once they start obeying us, our job is over.

There is another possibility. Handling fundamental behavior problems (like bedtime for younger children or curfew for teens) does not need to be the final objective. It can be a beginning that lays the foundation for a more fulfilling and rich family life.

There are many examples. For some families, handling bedtime is a nightly disaster. After all the yelling, threatening, fighting, horsing around, drinking water, brushing teeth, and eating snacks, a bedtime of 8:00 p.m. can be stretched to 9:30. Parents get frustrated. The next morning, kids are cranky and late getting ready for school. Emotional energies have been drained all around, and there is little room for enjoyable family activity.

Let's say that this problem of getting children to bed on time got handled and that a workable bedtime routine was established. That's not the end of the story; it's just the beginning. Now parents can focus on what they really want in their lives. They can now spend time at night relaxing and enjoying a peaceful evening. From this solitude, they have more time and energy to make plans and to work on other ways to improve their lives. Previously, they were so involved in this problem of bedtime that there was no space to look for other ways to develop a more satisfying home life.

Once the problem with bedtime is handled, children win too. They get enough rest and generally their relationship with their parents is more fun and pleasant. Rather than dreading the next hassle, everyone in the family is looking forward to spending a more enjoyable time together.

Focus on intentions and a few basic guidelines

There are probably thousands of strategies for being an effective parent. Knowing all of them and learning how to apply them would take years of diligent work. Luckily, operating from the strength and effectiveness of our intentions combined with the consistent use of a few basic parenting principles can take away the pressure to become a walking encyclopedia of parenting skills.

Being loving, being committed to effective parenting, being committed to providing a good home, taking simple delight in our children as they grow up—all can lead us to make wonderful choices. This is true even when we know little about what the experts say.

Build on success

A benefit of handling one specific problem is that it often sets a precedent and makes it easier to handle other problems. If, for example, we have teenagers and deal effectively with the guidelines for homework, it can then be far easier to deal with guidelines for watching television and using the telephone. We don't have to start at ground zero with each problem. The success we have with one issue paves the way for success with the next one.

Most kids are masters at testing limits. We can count on that. When boundaries in one area are clearly defined and consistently enforced, kids are less likely to push against the limits we set i n others.

HELP YOUR CHILDREN LEARN

When people speak about raising children, they often get into a passionate discussion about the "d" word—*discipline*. Often, the meaning of this word blends with simplistic notions of punishment or praise. This can be a disservice to our children.

Usually we can be more effective parents when we consider ourselves teachers instead of police officers or judges. In this light, our main task is helping our children learn responsible behavior instead of imposing it by force. We can be teachers who empower our children to learn how to think, not just what to think. We can be models. We can help our children learn to solve their own problems instead of rescuing them. The following ideas can help us meet these goals and assist us in dealing with the "d" word.

Focus on behaviors

Distinguish between the child as a person (who is always lovable) and the behavior (which is sometimes unacceptable.) Avoid labels that describe who a child *is* ("You're a bad kid") and replace them with observations about what the child *does* ("You swung from the chandelier and broke it.".)

Behavior can also be distinguished from the issues that might underlie the behavior problems. Children might be acting out or misbehaving for any number of reasons. We can deal with the behavior in one way and the underlying issues in another. This section deals mostly with overt behaviors. Often, using these strategies can also help resolve any deeper issues that contribute to behavior problems.

Providing love, acceptance, clear and open communication, consistency, and security can often heal emotional wounds a child has suffered. If, in spite of your best efforts, problems continue, it is best to seek professional help.

What you directly observe is a powerful place to start. It's not necessary to analyze the behavior or look for its cause. You can save yourself a lot of time and energy when you stop looking for a motive or reason for the behavior. Even if we could discover these things with final truth, it's not necessary to know them in order to deal with the behavior effectively.

When confronted with a behavior, there's no need to ask, "Why did you do that?" Kids are generally truthful when they answer, "I don't know." Just set reasonable, well-defined rules, clearly define the consequences for breaking them, and make sure both the rules and the consequences are understood. Then enforce the rules with the consistency of gravity.

The following tips follow from these basic ideas:

- Kids might strenuously object when you set firm limits. You can do it anyway. Most children feel more secure when parents clearly define boundaries and consistently enforce them.

- Once children become verbal, you can involve them in discussions about the rules and consequences without giving away your authority. Say, "I'll set the rules. And, before I do, I want to talk with you about some of the possibilities."

- Ignore misbehavior unless you intend to do whatever is necessary to enforce a rule. If a child misbehaves and you're not going to stop it, then ignore it. Telling a child to stop doing something-and then not following through if the behavior continues can do more harm than good. It teaches the child that your speaking doesn't mean much, that she doesn't need to pay much attention to you.

- As a general rule, apply consequences to a child's *actions*, not to her *words*. We can keep the lines of communication clear if we make it known that it's OK to express any thought or feeling. We can allow and even encourage anything a child says when she is expressing her point of view. Actions are a different matter. Some of them are acceptable and others are not.

  One possible exception occurs when words are used to intentionally hurt others or to conceal the truth. This type of speaking can be treated like any other unacceptable behavior.

- Remember that there is social behavior and antisocial behavior. When behavior is antisocial, it's fine to remove a child from the social situation. That can mean placing her in a time-out chair, confining her to a room, or barring her from participating in an activity.

Use a time-out

Time-outs are an effective strategy for managing the behavior of younger children. This involves removing them from the normal course of their activities and having them sit in a chair where they must be quiet for a defined period of time. The location of the chair is not all that important, as long as it's not in front of a television that's turned on.

In effect, a time-out limits the child's freedom of movement and participation. That freedom, like all other freedoms in life, comes with responsibilities.

If people respect their freedoms, those freedoms remain intact. If people don't, those freedoms are taken away. This is the foundation of our legal system, and it can be applied effectively in our homes as well.

Another version of time-out is known as grounding. Grounding a child most often involves restricting her to her room or home for a period of time.

Time-out is more meaningful to kids when we let them know exactly how long it will last. Setting a timer that they can see helps. Time-out doesn't start until the child is sitting quietly in the chair. The timer will not start while the child is yelling or making a fuss. If a disturbance begins before the time is complete, the time-out period can starts all over again or the timer can be stopped until the disturbance is over.

A general rule of thumb for the length of a time-out is one minute per year. This can apply to the first time a misbehavior occurs. If the child is age three, the first offense results in three minutes in the time-out chair. If the child is seven years old, then she can start with seven minutes.

If the same or related misbehavior occurs within a relatively short period, say the same day, the time-out period can be lengthened. This escalation can also be used if the child is screaming and won't sit quietly in the chair. If, after a few moments, she does not quiet down, we can inform her that the time-out period is now one

minute longer. After we add several more minutes to the time-out period, children usually get the idea and quiet down.

Once the time-out is done, we can require that the child not get up from her chair until she promises to try her best not to repeat the offense. If the child doesn't agree to this condition, we can keep enforcing the time-out.

With older children, it is reasonable to expect them to be able to identify the behavior that lead to the time out. It's also reasonable to expect that they suggest one or more alternative behaviors that would have been more acceptable. The purpose of this conversation is to ensure that the child knows why she is in the time-out situation, so that she knows she is in control of what will happen in the future.

In extreme cases, when the child will not stay in the time-out chair, she can be physically restrained by hugging her in a loving way until she quiets down and promises to follow the rules. Once a child grows to be too large for this, other strategies can be found (see "If something doesn't work, move on" see right . . .)

Be prepared to use another consequence if the time-out periods become too long and don't seem to be working. If we are limited to only one or two discipline strategies, children will soon wear them out and we will no longer be in charge. When children realize that we will always find an effective way to deal with problems, their misbehavior will be less of an issue. Our relationships with them will have the chance to blossom.

Be consistent

Kids respect the phenomenon of gravity. The consequences of testing gravity are absolutely consistent. Gravity never fails to apply its consequences. Every single time kids try to defy gravity, it brings them back to earth . . . without exception. Likewise, if the rules for our children could be enforced with the same consistency as gravity, the problems that arise from testing limits would disappear.

However, enforcing rules with the absolute consistency of gravity is impractical, if not impossible. There are just far too many variables in parenting. First of all, we are not always around when the rules are broken. Second, behaviors do not always conform to well-defined labels and categories. When it comes to values, motives, intentions, and behaviors, human beings are capable of infinite variety. Blurry circumstances and shades of grey can make it hard to decide which behaviors actually violated a rule.

Even so, we can aim for a high level of consistency. The more consistent we can be, the fewer discipline problems we're likely to have. Let's say that a child is caught telling many lies. If we ignore it one time and take drastic measures the next, the child will be confused. Since lying pays off sometimes and not others, the behavior is likely to continue.

Receiving rewards on an inconsistent basis is known to psychologists as an intermittent reinforcement schedule. When behavior is rewarded in this way, it is very difficult to stop. When behavior has been reinforced this way, it is likely to continue for a long time even without rewards because, in the past, if the behavior was continued, sooner or later the payoff would occur. This reinforcement schedule is one of the factors that makes it hard for compulsive gamblers to quit. Imagine how easy it would be to quit if they lost every time they bet.

When we're clear and consistent, we make it easier for our children to quit behaviors that no longer serve them and to adopt behaviors that do.

If something doesn't work, move on

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten.

Too often, parents continue to rely on a strategy that doesn't work. A common example is yelling, which some parents use as their primary form of discipline—even when it fails. Their choices seem to be limited to 1) ignoring the

problem and letting the kids get away with it, or 2) yelling. If these were the only choices, then the responsible thing to do would be to yell. At least it might work some of the time.

If what we are doing isn't working, it makes sense to quit and try something else. There are many resources for exploring new strategies: books, classes, fellow parents, counselors, and workshops. If changing approaches would mean resolving long-standing behavior problems, it's worth the trouble to do something different.

Ask: "If this doesn't work, what will I do next?"

When kids are acting out, one of the most effective ways to handle the problem and prevent things from getting worse is to stay one step ahead of them. In their quest to test limits, they can discover that no matter what they try next, we are ready for them. Then they might back off and quit testing so hard.

One strategy is to make a list of consequences that gradually increase in severity. If one consequence doesn't seem to get results, we can move on to the next one. For example, we can start with restricting television for one evening. If that doesn't work, we can restrict it for two, then three. After that, we can take television privileges away for a week or more.

It might become evident that restricting television isn't going to get the job done. Then it's time to escalate to other consequences. We can make a list of other privileges to limit or remove, including playing with friends or toys, using the car, using the telephone, joining the family on outings, and receiving allowances.

It often pays to give moderate consequences a chance before imposing more severe consequences. Escalating too fast can result in kids becoming bitter and resentful.

It can also be dangerous to move too slowly. Kids might lose respect and learn to take advantage of us if we impose consequences that don't get their attention.

Parenting is a balancing act full of judgment calls. By being thoughtful, sensitive, and loving, we can weather occasional storms and enjoy long periods of harmony and happiness.

We can ask, "If this doesn't work, what will I try next?" When we have an answer to this question, we will feel more confident. When we are confident, children sense it and they're more likely to respect the rules.

Avoid the three-step "talk is cheap" sequence

Frequently, parents can be heard giving their children some instruction such as "Leave that alone." or "Come here right now." Too often, what happens next is nothing. Children ignore the command, and parents go on about their business. In a short while, the three-step sequence is repeated again: 1) parents speak, 2) children ignore the speaking, and 3) parents go on about their business. Sooner or later, the parent usually blows up. Then, at another time, this three-step cycle repeats itself and another blowup is sure to follow. Words that are not followed with action become meaningless.

Actually, words without actions to back them up do have a meaning. They indicate that parents don't mean what they say and that kids can do what they want regardless of parental communication. When parents don't follow up on what they say, they become more and more frustrated with their kids and the kids lose more and more respect for their parents.

It's useful for us to give directions only when we are willing to enforce them. Unless we are willing to stop what we're doing to ensure that our instructions are followed, it makes sense to remain silent.

Many parents feel handicapped when they are in public places. To avoid embarrassment or making a scene, these parents give token instructions and go about their business, allowing their children to misbehave. It is worth some embarassement, a few inconveniences, and several delays in order to let children know that our rules are as consistently enforced in public as they are in our homes. Interrupting a few trips to the mall or canceling a few meals at restaurants (even after they have begun) is better than putting up with unacceptable behavior almost every time we go out.

If you mean what you say, be prepared to follow your words with appropriate action.

Distinguish between requests and commands

To request is to ask for something or to express a wish or desire. To command is to direct with authority or to be in control.

If we prefer that our children do something and we are willing to let the child have the final choice, a request is in order. If, on the other hand, we intend to exercise our parental authority and declare what *is* going to happen, a command is appropriate. Life is easier when kids know the difference.

If you command, be willing to follow up with appropriate action to enforce the command. If you request something, be willing to allow your children to make up their own minds and even make mistakes. It's all part of growing up.

Beware of the "that's not fair" trap

One of the most frequent complaints we hear from kids is, "That's not fair." If we get tricked into playing this game, they can have us hogtied and helpless in no time.

We can tell our children up front that there will be times when our decisions won't seem fair. We can also tell them that we sometimes make mistakes. If we discover that we have made one, we will change our call. Or, if it's too late, we will apologize and do better next time. It's a good bet that there will be times when we believe our parenting is fair and our children will be absolutely certain it is not. If we promise to be fair all the time, we will compromise our ability to be responsible parents. Allow natural consequences. Sheltering kids from the natural consequences of their choices cheats them and sets them up for hardship when we're no longer there to save them.

Use logical consequences

The logical consequences for some behaviors are fairly obvious. If a child has promised to feed the cat every day and then doesn't, the logical consequence is to take the cat away and give it to a home where it will receive good care. If our teenager abuses his telephone privileges, an obvious consequence is to take those privileges away for a period of time. If school grades are suffering because our child is too busy with friends to complete homework assignments, we can limit the amount of time she spends with friends or allow her to be with her friends only after her homework has been completed.

Sometimes we need to be creative to figure out logical consequences. If, for example, one of our child's responsibilities is to make his bed every morning, the natural consequence is that the bed looks messy and he has to climb into an unmade bed that evening. Many kids don't give a hoot about either of those consequences.

If we're willing to be creative, we can look for a logical consequence. Since his bedroom is part of our home, his mess makes our home look messy. We work hard to make our home a neat, pleasant, and comfortable place to live. We take pride in it and will not allow him to treat it with disrespect. Now a logical consequence starts to reveal itself.

If he is unwilling to respect our property, it seems logical that we should not let him use it. Although we could take the bed away and let him sleep on the floor, that might be a bit drastic. Another option would be to generalize about the care and use of property so that it includes much more than his bed. The television, the playroom, or the family car are some items of property that we can call into play. Until he demonstrates that he will respect and take care of our property by making his bed, his use of our other property can be limited.

The closer we can relate consequences to the behavior, the more meaningful and effective they can be.

Allow mistakes . . . to a point

As we allow our children to take on responsibilities, they will make mistakes and "foolish" choices. Within reason, this is not a problem. In fact, it is a necessary part of the learning process.

We might use the quantity and quality of their mistakes as a guideline about how much responsibility to give them. If they are not making any mistakes, we have probably reined them in too tightly and need to let go a bit. If they are making repeated and serious mistakes that consistently lead to trouble, we've probably given them more control than they are ready to handle.

When our children make mistakes and then learn to deal with the consequences of these mistakes when they are young, they are less likely to make more serious mistakes when they get older.

Involve children in decisions

When children help design the rules and the consequences for breaking them, they often take more ownership of those rules and are more likely to follow them. This kind of conversation works best when there are no immediate problems to handle.

When kids participate in designing discipline strategies, they learn about problem solving. They learn to look at things from new points of view. We can also establish closer working relationships with them. They also learn to take responsibility and have more control of their lives.

Remember that their participation is valuable, even when they don't get to vote or decide. Even though we listen to their ideas, we can still call the final shots.

You might sometimes be willing to allow a decision to be made by consensus. In this case, you are giving children full voting power. Before you declare that this decision-making process will be used, be willing to go along with whatever choice is made.

Provide alternatives

As parents, we often function as salespeople. We're selling our ideas about what it means to be a responsible, effective human being. We're selling our children on which behaviors to adopt and which to leave behind.

As we do, we can take a tip from master salespeople. When talking to a prospect, these people offer potential customers many alternatives to consider. This gives the customer a chance to choose freely, and then the complaints of "I feel pressured" begin to disappear.

Whenever possible, we can avoid handing our children a forced, hollow choice—a "take it or leave it" offer. Offering multiple options helps children learn to make choices and keeps those choices with limits that we can accept. "Which pair of socks would you like to wear today?"; "When we walk through the parking lot, would you like me to hold your left hand or your right hand?"; "Which car within this price range do you think you'd prefer?"

EXERCISE

List escalating consequences

While considering one of your child's behaviors that you would like to change, on a separate piece of paper, write a list of logical consequences in order of increasing severity. You might start, for example, with a few minutes in a time-out chair and move through various forms of grounding. You could end the list with asking for help from outside agencies, including law enforcement and the court systems.

If you think you might have to use agencies outside the home, do some research. Call to find out your options. Write about how you might use these services here:

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DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Evaluate consequences

Describe the consequences you use to discipline your children. The consequences I use now are . . .

Now evaluate those consequences. Decide whether the consequences are a logical result of the offending behavior. If you discover that the consequences are not meaningfully related to the behavior, list other consequences that are more directly related to the behavior.

LET YOUR CHILD TEACH YOU

Many parents say that one of the joys of raising children is the constant opportunity to learn. At times, our children have much to teach us if only we're willing to learn. There are many ways to do so.

Ask: "How did I create this?"

Imagine a parent who complains, "My children aren't doing well in school, and I know whose fault that is—theirs!" When asked about their children's failures, some parents are quick to place the blame in a dozen different directions, including a bad peer group, lack of motivation, too much television, and so on.

This blaming might be partially accurate, but it put some parents in the role of victim, making it sound as if they have relatively little influence on their children. It can be far more useful and revealing to ask, "How did I as a parent help create this problem?"

When it comes to problems at school, some possible answers are:

I didn't instill a love for learning early on.
I didn't respond to my child's request for help with homework.
I didn't model effective study habits.
I seldom asked my children about what they did in school.
I didn't attend parent/teacher conferences.
I didn't make academic excellence a top priority.
I didn't communicate high expectations for academic performance.
I didn't restrict my children's television watching.
I ignored the advice of my kids' teachers.

These are just a few examples.

It's important to allow children to be responsible for their own behavior. At the same time, we can learn much by examining *our* role when problems occur. When we handle our own responsibilities fully, children can see the benefits of handling theirs.

Remember, too, that sometimes, in spite of loving, effective parenting, children make choices that are inconsistent with parental values. Asking "How did I create this?" is not intended to determine the truth about why kids turn out the way they do. It is not intended to be used by parents to blame themselves. It is an exercise in exploring what we can learn about ourselves as parents. As we take responsibility for our roles, it is important to allow our children to take full responsibility for theirs.

Give the gift of attention

Children want your attention, and they are masters at getting it. If they can't get your love, attention, and acknowledgment, they may settle for getting your goat. You can forestall lots of problems by granting children your full, undivided attention.

It's especially important to pay attention to children when they're behaving well. Most children would rather receive approval than punishment.

And, as strange as this might sound, most children would rather be punished than be ignored. Punishment is a form of attention, and any attention, even if it hurts, can be better than no attention at all. Children sometimes misbehave because they are not getting the attention they desire. If a child's choices are 1) to

be good and be ignored, or 2) to misbehave and receive the attention of punishment, they will usually choose to misbehave.

Paying lots of attention to kids when they are behaving effectively is a powerful strategy for preventing problems.

As appropriate, gradually let go

When babies are first born, parents are 100 percent in charge. This is the first stage of parenting. Newborn infants are totally dependent and have no responsibility for their lives.

Over the years, babies grow up and become adults. They leave home, choose careers, and often have families of their own. A new stage is well under way. Children are now 100 percent in charge of their lives. And their parents and grandparents, even with all kinds of wonderful advice, no longer make the decisions.

Under normal circumstances, the transition from one stage to the other involves a gradual increase in responsibility for children, accompanied by a gradual letting go for parents. There are no strict formulas or absolute time lines for this process. Many judgment calls come along the way.

Children begin to exert their independence at fairly young ages. This is normal and healthy. They are determined to select their own food, toys, television shows, and bedtime. They want to go where they want to go, do what they want to do, have what they want to have, and they want it NOW! It's a challenge to set boundaries that are neither too lenient nor too strict.

At younger ages, kids begin wanting to make small choices—what color socks to wear, what toys to play with—and it's appropriate to let them choose. It might not be wise to let them have total choice in other areas, such as which television shows to watch. When they are teenagers, they can take on bigger choices, such as which part-time job to take.

Some parents, with the best intentions, hang on to control far longer than needed. They remain in charge even when their children are physically, psychologically, and emotionally capable of handling more responsibility. This stifles children's growth and development.

During adolescence, a child's drive to form an independent identity can border on defiance and rebellion. Music, clothing styles, hairstyles, and jargon are a few of the typical and healthy ways that teenagers of every generation proclaim their independence. However, when teenagers start to experiment with drugs, indiscriminate sex, or violence, their need to forge identities has moved beyond healthy limits. It's time to define and enforce appropriate boundaries.

This is a challenging and continually changing dance. As kids take on more and more responsibility for their lives, parents let go. Learning to manage this shift in a way that allows kids to mature in healthy ways calls for commitment and courage.

When appropriate, stay in charge

We can learn a lot from our children as we practice setting boundaries for them. As parents, we are morally and legally responsible for setting boundaries and enforcing them. When we let go of this responsibility too soon and allow children to run the show, we are doing them a disservice.

Parents can abdicate their responsibility for a number of reasons. Some examples include: wanting to be nice, wanting to be liked, fearing what kids might do, or lacking confidence about handling a situation. In any case, parents end up letting kids take too much responsibility. Allowing a toddler to play wherever she chooses, anywhere in the neighborhood, is asking for trouble. Similarly, allowing a 12-year-old to set his own curfew could lead to problems.

Some parents are afraid to be assertive or firm with their children, especially with adolescents. In a real way, their children end up running the household. This harms not only the adults and any younger children in the home, but also the adolescents themselves. It gives adolescents an unrealistic sense of their power and sets them up for problems when they are in the "real" world away from home.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Try something new

Think of one parenting behavior that you continue to use, even though it is not producing the results you want. The behavior I continue to use without getting the results I want is . . .

Now think of an alternative strategy that might produce better results. One way that might help me to get a preferred results is . . .

Finally, describe how you plan to apply this strategy. I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Get a second opinion

Invite a family member or trusted friend to give you some feedback about your parenting. Ask this person if the control they see you exert over your children seems reasonable, given your child's maturity and developmental level. Ask whether it would be wise to let your child assume more responsibility or whether you are too slack and need to tighten up a bit.

Be open to the possibility that you are handling this issue appropriately regardless of the feedback you get. Remember that the purpose of this conversation is only to get feedback. You can choose what to do with this feedback.

When getting feedback about my parenting I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

SEE THE PITFALLS OF CRITICISM AND PRAISE

Saying "You're such a good girl." appears on the surface to be effective parenting. Often it is not. The problem with this kind of praise is that it is too general. Without knowing the specifics, a child can feel insecure and confused. She is likely to feel much safer and more in control of her life if she knows exactly what she did (or did not do) to get that response.

Another problem is that criticism tends to encourage children to look for approval outside of themselves instead of learning to evaluate and appreciate their own choices. Remember there are no hard and fast rules about parenting.Praise can be powerful when used thoughtfully.

An alternative to giving general praise is to give feedback that is detailed, specific, and focused on behavior: "Thank you for putting your toys back into the toy box. It helps keep the house looking very nice."

General criticism poses the same problem. If a child is criticized because he is "bad," his self-esteem is at risk. Again, children feel more secure when they know precisely which part of their behavior is not effective. They can feel in control of their world if they know they made a mistake and know which specific behaviors need to be modified. If they must change in some general, unspecified way in order to be "good," their basic well-being as a person is threatened. They are likely to feel insecure and confused. They might feel badly about themselves and have no idea how to go about feeling better.

We can move away from the generic notion of "being bad" and deal with specific behaviors or mistakes that can be corrected.

Using praise and criticism to render summary judgments about our children as people can create serious and long-lasting problems. Describing specific behaviors leaves children's fundamental self-esteem healthy and intact.

One alternative to praising or criticizing children is to invite them to set their own standards and evaluate their own performance. When children give themselves feedback, they learn to become more independent thinkers, they develop a stronger sense of self-esteem, and they experience more safety. They learn to avoid playing the role of victims who turn their happiness and well-being over to other people. They learn valuable lessons about becoming strong, healthy individuals who are in charge of their own lives.

There are some dangers in allowing children to set their own standards. One is that children are sometimes much harder on themselves than others would be. Another is that they might set unrealistic goals that are setups for failure or set tasks so simple and standards so low that there is little value produced even if they do achieve their goals. Both of these dangers can be avoided if we moderate the standards and criteria children set for themselves.

EXERCISE

Practice giving specific feedback

The next opportunity you have to communicate with your child about his behavior, practice giving specific feedback. Then, in the space below, write the plain facts about the behavior you praised or criticized.As you do, look for ways to improve your feedback in the future.

_____

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HANDLING SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Choose a strategy for bedtime

Putting young children to bed seems to be troublesome in many homes. Following are some guidelines that can help eliminate the hassle.

Choose a standard routine for bedtime. This might include taking a bath, reading a story and getting tucked in and kissed goodnight. After that, it's bedtime. After bedtime, we can remove all other payoffs for staying up: no conversations, no shouting, no extras. Once the routine is established, kids know what to expect and can prepare themselves for bedtime with every step along the way.

Since it is impossible to sleep on command, requiring children to go to sleep immediately doesn't make a lot of sense. We can, however, require that lights be out and that children stay in bed.

Sometimes, physical restraint might be necessary. We can do this by hugging kids lovingly and silently until they quiet down.

It's worth taking time out of our evening to enforce bedtime. In the long run, it will allow many hours of enjoyable relaxing time for us after the kids are in bed.

Occasional exceptions to bedtime routines are likely. These include a trip to the bathroom or receiving reassurance about a frightening noise outside. Remember that kids can be master con artists. Be sensitive to their genuine concerns and be cautious if you feel like you are being manipulated.

Using time-outs might not be an effective strategy if kids flaunt the bedtime routine. They might prefer a time-out to being in bed.

If parents learn effective discipline during the day, handling bedtime can be much easier.

Choose a curfew strategy

Curfew is a common issue among adolescents and teenagers. Here are a few suggestions for developing workable guidelines:

- Ask your kids to help design these guidelines. Allowing them to have more input can help them learn to become more responsible. As we learn to trust their judgment, our relationships become stronger.

- Include consequences in the guidelines. This suggestion applies to any rules we set. Spelling out the exact terms of the rule, including the specific nature of the consequences for not following it, adds credibility.

  The logical consequence for not keeping curfew can be that evenings out will be restricted. Let kids know the specifics. For example, they can lose one night out for every half-hour they are late. If this doesn't work and kids continue to come home late, other restrictions can be applied.

- Consider alternatives. Some families set a check-in time in addition to a curfew. By this check-in time, the child is either at home or calls to inform parents where she is and tell about her plans for the rest of the evening. For example, on the weekends, a 16-year-old might have a check-in time of 10:00 p.m. and a curfew of midnight. She can call her parents before 10:00 p.m. if she wants to stay out later. She then informs her parents of her whereabouts and her plans for the next two hours.

- Allow for special occasions. Teenagers are busy people. Allowing some flexibility about curfew, so that they can attend special events or be with friends on special occasions, allows them to more fully participate in activities.

- Be proactive about excuses. No matter how creative we are about anticipating excuses, we'll probably find that teenagers can think of more: *"Well, I wasn't driving. It wasn't my car. I couldn't help it. What was I supposed to do?"* It is wise for us to consider up front as many problems, deviations, complications, excuses, rationalizations, special unforeseen circumstances, and justifications as possible. That way we can be prepared.

- Know local laws. Many communities have ordinances that specify curfews for teenagers under certain ages. Find out if there is such a law where you live, so your guidelines can be consistent with it.

- Apply curfews to overnight visits. Curfews and check-ins do not have to be suspended just because your child is spending the night at a friend's home. It is reasonable to ask your child to call you when they arrive at their destination, so you can be assured they are safe.

- Persist. Sometimes, in spite of our best efforts, our children continue to misbehave. If we are committed to being responsible parents, we will never give up and we will be willing to get outside help. Counselors, workers at the department of social services or court services, and even the police can offer suggestions and support.

Evaluate your skills as a parent

Assisting your children to grow into capable, happy, productive, loving adults includes knowing everything from how to bathe an infant to how to talk about sex with teenagers. You can use this exercise and the following one to explore your current levels of knowledge about parenting. You can identify what you need and want in order to offer a rich and safe environment for kids as they grow up.

Review the following list and pick at least five areas where you could improve. On a separate sheet of paper, write about how you have handled these issues with your children in the past. You can record relevant incidents along with your reactions and your children's reactions to them. If you think of issues that are not in this list, write about them too.

Abortion
Alcohol
Allowances
Art
Athletics
Automobile insurance
Automobile maintenance
Automobile repair
Babysitting
Bed-wetting
Bedrooms
Behavior in public
Books
Careers
Chores
Clothing styles
Clubs
Colds, flu, and other illnesses
College
Community resources
Contact lenses
Dating
Daycare
Dental examinations
Driving
Drugs
Education
Exercise
Eye glasses
Family finances
Fire safety
Friends
Gifts
Grooming
Hairstyles
Health insurance
Hobbies
Homosexuality
Intellectual stimulation
Investment funds
Language
Magazines
Masturbation
Meals
Moral values
Movies
Moving out
Music
Nutrition
Part-time jobs
Peer pressure
Physical abuse
Physical examinations
Political affiliations
Racism
Reading
Relatives
Religion
Savings accounts
School
Self-defense
Sex education
Sexual abuse
Sibling rivalry
Spirituality
Strangers
Swimming
Teachers
Television
Thumb sucking
Toilet training

After you have finished writing about how you handled these issues, think of one or two actions you can take to become more skillful as a parent.

I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Ask what is missing

Thinking about your child and all aspects of her life, ask what is missing for her. What new learning or skills would add to the quality of her life? What problems does she continue to experience that could be resolved?

Now ask what resources you can use to supply whatever is missing. Choose how to teach your child new skills and how to help her resolve her problems.

I intend to . . .

RESOLVE IT WITH YOUR PARENTS

In some circles, parent bashing is the rage. Some of the authors and speakers who want to empower us, urge us to reflect on our childhood to understand the sources of our present unhappiness. We may conclude that our unhappiness began with something our parents did or failed to do. They spanked us, or they didn't spank us. They kept sex a secret, or they had affairs. They were alcoholics and neglected us. They set too many limits, or they failed to set any limits. They got divorced or they continued to live in a dysfunctional relationship.

Any of these things might be true, and it is fine, and often valuable, to gain insight into the past. Yet, all the insight in the world may change nothing.

We can talk endlessly and eloquently about our parents' mistakes and still be miserable. And even if we could remake our parents according to our ideals, we cannot magically return to childhood and force them to raise us all over again. ("OK, Mom and Dad, you get a second chance. And this time you'd better get it right.")

Starting right now, the quality of our lives hinges on *our* decisions and *our* actions. Understanding how our parents treated us might help us *explain* the present; only our own choices and actions can help us *change* the present.

Move from blame to self-responsibility

It's been said that in life we either have explanations or excellence, reasons or results. This statement may oversimplify things a little, but it makes a point. Sometimes we spend too much time and energy cataloging our parents' mistakes, reliving painful incidents from the past, and analyzing how our parents "screwed us up." In the end, we might just end up with a bundle of explanations and reasons for the way we are today.

Another option is to tell the truth about what's not working in our lives, decide what to do about it, and take action. In this process, we can move from excuses to results. We move from blame to self-responsibility.

If our parents are solely responsible for our happiness, we are forever at their mercy and our destinies are locked into place by our histories. If our own discoveries, decisions, and actions determine our happiness, we cease being victims of our parents.

Taking responsibility for our lives and accepting and forgiving our parents often allows us to form more intimate connections with them. It does not, however, obligate us to be intimate with them. When parents are physically or

emotionally abusive, it is OK for us to leave them, even while forgiving them. We have a right and a responsibility to protect ourselves.

When parents are merely imperfect, frail, or fallible, we can look past what they failed to do and recall what they did do for us. Even parents who are short-sighted, narrow-minded, or unfair usually clothe, feed, bathe, and shelter their children. Remembering this, we can forgive our parents' mistakes, celebrate the skills they do possess, and get on with our lives.

Tell the truth, accept, and forgive

Coming to terms with our parents begins with seeing them realistically. They have strengths and they have weaknesses. They did some things right and they made mistakes. We can love them, accept them, and forgive them for all of it.

When we age and become parents ourselves, many of us find it easier to forgive our parents. As we struggle with child rearing and make some hefty mistakes ourselves, we might gain respect for what our parents did give us. As we acknowledge their errors, we gain newfound appreciation for what they did right. The older we get, it seems, the smarter our parents get.

During our childhood, our parents simply did the best they could. They were as loving, patient, and skilled as they knew how to be at the time. Even when they seemed off-the-wall to us, they were doing what they thought loving parents were supposed to do. Few parents act with the specific intention to harm their children. That was true of *their* parents, and it is true of us as parents.

Our parents learned how to raise children largely from the example of their parents. And if their parents did some things that were ineffective, chances are that our parents repeated the pattern. We can forgive all of these patterns and refuse to pass them on to our children.

EXERCISE

Acknowledge your parents

This exercise provides you with an opportunity to thank your parents. Most of us can think of things we appreciate about our parents.

Even people who grew up in unhappy families might be able to recall a kind word or deed they've forgotten.

Thank one or both of your parents for what you remember. If your parents have died, you can still thank them. Write a letter to them in your journal or have an imaginary conversation. If they are alive, write a real letter or have a real conversation.

Even if you've told them before, you can still set aside a special time and tell them again. Consider making this exercise a regular practice.

Chapter 4

Romance

In this chapter you'll find

Practice intimacy.
We can get closer to others by talking about what embarrasses us, focusing attention, giving freely, refusing to keep score, and setting high standards for relationships.

Practice sex.
The strategies for emotional intimacy can enhance sex as well.

State what you like about yourself and your partner: exercise.
Complete these two sentences: "What I like about you is . . ." and "What I like about myself is . . ."

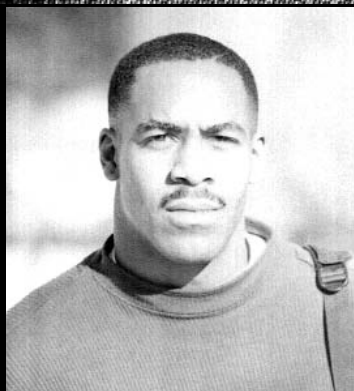
Plan your next relationship: exercise.
We can describe a set of personal qualities that we consider vital in the person we love.

Teach people how to treat you: Discovery/Intention Statement.
By making requests, we can "train" people to treat us in more affirming ways.

Discover barriers to relationships: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Any of us can unconsciously create barriers to relationships.

Get your lover's attention.
When a longstanding relationship problem is being ignored, do what it takes to put the issue on the front burner.

Creat a contact: exercise
Get together with your partner when you are getting along and create a contract that you can follow when tesnsions are high.



PRACTICE INTIMACY

We can spend 20 years in school without learning a thing about the most fundamental facts of successful relationships. In college catalogs, we seldom see courses named "Relationships 101," "Twelve Essential Love Skills," "Marriage: The Fine Print," or "Fundamentals of Divorce and Dating."

Getting close to another person can be scary, but most of us want to experience it. We can learn how to cultivate intimacy in ways that fulfill us and our partners as well.

Focus attention

Romance begins with the simple things: noticing what our partners wear, listening carefully to what they say, seeing the kind things they do, and offering thanks. What makes all this possible is an act of attention.

Marriages flounder when a partner says, "She hasn't heard a thing I've said for the last five years." or "He never admits how hard I work." Long before problems reach this point, we can take preventive action. We can give our partners the gift of attention.

Be strong on your own

Many people have a relationship in order to be happy, complete, and whole. Another option is to be happy, whole, and complete—and *then* have a relationship.

When we depend on other people, circumstances, or things to make us happy, we're building a house on shifting sands. People leave, they die, they change. And they can do all these things without our consent.

When we depend on our relationships to deliver our happiness, then the people in our lives become like drugs. Addicts use a substance—something outside themselves—to make them happy. We can effectively use people in the same way.

Getting stronger and learning to achieve happiness on your own can be hazardous to your relationship. Sometimes, when you get emotionally and mentally healthier and your partner doesn't, trouble occurs. Sometimes, partners are so threatened, that they try to sabotage each other's growth.

Many of us pick partners who are about as mentally healthy (or unhealthy) as we are. Like attracts like, and hundreds of subtle cues bring us together. This is often done on a subconscious level. If we are growing and we want our relationships to survive, it is important that we invite our partners to grow with us.

There might come a time to recognize that love can outlast your relationship. This can apply across the board to kids, parents, or siblings. In all these cases, love could include nurturing others and assisting them to achieve their goals—even when it means ending or significantly altering our relationship with them. There can come a time to say, "I love you . . . and that's why I'm changing our relationship." or "My commitment to loving and nurturing you is greater than my desire to stay in a relationship with you."

The freedom to leave is the freedom to stay. Healthy relationships come from our willingness and ability to live without them. When we turn to another person as our sole source of security, we are not in love—we're addicted. When we think we cannot live without a person, then we will manipulate, make impossible demands, or even lie to keep her. We are also then likely to act against the best interests of the other person—the person we say we love.

When we are strong enough to live *without* the other person, then we can freely choose to live in a healthy relationship *with* that person.

Share secrets

Start with secrets about yourself and how you view the world. Then share how you truly think and feel about the other person.

Talk about what's most significant in your life right now. Reveal what you worry about—your health, your sexual desires, your work, or anything else. Talking about these things might feel embarrassing. You can acknowledge and accept these feelings without letting them determine what you say.

Many of us want intimacy with another person as much as we want anything else in the world. Harboring secrets and withholding what we think and feel works against that goal. These habits keep people separate.

Do a difficult task together

Working toward a common goal is often a direct line to deep friendship. The deepest and most long-lasting friendships can develop when people work side by side, seeing a project through from beginning to end.

Spend a lot of time together

This means more than five minutes or even an hour every day. Instead, go for many hours or whole days together.

A related strategy is to share meals together. Since the dawn of human history, meals have provided an opportunity for people to be close.

Show affection

Little things mean a lot. Kind words, soft smiles, tender touches, thank-you's, and small favors accumulate to make a huge difference. Taking things for granted is asking for trouble.

Wonderful relationships are built by investing daily effort to make sure that our partners know we care. Besides, it feels good for us, too.

Promise that there will be no sex

When first getting to know someone, promise that there will be no sex. This eliminates a big fear and allows for safety. It puts a boundary on the relationship and still gives it plenty of room to expand.

Give up the score card

People who are in conflict with their partner frequently keep mental score cards. They log every unkind word and thoughtless act that their partner makes, cataloging sins of omission that go back decades. Often these people are obsessed with getting even. They refuse to offer apologies or make amends until their partner takes the first step.

It's hard for love to flourish in this atmosphere. We're more likely to enjoy intimacy when we give to our partners freely, no strings attached. This does not mean becoming a doormat for other people or letting them take advantage of us. Rather, when we release resentments and take the initiative to resolve conflict, we'll often see the payoff of increased intimacy.

PRACTICE SEX

Sex with love can be the most fulfilling experience imaginable. On the other hand, when sex gets entangled with a relationship that's not working, it can be an unparalleled source of upset.

There's far more to sex than lovemaking techniques. If we want to raise the level of sexual intimacy in our lives, we can start by deepening our emotional intimacy with our partners. The following list of strategies for practicing sex bears a remarkable similarity to the strategies in the preceding article about practicing intimacy. This is intentional. The skills we learn in either area can enhance our effectiveness in both.

Focus attention

Often people's sex lives falter when their attention starts to roam. Instead of concentrating fully on the moment of lovemaking, one or both people might be mentally absent. They could be thinking about what to eat afterward, fantasizing about another person, or worrying about incomplete tasks at work.

Sex is usually more fun when we show up for it. When we focus moment-by-moment on this touch, that sensation, that caress, then we're more likely to emerge from lovemaking feeling truly loved.

Be strong on your own

One key to fulfilling sex is knowing ourselves well. Our bodies and sexual responses are unique, unlike anyone else's. Perhaps we can ask our partners to slow down, take more time, or give a massage first. Knowing what gives us pleasure and asking for what we want can actually enhance the sexual experience for our partners as well.

When we see our partner as our only source of sexual satisfaction, we might become resentful if they aren't in the mood. Masturbation is one way we can avoid being totally dependent on our partner.

Share secrets

Despite all the supposed openness about this topic, many people are as secretive as ever about sex. We might be able to talk about the mechanics of sex. But the love part of it—how it effectively fits into a relationship between human beings—still remains a subject that's often avoided. When it comes to integrating sex and love, many of us are still groping in the dark.

This makes sex an easy topic to avoid, even in a "permissive" society. We fill our days talking about things much less important and mundane than sex. We spend hours speaking about difficulties much less significant. Most of us think about sex a good deal more than we talk about it.

Do yourself and your partner a favor: Talk about sex. Reveal your secrets. Talk about the kind of lovemaking you enjoy. Share your fantasies. Each of these can promote the emotional intimacy that makes for great sex.

Do a difficult task together

Emotional bonds are based on shared effort. People who share great sex often share other activities as well. They run a household, raise children, travel, or even share a business. The very challenge inherent in these projects gives partners a lot to talk and to learn about together. This in turn invites more emotional intimacy—a basis for fulfilling physical intimacy.

Spend a lot of time together

When the only time we spend with our partners is in bed, our sex lives can suffer. Sexual intimacy is enhanced when we're willing to invest time in a relationship. Romantic relationships merit as much of our waking time and energy as working, maintaining a household, or raising children. Spending time with our partners and sharing a variety of activities sends the message: "You matter to me."

Time for sex can also be planned. It's no wonder many people have unsatisfactory sex lives, given their busy schedules that don't include time for sexual intimacy.

Show affection

Intercourse is only one way to express our love sexually. Sometimes a shoulder rub, a kiss, or a hug says as much. Demonstrating our affection in a variety of ways shows that we care and that we're concerned about more than experiencing our own orgasms.

Promise that there will be no sex

This suggestion might sound odd in the context of an article about having sex. Even so, consider the possibilities. For example, instead of having sex one night, you could have a "sex talk." Use this time to talk about any issues in your sexual relationship. Talk about the kind of touching you enjoy, express your concern about any loss of interest in sex, or talk about any new experiences you'd like to have.

Also, take time to touch, show affection, and explore each other's bodies without the aim of experiencing orgasm. A night when no sex is promised can build a hunger that is missing in some long-term relationships.

Give up the score card

Many relationships drift into trouble when partners keep score: "We had sex only once last month." "We used to make love a lot more." "In the old days, when we were dating, sex was a lot better." Statements like these invite a defensive response. They can turn the act of lovemaking into an obligation or an occasion for guilt.

Another option is to throw out the score cards. We can accept the mistakes in our sexual pasts, practice forgiveness, and talk about the kind of sex we want to experience in the present and the future. Shifting the conversation in this way invites solutions instead of complaints.

It's difficult to let passions between lovers flower when old resentments are smoldering underneath. Practicing forgiveness and solving problems can directly raise the intensity and joy of our sex lives as well.

EXERCISE

State what you like about yourself and your partner

This exercise involves the following two steps:

Step 1. Choose one person to do the talking. This person's job is to complete the sentence in as many ways as possible, "What I like best about me is . . ." As this person talks, the other person's task is simply to listen without making any comments. (The listener can offer acknowledgements, such as "Uh-huh" or "Okay.")

Practice speaking and listening this way for five minutes. Then switch roles: for five minutes the person who spoke now listens, and vice versa.

Step 2. Again, choose one person to speak and one person to listen. This time, let the speaker complete the sentence for five minutes: "What I like about you is . . ." The person who is listening and receiving these compliments can respond only with phrases such as these:

"Thank you; you sure know quality when you see it."
"Thank you; you're very perceptive."
"Thank you; I know."

After five minutes have passed, switch roles again.

This exercise has several purposes. It offers you and your partner a chance to practice listening and giving the gift of attention. It also invites you to practice giving and receiving compliments. In addition, it demonstrates that acknowledging others can raise your self-esteem as well.

> ***Love is a choice–not simply or necessarily a rational choice, but rather a willingness to be present to others without pretense or guile.***
>
> –Carter Heyward

EXERCISE

Plan your next relationship

When it comes to relationships, most of us don't think planning plays much of a role. We just wait, watch, and react. If what shows up seems good, we go for it. If not, we choose to continue to wait and watch.

An alternative is to plan. After thoughtful consideration, we can describe a set of personal qualities that we consider vital in the next person we come to love. If you are already in a relationship, you can use this exercise to evaluate it and discuss ways to improve your relationship with your partner.

To begin, gather a stack of 3x5 cards. Then brainstorm a list of things you value and things you dislike in a spouse or a romantic partner. Write each item on a separate card.

Be specific. For example, "He takes time to understand my viewpoint before criticizing it." or "She takes equal responsibility for managing our household finances."

Write each idea on a separate card. Do this for at least 10 minutes. As you do, consider the following areas:

Shared values
Physical attributes
Intellectual abilities
Education
Financial stability
Sexuality
Interests/hobbies
Politics
Religion/spirituality
Conflicting commitments
Willingness to commit
Interpersonal skills
Communication skills
Sense of humor
Children
Ex-spouses
Career plans
Geographical constraints
Patterns in previous relationships
Long-range plans
Personal hygiene
Manners
Willingness to be intimate
Appreciation of romance
Fun activities
Trust levels
Emotional health
Travel

Now assign each attribute (one on each card) to one of the following categories:

Required—These attributes are absolutely necessary for me to even consider the possibility of being in a relationship. If one or more of these is missing, the relationship is doomed.

Preferred—These attributes would be nice. But if they are not present, the relationship can still be outrageously wonderful.

Disliked—I would prefer a partner who does not have these characteristics. Yet, I know I can accept them and still have a truly healthy and satisfying relationship.

Unacceptable—These are attributes that I know I would not tolerate. If someone demonstrates an aspect that is in this category, the wisest move might be to head for the door and sever the connection as completely and politely as possible.

Some people object to this approach as discriminating. They fear that the more picky they are, the smaller the pool of potential candidates. If you have this fear, turn the suggestion into a question. Ask, "How much am I willing to compromise in order to be in a relationship?"

If you complete this exercise, you'll have a detailed portrait of your next romantic relationship. Now you have a way to evaluate the probable success or failure of getting involved with anyone you meet.

If you are already in a romantic relationship, both you and your partner can complete this exercise. Pretend you are single. Be courageous in describing attributes and assigning them to categories. Discussing this exercise could give you and your partner a wonderful chance to dramatically improve the quality of your relationship.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Teach people how to treat you

We can "train" other people how to treat us. To illustrate this point, list two people who don't treat you very well. Next to each person's name, list at least two ways they mistreat you. Be specific: Describe something that each person consistently says or does.

Name	Action or words involved

Now play with the idea that you taught these people to treat you in these ways. Imagine that you are a very clever person and you might have taught them without knowing it. For example, say that another person consistently interrupts you. If you neglect to point this out, you are in effect telling them, "It's OK for you to interrupt me." In a way, you are teaching them to interrupt.

For each of the people listed above, write about how you taught them to mistreat you.

Finish this exercise with Intention Statements that describe what you will do to "retrain" these people to treat you differently.

I intend to . . .

Discover barriers to relationships

Any of us can create barriers to relationships. Sometimes the process is so subtle that we can easily be unaware of it.

For example: A person immerses herself in a job or hobby so that she has little time or energy for friends. Another person pursues relationships that have no future or that seem destined to fail. Someone else goes out of his way to look sloppy and unattractive. Still another person refuses to let anyone enter her apartment because it's always messy. Each of these can be ways to sabotage relationships before they begin.

Looking honestly at our lives and telling the truth are the first steps to removing these barriers. Consider whether or not you are creating barriers to relationships. If you are, describe specifically what you say or do to create and maintain these barriers.

If at first you don't believe you create such barriers, keep looking. There may be subtle ways that are hidden from your first look. Most everyone can find some way that they distance themselves from others.

I discovered that I . . .

Now describe one concrete action you can take to remove a barrier from your life.

I intend to . . .

GET YOUR LOVER'S ATTENTION

"He won't talk to me. He doesn't listen, either."

This article suggests strategies you can use if this problem, or any of its endless variations, shows up in your life.

Note: The suggestions that follow alternately use male and female pronouns to refer to the partner in a relationship. Keep in mind that these ideas apply to people of both genders.

Understand that this problem belongs to both of you

"That's crazy," people say. "It's his problem. He won't talk." OK. And, from another perspective, it really is your problem, since you are the only person who cares whether or not he communicates. It's not that you are doing anything wrong. It's just that you might be the only one who considers this situation a problem and wants to fix it.

Of course, you can ask him to acknowledge the problem, too. Work as a team. Ask him to agree that it's a problem for both people when one person does not communicate.

Set aside a time to talk

Ask for a time to talk. Don't assume you'll know when it's a good time to iron out a problem. And don't assume that now is a good time.

Discuss no other problem until this one is resolved

If she won't talk with you after you bring up the problem several times, let her know that you are not going to talk about any other problem until she's willing to talk about this one. If communication is the fundamental basis of a relationship, not much else can be resolved until communication is working.

Involve a facilitator

This could be a friend, a counselor, or a minister. Keep in mind that your facilitator does not have to be a professional. Don't choose a facilitator without your partner's input. Find out from him if there is someone he would be willing to have help with this problem.

Have no sex until you feel connected

Do not make love when you don't feel close to your partner. Send the message clearly: "Before I can feel comfortable having sex, I want to talk out this problem."

This is not necessarily manipulation but a way to honor your own experience, a way to be authentic and honest.

Be satisfied only with full attention

You perpetuate the problem by competing with the television, the newspaper, or her favorite hobby. Insist on full attention, or wait until later.

Model what you want. Notice if, when you are talking, you are also reading, watching television, dealing with children, cooking, or cleaning. Instead, give your undivided attention.

Allow logical consequences

If he won't talk to you about dinner, eat alone or go out with a friend. If he won't talk to you about plans for the weekend, make plans that don't involve him. If he won't talk to you about the remodeling project, do it on your own.

Of course, he may be upset. That can be *his* upset and the price he pays for not communicating. The next time you want to talk about weekend plans, he may be more likely to do so.

Meet her on her turf

In addition to—or even before—discussing what you want, talk about her interests. This is one way to help her change a habit from "little or no communication" to "plenty of talking and listening." Open up communication in small steps, starting with the topics most interesting to her.

Ask about her work. Get specific. Avoid simple questions that have easy one-word answers. For example, "How was work today?" often gets a perfunctory "Fine." "What happened with the problem you were having with . . ." invites a more detailed response.

Be careful of interpretations

The problem gets worse when we add our guesses to the little communication that already does exist.

When our partner withdraws from contact, we might interpret this fact as meaning, "He doesn't love me," "He doesn't care about me," "He doesn't think I'm very smart," or "He just doesn't want to talk to me." In reality, none of these may be true. He might be in pain or preoccupied with a problem of his own.

It's easy to start filling in silences with our own assumptions. When that happens, we forget the real problem, which is opening up the channels of communication.

When there is little communication in a relationship, all we know for sure is this: There is little communication. All other interpretations or assumptions are dangerous and potentially inaccurate.

Surprise her

Change something dramatic about your appearance or behavior. Alter the status quo in a way that gets her attention. Do something so outrageous that it would be impossible for her to not notice. For example:

- Dress in a clown costume.
- Schedule a surprise romantic date.
- Prepare an elegant dinner with fine dishes and candlelight.
- Move the television to your neighbor's house. If she asks what's going on, say, "I can't remember where I put it. I guess we'll just have to find a way to entertain ourselves tonight."
- Tape your mouth shut.
- Fill a room with balloons and hang a banner with a special message.
- Pick her up at work, unannounced, and go on a mystery date.

BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

(Send in more examples of how to surprise your lover.)

Get support

We can start to feel crazy and blame problems on ourselves when we are cut off from others. Sharing our experiences with people we trust can keep us clear-headed and on target.

Take drastic action

If there is no progress or effort on his part to deal with problems, consider raising the stakes with more action. This might include moving out until something changes, or ending the relationship.

E X E R C I S E

Create a Contract

Effective communication between partners is probably likely to conflict when tensions are high. This exercise is recommended when you and your lover are getting along well.

Set a time when the two of you can get together and write a contract that describes a detailed process to follow when you are experiencing problems and are not getting along. Consider using a variety of ideas from this section.

The contract can spell out timelines, names of others who might be used to facilitate communication, specific responsibilities for each of you, and any other details you can think of.

It might take several meetings and several drafts before you have an agreement that both of you are comfortable signing.

Possible components of the contract might include "time outs" or cooling off periods, written communications, clearly designating which partner is sending and which is receiving at any given time, conditions under which you might seek professional help, specific guidelines for managing children and daily tasks, designated times to discuss the issues, designated times to absolutely not discuss the issues, or rules about discussing problems with in-laws and other family members.

Be creative and design a plan that will help ensure that all possible avenues to reach agreement are pursued and that an impasse is not declared too quickly.

Once you have a mutually agreeable contract, choose a time and place to have a formal ceremony to sign it. Consider a romantic evening, inviting friends as witnesses, or having a party.

In the space below, list several ingredients of the contract that you would consider using.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

> ***"Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing."***
>
> –Helen Keller

Chapter 5

Leadership

In this chapter you'll find...

We are all leaders.

We lead by our words, our requests, and our examples.

You are a leader: Discovery Statement.

Remember a time when you acted as a leader and list the qualities you displayed.

Strategies for leading.

We can help others rise to their potential by making requests, inviting change, avoiding reprimand, sharing credit, accepting responsibility, and painting a vision.

Assume leadership: Intention Statement.

Think of some area in which you could act as a leader and plan how to do so.

WE ARE ALL LEADERS

At some point in life, all of us take on leadership roles. Even when we don't have an official leadership position, we can still lead by our words, our requests, and our examples.

The line between leader and follower is constantly shifting, depending on the various roles people play. At any moment, any one of us could take the reins of leadership in a given situation.

We can apply leadership skills across the board in many aspects of life. Through their questions and efforts to learn, students can lead their teachers. By giving their opinions and making requests, employees can lead their supervisors. By choosing what to buy, consumers can lead manufacturers.

This applies with special force to politics. By wielding our vote, we can lead our politicians. If we want to see a massive change in society, we don't need to wait for politicians to initiate it. Often politicians will implement change only when they see that it's safe to do so, which is often when a critical mass of people support a specific change. By influencing public opinion, we can sway our elected officials. Instead of pushing our governmental leaders, we can stand in front of them and pull them along.

Opportunities for leadership surface constantly as we raise children, do committee work, train others, or volunteer our time. At some point, the people we're involved with might turn to us for direction. We can be ready.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

You are a leader

Remember a time when you took on a leadership role. This might have been when you were the president of a company or an organizer of a poker game. For purposes of this exercise, it really doesn't matter. Just remember some time when you took responsibility for making a result happen.

As you recall your experience as a leader, list your strengths. Also describe any ways that you could become a better leader.

I was a leader when I . . .

As a leader, my strengths included . . .

As a leader, I could have improved by . . .

STRATEGIES FOR LEADING

To prepare for your next leadership role, experiment with the following suggestions. As with most suggestions in this book, some of these will not work in certain circumstances. Keep in mind those situations where you are a leader and look for which of these suggestions you can apply.

Accept responsibility

If you're in a leadership position, be willing to say that the buck stops with you. Others will often respect you for owning a problem. Taking full responsibility for some result is often a source of tremendous creativity and effectiveness. And, remember that when you accept responsibility, you might sometimes be disliked by some people—or even widely unpopular.

Make requests

One reason that leaders sometimes don't get the results they want is that they forget to ask. Skilled leaders make dozens of requests in the process of encouraging people around them to work up to their full potentials.

Requesting excellent performance from others is a form of respect. It sends the message that we see the people around us as skilled, competent, and capable of doing great things. Requests are invitations for others to make daring promises and then live up to their word. This can be a joy for everyone.

If you want to lead, then make lots of requests, both large and small. This habit may irritate some people. Yet, your requests give them an opportunity to rise to their potentials. In the end, people often appreciate leaders who ask for excellence.

Offer feedback, not reprimand

If you want to lead effectively, avoid reprimanding others. Reprimands often shut people down. They might become resentful and unwilling to participate. Reprimands punish the people who acknowledge that they made a mistake and block effective solutions to the resulting problems. An alternative to reprimanding is empowering another by offering supportive and even loving feedback.

We can approach any conflict as a problem to be solved, instead of an occasion to find fault with those around us. After carefully defining the problem and creating solutions, we can take action to experience mutual benefit.

Share credit

Projects rarely succeed through the efforts of one person. Even if you headed the effort, acknowledge the support and help you received from others. People may be more willing to join your team next time if they know they'll be appreciated.

Go for the big fish

If you want to experience the thrill of leadership, go beyond safe, sure projects. Make big promises and work like mad to deliver. Raise the stakes beyond what feels comfortable and go for a genuine breakthrough in your effectiveness as a leader. And, remember to set goals that are both high and realistic.

Allow big mistakes

If you take on a big project with an ambitious result, there's a chance you could fail. This is true of any worthwhile effort. Mistakes are an integral part of achieving mastery.

The capacity to make a huge contribution usually goes hand in hand with the possibility of making huge mistakes. For example, doctors can save a life or lose it. Managers can make millions for their company or lose millions.

Effective leaders do not set out to fail or take on dead-end projects. The point is simply that if we allow fear of failing to paralyze us, we might never move into action, taste success, or reach our potential.

Draw on the talents of others

As a leader, you don't have to go it alone. There are probably many people nearby who could help you attain any goal.

Effective leaders master the art of delegating tasks. After they delegate, these managers follow up to find out how things are going—not to hen-peck, but to demonstrate concern and attention to detail. Then, after delegating and checking in, genuine leaders get out of the way and let the people under them do their jobs.

Paint the big picture

One of the most important things a leader can do is remind people of the overall scope and significance of their work. A leader can lift our eyes to the horizon.

Any of us can get lost in day-to-day details, forgetting the larger purpose of our efforts. Leaders counter this all-too-human tendency by rising to the platform, redirecting the prevailing conversation, and painting an inspiring vision. These people continually put us in touch with the contribution that our work can make to ourselves, to other people, and to the planet.

Listen for intentions

Intentions are powerful statements. They indicate a decision to do something. They can suggest possibilities for change and improvement.

Fulfilled intentions have the power to improve the quality of our lives. Intentions fulfilled by action can even change the world. It's unfortunate when intentions are lost simply because we are not listening for them.

Sometimes spoken intentions are not obvious. They might be passed over because they are taken too lightly by the speaker or the listener. At other times, they are spoken almost unconsciously and then forgotten.

Suppose someone says, "It sure would make sense if I exercised more often." There are several possible responses to that statement. One is to just nod casually and reply, "Yeah, me too. Hey, pass me a piece of that banana cream pie." If we're listening for intentions, we might have a different response: "Sounds like you're getting more serious about exercising. I think it's a great idea, too. Why don't we go out for a brisk walk tomorrow and talk about it?"

Intentions are often imbedded or disguised in someone's speaking. People hint or imply that they are intending to do something and never quite get around to saying it. Or they might not even be aware of an intention that could naturally fall out of what they say.

Listening for intentions can salvage many wonderful ideas. If we're not listening for intentions, those same ideas might fall through the cracks of careless communication and be lost forever.

Follow up

An effective leader follows up on responsibilities she assigns to others. She asks them to report on their progress. In some sense, she minds other people's business. By asking how a project is going, she demonstrates interest and acknowledges the importance of the work.

Allow the consequence

We fail at contributing to others when we separate them from the natural consequences of their actions. At times, it's best to allow the other person's pain, so they can learn from their experience .

There are many examples. We do a child a disservice if we smooth over the fact that his friends won't play with him when he's selfish with his toys. If we lie to a supervisor about our lover's hangover, we separate the person we love from the natural consequences of drinking, which might include losing a job.

We don't have to live this way. We can promote others with this simple thought: The pain that results from our mistakes is usually the tool that promotes our learning. As with most other suggestions in this book, the suggestion to allow consequences involves judgment calls and exceptions. It does not make sense, for example, to let a child experience the pain of getting hurt from a serious accident that could have been avoided.

Lighten up

The most skilled leaders are also clear and loving, even when circumstances don't turn out as they prefer. We are not effective when we grow attached to our pet ideas and projects. When we operate with a tight gut or rigid demands for results, we stop being as supportive.

> *I accept the universe.*
>
> –Margaret Fuller

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Assume leadership

Think of an area in your life where you could take on a leadership role. Then write about how you could assume that leadership and the costs and benefits of doing so.

I could assume leadership by . . .

The benefits of assuming this position of leadership include . . .

The costs of assuming this position of leadership include . . .

I intend to . . .

Chapter 6

Conflict resolution

In this chapter you'll find...

Instead of doing battle, solve problems.
We can expand the limited idea of conflict resolution to the more general notion of problem solving.

Seven steps to conflict resolution.
After sitting down at the bargaining table, we can first agree about how to reach agreement. Here is one possible process.

Switch your point of view for five minutes: exercise.
Practice arguing for a different stand on an issue—one that you disagree with.

Find out which part of a request is being denied.
It often pays to find out which specific elements of our ideas are meeting with resistance.

Complain creatively.
When presented as the search for a solution, our complaints can make a positive difference.

Practice creative complaining: Intention Statement.
Devise a plan to complain creatively about something you wish to change.

Turn complaints

Find the request in a complaint: exercise.
Listen for the question imbedded in a complaint and decide how to respond.

Build a bridge before walking the canyon.
Establishing a foundation of trust can pave the way for candid speaking.

Befriend criticism.
Put criticism into perspective, let go of value judgments, and choose your response.

Notice your reactions to criticism: Discovery/Intention Statement.
The next time you feel criticized, pay close attention to your physical sensations and thoughts.

Monitor your criticisms: Discovery/Intention Statement
Look to see if your criticisms of others could apply to you.

Solve the problem: exercise.
Think of some conflict you now have with another person and create a detailed plan to solve this problem.

Separate what people do from what you think they do: exercise.
Practice seeing the difference between behaviors and judgments.

INSTEAD OF DOING BATTLE—SOLVE PROBLEMS

Entering into the battle is one of many ways to resolve conflict. We can expand the idea of conflict resolution to include the general notion of problem solving. This way we are more likely to use strategies that result in win-win outcomes. Using peaceful and creative approaches, problem solving can turn into an opportunity that improves matters for everyone.

If our preference is to avoid win-lose scenarios and go for win-win, the following strategies can help.

Look deeply

When our relationships don't work, life can be miserable. Frustration and resentment can lead to pointless arguments with friends and family. We might feel trapped, angry, or confused about what to do.

Often such feelings are signs of deeper problems. Working on the symptoms alone is usually ineffective. It's like trying to kill dandelions by mowing the lawn. No matter how determined we are or how often we mow, they just keep coming back . . . again and again. No wonder we're frustrated. Instead, we could handle the dandelion problem at its roots (literally) by using some non-toxic weed killer. That moves us beyond the symptoms to the underlying problem.

Something like this applies to relationships. Unhappy relationships are often rooted in behaviors and communication patterns learned long ago. These patterns might be so habitual that they remain invisible. Even so, they can create dozens of problems.

Faced with this fact, we can inquire deeply. We can keep looking for the persistent, broad-based patterns in our thinking, communication patterns, and behavior. With that information, we can make specific and powerful plans to change—and often weed out many damaging communication patterns.

Perhaps we have a tendency to point a finger and blame others when we experience conflict. Or, maybe we make a habit of bottling up resentments and avoiding any discussion of things that bother us. Either of these tendencies can be changed by practicing the suggestions offered throughout this section of *Human Being*.

Remain open

We can share our views without solidifying our position. Once we adopt a firm position and invest our well-being in that opinion, we've gone beyond holding merely a point of view. We've become so attached to an idea that any disagreement about it might insult us.

Certain phrases signal that our opinion is just that—an opinion, an idea on the table for discussion, not a revelation of eternal truth from on high. Those phrases include "From my point of view . . ." and "It looks to me like . . ."

In addition to remaining open, other suggestions for sharing a point of view without antagonism are:

- Always be willing to leave a conversation with a new opinion.
- Be open to challenges to your point of view.
- State the supporting facts along with your point of view. Be prepared to provide verification and evidence.
- Stay in the discussion with the goal of reaching agreement.
- When appropriate, apologize, ask for forgiveness, or offer to make amends.

Permit the conflict

Conflict might get worse before it gets better. When we allow people to vent their feelings and bare their frustrations, it might appear that things are just getting worse. Often, it pays to hang in there awhile longer. Sometimes, we're witnessing the storm that comes before the calm. Once people express and release their anger and fear, they can often see how much they really care for each other and want a mutually beneficial solution.

Find common ground

We can often agree with a person's goal even though we disagree with her strategies for reaching it. Most human beings want similar things—among them, happiness, health, love, and wealth. Even when we disagree about how to realize these values, we can remind ourselves of our common ground. Agreeing on fundamental issues paves the way to further agreements in more specific areas.

Consider interests, not positions

Two women were fighting over an orange. "My position is solid," said one woman. "I will not compromise. I need this orange."

The other woman said, "I am firm and will not budge from my position. I need this orange."

The women had the wisdom to take their problem to a mediator. The mediator questioned the women about their interests in the orange. She asked how each intended to use it. The mediator discovered that one wanted to squeeze the orange to make orange juice, and the other wanted to grate the peel and use it for cake frosting. The solution was obvious and simple.

There is usually only one way to satisfy a position, while there are often many ways to satisfy an interest. "This company needs to hire more people." is a position that can be satisfied only by hiring more people. "This company needs to improve overall productivity." is an interest that can be satisfied by exploring a variety of possible solutions.

Slow down

When you're listening to others express their points of view, give them time to lay their cards on the table. Give people a chance to finish what they're saying before you speak. Ask, "Is there anything more you want to say?" Then allow a few moments of silence so you can digest what you've just heard.

Do it face-to-face

Conflict flourishes when we rely on third-party communication. Instead of talking directly to the people we disagree with, we can find ourselves talking about them behind their backs. Resolving conflict usually means doing exactly the opposite. Going directly to the people involved facilitates negotiating a solution that works for everyone.

Do it in writing

One way to prepare for negotiation is to put your thoughts in writing. Write a letter that sums up the points you want to make. The act of clarifying your point of view enough to express it in writing is a great way to prepare for later conversations. In many cases, you can enhance the power of this technique by summarizing, in writing, the opposite point of view as well.

To get started at writing, imagine that you are composing a letter to a person who's in conflict with you. If you find that the letter is full of accusations and anger, savor the feeling of getting all those thoughts off your chest. Then toss that letter and begin a new one focused on defining and solving the problem. Express yourself in "I" messages whenever possible, and invite a response from the other person. Then, consider sending the letter, if you think it will help. Even if you choose not to send the letter, there's value in writing it.

Get to the point

Don't ask others to wait in suspense while you warm up to your main problem or suggestion. Start with your main points. Offering a brief preview promotes clarity and can prevent misunderstanding.

Turn suggestions into requests

There is a clear distinction between requests and suggestions. A request calls for some type of response. Any request is an unresolved opening that awaits an answer. It remains incomplete until a response is given. On the other hand, a suggestion can stand alone. It does not require a response.

If we disguise a request as a suggestion, we usually don't get far. Take this suggestion: "You know, you rush around in the morning. It's a chaotic way to start the day. You could get up a little earlier." After our suggestion is acknowledged (maybe with "That's an interesting idea."), we still don't know what response to expect.

To solve this problem, we can turn the suggestion into a direct request: "Would you please get up at 6:30 in the morning so you won't have to rush as much, and we won't have to start our day in such a frenzy."

When we're straight about what we want and get a response to our requests, we know where we stand. Remember, a request deserves an answer. Being assertive about getting one is a key to upgrading an unresolved suggestion to a powerful request.

Respond to requests

There are at least four possible effective responses to a request.

The first is a simple *yes* or *no*. We either grant the request or we do not. Granting a request is the same as promising we will do whatever the request asks.

Another possible response is to make a *counter offer*. Here we suggest alternative conditions that would satisfy the request or suggest a different time line. Consider this request: "Would you please build four widgets by June 15?" We can respond by suggesting that we will build three widgets instead of four or that we will complete the project by June 31 instead of June 15.

A third type of response is appropriate if we are not clear about what's involved in fulfilling the request. We can ask for *clarification*: "Does building the widgets include boxing them when we're finished? Or can we just leave them on the shelf and pack them later?"

Fourth, we can *postpone* our response. Perhaps we need to check the status of some other project before answering a request. Maybe we just want to consider the request for a day or two before we answer. If the latter is true, we can say, "I'll get back to you with an answer on Tuesday." Most people appreciate knowing when they will have a response to their requests.

Notice that answering a request with "Maybe" is not included in this list of effective responses. Although "Maybe" is a possible response, it is seldom effective. When we respond with "Maybe," others don't know where we stand. When the request is important, it's often wise to treat "Maybe" as "No."

Treat intuitions carefully

Often we'll get gut feelings about other people. A salesperson might display expert knowledge of a product and say all the right things. Yet, we can walk away with the impression that he's not being totally straight. In the same way, we're likely to trust someone who is sincere and truly interested in our well-being—even if that person is not a whiz at sales techniques.

Another name for this type of gut feeling is intuition. Intuitions are often worthy of respect and can be amazingly accurate. At other times, trusting our intuitions can get us into trouble. When possible, it's wise to check them out, especially in times of conflict.

The majority of us are not great mind readers. Our extrasensory perceptions are not fully developed. Even those of us who have unusual abilities are not 100 percent perfect.

Communication is difficult at best, and relying on vague hunches can compound misunderstanding. Whenever possible, we can verify our suspicions by using effective speaking and listening skills.

Suppose, for example, we are expecting a friend to call. We wait all night; no call. We might suspect that this person is an uncaring jerk who doesn't really care about us. We might even say, "You know, I had an intuition that she just wasn't very sincere."

Yet, this is only one possible explanation. Maybe the telephone lines were down or the person was in an accident. Maybe her meeting lasted longer than planned and she was uncomfortable calling at a late hour. Or maybe she misplaced our number and couldn't remember our last name to look it up.

Rather than spending angry nights fretting about such incidents, we can postpone judgment. We can take the time to discover what really happened.

Use a mediator or arbitrator

Many of us fall into the habit of solving problems through conflict. This habit limits our choices. There are other options, and we can begin to be aware of them. Some are formal, such hiring a professional mediator or submitting an issue to legal arbitration. Others can be as informal as talking it over at lunch or flipping a coin.

Mediation and arbitration both involve an impartial third party entering into a dispute. Mediation is a voluntary process, and the mediator is there only to facilitate negotiations. A mediator has no authority to make decisions. Arbitration can be voluntary or involuntary. Arbitrators have authority to make decisions about how problems will be resolved.

If we are committed and creative, we can almost always solve problems by finding new approaches that do not involve conflict.

SEVEN STEPS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Agreeing on a process lays a foundation for resolving conflict, even before any specific problem is explored. It demonstrates that the parties involved can work together. They can begin to trust each other.

The following seven steps represent a common and effective process for solving problems between people:

1. Clarify

Chances of solving a problem increase when everyone involved understands what the real issues are. Sometimes a problem can be cleared up simply by clarifying a single point or squashing a rumor. In some cases, taking time to clarify the problem makes it obvious that there really isn't a problem.

This step can also help us be aware of the extent of the problem. Maybe it's going to be relatively easy to handle. Or, maybe we'd better re-arrange our schedules, roll up our sleeves, and prepare for some hard, creative work.

2. Brainstorm

This is the creative stage of a problem solving process. Let everyone suggest many possible solutions to the problem. Appoint someone to write each idea down, and refuse to allow criticism of any idea. Even ideas that seem wild or crazy are OK. They might lead to a perfect solution. The idea here is to go for quantity, not quality. You can evaluate proposed solutions during the next step.

It helps to set a specific amount of time for this brainstorming. And, it is OK to go beyond the time frame when people are really cooking. Cutting it short might cheat everyone of an outstanding idea that's brewing just beneath the surface. In the same way, silence is OK if the group runs out of steam early. If this happens, keep going until the allotted time is done.

3. Evaluate

After brainstorming, it's time to "get real" and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of reasonable ideas. Vague, general ideas can be clarified and developed. Consider which of them are acceptable to everyone and show promise of success.

4. Choose

If the process has been successful, people can usually agree on a mutually acceptable course of action. Consensus can be the natural method for choosing.

5. Plan

Translate the general course of action you've agreed on into a series of specific intentions. Follow the guidelines for Intention Statements on page 18.

6. Implement

Move into action immediately. Any problem that was not seen when developing a plan, will reveal itself when we begin to implement it. Keep in mind that an effective plan changes quickly to accommodate problems once implementation begins.

7. Re-evaluate

One of the few things we can count on is change. Circumstances are continually in flux, and we often gain new insights that change the way we think.

Having the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and new information makes it likely that our solutions will continue to serve us. When periodic re-evaluations are a part of our plan, we can ensure opportunities to keep our efforts on target.

E X E R C I S E

Switch your point of view for five minutes

Pick some behavior or concept that you think is negative. Some possibilities are drugs, casual sex, communism, war, abortion, or welfare.

Now switch your point of view on this topic for five minutes. Writing on a separate sheet of paper, which you could later destroy, describe some positive aspects of these activities or ideas. Be willing to ask, "What if there is some value in this activity or idea that I've been overlooking?" For instance, if you don't like people on welfare, you might write, "We do need some kind of welfare system to help the people who've lost their jobs through no fault of their own."

Keep in mind that you don't have to agree with all that you write. Just be willing to explore. In the process, you might shake loose a few assumptions or better understand another person's point of view.

Complete this exercise with a Discovery Statement that describes how this exercise affected your point of view on the topic.

I discovered that I . . .

_____

_____

_____

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_____

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_____

FIND OUT WHICH PART OF A REQUEST IS BEING DENIED

Observe what happens when a request is denied. Often you'll find it is only a part of the request that poses the problem. By determining which specific part of the request is being denied, you can usually modify the request and salvage an otherwise fruitless exchange. With this idea in mind, consider the homely tale that follows.

Once upon a time, Max dated Agnes. They had shared the adventure of dating for more than 10 months. They were hopelessly in love. After giving it considerable thought, Max decided to ask Agnes to marry him.

He planned the evening with care. Dining, dancing, her favorite music, and a walk around the lake were sure to create the romance he sought for this special occasion. And the night was perfect. The clear ebony sky celebrated the brilliance of a full moon and the sparkling of countless stars.

After dinner, at exactly the right moment, while walking along the path around the lake, Max took the ring from his pocket, bent down on one knee, and said, "Agnes, I love you more than I can bear. I dedicate my life to making you happy. Please, will you marry me?"

Agnes thought for a brief moment. Then she said, "No." She turned and started walking away.

Max was shocked. He struggled to maintain control. He watched helplessly as his future happiness disappeared down the moonlit path. His thoughts raced at the speed of light. Through confusion and upset, he frantically searched his mind for a clue about what to do next.

He sensed the moments slipping by as a tragic and hopeless destiny unfolded before him. No options came to mind. Then he remembered something he'd read long ago: Find out which part of the request is being denied. With that thought, he decided to take charge of his destiny.

Max ran after Agnes. Panting and pleading he asked, "Why won't you marry me?"

She stopped cold in her tracks. Tears streamed down her cheeks, and her bottom lip quivered. Then came a scream. Max cringed, covering his ears.

Pausing between each word to take a shallow breath, gather her strength, and devote every ounce of her energy to the next word, Agnes said, "I . . . can't . . . cook!" Then, sobbing into her chiffon handkerchief, she repeated it under her breath, "I can't cook."

Now Max understood: Agnes thought that cooking was part of the marriage request. He knew what to do. Relieved beyond description, he slowly straightened up and looked at her. He greeted the terror, pain, and anguish in her eyes with a gentle, loving gaze.

Taking her in his arms, he said sincerely and gently, "But I can. I will do the cooking."

Slowly, both saw the humor of it all. Her face softened, and a twinkle returned to her eyes. His mouth formed a hesitant grin. Their smiles turned into chuckles, and their chuckles into uproarious laughter. They were literally rolling on the ground in laughter.

Max had his special moment after all. This experience, forged in that one ecstatic moment, sealed their love forever.

They lived happily ever after.

The moral of this edifying fairy tale: When in doubt, check it out. Ask, "Which part of my request are you rejecting?" Often a solution lies in the answer.

Complain Creatively

We might complain for a variety of reasons. Perhaps we are angry and want to find fault with someone. We might feel defensive and want to attack in return. Maybe we're experiencing some pain and simply want to vent our emotions. We might know we are right and complain so that others know it, too. Or, maybe we're just in a bad mood and are looking for some way to release frustration.

The following ideas for creative complaining are probably not going to serve any of the above purposes. We might find other ways to satisfy those purposes. If, for example, we're angry and feel like attacking someone, we could use "I" messages instead (see page 322). Or, if we want to vent our frustration, we could write in a journal, find a neutral third party who is willing to listen, or take it out on a punching bag.

The following ideas are intended to help us complain in a way that changes something. Using these strategies can help ensure that we'll get what we want when we complain.

Begin at the immediate source

Start with the person who is most directly involved with the problem. Complaining to the hairdresser about the landlord is not likely to produce results. First, talk with a person who is close to the problem and in a position to do something about it.

Continue up the chain of command

In most situations, the person we are complaining to is not the final authority in the matter. If we don't get satisfaction at first, we can request a supervisor's name. If not satisfied, we can visit or write a letter to the home office or the company president. And, we don't have to stop there. Keep reading.

Take legal action if necessary

We don't have to hire an attorney to take legal action. We can go to small-claims court, which handles cases involving small amounts of money (up to $1,000 or $2,000.) The cost is relatively low. Legal aid offices are a source of help, too.

Hiring an attorney and filing formal charges is another option.

Use available support

There are dozens of groups and government agencies that get involved in resolving complaints. We can contact the Better Business Bureau, a trade association, or a consumer group. City council members, county commissioners, state legislators, government agencies, regulatory boards, and elected officials are usually available. If the people we contact first are unable to help, they can often suggest another person or agency to contact.

Do your homework

If we document our complaints with facts, they are likely to be taken more seriously. We can keep written notes that include names, dates, locations, promises made, actions taken (or not taken), and supporting evidence.

Hold people accountable

It can help to tactfully remind people of their commitments. For example: "Hello. I understand that you are responsible for making sure customers are satisfied." Chances are, this opening will be more effective than, "You've cheated me out of my money, and you'd better cough it up or else!"

We can ask for specific commitments, and let people know we intend to follow up. "So, will you call your supervisor to find out what can be done? Thanks. I'll be in again on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. to find out what she has to say."

Highlight advantages to others

People are often more willing to help us when there is something in it for them. To an elected official, we might say, "This issue is of great interest to many voters in this community, and I'm sure they will be interested to find out how you've helped us resolve it." To a store owner, we can say, "Many of my friends and extended family shop here. I'm sure they'll want to know how you've helped me out."

A neighborhood improvement committee might appreciate knowing that a drainage project on our block will also clear up the mud in a park every spring. And, we can remind our kids that if they help clean the house by noon on Saturday, there will be plenty of time for swimming at the lake.

Of course, since we value integrity, we say these things only if they're true. Lying and bluffing are not part of creative complaining.

Be persistent

Be persistent. Be persistent. Be persistent.

We're worth it. Too many of us quit far too early. We insult ourselves by quitting long before the final results are in. One more call, one more letter, one more reminder, or one more request can make all the difference. Be persistent.

Practice creative complaining

Think of something you would like to change. Using a suggestion from the preceding article, create a plan to complain creatively.

I intend to . . .

Turn Complaints Into Solutions

Countless negotiations flounder when people focus on their complaints rather than search for solutions. An alternative is to listen for the feeling and the request embedded in a complaint.

Listen for the feeling in a complaint

When a person who is complaining feels that he is fully heard and understood, his upset is often diminished. He is more likely to be reasonable and open to discussing solutions. As listeners, we can help this happen by paying close attention to the deeper, emotional levels of a complaint. This involves heeding the feelings that underlie the content of the complaint.

Consider a woman who complains that her husband spends most of his weekends watching sports. He responds by saying, "So, what I hear you saying is that you don't want me to watch sports."

She tells him that's not true, and that he's missing the whole point. In turn, he feels confused and defensive. Given her words, his initial response seemed right on target. He feels attacked and accuses her of twisting things around. All the ingredients of an argument are mixed and ready to go.

The problem might have been avoided if he had looked beyond the content to her underlying message. Then the dialogue might have gone like the following exchange.

"I understand that you're upset about my watching sports. You seem hurt."

"That's right," she replies. "You work long hours all week, come home late often, and then on the weekends, you sit in front of the television most of the time."

"I wonder if you think I don't spend enough time with you," he replies.

"Right again," she says. "The truth is, I really don't mind that you watch sports. I know how much you enjoy it, and I'm happy you can take time on the weekend to relax and enjoy yourself. Since we spend so little time together during the week, I'd also like it if you would be with me and the kids on the weekends. Could you find a way to do both? We don't get to see you much, and we would like to do more as a family on the weekends."

The conversation is now moving toward resolution, one in which everyone in the family wins. What made the difference was listening for the feelings that were hiding beneath the content of the complaint.

Listen for the request in a complaint

When listening carefully, we can sometimes discover hidden requests in what others are saying. Requests can be imbedded, taking on a variety of disguises: complaints, statements, and even circumstances.

Complaints almost always contain requests. When people forget this, complaints often become dead ends that create discomfort and perpetuate discontent. They can be a breeding ground for hostility and antagonism.

Hearing the request in a complaint provides us with an opportunity to guide the conversation in a direction that can make a difference. After extracting the request from a complaint and acknowledging it for what it is, we can help the speaker get what he wants. We might grant the request and promise to fulfill it. Or, we might deny it, make a counter offer, or suggest another way for the speaker to get what he wants. Any of

these responses can be far more productive than the usual agreement, judgment, or sympathy that often follow complaints.

Kids offer many examples. From time to time, they are known to complain about being bored. If we hear a child say, "It's so boring when we go visit Aunt Sophie," we might get frustrated, irritated, or angry. We might feel like lecturing our child on the finer aspects of family courtesy. If instead, we search for the request imbedded in that complaint, we might discover this: "I want to stay home tonight so I can practice my drums. Can I do that instead of going to Aunt Sophie's?" This discovery opens options that can be satisfying to everybody, including Aunt Sophie.

There are many more examples. "We never go out for romantic evenings any more." can be heard as "Can we go out for a romantic evening?" "We always run out of money at the end of the month." can be heard as "Let's budget our money and find a way to increase our income, reduce our expenses, or both."

Requests can also be disguised as simple statements. "It sure would be nice if . . ." and "I wish somebody would . . ." are phrases that signal a possible request. "It sure would be nice if you could do the dishes tonight." can actually be heard as: "Would you please do the dishes tonight?"

We may not always know if the request that we think is hidden in a statement or a complaint is actually the one intended. It works best to check it out. For example, if someone says, "It's cold in here," we might assume that the request embedded in that complaint is "Would you please turn up the heat?" That might not be the case. The request might be "Could we move to another room?" or "Can I borrow your jacket?" or "I am not feeling well, and I want to go home." or "Could you please speak to me in a less cold and antagonistic way?"

Sometimes we encounter a set of circumstances and realize that making some changes would have a positive impact. We can "listen" to whatever is missing and "hear" it as a request to initiate constructive action.

For example, we might have a close call driving through a congested intersection. We remember that an accident occurred last month at the same place and realize that a traffic light would be helpful. Or, maybe the speaker at our luncheon doesn't realize that her microphone is off, and people in the back of the room can't hear. Perhaps a group of senior citizens are frustrated because they have no convenient transportation to a shopping mall they enjoy. In each case, a circumstance suggests a request: Please install a traffic light. Please turn on the microphone. Help us find a way to get to the mall.

Complaints, statements, circumstances—all are breeding grounds for requests. Often they point out what's missing and practically beg for corrective action. By listening carefully for requests, we can help people turn casual comments into powerful commitments.

EXERCISE

Find the request in a complaint

Complaints are common. Recall a complaint you've heard and determine the request that is imbedded in it. Write the complaint and the request discovered.

The complaint was . . .

_____

_____

A possible request imbedded in this complaint was . . .

_____

_____

Build a Bridge Before Walking the Canyon

The emotional bond between two people can be compared to a bridge between two sides of a deep canyon. A strong bond or emotional connection is like a steel bridge that can support heavy weights. If the connection between two people is weak, we can liken it to a primitive footbridge made of wood and vines.

The messages two people send to each other can be compared to the materials we send across the bridge. A strong bridge can support tanks, large trucks, and other heavy equipment. A strong bond between people can support straightforward, candid speaking.

Suppose that we're in conflict with someone, and there is not yet a strong bond between us. In this case, sending difficult messages might damage or destroy the relationship—collapse the bridge. An example is telling a colleague we don't know well that he doesn't seem very committed to his work. That's like trying to send a tank across a footbridge. The relationship might not withstand the weight of the message.

Once a relationship is on solid ground, it might be safer to risk some frank communication. This assumes, of course, that the communication is sent in a supportive spirit rather than with the intent to blame or hurt. The quality of our relationships depends in part on sending messages that reflect the depth of our personal bonds.

Following are several suggestions for building bridges and strengthening emotional bonds. We can use these before we send difficult messages.

- Spend time together. Hostage negotiators know this technique well. When they want to build a bond, they work to spend lots of time with the terrorist. They know the longer they spend in negotiations, the more likely it is that they will reach a satisfactory resolution. The same dynamic occurs between the terrorist and his captives. The more time they spend together, the more likely it is that the captives will make it out alive. Of course, the conflicts we have with people generally aren't as serious as those with terrorists and their hostages, but sometimes it feels like it.

- Talk about common interests. When we first get to know people, we can search for what we both appreciate. We can talk about common hobbies, shared musical interests, similar projects, and any joint interests we have in children, pets, or politics.

- Laugh together. Shared laughter builds a bridge that is difficult for even the toughest messages to destroy. There is an intimacy that develops when we laugh with others at ourselves or our situation. Humor builds emotional bonds.

- Display vulnerability. Confessing our own fears or inadequacies makes it easier for others to identify with us and drop their barriers.

- Extend a favor. Tokens of our gratitude can demonstrate our commitment to a strong relationship. Inexpensive gifts and small favors carry a meaning far beyond their monetary value.

BEFRIEND CRITICISM

Notice how criticism feels to you

Perhaps you work as a teacher, counselor, supervisor, or in some other position where you affect a lot of people. If so, you probably get criticized. Almost anyone who suggests a new idea or challenges the status quo gets criticized, too.

The problem is that many of us don't like to be criticized. We take criticism as an attack.

There is a way to work creatively with criticism. The next time someone criticizes your performance, pay attention to physical sensations. What sensations go through your body? Does your stomach tighten up? Does your mouth feel dry? Does your breathing get more shallow?

Now look at the thoughts running through your mind. When people are criticized, they sometimes start thinking, "This is terrible." "This is the worst thing that ever happened to me." "I must not be a good person."

There's no need to judge yourself for having these thoughts or reactions. Instead, you can simply watch them rise and fall. This is "loving" the criticism—loving it in the sense of accepting it and seeking to experience it fully.

When you love a problem in this way, it loses some of its power. You can literally love your problem to death. This doesn't mean the problem will necessarily disappear. You may still find it hard to hear criticism. It's just that criticism might be less of a barrier for you the next time you hear it.

Put criticism into perspective

Blowing criticism out of proportion is self-defeating. Putting criticism into perspective allows us to hear it with more clarity. We can remember that the purpose of criticism is to learn, to grow, and to improve. We do not need to use it as a weapon to beat ourselves up.

One way we inflate the significance of criticism is to identify with the criticism. We hear "You screwed that up." and translate it to mean, "You *are* a screw up." The difference is subtle but significant. The first comment points out that we made a mistake. The second one implies that we are a mistake.

We can put criticism into perspective by acknowledging and accepting what we've done right. Imagine that you gave a performance and that 100 people evaluated it. Seventy-nine of them were positive, thirteen of them were neutral, and eight of them were negative. Most of us will spend more time remembering the negative evaluations than celebrating those that were positive. We might lose sleep over those eight negatives.

Putting criticism into perspective means telling the truth. And telling the truth means celebrating what we've done right, as well as acknowledging where we can improve.

Treat criticism as feedback, not failure

Criticism has a bad name because it's generally associated with antagonism. Usually criticism means that someone is being put down or made wrong. The best way to deal with this kind of criticism is to avoid it.

There is another way to handle criticism. If we keep our egos out of the way, criticism can be accepted as an opportunity to evaluate ourselves. When we find some truth and value in the criticism, we learn more about ourselves. We can figure out how to improve. We can move from thinking, "How dare she say that!" to "How can I use this comment to become more effective?"

When we experience criticism this way, we can actually be thankful for the gift it offers. Leo Tolstoy used to read drafts of his novels to his hired workers to make sure his writing was clear. He was the recipient of so much constructive criticism that he became one of the greatest novelists of the nineteenth century. Advertising executive, David Ogilvy, used to circulate drafts of his memos to colleagues with a note that read, "Please improve." His willingness to listen to criticism and to improve built him a business empire and a fortune.

Avoid defending with denial, anger, or humor

Many people react to criticism by denying it, by becoming angry and attacking the person who is criticizing, or by making jokes about it. These defenses compromise our ability to accept criticism as a gift.

There are two main problems with denial, anger, or evasive humor. First, they prevent honest reflection and self-evaluation. We probably can't defend ourselves and look honestly at ourselves at the same time. While there are times to defend ourselves and times to evaluate ourselves, they don't mix well. Second, when we react with denial, anger, and jokes, we decrease the chances of receiving useful feedback in the future. After people run into our defenses, they are not as likely to speak candidly next time.

Choose your response to criticism

Ultimately, we get to decide what to do with criticism. If we find some value in it, we can choose the next step to take in response. If we find no value in the criticism, we can thank others for their concern, and let the comment go.

Ignoring criticism has a wide range of consequences. If a stranger criticizes us and we ignore it, there's probably no harm done. If a supervisor criticizes us and we ignore it, we might be out of work. Even so, we could still choose to ignore the criticism.

The point is that you always have a choice. Although the consequences of your choices vary, the next step is still yours. Imagine hearing someone say, "Your report was too short." Instead of taking that comment as an insult, you could hear it as a supportive suggestion: "If you want to improve your report, add more details." You can then choose to use criticism to promote your success.

> ***How wonderful it is, that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.***
>
> –Anne Frank

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Notice your reactions to criticism

Reflect on the last time you were criticized. What were your physical sensations and thoughts. Write about your experience, what you learned about yourself, and what you will do differently.

I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Monitor your criticisms

For two weeks, write down the details every time you criticize someone. At the end of two weeks, review your notes to see if any of these criticisms could apply to you.

This might lead you to the discovery that what we find repulsive in others might be something we have not yet admitted about ourselves.

This exercise is not done so you can make yourself feel wrong for criticizing. Instead, monitoring criticism can be a gift to yourself—a way to see more of the truth about yourself, a step toward a more complete self-image.

To realize the full value of this exercise, follow it up with an Intention Statement. Write what you plan to do as a response to what you learned about yourself. Use this as an opportunity for constructive change.

When I reflected on what I criticize others for, I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Solve the problem

Think of some conflict or problem you now have with another person. Using the strategies described in the preceding article, create a detailed plan to solve this conflict. Describe your plan.

I intend to . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

EXERCISE

Separate what people do from what you think they do

You've probably seen other people undergo a stressful situation. In the space below, describe some of the behaviors you have observed in these circumstances.

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_____

_____

_____

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_____

Now look back at your list and notice if some of the "behaviors" you described are actually judgments.

Behaviors are observable actions. Yelling, crying, breaking a vase, walking away, or kicking the cat are examples. Judgments often take the form of opinions or assumptions that assess the quality, character, or value of something. Anger, frustration, rudeness, *and* jealousy *are words that imply judgment. They are not behaviors that can be directly observed. Draw a circle around any judgments in your writing.*

When it comes to judgments, it can be useful to question first impressions. Even though we might be right much of the time, there are occasions when we could be wrong. A person yelling might feel anger, joy, or pain. The same is true of a person crying.

It's difficult, if not impossible, to avoid forming opinions and making judgments about the behaviors we see. It is also possible, and sometimes useful, to question our interpretations and get back to observations.

Chapter 7

Diversity

In this chapter you'll find...

Celebrate diversity.

Diversity among people is more than a fact to live with; it's something we can value.

Cross the cultural divides.

We can prevent misunderstanding by observing with an open mind and asking questions when we're confused.

Satisfy your curiosity–exercise.

Find an answer to a question about people from a culture other than your own.

Multiply the value of these strategies–exercise.

Take any suggestion in this section of the book and create at least three ways to apply it in your life.

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

As the world population grows and resources decrease, the human race grows more interdependent. Our individual destinies are linked with the destinies of all human beings everywhere.

On any given day, people all over the world watch television and read newspapers, learning about the same global events. Many of those events are international in scope. Changes in one part of the world can have dramatic effects across the globe.

Nations and cultures of the world can no longer think in win-lose terms. When it comes to war, resource depletion, or the environment, humanity as a whole will either win or lose.

The probable effects of a nuclear war provide a clear example. Many strategists say that there can be no winner in a nuclear war. Unless we avoid nuclear war, radioactive fallout will destroy life as we know it everywhere on the planet.

The danger does not stop at the nuclear threshold. A downturn in Tokyo's stock market startles the New York Stock Exchange. Toxins from the meltdown of a nuclear power plant in Russia are detected in Sweden. The conditions that led to a poor harvest of corn in Tegucigalpa, Venezuela, can affect food prices in Rapid City, South Dakota. Destruction of the Brazilian rain forests triggers a reaction from environmentalists all over the world.

Political conflicts in any part of the world are a matter of grave concern for the entire international community. The election of a new president in the United States affects the prospects of a political party in a foreign country. When one country violates the boundaries of another, the rest of the world can no longer afford to stand by at watch. When a national leader violates the basic human rights of citizens, people all over the world are outraged and call on international leaders to intervene.

All this calls for the ability to communicate across cultures. In the past, many of us admired the ability of those who could effectively communicate with people from other cultures. We probably considered it an interesting, worthwhile, and sometimes useful skill. Given our global interdependence, this skill is fast becoming a necessity—not a mere option.

Even within the boundaries of the United States, learning about various cultural patterns is becoming increasingly important. From colonial times through the twentieth century, the majority of United States citizens shared a white European background and came from a male-dominated culture. Sometime early in the twenty-first century, this will no longer be true. The majority of people in our cities, farms, businesses, labor unions, schools, churches, and political parties will have African, Asian, Hispanic, or Arabic ancestries.

The ability to communicate with people of various cultures is fast becoming a necessity for success in any area of our international, national, and even local communities. Our ability to peacefully coexist with people of different races, ethnic groups, ages, physical abilities, and sexual preferences is required for our psychological and even physical survival.

Some people greet cultural diversity with racism, prejudice, and bigotry. This can change. We can remember that diversity is a source of strength and a cause for celebration.

As people of divergent cultures learn to live and work together, our lives are enriched. As each of us learns to better understand people of other cultures, we help our nation heal its internal racial wounds. We also help ourselves get what we want, be happy, and experience more fulfillment in a diverse cultural landscape.

Intercultural communication is a vast topic, one that goes well beyond the scope of this book. The two strategies suggested in the next article offer ways to begin learning this crucial skill.

> ***Candor is a compliment; it implies equality. It's how true friends talk.***
>
> –Peggy Noonan

CROSS THE CULTURAL DIVIDES

Observe with an open mind

Different cultures have different values, expectations, and patterns of communication. The meaning of a single word, phrase, or gesture can vary radically from one culture to another. Remaining open to alternative interpretations of what we see and hear gives us a better chance of accurately communicating across cultures.

Some Native Americans, for example, believe that looking someone directly in the eye is disrespectful. When these people avoid eye contact with us, we might interpret their behavior as a sign of apathy, dishonesty, or disrespect. The message we get is exactly the opposite of the one being sent.

Another example: African Americans and European Americans often have different expectations about time. People of European backgrounds often value punctuality and the precision of the clock. People of African descent might experience time more as a flexible function of group readiness. An event begins when all the necessary ingredients have come together, even if that's earlier or later than the appointed time.

Each way of relating to time has advantages. Punctuality allows us to experience the beauty in precision and the synergy of a well-defined shared commitment. The African American perspective can open us to the magic and beauty of an unspoken shared group experience.

This leads to the suggestion that whenever we observe unfamiliar behavior and language patterns, we can hold our initial impressions tentatively. We might be looking through culturally biased lenses. In fact, it may be impossible to do otherwise. Problems begin when we think that our way of seeing the world is the only way.

In any situation, numerous interpretations are available. Even two people with similar backgrounds can witness a crime and report it in radically different ways. It's reasonable to assume that people with different backgrounds will also respond differently to the same set of circumstances.

In summary, we can acknowledge that all of us are naturally biased. Then we can stay open to other ways of interpreting an experience. Using these two steps, we can avoid the trap of jumping to inaccurate conclusions. Such conclusions can hamper our relationships at work, school, and home. Consequently, they can be barriers to our being successful, happy, and fulfilled.

When in doubt, check it out

Remaining open to alternative interpretations is a powerful strategy to use when we interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. When we couple this with a genuine intention to understand, we increase our chances of communicating across cultures.

Sometimes, out of fear of offending someone or looking foolish, we avoid asking questions. This is unnecessary. Most people will appreciate our interest. Often, they are happy to shed light on their own cultures.

Lacking understanding of another culture is a common experience. Assuming that we understand another culture and not seeking to learn more about it can be self-defeating. Rather than trying to cover up our ignorance, we can use it as an opportunity to gain skill. Asking questions when we are confused or uncomfortable is one way to get what we want in our lives.

EXERCISE

Satisfy your curiosity

Write down a question that comes to your mind about people from a culture other than your own.

Regarding people from _____ *(name the culture), I would like to ask . . .*

_____
_____
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Now find a person from that culture who is willing to answer your question. Write about what you learned.

I learned that . . .

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EXERCISE

Multiply the value of these strategies

Take any suggestion in this section of the book and write about one way to apply it in your life. Be specific about what you intend to do and when you will do it. Then think of two other ways you can use the suggestion. For instance, if you find a strategy that works for improving one relationship in your life, see if it can apply to other relationships, including the relationship you have with yourself. Or, get creative. Find a way the suggestion can help you improve your health or increase your wealth. Describe your strategy and various applications here.

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LIFE CAN WORK.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE as much happiness, health, love, and wealth as you choose.

You can feel happy and fulfilled no matter what your current circumstances.

Each of us can be essentially free from insecurity, depression, fear, worry, jealousy, aggression, turmoil, anxiety, boredom, vanity, hostility, irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and frustration.

Within a short time, and with some new skills, you can experience vitality, satisfaction, joy, serenity, health, contribution, fun, confidence, happiness, pleasure, love, peace, effectiveness, and security far beyond your current expectations. These positive experiences are always available and can be developed when you tell the truth about your current experiences and when you practice creating new ones. You are invited to use the techniques in this book to create a life filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Co-authored by Dave Ellis, author of *Becoming a Master Student* which has sold over two million copies.

WEALTH

A MANUAL FOR HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH

DAVE ELLIS and STAN LANKOWITZ

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Chapter 1

Time

In this chapter you'll find...

Get the good news about time.
We can turn time from an adversary into an ally.

Monitor your time –exercise.
Take a detailed look at how you spend your time.

Assess how you manage time: Discovery/Intention Statement.
After monitoring your time, reflect on what you will change.

Explore the value of your typical activities: Discovery/ Intention Statement
See how your weekly activities align with your fundamental commitments.

Find out if you are living the life you choose: Discovery/ Intention Statement
Ask whether a typical day in your life reflects the life you truly want.

Plan it.
Make time your ally by deciding specifically how you want to spend it.

Plan your week –exercise.
Practice creating a detailed plan for the next seven days.

Make the most of it.
Choose from a variety of time management techniques—and feel free to let go of them when appropriate.

Stay in touch with the value of your time: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Determine your hourly wage and then ask if your current activities merit the amount of time you now give them.

Put off procrastination.
Procrastinate tomorrow. Handle tasks today.

Take a look at the costs and payoffs of procrastination: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Estimate the time and energy you've invested in putting off a task. Also list the benefits you've enjoyed by procrastinating.

Put an end to putting it off –exercise
Actively apply a strategy for ending procrastination.

Choose a new approach–exercise.
If you've tried to accomplish a goal without success, then choose and apply a new strategy.

Complete the small stuff: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Choose and complete a short task—one small step toward finishing a large project.

Do less and get more done.
Do more than create to-do lists; set priorities as well.

Create your own experience of time.
If conventional time management strategies don't work for you, then choose some that are more your style.

It's time for action: Discovery/Intention statement
Once you have reflected on the way you have been relating to time, pick specific actions you will take so that time becomes your ally.

GET THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT TIME

Consider the precious limits that death imposes on us. At age 20, the average American has about 56 years left to live. Sounds like a lot. Yet at age 40, the number of years dwindles to about 36. And by age 60, we have only about 16 more years—maybe.

Time treats each of us equally. Rich and poor, old and young, healthy and ill—all of us get the same number of hours in a day, the same number of days in a week, the same number of weeks in a year.

It's often said that time is money. This statement overlooks a crucial difference. Money that's lost can often be returned or re-earned. In contrast, time is a nonrenewable resource. Each hour that ticks away is lost, never to be regained.

Time is the original equal opportunity employer. All of us, regardless of race, creed, or color, get the same amount of time to work with—24 hours a day, 168 hours a week. We can hardly say that time is unfair, since everyone alive gets the same amount.

Despite the fact that it's fair, time is elusive. We can deposit money in a bank and store it there to withdraw later. Not so with time. Imagine a drive-up teller who could dispense time as well as cash. You'd speed up to the window and plead for extra time: "I need four more hours to meet a deadline; I'd like to make a withdrawal from my account, please." It won't happen.

This means that time is valuable. Every moment of time is unique and unrepeatable—a gift that literally comes only once in a lifetime.

Insights such as these lead people into the heart of time management. Yes, time marches on with a relentless regularity. That's the hard news. The good news is that there's a lot we can do immediately to take charge of time.

For many, the phrase, *time management,* calls up images of people on schedules that are planned down to the minute. They fear that managing time will make them rigid, overcontrolled and just plain no fun. Time management doesn't have to be that way. Applying time management techniques can be a ball.

Time management is about freeing up more time for the things that matter most to you, including time for fun and being with the people you love. There are few things that feel as good as spending your life energy the way you choose.

Many people think of time management strategies when it comes to using their hours at work more efficiently. Actually, the essential principles go well beyond career. They can be applied in every aspect of life.

It all begins with being willing to take charge of your time. Some people are not in charge of their time. They'd rather blame their frustrations, lack of productivity, and unrealized dreams on the demands of others: "I'd have gotten that done a long time ago, but my boss keeps dumping work on me." "When I had children, I gave up having any time for myself." "I was born without any time management skills."

The alternative to blaming others is to take charge of time. We can learn to say no to the demands of others or negotiate more realistic expectations. We can learn to free up extra minutes and hours each day. We can distinguish between what merits our time and attention, and what's not worth doing at all. With these ideas in mind, we can have the time of our lives.

We can let go of any belief that time is scarce or unmanageable. We can make more time for worthwhile activities. We can also spend less time on things that deliver little value, and we can plan for the future. We can even get so skilled at managing time that we gain the luxury of looking beyond it now and then.

Look for ways to attain that kind of mastery as you read the following pages.

EXERCISE

Monitor your time

This exercise is about taking a detailed look at how you spend yourself—that is, how you spend your time for a week or two.

To get the most value from this exercise, be precise. Aim to account for your time in 15-minute intervals. If that sounds like a lot of work, hang on. There are a variety of ways to do this. Besides, this exercise is not something to be done every week of your life.

The potential benefits of periodically tracking your time are many. Most people spend a lifetime with no clear picture of where their time goes. Years and even decades pass, leaving people only to guess where all the time went.

With an accurate account of how we spend our time, we can diagnose with pinpoint accuracy any recurring problems we have with managing time. Armed with that baseline data, we can make changes in our schedules that open up space for high-priority activities. This is actually the cycle of discovery, intention, and action applied to time.

For example, someone complains about not having enough time for reading books. After monitoring his activities for several days, he discovers that he spends at least two hours every day watching television. He decides to cut television back to one hour so that he can spend an extra hour reading a book.

Choose a method for monitoring your time that works for you. One option is to fill out the chart on the following page.

Monday
5 / 19 / 97
Monitor

7:00 get up, shower
7:15
7:30 drive to work
7:45 work
8:00
8:15
8:30
8:45
9:00
9:15
9:30
9:45
10:00
10:15
10:30
10:45
11:00
11:15
11:30
11:45
12:00 lunch w/ Anne
12:15
12:30
12:45
1:00 work
1:15
1:30
1:45
2:00
2:15
2:30
2:45
3:00
3:15
3:30
3:45
4:00
4:15
4:30
4:45
5:00 grocery store
5:15
5:30
5:45
6:00 drive home
6:15
6:30
6:45
7:00 prepare dinner
7:15
7:30 eat and clean up
7:45
8:00
8:15
8:30
8:45
9:00 get kids ready for bed
9:15
9:30
9:45
10:00 watch TV
10:15
10:30 go to bed
11:00

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
__/__/__	__/__/__	__/__/__	__/__/__	__/__/__	__/__/__	__/__/__
Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor
7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00	7:00
7:15	7:15	7:15	7:15	7:15	7:15	7:15
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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
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Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor
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Monitor your time: Exercise (continued)

There are other formats you could use to monitor your time. Some people summarize an entire day on a single 3x5 card. It takes only a few minutes. They simply note the starting and ending times for each activity throughout the day. Other options are to note your activities on a calendar or to use computer software designed for time management. Track your time for at least one week. You can learn even more by doing this exercise for several weeks in a row.

After collecting the data about your time, summarize it. Create a list of categories that describe your typical activities: sleep, grooming, work, television, travel, meals, reading, and so on. Then total the number of hours in a week you spent in each category. Complete the summary form below.

Week of ___/___/___

Category	Monitored
Sleeping	
Working	
Driving to/from work	
Eating	

Assess how you manage time

After monitoring your time as described in the previous exercise, reflect on what you've learned and complete the following sentences.

After monitoring my time, I was surprised to discover that I spent so much time on . . .

After monitoring my time, I was surprised to discover that I spent so little time on . . .

In the future, I intend to spend more time on . . .

In the future, I intend to spend less time on . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Explore the value of your typical activities

Create a list of your typical weekly activities. List them in four categories: 1) Consistent with my values and commitments, 2) Somewhat supportive of my values and commitments, 3) Somewhat in conflict with my values and commitments, and 4) in conflict with my values and commitments. Then write a Discovery Statement describing what you learned about the alignment between your values and your weekly activities. Follow up with an Intention Statement describing any activities you want to change.

Activities consistent with my values and commitments include:

Activities somewhat supportive of my values and commitments include:

Activities somewhat in conflict with my values and commitments include:

Activities in conflict with my values and commitments include:

I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Find out if you are living the life you choose

This Journal Entry is designed to furnish you with answers to several questions: Are you satisfied with the way you currently spend time? Are you doing what you've chosen to do? How much time do you spend on obligations imposed by others? As with other Journal Entries, be courageous and dive in.

This Discovery Statement comes in several parts, each to be completed at certain points during a single day.

1. When you awake for the day, ask yourself if you really want to get up. Quickly list the things you look forward to doing—the activities that make it worthwhile for you to get out of bed.

2. Ask these questions as you sit down to each meal: "Am I truly hungry and ready to eat?" "Do I want to eat the food that's in front of me?" After the meal: "Do I feel energized by the food I've just eaten?"

3. As you go about your daily non-work related activities, ask, "Would I choose to do this if I were financially independent, free of the need to work for a living?"

4. After conversing with people, ask yourself, "Did I truly want to be with this person? What am I not saying to this person? Are there certain topics we consistently avoid?"

5. After work, review your plans for the rest of the day. Ask, "Do I consider the activities I'm about to engage in to be worthwhile? If I had only six months to live, would I do anything different with the remaining time in my day?"

Summarize your responses by completing the following sentence:

Regarding the degree of alignment between what I want and what I do, I discovered that I . . .

Finish with an Intention Statement.

The most important thing I can do to bring my activities in line with my values is to . . .

Come back to this Journal Entry periodically and note how your responses change over time.

PLAN IT

One way to make time your ally is to choose how you want to spend it. Making this choice is the essence of planning.

To create a powerful plan, first gather the facts about how you're spending time right now. You did this in the previous exercise. With that baseline data, you can make informed decisions as you budget your time for the future.

Many people find that planning one week ahead is a useful time management exercise. If you're used to planning one day at a time, this might sound like a real stretch. Take heart. Once you have a few weeks' practice, doing a weekly plan can be a cinch.

There is no one correct way to plan. Planning is an activity that makes room for many different individual styles. You can use the following guidelines to discover what works for you:

Schedule predictable events first

Sleep, work, housework, cooking, church—such activities tend to concentrate themselves in regular, predictable blocks of time. They can become so familiar that we take them for granted and fail to account for them in our plans. When planning, allow adequate time for these parts of your life. Then schedule other tasks around them.

Expect the unexpected

Include time for errands, travel, and surprises. It's also easy to forget about low-visibility activities—trips to the post office to buy stamps, last-minute excursions to the grocery store, and commuting time between two appointments. Failing to do so can leave us feeling harried and constantly two steps behind.

Make dates with yourself

Schedule definite times and places for recreation, reading, exercising, and other important but non-urgent activities. These activities are as important as anything else we put on our calendars.

Revise your plan

When midweek rolls around, you might find that your plan needs some changes. Perhaps some activities are taking twice as long as you expected. Or maybe a scheduled event was cancelled. When these things happen, you might be tempted to abandon your entire plan. Learning to adapt to changes is a useful time management skill. Rather than giving up, you can revise your plan in a way that takes advantage of the change.

Some people are afraid to do this. To them, revising a plan feels like admitting they've made a mistake. Actually, what's involved here is updating your plan based on the latest feedback. Plans that are regularly fine-tuned can be the most useful.

Get it done, one task at a time

The loftiest and most remote goals are accomplished in the same way as your goals for next week: one simple activity after another. As you plan, convert any goal into a list of small steps—simple activities that you can add to a daily to-do list.

Put activities into fixed "containers"

Set clear starting and stopping times for each task. Sometimes a task that typically takes three hours can be completed in two. Declaring your intention to do so is the place to begin. Activities tend to fill up whatever space is allotted to them. By allowing less space for them on our calendars, we can often increase our efficiency.

Get back to your purpose

One of the General Strategies explained in Part One of this book is "Determine what you want." If you completed the exercises following that strategy, you wrote a one-sentence purpose statement for your life. That statement can be a valuable tool when planning your week. Use your life purpose as a device for screening out activities and commitments that are out of alignment with your values or for adding those that are. For example, if your life purpose is to practice and promote health, schedule time for exercise. If you decide to bump or eliminate a low-priority activity in order to do so, you're demonstrating the power of a life purpose.

As you plan, periodically ask: "What would a person with this mission do this year? this week? today?"

> *I must govern the clock, not be governed by it.*
>
> –Golda Meir

EXERCISE

Plan your week

The purpose of this exercise is to help you create an hour-by-hour plan for the next 168 hours (one week) of your life. To get started, simply fill in the form on the following page with brief descriptions of how you intend to spend the next seven days. Your notes can be short, summarizing each activity in a word or phrase.

To get the full value of this exercise, after you've planned your week, monitor it during the coming week as suggested in the "Monitor your time" exercise on page 407. Then place your time monitor and your time plan side by side. Compare how you planned to spend your time with the way you actually spent it. After doing so, complete the following sentences.

As an alternative to using a separate page to monitor your time, you could plan your time in pencil and then record how you spent it using an inkpen.

After comparing my weekly plan with my weekly time monitor, I discovered that I . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Next week, I intend to make more time for . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

Next week, I intend to spend less time on . . .

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Continue this exercise for several weeks. Eventually you can see time management as a continuous cycle of monitoring and planning, monitoring and planning. Your reward is that you are taking charge of the details about how you spend yourself.

Monday ___/___/___	Tuesday ___/___/___	Wednesday ___/___/___	Thursday ___/___/___	Friday ___/___/___	Saturday ___/___/___	Sunday ___/___/___
PLAN	PLAN	PLAN	PLAN	PLAN	PLAN	PLAN
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10:15	10:15	10:15	10:15	10:15	10:15	10:15
10:30	10:30	10:30	10:30	10:30	10:30	10:30
11:00	11:00	11:00	11:00	11:00	11:00	11:00

MAKE THE MOST OF IT

Review the following suggestions on how you can make the most of your time. Look for what you can implement immediately.

Be effective, not busy

When it comes to managing time, hard work is no substitute for brains. Frantic activity does not replace thoughtful planning. The busiest people are not always the most effective. Sometimes they occupy themselves with low-priority tasks that are better left undone.

Aim to devote most of your time to high-priority activities. Then search for quicker or more efficient ways to do them.

Weed out activities that fail the "values test"

Ask, "Will doing this move me significantly closer to what I want to be? to do? to have?" When we see our activities against the backdrop of these questions, we can effortlessly let some of the low-value activities go.

Make all time your time

The minutes we spend waiting for meetings to start and standing in line can add up to hours, even days, over the course of each year. With a little preparation, you can use that time for your own purpose.

Get in the habit of carrying something to read or to work on everywhere you go. If you keep 3x5 cards in a pocket or purse, you can write journal entries, brainstorm solutions to a problem, or create to-do, lists no matter where you are. Also use 3x5 cards to create flash cards—quotes, facts, dates, or ideas you want to memorize. Pull out those cards and review them when you've got moments to spare.

Three-by-five cards work like a mini-office you can carry in your pocket. Use them to turn stray minutes into pure gold.

Another wonderful use of waiting time is to relax. Too often, when people have extra time because of stopped traffic or a late appointment, they fume. An alternative is to take a break and relax. Breathe deeply. Close your eyes. Imagine being in a pleasant spot. Relax.

Be prepared

The Boy Scout motto, "Be prepared", can work for all of us. You can save precious minutes and bypass frustration in the morning by getting ready the night before: filling the car with gas, packing your briefcase, packing a lunch, and deciding which clothes to wear.

Get on the phone

Call ahead before you shop to make sure the items you want are on the shelf. Do the same when you have items you're trying to obtain at the library. By doing so, you prevent wasted trips across town. One phone call for clear directions can save you hours when you're trying to find an important destination.

Get off the phone

The phone can be a notorious time waster. For some reason, we often consider a ringing phone to be a sacred object that we must respond to, even if we have to drop a crucial task in mid-stream. Answering services or phone machines can ensure that we get important messages and screen out the calls that are a waste of time.

Say no

A polite refusal can bypass hours of teeth-gnashing later on. When asked to volunteer their time, people often say, "I'll think about it", when what they really mean is "There's no way I'll do that, but I don't want to say no right now." An indecisive answer leaves their willingness to participate in question. This invites another series of phone calls or meetings where people again turn down the request. To save time, say no up front.

Find uses for procrastination

We usually think of procrastination as a problem. Yet procrastination is a habit that can actually work in our favor. Some tasks, especially those that create little value for us, are worth doing later or not at all. When you've got a major report due at work within 24 hours, it makes sense to put off alphabetizing your spice jars or leafing leisurely through seed catalogs.

Some people procrastinate deliberately, realizing that they do their best work during the final hours before a deadline. For them, procrastination may not be a problem at all—just a unique working style.

Learn to do the job with an appropriate level of quality

Some jobs are not worth doing perfectly. Suppose that you can complete a job to a 90 percent level of perfection in four hours, and 100 percent level in eight hours. Ask if the extra four hours are truly worth it.

Do it now

Some tasks are tailor-made for immediate completion. Often we can return phone calls or reply to a letter immediately instead of putting it on a to-do list to complete later. Scheduling tasks for a later date can be an unconscious form of ineffective procrastination or a refusal to admit that we really don't intend to do the task at all. Sometimes we spend more time and energy avoiding a task than it would take to get it done.

Delegate it

You can complete a job in almost no time by giving it away. Another term for this practice is delegation.

You don't have to be a manager or a millionaire to delegate. Even people of modest means can hire someone to cook for them two or three nights each week. We can delegate to, or share responsibilities with, others in our family. We can also trade services with a friend or neighbor: "If you cook for me three times a week, I will mow your yard and do your laundry." The same strategy can work for cleaning, shopping, babysitting, car maintenance, or bookkeeping.

Destroy it

Much of the paper that enters our lives does not merit a response. Many people find that they can safely trash eight out of every 10 items they receive in the mail. Doing so helps them focus on the items that really do matter.

Put yourself on the spot: Promise it

Say that your problem is never having enough time to read. You've got a stack of articles to read for work, not to mention the novel at home that you can't wait to devour. What's more, you see no way to get any extra reading done, given the demands on your time right now.

Here's a great place to practice making and keeping agreements. In the face of all your demands, you can simply declare that you'll get the reading done. Commit to it, even though it seems outrageous. Put yourself on the line. Make a contract to get that reading done; put it in writing. Give your word, and then let your creativity and commitment help you follow it.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Stay in touch with the value of your time

This Journal Entry can put you in touch with the most valuable resource you have—your time. Divide your yearly earnings by the number of hours you work in a year. This will reveal your approximate hourly wage. Write in the appropriate amounts below:

$_____ /$_____ = $_____
(Yearly earnings)/(hours worked per year) = (hourly wage)

Would you manage your hours away from work differently if you knew each of them was worth that much? How would you change how you spend your life? Be specific.

I discovered that I would . . .

You might even choose to operate as if your time actually costs that much. Doing so might reveal new ways to save time. Write about your intentions for managing time differently.

I intend to . . .

PUT OFF PROCRASTINATION

Do it later

At times, it's effective to save a task for later. For example, writing a résumé can wait until you've taken the time to analyze your job skills and write career goals. This is not procrastination—it's planning.

When you do choose "I'll do it later," turn your decision into a plan. Estimate how long the task will take and schedule a specific date and time for it on your calendar.

Divide and conquer

Julius Caesar's age-old battle comes into play here. Divide any big project into a series of small goals. To clean out your garage, for example, simply resolve to remove one item or organize one small area each day. At the end of each week, pause to savor the resulting lack of clutter.

Start small

For most of us, trying to make massive changes in behavior overnight has about as much chance of success as last year's New Year's resolutions. Often those resolutions are simply too big, trying to keep them is futile.

When people have a long history of not following their word, they can benefit from making big changes in "baby steps." For example, if your goal is to clear more time for reading, promise to get up earlier each day and read. Don't promise one hour earlier, or even one half hour. Go for just 15 minutes earlier, three days a week. Success at such small tasks can gear you up for bigger ones.

The key is to balance two concerns. On one hand, we want to stretch ourselves, to accomplish something that makes a difference. On the other hand, taking steps that are too large leads to overwhelm and frustration. The dilemma is that if the steps are too small, we get bored, and if the change is too big or too fast, we set ourselves up to fail.

The secret is to value small changes and find out how much of a stretch works for us. It's the total of our little choices that leads to significant change.

Involve other people

If you want to start jogging, form a partnership with someone who wants to establish the same habit. If you want to lose weight, join a support group for people with the same goal. Promise them that you'll make one concrete change in the way you eat or exercise for the next month. Also, ask the people in your group to hold you accountable, even if that means having you hop on the scale at the next meeting.

You can even get formal. Write up a contract describing the change in behavior you promise to make. Make it official-looking and imposing, just like a legal document. Take it to a notary public and pay to have it notarized. Sign it in the presence of witnesses. Or, plan a formal ceremony to make the promise and invite a couple hundred of your closest friends. State your vows and "marry" yourself to your intention.

Heed the message

Sometimes the feeling we call procrastination is actually a kind of deeper wisdom. An example is the marketing executive who finds her job hollow and wants to write novels instead. Her chronic tardiness for work is not really laziness; it's a signal to change careers and experience greater happiness. Sometimes feelings of discomfort have a gift for us in their hands.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Take a look at the costs and payoffs of procrastination

Think of a task that you've been consistently avoiding. Describe the task here.

Estimate the time and energy you've invested in putting the task off. Perhaps you've shuffled important papers among several different locations, packed projects away in a series of boxes, or invented other work so you could avoid the dreaded task. Don't forget the time you've spent thinking, worrying, making excuses, and telling stories to yourself and others about it.

Describe such actions here and estimate the total amount of time such evasive action has taken.

I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Put an end to putting it off

Think of a task that you haven't had enough "motivation" to complete—a task you've been putting off. List the benefits you have received by procrastinating.

Now list at least three benefits of completing the task. Imagine how different your life would be, how you would feel, and what concerns would be alleviated if you completed it.

Now write a plan describing how and when you will complete this task. Include specific action steps.

EXERCISE

Choose a new approach

Think of some goal that you have tried to accomplish or some change that you have tried to make without success. Briefly describe the goal or change and the strategy or strategies you've already used.

The goal or the change is . . .

The strategy (or strategies) I have used include . . .

Now select a new strategy, one that you think might work, and write an Intention Statement about how you could apply the new strategy.

I intend to . . .

Complete the small stuff

Describe a large project that you have not begun or that you have left unfinished. If such a project is not present in your life right now, describe one that could come up in the future.

Now think of one short task that you could complete in less than one-half hour—one small step toward finishing this project. Without any commitment to do more than this small task, complete it within the next 48 hours.

After you have completed the above task, write a Discovery Statement describing what you learned from this experience, and write and Intention Statement describing how you will apply this insight in the future.

I discovered that I . . .

I intend to . . .

DO LESS AND GET MORE DONE

To do or not to do—that is the question

Imagine a woodcutter who constantly claims that he's too busy to sharpen his axe. He may get a lot of work done in the short term, but eventually, his productivity will drop to zero unless he takes the time to care for his equipment.

Many people cut furiously at the "trees" nearest to them without taking the time to get an overall view of the forest or take care of their tools. They spend the bulk of their time reacting to crises, urgent phone calls, and other species of disaster. In the process, they give short rift to important, but non-urgent, activities such as exercising, planning and cooking nutritious meals, meditating, praying, or spending regular time with the people they love.

One practice can deliver us from such a fate: following a daily or weekly to-do list. By carefully listing our intentions (to-dos) for the near future, we can choose how to spend our time. While looking at the big picture, we can rank each activity according to priority and decide when to do it. This allows us to move from constantly putting out fires to living the life we want.

There are many ways to effectively manage a to-do list. The following is one logical procedure.

Keep all your to-dos in one place

Begin by gathering all your to-do items and storing them in a single place. Some people keep master to-do lists in notebooks. Other people write each individual to-do item on a separate 3x5 card. And still other people prefer to key their to-dos into a computer program designed for this purpose. Computers and 3x5 cards have the advantage of flexibility. You can add, delete, or rearrange to-do items with minimum recopying and reorganizing.

Prioritize

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by a huge stack of 3x5 cards or page after page of to-do lists. Before we use to-do lists to guide our action, we can organize them into categories. That makes it easier to decide which to-dos we'll tackle first and which we'll save for later.

You can assign your to-do's to a variety of categories. Some people use the ABC priority system. They assign an A to the most important activities, a B to the activities that are valuable but not critical, and a C to activities that fall into the category of "nice to do but not essential."

You can also sort to-dos into Yes, No, and Maybe. The "Yes" items are those you definitely intend to do. "Maybe" entries are those you might do when you can afford to take time away from your Yes activities. And "No" items are not worth doing at all.

That last point brings up a useful theory about human affairs—one that applies naturally to time management. This is the 80-20 principle. It claims, in short, that 80 percent of the value of any set of activities is derived from 20 percent of those activities.

For instance, 80 percent of a company's profits may come from the sale of only 20 percent of its items. Applied to to-do lists, this means that most of the value from any to-do list comes from completing only a few of the items on the list. If you have a 10-item list, you might want to focus most of your energy and time on completing the two highest-priority items.

There's probably no way to determine exactly how accurate the 80-20 principle is. Even so, it's useful when it comes to managing to-do lists. Experiment to see if it helps you focus on the most important activities in your life.

After sorting your to-dos into whichever categories you choose, sort them one more time. Choose which items you will do today, this week, this month, this year, and in the coming years. Be honest about the items you never really intend to do, and be willing to let them go. You'll save yourself needless mental and physical clutter.

Accentuate the A's

A-priority activities are usually those that deliver the best return on our investment of time. They can also be challenging to complete, so many people tend to put them off. Instead of writing a career plan or writing a key memo at work (A priorities), they fritter away hours clearing their file drawers, updating their address list, or opening the junk mail. C priorities are often easier and more comforting to complete. When we focus too much time on them, however, we can find that our most important goals remain unmet.

The solution is simple: Calmly return to the A's. Schedule specific times for them on your calendar. This does not mean moving through life with cutthroat efficiency, zeroing in on A's like an unfeeling robot. It does mean giving A's their fair share of our time and handling the C's in a way that doesn't distract us from our A's.

Do your do's

The funny thing about to-do lists is that they're by nature incomplete. They come to fruition only if we follow the listmaking with action taking. Even the most impeccably organized to-do list can be as useless as a pile of stale beans. But when making them is followed by acting on them, even the most haphazard to-do lists guide us to real value.

Clear out the clutter—and enjoy the ride

The idea behind making to-do lists is not to be busier; it's to be more effective. You don't have to do any more than you're doing right now in order to use time more effectively. Just focus on the activities that align most closely with your values and goals. Every time you add a new activity, see if you can subtract an old one.

This process is only partially about deciding what to do. Equally important is deciding what *not* to do. When we purge the low-value activities from our to-do lists, we open up a lot of breathing space—not only on paper but also in our lives. We discover that we can be relaxed and spontaneous, and still make time for what really matters. We can do less and still get more of the important stuff done.

Expand your goal

Expanding goals is one way you can achieve your dreams that seem impossible. For example, say that you want to enjoy the benefits of being an Olympic athlete. After some sober reflection, you decide that its too late in your life to start the years of training required for Olympic competition. You might then decide to give up your goal. There is another possibility.

Instead of giving up your dream, expand the goal. Ask yourself what specific benefits come with being an athlete. You might come up with the following list:

- Staying physically fit.
- Enjoying international travel.
- Being around world-class athletes.
- Getting paid for doing what is fun.

Each item on your list represents a sub-goal—one special aspect of being an Olympic athlete that appeals to you.

Now look for an alternate goal that allows you to experience many, if not all,of these sub-goals. For example, you could be a physician or physical therapist who specializes in sports medicine and works with professional teams. Even if you're not competing in a sport, you still get to travel and mingle with athletes—and get paid for it besides.

CREATE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF TIME

Measure time in new ways

Our system of subdividing life into days, hours, and minutes is only one possibility for chronicling the passage of time. We could have just as well chosen to use the occurrence of solar eclipses, changes of the seasons, shifting of the tides, or occurrences of the full moon as our benchmarks for measuring time. We could regulate our activities with sundials or hour glasses instead of digital clocks.

Reflecting on this reminds us that time is a concept created by human beings for their own purposes. Our ways of measuring time are relative, too.

Experiment with conducting your life on rhythms other than those of the clock. You could, for example, wake with the sunrise or go to bed with the sunset. You could eat meals based on when you really feel hungry instead of the position of the hands on the clock. Or, you could keep at a task until it's finished instead of taking time out for scheduled breaks or meals.

Recognize the virtue of having too much to do

One option for busy people is to accept their busyness as a fact of life—even a virtue. We can structure our lives recognizing that there will always be too much to do. It doesn't pay to wait until we're caught up before we take time off; we may never feel caught up. Keeping this in mind can help us more clearly recognize how valuable our time truly is. This knowledge spurs us to constantly make the best use of our time.

Stop fighting time

In the strictest sense, we cannot manage time at all. The seconds, minutes, and hours will click by no matter how many strategies we apply. However, we can manage *ourselves* and what we do at any given time. Instead of approaching time as an enemy intent on sabotaging our every goal, we can take a more relaxed approach.

Assume for now that there is plenty of time to get the most important things done—those activities that contribute most to your values. Then ask what your values and high-priority activities are. Remember them when making decisions about how to invest your time and energy.

Instead of moving faster or squeezing more activities into an already overloaded day, we can keep returning to the basics. If a scheduled event doesn't contribute to the life we want to lead, we can quietly weed it out of our schedule.

To-do lists that are 10 miles long can be a major source of stress. One option for planning your day is to plan only three essential activities—one task for the morning, for the afternoon, and for the evening. Visualizing the highlights of your day helps you concentrate on a few items of major importance while leaving space in your day for unexpected commitments.

Gain a sense of your life as a whole

There is more to life than loading our calendars with commitments or creating endless to-do lists. From time to time it pays to take a break and ask, "What is my life as a whole all about anyway?"

People who have survived personal tragedy often report a fresh outlook on life. There is nothing like a brush with death or a catastrophic illness to restore our perspective on what's truly important. Consider how you would use your time if you had only two more years to live. This can be a quick way to purge the low-priority tasks from your life and start taking time for what really matters to you.

Grant yourself plenty of time off the clock

An effective schedule is one that allows times for us to be "off task." Feeling pressured to perform and produce during every waking minute of every day can drain the joy out of life. At times, we can benefit by losing consciousness of how quickly the hours are passing and actually forgetting what time it is. Indeed, this is what usually happens when we indulge in our favorite hobbies or go on our most relaxing vacations.

We can take the following steps to reduce our awareness of time when appropriate:

- Go without a watch during periods when you have no scheduled appointments.
- Immerse yourself in the moment. Instead of trying to accomplish several tasks at once, do only one at a time. And instead of rushing through that task, do it thoughtfully and deliberately, with full attention. Focus completely on what you're doing in the present. Let thoughts about the future and the past gently fall away. The present moment is the only point in which we can experience fulfillment.
- Grant yourself one day each week that is free of scheduled commitments and to-do lists. This is a perfect time to practice the near-forgotten and valuable art of doing nothing.
- See waiting time as a mini-vacation. While standing in line, for example, slow down your breathing and do relaxation exercises. Mentally scan your body, noting points of tension and allowing them to soften.
- Instead of staring at the clock, take a moment to notice your surroundings. Take pleasure in the sights and sounds of nature—birds chirping, waves on a lake, the hue of flowers. Even in an office building you can notice the colors of people's clothing or the play of light coming through window .

All this is one way of making the point that sometimes one of the best ways to manage time is to forget about it.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

IT'S TIME FOR ACTION:

As you review this chapter on managing your time, what have you discovered about yourself and your relationship to time? What have you learned or relearned concerning how you use your time and how it has become either your friend or your foe?

I discovered that I...

Self-discovery is fascinating and generally much more valuable when followed by specific intentions. This is particularly true in the area of time management. Many people know what they could do to improve their relationship with time and don't do it. We may know how not to procrastinate and yet continue to procrastinate. We may know how to organize ourselves and yet continue to be disorganized.

Power and effectiveness are related to action. In the space below, list at least five specific new actions you will take so that your relationship with time assists you to have a more wonderful life.

I intend to . . .

I intend to . . .

I intend to . . .

I intend to . . .

I intend to . . .

Chapter 2

Vision

In this chapter you'll find...

Creating the future.
Planning is a powerful path to leading a life of your choosing.

Design your life—now–exercise.
Get started right away with long-range, comprehensive planning.

Tune up your conversation space.
To get more of what you want in life, focus your conversations on the future.

Notice how you fill your conversation space: Discovery Statement.
Discover how often your conversations dwell on the past, the present, or the future.

Balance your conversation space: Intention Statement.
Choose conversations that lead to your preferred future.

Start a conspiracy about the future –exercise.
Practice planning by speaking almost exclusively about the future.

Unleash the master planner in you.
Use creativity techniques to expand your sense of possibility.

Just open your mouth and speak the future–exercise.
Practice creating goals on the spot with a sympathetic listener.

Stage a "goal-around" –exercise
Create goals with a group and steal ideas freely.

Plan another person's life–exercise.
Letting someone suggest goals for your life can take your sense of possibility to a new level.

Create the next 10,000 years.
Discover the value of writing goals that extend well beyond your lifetime.

Write goals for the year 2500 and beyond–exercise.
Create your vision for the third millennium.

Create the future from nothing –exercise.
After you practice being nobody for a while, you're free to really be somebody.

Fine-tune your plan.
Shape your first-draft goals into a cohesive, comprehensive plan.

Add details to your goals–exercise.
Move into action by adding time lines, priorities, categories, and domains to your life plan.

Schedule a personal planning retreat: Intention Statement.
Pamper yourself from time to time—and do some planning while you're at it.

CREATING THE FUTURE

What's next for you in life? This is an unusual question to ask, and life planning is an unusual thing to do. If you set aside hours of your life to create the future, you will be in a group of people that's quite small. Amazingly, many people spend more time planning a weekend trip than they do planning their lives.

Planning makes a difference. When Henry David Thoreau wrote, "The masses of men lead lives of quiet desperation," he was describing what can happen when we forget to plan. When we drift with no clear idea of what we want, we can easily end up with lives that seem unfocused and unfulfilled.

On the other hand, when we create the future by determining what we want and how to get it, we uncover a newfound source of energy. We discover a reason to get up every day and play life full out. The difference between this state and a life of quiet desperation is often a matter of planning, of asking "What's next?"

By fully participating with this chapter, you will answer that question for yourself in detail. You'll emerge with a comprehensive vision of your future, including goals in various categories for the next month, the next year, the next decade, and even the next century. What's more, your plans can extend beyond yourself to include goals for your community, your organization, your country, and your planet.

If the prospect of doing all this makes you nervous, then take that feeling as a kind of compliment. It means that you've got a huge amount at stake. What's at stake is nothing less than the quality of your life between now and the time you die. You can choose what you want to do, to have, and to be during those years—or you can leave these matters to accident and circumstance. The difference between these two outcomes depends largely on your commitment to planning.

Planning is not something you have to do. While planning is a powerful tool for personal growth, it is not a panacea. There are some happy and effective people who are not skilled planners. Before you choose the role of planning in your own life, experiment with the process. Play with it. Open up to planning. See if planning has a positive impact on your life. If it does, great. If not, leave this tool on the shelf for now and come back to it later. And as you make your decision, remember that planning can be outrageously fun.

To gain the most from this chapter, follow these guidelines:

- Practice full creativity. Be willing to take the lid off your dreams and live up to your potentials. If a goal comes to mind that seems too outrageous or wonderful, write it down anyway. Be willing to put any idea on the table for consideration.

- Be candid. Tell the truth about what you want in life and what you're willing to do to get it. Doing so sets up the conditions for lasting change.

- Strongly consider doing this chapter with others. One way to create a plan that's worthy of your talents and keep it alive is to share the process with people you care about.

EXERCISE

Design your life—now

This chapter begins with an unusual request: Create a long-range, comprehensive plan for your life—right off the bat.

Planning means setting goals. To begin drafting your life plan, gather a stack of unlined 3x5 cards. Then, brainstorm as many goals for your life as you can. Write each goal on a separate 3x5 card, working quickly without stopping to rewrite. You can use this method of recording goals for all the remaining exercises and Journal Entries in this chapter.

To write a goal, just state something specific about what you want to have, do, or be in the future. You might want to be a skilled listener. That's a goal; put it on a card. You might want to travel to India or start a consulting business. Those are goals, too; write them down.

The first goals you set might be short-term—things to accomplish in the next week, month, year, or five years. That's fine. While you're creating goals, also give some thought to the long-range future. Set goals to be accomplished in 10, 20, 50, or even 100 years from now. Be willing to create goals that extend beyond your lifetime, projects that others can take on when your life is over.

Note: Don't worry about how to accomplish any of these goals. You can create specific action plans later. Also, don't discard a goal just because it sounds silly or unrealistic. The time for revising, refining, scaling back, or eliminating goals will come. For now, give your creativity free rein and consider even the most outrageous possibilities.

If you want to have some extra fun, do this exercise with others. Ask each person to generate her own goals and then share some of those goals with the other people present.

Put the goals you create in a safe, accessible place. One possibility is a file box for 3x5 cards. Count on doing much more with these cards as you experience the rest of this chapter.

Tune up your conversation space

Conversation space—if this term is new to you, don't be surprised. It's not in the dictionary. Even so, the term points to a practice that can reshape your relationships, your work, and your very experience of time.

Here the word *conversation* includes any act of thinking, speaking, writing, listening, watching, or reading. Talking with another person face to face is a type of conversation. Watching television is also a kind of conversation, even if it seems one-sided. So is reading the newspaper, writing an article, listening to the radio, going to a meeting, or making an entry in a personal journal. All are conversations—exposure to ideas and information along with your reactions to them. When combined, these activities take up a lot of space in our lives—that is, they make up a lot of what we do.

Moment by moment, we choose how to fill our conversation space. Minute by minute, second by second, we make choices about where to place our attention, what to listen to, what to read, and what to say. And each of those seconds presents us with an opportunity to choose our conversations—what we listen to, talk about, watch, read, and therefore think about.

Three options for filling conversation space

Conversations can be described in dozens of ways. For the purposes of planning, we can classify conversations according to their focus in time. At any moment, we can ask ourselves: "Where is my conversation resting right now—past, present, or future?"

Many people fill their conversation space with the past. They focus on events that took place five minutes, five weeks, five years, or even five decades ago. This is not good, not bad—just typical. The same can be said of our media. Most television programs, radio shows, newspapers, and magazines dwell on events of the past.

People who talk and think mainly about the past tend to repeat the same actions over and over again. In turn, their habitual actions mean that their circumstances in life remain fairly constant, too. When people fill their conversation space only with the past, it's as if they're driving a car while looking only at the rear-view mirror. Under these circumstances, they're hard-pressed to go any place new.

Another option is to fill our conversation space with the future. This is the time we spend thinking, writing, reading, listening, and speaking about what's yet to come in our lives.

For many of us, conversations about the future usually focus on short-term planning, worry, or prediction. It's the same even in many sophisticated think tanks. Here conversations are typically taken up with forecasting and extrapolation—in a word, prediction. Often these people are not talking about the future they want. Instead they're saying, "Here's what the future will be like if things continue to go the way they're going now." And sometimes that leads people to worry.

There is another option. Worry, prediction, and past events do not have to fill all of our conversation space. For most of us, at least a small portion of that space is about the present. This is the domain of artistry, excellence, and joy: the tennis player who's completely focused at the moment of a great swing, the musician who's focused on giving a great performance, the mountain climber who concentrates on each step up a sheer cliff. Friendship, romance, good food, good sex—all these occur in the present.

We can draw a diagram that represents our conversation space and how much of it is typically devoted to the past, present, and future. For many of us, that diagram looks like this:

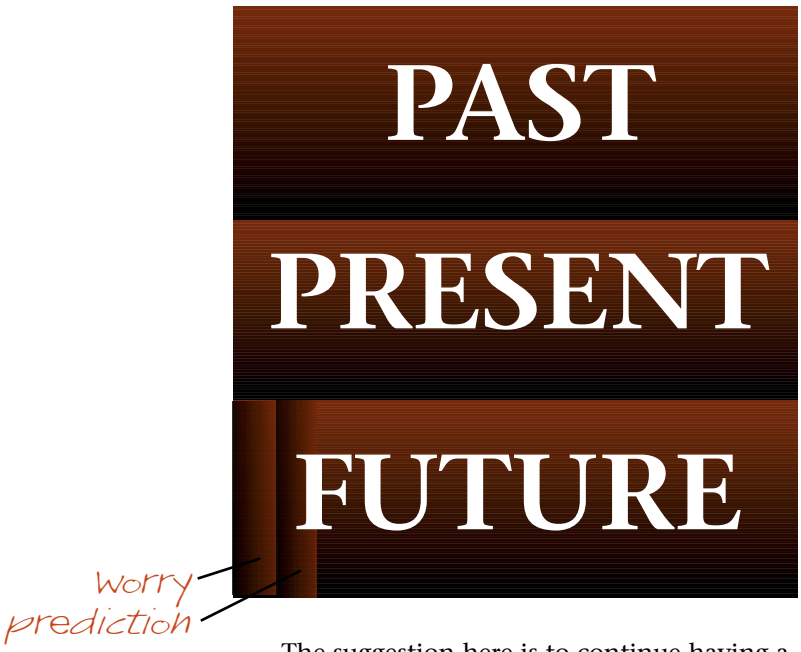
Balancing conversation space

From reading this far, you might get the idea that speaking about the past is bad, while speaking that creates the future is good. Not true. It can be wonderful, affirming, insightful, and powerful to have conversations about the past. This is how many of us relax, celebrate, learn, and deepen our relationships.

While bringing the future to life in our speaking, there's no need to suppress or belittle the past. Forcing our thoughts into the future can even be a way to deny something we find unpleasant about the past or the present.

Nor do we need to get rid of prediction. Prediction is powerful, appropriate, and even necessary for survival. While crossing a busy intersection on foot, for example, you see a car running a red light and heading straight for you. In less than a second, you mentally predict that you're about to be hit, so you take evasive action. Prediction saves lives.

When it comes to conversations, the point is that we can have it all. One benefit of long-range, comprehensive planning is the opportunity to balance our conversations among the past, present, and future. When this happens, our overall conversation space looks like this:



The suggestion here is to continue having a healthy dose of conversations about the past and the present. Then round out your conversation space with conversations about the future.

It's not useful to limit our conversations to any one period of time. For most of us, balancing our conversation space means making a concerted effort to dwell more in the future. We can use each of the following strategies to do so.

Speak and write about the future

Being with people who continually dwell on the past can be boring, even painful. Changing the focus of conversations can infuse these relationships with new energy and can even be a lot of fun.

This leads to a possible goal: "When I am with people, I will encourage more conversations about the present and future." We can do this in many ways. One is to set an example—to model the possibility by speaking about the future ourselves. Another strategy is to ask questions that shift the conversation into the present and future. In addition, we can make an explicit request: "For the last hour, we've focused mainly on the past. Can we shift gears for a while and talk about the future instead?"

This leads to another point. Practicing t*alking* about the future can be easier than *thinking* about it. After all, it's easier to control our lips than our thoughts. (While your lips don't have a mind of their own, your mind does have a mind of its own.) When we find ourselves talking about the past, we can simply start moving our lips in a different way and talk about the future.

There's no need to make yourself "right" for speaking about the future or "wrong" for speaking about the past. Instead, you can make a brief mental note: "Right now I'm speaking about the past again. I could be speaking about the future, and I'll do so at the next possible opportunity."

Another way to balance conversation space is to begin writing about the future when you notice that your thoughts are dwelling in the past. It's next to impossible to think about the past while writing about the future. Writing is a physical activity that's easier to control than your thoughts. When you write, your thoughts can trail your pen into the future.

Immerse yourself in the future

Since many conversations are dominated by the past, we might be justified in deliberately going overboard on speaking about the future. If your conversations during the past week have centered primarily on the past, consider focusing them almost exclusively on the future for the next 24 hours.

This technique brings up an analogy. Say that because a branch of a tree is becoming entangled with existing branches, you decide to bend the branch as far as you can in an opposite direction. Wood has a kind of memory; when you release the branch, it will come to rest as a slightly different position fairly close to where it used to be. You can repeat this procedure, each time overcompensating as you bend until the branch finally grows away from the other branches.

It's much the same for someone whose conversation is focused mainly in the past. To balance her conversation, she might choose to talk exclusively about the future for a few days or until this conversation becomes a regular habit. After this period, she may find that more of her speaking naturally comes to rest in planning, leaving her conversations balanced between past, present, and future.

Working with this chapter can be like learning a language by immersion. In this method students practice speaking a new language exclusively for hours or even days at a time. You can also use the immersion method to learn the language of long-range, comprehensive global planning. Dive into the process and start speaking this new language of the future almost constantly.

At first you might feel uncomfortable. Welcome that feeling. It's a sign that you're travelling new territories, leaving your comfort zone, and expanding your horizons.

Write distraction cards

When you find yourself distracted with thoughts about the past or worries about the future, describe each thought or concern on a 3x5 card. Perhaps you're filled with regret about a mistake you made. Describe that mistake on a card. Perhaps you're worried about an upcoming task. Write that task down, too. In short, use cards to summarize the conversation you're having with yourself at any given moment.

Now you've got several handy ways to deal with any distraction card:

- File the card away. You can handle the matter later. If you like, do this with a little ceremony. Say to yourself, "I promise to take care of this by Wednesday." You can even schedule a specific time on Wednesday.

- Destroy the card. This works well with thoughts you don't want—worries, regrets, resentments, and so on. Feel yourself getting lighter as you discard these pesky cards. Say to yourself, "I know I've been thinking about this event from the past, and this thought no longer serves me. I hereby release it." For more drama, set these cards on fire and watch them burn.

- Flip the card over and write an action plan. Describe, step by step, how you will fix the mistake or complete the unfinished task.

Ask for help

Changing the way you fill your conversation space is not something you have to do alone. Enlist the help of others. Ask them to point out when you're speaking too much about the past or losing yourself in worry or prediction. And as you all speak about the future, devote some of your attention to long-range goals—things you want to have, do, or be at least 10 years into the future. This can lead to many intriguing conversations.

Your friends might appreciate this practice of shifting the conversation to the future. They might even seek you out as someone who restores balance and perspective. That's a compliment worth winning.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Notice how you fill your conversation space

During the next 24 hours, observe how you fill your conversation space. Gain some clarity and awareness about the subjects of your speaking, writing, listening, reading, and thinking. At any given moment, check to see where you're dwelling: in the past, the present, or the future. If you're dwelling in the future, also notice whether your focus is on worry, prediction, or creating the life you want. You can do the same while observing the conversations of others.

To help this process work, avoid judgment or blame. If you're speaking about the past when your aim is to dwell in the future, simply notice it. Any regret or self-reproach might only keep your conversation about the past more firmly in place.

At the end of this 24-hour period, write a Discovery Statement that describes the way you typically fill your conversation space.

I discovered that I . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Balance your conversation space

After completing the previous Discovery Statement, consider how you could balance your conversation space. Think about ways to converse about the present and the future. Also consider how you can fill conversations about the future with creative planning instead of worry or prediction.

In the space below, write an Intention Statement that sums up your decisions.

I intend to . . .

EXERCISE

Start a conspiracy about the future

Make an agreement with several of your friends, family members, or coworkers to spend more time conversing about the future. During certain time periods—such as one day a week or one hour a day—you could even choose to talk exclusively about the future.

In the space to the right, name the people you'd like to involve and the steps you'll take to carry out this exercise.

UNLEASH THE MASTER PLANNER IN YOU

We sometimes act as if all the possibilities for our future have already been considered. That's like closing the patent office because we believe there will be no more inventions.

The techniques explained in this article can keep your personal patent office open. Use them to energize your life plan, to write new goals, and to fuel your creativity in all areas of life.

Let go of self-criticism

Sometimes people stop in the middle of a creative spurt to ask, "Can I ever achieve this goal?" That question can defuse the whole planning process, sink us back into the status quo, and stop us from painting a bold vision of the future. It paves the way for a self-defeating internal dialogue: "Who am I kidding anyway? There's no way I can do this." Such are the thoughts that erase dreams from the drawing board.

Many goals—from the invention of the airplane to the development of the computer chip—appeared ridiculous or unworkable when they were first proposed. These remarkable creations came to life because their creators lifted their eyes to the horizon and held fast to a sense of possibility. When planning, we can do the same. The results will be apparent in our own lives.

Create many goals

Working with many goals gives you a chance to develop skills for categorizing goals and setting priorities. That's difficult when your goals are few.

Having a card file that's teeming with goals also gives you permission to throw some goals away. That, in turn can unleash your creativity, giving you permission to create goals that seem silly or outrageous. These are the goals you write down simply to expand your sense of possibility or to entertain yourself: "Live in Timbuktu for a year." or "Pay off the national debt of Brazil." Later you can toss such goals or give them a low priority.

Don't toss them all, however. With some time and thoughtful revision, those goals could turn into "doable" activities that make a huge difference in the quality of your life or the lives of others.

Observe skilled people

One powerful way to learn anything is to observe and model skilled people. Art students spend hours in museums with pencils and sketch pads copying the paintings of the masters. Musicians submit to years of discipline and guidance from master players. Business executives learn from the words and actions of their mentors.

You can apply this idea to planning. Look for the master planners in your life. They can include anyone from managers to homemakers. Then experiment. Do what they do. Say what they say. Experiment with viewing the world through their eyes. Eventually you can tailor their techniques and attitudes in a way that suits you.

Forget about time and money

When asked about the barriers to getting what they want in life, most people will answer with two excuses: "I don't have the time." or "It would cost too much money."

Dealing with time and money issues is essential. Yet, if we do so too early in the planning process, we'll end up with needless limits on our creativity. While setting goals, pretend that money and time are unlimited. If this feels silly, remember that you're in a brainstorm mode. It's okay to think, write, or say anything.

When a daring goal really takes hold of us, we can often find a way to achieve it—time and money notwithstanding. Discovering what we really want can open our eyes to financial reserves and sources of help that we've missed. Often those resources already exist; we simply gloss over them due to self-imposed blinders. Many of those blinders are put in place when we let time and money problems squelch our most powerful ideas.

Begin with "what," not "how"

To unleash the master planner within you, hold off on asking, "How?" In the beginning, stick with: What do I want? Where do I want to be in the future? When will I make my desired future occur? Who do I want to be with?

There's nothing wrong with asking the how questions. There's a time and place for how—that is, for choosing strategies that allow you to fulfill your goals. Even so, questions of strategy can easily be overdone.

For example, imagine what it would be like to live in a world without violence. Many of us have a hard time picturing such a world. Yet, once we allow ourselves to envision such a world, we're one step closer to achieving it. We're one step beyond the beliefs that lock violence in place: "You can't change human nature." "People are always going to kill each other."

The same can be said for a world without hunger or a world without communicable diseases. Action to achieve such worlds begins when we admit their possibility.

When you begin to plan, it helps to start with the details of your preferred future—what you want to be or do, where you want to live or work, when do you want to see certain changes in your life take place? Who do you want to work with and live with? With these details in mind, you can spontaneously discover the means to make that future a reality. There's no hocus-pocus or magic involved here—just the power of a rich, detailed vision for the future.

After you're clear about what you want, the question of "how" is more quickly answered. With a clear vision, you can make moment-to-moment choices that bring you closer to your goal, even in the midst of changing circumstances.

Involve all your senses

Goals can be expressed in a variety of sensory modes. If you find it difficult to see the future, then experiment with other modes. Think about what you want to hear, smell, taste, feel, or touch. If you're drawn toward sound, for instance, you might ask: How could we make music in the year 2100? What could people be talking about? What could be the noise level in major urban areas? What will the voices of hunger and poverty be calling for? What could television and radio sound like?

You can also envision a time when the world is free of certain smells—the stench of rivers swollen with garbage or the odor of bodies rotting on a battlefield. Doing so can give new meaning to abstract goals such as reducing pollution or ending war.

Look boldly for things to change

To create new goals, open up your thinking about what aspects of your life can be changed and what cannot. Be willing to put every area on the table for consideration.

It's a fascinating practice to notice what areas are off-limits when we set goals. Money, sex, spirituality, career, marriage, and other topics can easily fall into a category called "I will just have to live with this."

For example, you might think that you have to live with the face you were born with. Perhaps not. There might be ways to change your face without plastic surgery. Physical therapists say that there are hundreds of muscles in the face. By learning to bring more of them under conscious control, it's theoretically possible to remake your face without going under the knife.

When planning, it pays to consider the whole range of our experience. Doing so can lead us to worlds beyond our wildest dreams.

Look for what's missing in your life

Plans usually arise from our sense of what's missing in life. Rarely do affluent people set a goal to eat three meals each day. More often, goal setting is fueled by the unsolved problems in our lives—the relationships we still want to develop, the careers we still want to pursue, the projects that are still incomplete.

If you want to set powerful goals, then remember not to make yourself wrong for missing something in your life. Instead of talking about your deficiencies, talk about your potentials. The person with a bulging belly and weak knees can justifiably say, "There's a lot of potential in this body. I've got plenty of opportunity for change."

Not all goals need to spring from a sense of need. You can also make it a goal to maintain things that you have or to keep doing the effective things that you already do. For example, the person who already exercises vigorously three times each week can make it her goal to continue doing so as long she lives.

Create goals in many media

While it's common to express goals in writing, there are many other possibilities. In addition to writing, you might choose to express your goals by drawing, painting, sculpting, writing a song, or making a video. You can also speak your plan to another person and record the conversation. Any medium that allows you to create a detailed vision of your future will do nicely.

EXERCISE

Just open your mouth and speak the future

Practice speaking your goals in the presence of another person. Ask that person to function as a sympathetic listener—one who will not interrupt, ask questions, or criticize any of your goals. (This person can nod in agreement or acknowledge your speaking with a simple "OK" or "Uh-huh.") Ask this person to pay attention, to keep everything you say in confidence, and to take what you say with a grain of salt (maybe a huge grain of salt). The listener's basic job is to receive your ideas fully, postponing any of his responses for later.

Now that you've created a safe atmosphere for revealing whatever comes to mind, just speak. Speak for five minutes without rehearsing or editing your thoughts. Speak even before you know what you'll say, and just listen to what comes out of your mouth. For starters, begin by saying, "What I want is . . . " or "What I might do is . . ." Another option is to say, "I've got several brand new goals I've never spoken to anyone before. The first goal is. . . ." Finish any of these sentences with as many ideas as you can create.

Again, quality is not an issue. Remember that you don't have to adopt or act on any of the goals that you speak during this creative process. These goals might sound grandiose, outrageous, off-the-wall, or silly. ("I want to rid the world of disease." "I want to perform at Carnegie Hall." "I want to move to Alaska and build a cabin and never talk to anyone again." "I want to live on another planet and form a band.") That's fine. Just speak. Sound off with some ideas to see how they feel.

There's a method in this apparent madness. One aim of this exercise is to get past the mental filters that choke off possibilities and kill options for the future. These filters often take the form of deep-seated beliefs, such as, "I could never do that," "No one's ever done that before," or "I haven't got the time or the money."

During this exercise, something wonderful and unexpected can occur. You might speak a goal that's never occurred to you before—one that seems so on track, so right, that you'll want to make it part of your life plan.

Sometimes, we don't know what we want to do until we literally open our mouths and speak it. The most powerful goals can emerge from daring, reckless verbal creation.

Speak your goals for five minutes. Then switch roles and let the other person speak her goals for five minutes while you listen.

Doing this exercise offers another unexpected benefit: practice at listening. Listening with full, permissive attention to another person's wishes for the future is an empowering—and unusual—gift.

You can do this exercise regularly, with people you know well and those you hardly know at all. Each time you do the exercise, gradually lengthen the amount of time you spend speaking goals. Go from five minutes to 10 minutes, 15, and even 20 or more.

If you notice any signs of fear or apprehension about what you'll say, just notice these feelings. Bring them fully to consciousness, then continue speaking your goals. When in doubt, just keep your lips moving.

As you do this exercise, practice speaking completely new goals—no preconceptions, no agendas, no limits. Don't worry about telling the other person what he or she wants to hear. Simply speak from a sense of unlimited potential.

EXERCISE

Stage a "goal-around"

Get together regularly with a group of at least three people who are committed to goal setting and creating the future. Ask everyone present to spend five to 15 minutes writing goals. Then gather the participants in a circle and ask each of them to read aloud one goal they've written. Go around the group several times, always giving people the option to pass if they choose.

It's important to postpone any debate or discussion about these goals until later. For now, the idea is to nurture creativity and let people speak without fear of judgment.

Don't let the simplicity of this exercise fool you. Besides being a learning experience, it can be uproariously fun.

As you listen to others' goals, jot down ideas that sound appealing. This exercise offers people permission to "steal" each other's goals. That way, you can walk away from this session with exciting new goals that you're absolutely committed to—goals that could occur to you only with the impetus and support of a group.

EXERCISE

Plan another person's life

One creative activity is the practice of planning another person's life. If this seems like a call to control another person, remember that people plan each other's lives all the time. Teachers set goals for their students. Parents set goals for their children. Salespeople plan for their customers. Employers set goals for their employees.

With this in mind, invite another person to brainstorm some goals for you. Ask this person, "If you were going to live my life, what would you do, have, and be?" Ask the other person to speak for 10 minutes while you take notes. Remember that you can keep all the other person's ideas, use only a few of them, or throw them all away.

If you want to get the most out of this exercise, practice nonjudgmental listening. Reacting defensively defeats the purpose, which is to practice creative thinking. This kind of thinking flourishes in an atmosphere of total candor and detachment. If you hear a goal that rankles you, merely accept the reaction. Then return your attention to listening.

Next, switch roles. Speak your ideas for the other person's future while she takes notes.

Planning for others can actually promote their happiness and freedom. And it's always up to others whether or not to accept our plans for them.

CREATE THE NEXT 10,000 YEARS

As you plan, keep in mind that your goals can extend outward in time—as far as you can possibly imagine. There's no need to stop at setting goals for 10, 20, 50, or even 100 years. Your goals can extend 500, 1,000, or even 10,000 years into the future.

If thinking 200 years or more into the future seems like an impossible or useless mental stretch, keep a couple of things in mind.

When considering the entire span of human history, we see that a decade, or even a century, is a relatively short period of time. Recall the history courses you took in school. You probably considered entire decades in a matter of minutes. Given the entire length of human history, one century is simply not a very long time.

Through our religious upbringing, many of us grew accustomed to thinking about events that took place in the distant past. Christians talk about the life of Jesus, which took place nearly 2,000 years ago. People who belong to other faiths tell stories of Abraham, Buddha, or Mohammed, all of whom lived before the Christian era. And the creation stories of Native Americans, Hindus, and others recount events that predate written history.

If we can gain facility at talking about the distant past, we can also become skilled at considering the distant future. If we can converse meaningfully about 2,000 years in the past, we can do the same for 2,000 years in the future. The ability to think in long time spans is nothing more than a habit—one that improves with practice.

Remember that plans for the distant future can represent highlights, not detailed agendas. When you set goals for the next decade or the next century, you're plotting the major events—the turning points in human affairs. Relatively few events on this scale take place in a single 10-year, or even 100-year, period.

Believe it or not, there are people who are not in mental hospitals who do have long, long-range goals. Imagine what it would be like to routinely plan from this long, long-range perspective. Your planning—and your life—may never be the same again.

Go beyond yourself

When we think 500 years or more into the future, it's easier to go beyond our short-term, narrow self-interests. In 500 years, you will be gone from the earth. So will any of your children, your grandchildren, and their grandchildren. No one that you care about today will be alive in 500 years.

Looking through the lenses of the long-term future, you can more naturally step aside from your personal, short-term interests and consider the fate of humanity as a whole. You can care equally about everyone on the planet; at least you won't care about any one person more than any other. This is a valuable perspective to have when thinking about the future you want for our planet as a whole.

Make short-range planning easier

Another advantage of thinking in terms of long stretches of time is that the shorter stretches suddenly become easier. Once you've practiced thinking 100, 500, and even 10,000 years to the future, the notion of planning one year, five years, 10 years, and even 20 years into the future can seem like child's play.

To understand this, consider an analogy. Imagine an executive who is mortally afraid of public speaking, even though his job often requires him to make presentations to groups of people. Desperate for help, he hires a speaking coach. The coach patiently listens to the executive's problem and offers a solution. "What I suggest that you do," says the coach, "is to speak for 20 minutes to a group of 3,000 people. I can arrange for that to happen next week."

"Three thousand people! Are you crazy?" exclaims the executive. "I can barely ask a question in a meeting without getting nervous."

"I know," says the coach. "And I still ask that you speak to this large group next week."

"But you don't understand," protests the executive. "All I want to be able to do is stand in front of a room of 10 people and be a skilled, confident, and relaxed speaker."

"Yes, I do understand," replies the coach. "And I want you to immediately have the experience of speaking to a much, much larger group. That will instantly put the experience of speaking to small groups in perspective. Chances are that after you make a presentation to 3,000 people, you'll find speaking to 10 nearly effortless."

This is roughly what happens when you expand the temporal boundaries of your goal setting. Once you stretch your thinking ahead 3,000 years or more, planning the next 10 years of your life might be easier.

Begin now

You don't have to believe this concept of long, long-range planning. Just experiment with the idea to see if it has any usefulness for you. The whole point is to play with a new way of thinking and see where it leads. Just be willing to put any objections on hold for now.

So unleash your creativity as you create the next 10,000 years. Expand your notion of what's possible. Question your assumptions about the future. Doing so promotes excitement and prompts you to clarify your core values in a new way. Besides—it's fun.

EXERCISE

Write goals for the year 2500 and beyond

Describe the world you want to see in the year 2500. Remember that this is not an exercise in predicting the world of 2500; it's a statement about what you'd like humanity to achieve.

To fully experience the potential excitement of long, long-range planning, do this exercise with others. Spend 10 minutes writing goals individually about the year 2500. At the end of that time, ask all present to share one of their goals with the group. If there's time, go around the room several times.

Agree to let anyone contribute a goal without fear of criticism. If you hear a goal that seems off track, just modify the goal so it truly works for you and offer it to the group.

After you've played with creating the world of 2500, go even further into the future. Conceive the world you'd like to see in the year 3000, 5000, or 10,000.

Consider the following list of goals from one group of people who mentally stood in the year 10,000 and described what they saw:

> *We can decode natural communication systems. Now humans can communicate with rocks, plants, and all species of animals. The birds consistently tell us, "Don't worry. Be happy." (And when the birds talk, people listen.)*
>
> *Eating is optional; we eat only for pleasure. It's a world of virtual cuisine.*
>
> *Physical pain is erased with thought. Bodies are optional; we can live in the spiritual dimension any time. There are "bodies-optional" beaches.*
>
> *War has been absent from Earth for centuries. Now, conflict is resolved by teams of skilled negotiators that can be dispatched to any place on the planet in a matter of seconds—before any dispute can involve weapons.*
>
> *Cities are limited in size to 100,000 people, at most. This, combined with nonpolluting, clean, and safe mass transit makes traffic congestion and vehicle accidents a thing of the distant past.*
>
> *Natural disasters are predicted with absolute accuracy, far enough in advance to make mass evacuations possible. No longer is anyone killed because of tornadoes, floods, or earthquakes.*
>
> *We are able to consciously live parallel lives.*
>
> *Prisons are eliminated, replaced by strictly supervised programs where people who commit crimes work to make restitution to their victims.*
>
> *Education at all levels—from kindergarten to postgraduate school—is universal and free.*
>
> *We can communicate with the surviving spirit of any being who has ever lived on the planet. This greatly reduces the sadness associated with death.*

After you've completed this group exercise, list the 10 goals you heard that most interest you. Consider adding these goals (or some variation of them) to your life plan.

EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC OF PLANNING BY CREATION

Much of the planning that's done today in business, government, and education is prediction. In this type of planning, we carefully study what has happened in the past. With this information in hand, we can safely extrapolate into the future.

For instance, imagine that you add $100 to a savings account each month for the next five years. If you know what the interest rate on your account will be during that time, you can predict the total amount of money you'll have in the account when the five years are up. Such simple projections into the future make up what many people consider to be long-range planning.

This type of planning is based on a few assumptions. One is that past events are the best predictors of what's yet to come. Another is that the forces now shaping our lives will continue to be at work in the future. In a sense, prediction is often the past masquerading as the future.

There's nothing wrong with this type of planning. Just keep in mind that there's an alternative to use anytime we wish: planning by creation.

Another term for planning by creation is zero-based planning. This kind of planning is based on starting from a clean slate. To practice zero-based planning, don't worry about the constrictions of the past or present. Let your assumptions go and just describe your preferred future. Next, describe the present. Finally, establish intermediate goals that connect the future to the present.

We can understand the difference between planning by prediction and zero-based planning by looking at two ways to create a budget.

The budgeting process for many organizations is an example of planning by prediction. The financial officers of a company take last year's budget and change figures here and there, so they more accurately predict what will happen to the company's income and expenses during the next 12 months. The result, they hope, is next year's budget.

An alternative is zero-based budgeting. In effect, zero-based budgeting amounts to taking last year's budget, crumpling it up, and throwing it away. That allows the company's financial officers to say, "Let's start from scratch. Instead of just doctoring last year's figures, let's think about where we want this company to be financially in one year. We'll decide how much money we want to be making and how much we want to be spending. With these goals in mind, we can figure out the steps needed to get us there."

You can use the same process in creating your future. Going through the following procedure can get you started.

Step 1: Begin from a clean slate

As you prepare to state your ideal vision of the future, be willing to completely let go of current circumstances. For the moment, pretend that time, money, and resources are not an issue in making your vision a reality. You can consider these factors later. For now, let your imagination work without limitation. Allow yourself to create the future from nothing.

Step 2: Design the future

In your mind's eye, see yourself in the future. Describe the conditions you'd like to exist in your family, workplace, and community in 20 or more years. Talk or write about those conditions as if they exist right now. Describe in detail what you're doing, seeing, and feeling as you stand in that future place.

For example, you might say, "I'm standing in Ethiopia in the year 2100. As I look around, I see that there's plenty of food for everybody. Starvation, famine, malnutrition—all are things of the past. The land is lush and green, and there's plenty of water to go around. The children are well fed and healthy. They're running from house to house, laughing and playing. During the day they go to well furnished schools with dedicated, patient teachers."

Step 3: Describe the present

Now, describe the present as it relates to your preferred future. Be honest. If your design for the future includes a world free of starvation, then tell the truth about the problem of hunger as it exists right now.

Step 4: Link the future to the present

In this step, you'll write history from the future. Do this by establishing mid-range goals that work from the future to the present.

Say that you envisioned the world you'd like to see in the year 2500. Now, describe what happened in the year 2400 that allowed that world to come to pass. Do the same for the years 2300, 2200, 2100, and 2000. Continue this process until you reach the present.

Return for a moment to the example of Ethiopia in the year 2100. When linking that compelling future to the present, we might envision intermediate steps like the following:

> "I'm in the year 2000—the year that the problem of irrigating arid lands in this country was finally solved."

"Now, we're in the year 1997. We've learned how to desalinate water from the ocean and make it available to farmers across the continent of Africa. This discovery holds the promise of transforming the way food is grown and distributed."

"It's now 1998. A new technology that transformed this country's system of dams and reservoirs is finally in place. This technology allows farmers to stockpile water between droughts."

Note that this process proceeds in exactly the opposite direction of planning by prediction. When most people plan, they start at the present and project forward in time. In creating the future from nothing, you start at the future and work backward in time, toward the present.

If you observe children at play, you might see them doing this kind of creation. In their make-believe worlds, children spin fantasies, unhampered by any "practical" questions about how to make those fantasies come true. As you experiment with planning by creation during the next exercise, allow yourself to regain that sense of childlike wisdom and creativity.

EXERCISE

Create the future from nothing

This exercise is an open inquiry into what's possible for the rest of your life . . . and beyond. During this exercise you will experiment with totally erasing your current personal identity. You will start life over again. After that, you will set goals.

Please be willing to stick with this process, even if it sounds crazy. There is a logic hidden in this request for you to begin your life over again from nothing. Most of us live lives filled with a lot of "somethings." We carry around a detailed personal history: successes, failures, attachments, requirements, relationships, careers, thoughts, feelings, bodies, and much more. All these are useful. At the same time, we can become so committed to preserving these things that we squash any possibility of personal change.

For just a few moments, consider what it would be like to re-create your life from a clean slate. Imagine that you could wipe out the past and start over fresh. What would you do? What would you have? Who would you choose to be? The purpose of this exercise is to bring you to this state of mind.

This blank space, this "nothing" is a state of uninhibited creativity. While you're there, you just might discover some goals that are worthy of your passion and energy—ideas that have never occurred to you before. This is different from much of what passes as creativity in daily life, which is just re-creation, a mere rearrangement of existing conditions. Seldom does that type of creativity bring forth something totally new.

To create your life from nothing is no small feat. So, allow yourself some time for this exercise and be willing to experiment. When you do succeed in reaching this state of emptiness, see if you can stay there for a few minutes or even a few hours. With practice, you might eventually be able to stay in this state for days at a time.

If all this sounds frightening, remember that you don't have to physically give up anything. This exercise is just a mental exploration. You can have back anything you give up.

The following suggestions can help you create this state of nothing.

- *Erase your current job. Imagine that you have no job. Whether you love it, hate it, or feel neutral about it, the job's gone. Vanished.*
- *Erase your financial concerns. Any money problems are permanently behind you. In fact, imagine that money is no longer used as a medium of exchange. There's no point in having money, and no one has any. Money is gone.*
- *Erase your friends. Peers, colleagues, neighbors, acquaintances—all of them are gone. Don't worry about being lonely. You can make more friends later.*
- *Erase your enemies. Imagine that any people you resented or fought with are no longer part of your life.*
- *Erase your family. Again, don't worry. These people are safe, and you can bring them back later. For now, however, they are no longer around.*
- *Erase your spouse or romantic partner. Do this now, even if you have a wonderful relationship. Let this person go to the same place your friends and family have gone.*
- *Erase your house or apartment. As of now, imagine that you have no place to live. No longer do you have any interest in the size, price, or location of your living space.*

- *Erase the community where you live. The town, city, or rural area where you grew up is gone. So is the place you lived until you read this exercise.*

- *Erase your past. All those accomplishments, hurts, and mistakes—release them also.*

- *Now, notice anything about your self that remains. Is your body still there? Erase it. Are your clothes or glasses still there? Erase them, too. (Notice that your body was erased before your clothes; no need to worry about being modest.) Also, erase your emotions, opinions, and thoughts. If you have any worry about all that you've erased so far, just notice that worry and let go of it, too. Then erase anything that's left.*

- *Finally, notice any remaining thoughts about this exercise—that it's silly, profound, boring, or anything else. Let those thoughts billow up and vanish like a bubble.*

If you've kept up with all the above suggestions, you're probably at a blank slate. For now, you're nothing. Everything that defined you up until a few moments ago is gone.

Perhaps on the other hand, you're not quite at nothing yet. Maybe some of the old thoughts, feelings, and choices that used to make up your self are still lingering. That's OK. Just don't identify yourself with any of them.

Congratulations. You've arrived at the peak of your creativity, unfettered by any thoughts, feelings, and consequences from the past. In fact, now that you're nobody, you may even be better company than when you were merely somebody. At this moment, you're free to make any choice whatsoever about what to be, do, and have.

Dwell in this state for just a little while longer. As you do, ask yourself: "What do I want?" Express your answers as goals written on 3x5 cards. Pay attention to how you'd like to fill the vacuum you've created. You might want new thoughts, feelings, friends, money, a house, or something else. Write whatever goals come to mind.

After you've noted these goals, slowly let yourself start to fill up again with your current reality. Allow all your old roles and possessions to gradually rejoin you. Return yourself to the present.

After you've fully "come back," review the goals you wrote just a little while ago—back when you were nothing. Ask yourself if you'd like to follow up on any of those goals. Note those goals in the space below.

Fine-tune your plan

Doing the exercises in this chapter probably left you with a large stack of possible goals. Now, it's time to gather all those ideas, refine them, and include them in a complete draft of your plan.

Skilled writers are seldom finished when they've completed a first draft. The process of revising their work offers opportunities for writers to sharpen word choice, delete unnecessary words, and fix gaps in logic. Likewise, revising the first draft of your life plan can make it more complete, specific, and easier to enact.

As you fine-tune the first draft of your life plan, keep the following suggestions in mind. They can apply to the second, the third, or the one hundredth draft as well.

Add a time-line

Give yourself due dates for practicing a certain value, taking a certain action, or generating a new result in your life. Adding such a time-line to your goals is one way to raise your level of commitment. Many people report that when they add time lines, their goals suddenly become more attainable.

There are several options for stating time lines:

"I will achieve this goal by (date)."
"I will do this until (date)."
"I will do this from (date) to (date)."

Note that a goal without a time line can still be powerful. In fact, some goals are more useful with no time line at all. That's true of goals such as "be loving" or "practice forgiveness." You probably wouldn't want to limit such goals with a time line. "I will be loving by Tuesday afternoon." and "I will practice forgiveness until I turn 50." are goals that border on being silly when connected to a lifetime.

You might feel stumped when choosing a time line. No problem. If you're in doubt, just pick a date or a range of dates out of the air. And if the time line looks unworkable once you write it down, then just change it. Even when an initial time line proves to be wildly offbase, it gets us started toward choosing a more accurate one.

Add priorities

Not all the goals you create will be equally important. Accomplishing some of them will create more value for you than accomplishing others. To get the most out of your efforts, assign priorities.

There are several options here, too. One is to assign priority with words. You can sort goals by those that are critical, those that are important, and those that are unimportant. Other people choose to divide goals into three simple categories: Yes, No, and Maybe.

There are many other possibilities. For example, each of the following statements signals a level of priority, going from lowest to highest.

- "I might accomplish this goal." In this case, you like the idea and want to include the goal in your life plan. You consider it a possibility. Yet, while you think the goal is a good idea, you're not committed to getting it accomplished.

- "I want to accomplish this goal." These words reveal that the goal is something you desire, even something you are passionate about. The goal is something that's attractive and appealing to you, but not something you're willing to guarantee as of yet.

- "I plan to accomplish this goal." The word *plan* reveals a higher level of commitment than *might* or *want*. While a plan is not a guarantee, it is a goal that's likely to be accomplished.

- "I promise to accomplish this goal." Promises represent the highest level of commitment. When you promise to complete a task or achieve a goal, you're "betting the farm." Your words have the weight and solidity of a marriage vow. In effect, you're saying, "You can absolutely count on me to get this done. I'm willing to stake my reputation on it. I give you my word."

Listening for these phrases can be revealing. Some people constantly hedge their speaking with the word *might*. Seldom do they make an ironclad commitment. They continually dwell in the realm of nebulous possibility. Others are habitual "want-ers." Though they constantly talk about what they want, they rarely reveal what they plan or promise to do. We can signal clear priorities for action when we use language more consciously.

Letters of the alphabet offer another way to assign priorities. A common system is the ABC system, where the most important and urgent goals receive an A rating, less urgent and less important goals become B's, and the mere possibilities are rated as C's.

Another option is to use numbers. For example, you can rate each goal on a scale from 1 to 100. Goals numbered 1—30 can be possibilities. Goals in the 31—60 range can be plans, and those 61—100 can be promises. By the way, don't worry about having an excess of goals rated 30 or below. Giving yourself permission to write these goals can clear a mental path for the 90's, 95's, and the 100's.

Still another method is simple rank ordering. Here, you number goals in order of their importance. Goal number one is the most important, followed by goal number two, goal number three, and so on.

Add categories

If you've been fearlessly brainstorming goals, you might have 100 or more of them by now. And, if you keep up this habit of life planning, there will be many more goals to come.

Before you feel overwhelmed, take a few minutes to create a list of categories for your goals. Then sort your goals into these categories so you can access them more easily.

There is no one list of categories that makes sense for everyone, so choose a set of categories that works for you. Sample topics include:

- Adventure
- Art
- Career
- Children
- Community
- Contribution
- Environment
- Ethics
- Family life
- Finances
- Friendships
- Fun
- Global transformation
- Growth and development
- Harmless vices
- Health
- Hobbies
- Learning
- Living space
- Love
- Marriage
- Music
- Nature
- Sex
- Simplicity
- Social life
- Spiritual life
- Values and beliefs
- Wisdom

Organizational plans can include other categories such as facilities, research, personnel, and the like.

A long list of categories might still feel unwieldy to you. If so, you can manage them more easily by choosing five to seven major categories or topics. Then group your remaining categories as subtopics under the major categories. For instance, the major category of health can include goals relating to diet, exercise, and stress management.

Here is where you'll discover one of the beauties of using 3x5 cards to record your goals. Writing one goal per card makes it easier to shuffle and re-shuffle your cards every time you choose a new organizing scheme. (Writing goals on a computer offers similar flexibility.)

Remember that your categories don't have to be based on topics such as those listed to the left. For example, you might choose to sort your cards chronologically: goals you intend to accomplish in one month, in one year, in five years, and so on. You could also sort goals by priority, using words, letters, or numbers as suggested earlier in this article. Other options are sorting by roles (goals that relate to your activities as a parent, friend, family member, professional, homemaker, volunteer, student), or arenas of activity (personal, professional, and political.)

It's useful and often fun to invent new categories for your goals. If you normally categorize your cards chronologically, experiment with arranging them by topics. After doing so, you might discover that most of your goals relate to work and only a few relate to health and relationships. That can signal a lack of balance in your life plan. Consider writing more goals in those nonwork categories. If you're concerned about the added demands on your time, you can delete some of your work-related goals or shift them to a lower priority.

Add a domain

Often, goals exist only in the domain of circumstance. That is, they name things we'd like to have: more money, better highways, bigger buildings, new houses, cars, pools, or hot tubs. Such goals often name some object that we'd like to acquire.

Other goals in this domain of circumstance are slightly different, such as having a cure for cancer or having a group of close friends. In this case, we're naming some results that we'd like to achieve, that are not present in our lives right now.

Synonyms for circumstances include having, possessions, and results.

Circumstances represent only one possible domain for goals. A second domain is action: "I want to exercise three times a week."; "I plan to enter graduate school."; "I want to travel to Europe."; "I will write 100 words a day in my journal." Such goals name things we'd like to do. Synonyms for actions include responses, behaviors, choices, and habits.

A third domain for goals has to do with values. We could call this the domain of being. Possible goals in this area include: "I will be more loving." "I will be more tolerant." and "I will be spontaneous and more aware of what is possible." Other values might include family, friends, fun, contribution, candor, focus, or reliability.

Synonyms for values include belief system, context, and attitude. Goals such as these help paint the big picture. They state what we consider to be most important and worthwhile in life. Our goals for circumstances and actions often acquire ultimate meaning in light of our value-related goals.

Many life plans focus primarily on results or circumstances—what people want to have. Who we are and what we typically do are just as important to consider. Achieving a balance in all three domains—values, action, and circumstances—can make for a more comprehensive, effective life plan.

State your goals in a positive way

Positively-stated goals are often clearer and more inviting than those stated negatively. While negative goals make clear what we are giving up, positively-stated goals point out the benefits we'll gain.

So instead of writing, "I will stop smoking," you can write, "I will lead a smoke-free life," "I will have clean lungs that are free from nicotine," or "I will be tobacco-free." Instead of "I will not overeat," you can write, "I will eat an optimum amount of food for my body," or "I will eat enough food to supply adequate energy and keep myself at an ideal body weight."

Some psychologists believe that your subconscious mind cannot process negative words such as not and never. If that's true, then "I will not overeat." is translated as "I will overeat."—with markedly different consequences for your life.

Write out your plan

There's a saying: "A goal clearly defined is a goal halfway achieved." Writing is a tool par excellence for gaining precision. Writing also helps us remember our plans and communicate them to others.

"A plan that's unwritten is no plan at all," says Peter Drucker, the well-known management consultant. Writing is one of the most powerful, intellectual tools we have. Although we can take plans to a high level of development by simply creating images of a desired result or by mulling ideas in our minds, our plans become even more powerful when we write them down.

Writing allows us to see our thinking. After all, thinking takes place at unbelievable speeds. In the space of a few seconds, our minds can create a whole series of images. Writing slows this process down so that we can supply missing links and state ideas more precisely. It's tough to know what we're really thinking until we see it on paper.

For some people, the process of writing seems to set a plan in stone. To them, ideas on a page have an imposing air of finality. If this is true for you, just consider your plan a first edition or a rough draft. Also include a paragraph describing the changes you intend to make in the next draft.

Like a portrait, a written plan is a revealing image of a human being who lives, moves, and changes constantly. Any plan is subject to endless improvement. Professional writers often produce three to 10 drafts of an article. Your life plan could go through many more as you change and grow.

Build in rewards

For many people, life planning becomes a new habit. Early on they start to experience some of this habit's rewards: a greater sense of choice and control, the surge of energy that comes with achieving a desired result, and much more. Such benefits are often called intrinsic rewards. That is, they flow directly from doing the task of planning.

You can also make use of extrinsic rewards—those that give you pleasure even though they are not a natural consequence of planning. Examples are getting a massage after you fill out 100 goal cards or going to a movie after achieving your goals for the week.

Establish measurements carefully

Finding ways to measure your achievement of a goal can be powerful. A workshop leader might have a goal to fully engage her participants and generate their enthusiasm. One way she could measure her performance is to note how many people attend the entire workshop. Her goal might be stated as, "ninety percent of attendees will stay for the entire four-day presentation."

It is possible for measurement to backfire, especially when we confuse the goal with the measurement. The student whose goal is to complete an empowering education might decide to measure this goal by the grades he gets. He could end up working exclusively to gain straight A's, neglecting to ask whether he's gaining any valuable skills or concepts from his learning. The workshop leader might indulge in stand-up comedy in order to hold participants' attention, neglecting to ask if they are gaining any life-changing ideas. When we're blindly focused on measuring our performance, not goals, we can end up misinterpreting feedback.

Check for alignment

At some point in the planning process, take a break to step back and look for overall consistency in your goals. See if your goals are aligned with each other and with your values. If a person who values frugality also has a goal to own 50 pairs of shoes, that's a sign of goal conflict. This kind of contradiction can muddle our planning and lead to confused action.

Give your plan visual impact

When creating a plan, you're not limited to writing prose. A chart, a diagram, or other graphic can work wonders. Use colors. Draw pictures. Or, plan in three dimensions by building scale models, as architects do.

Let your plan be unique

Your life plan does not have to look like anyone else's. There is no official format for a life plan. This is one area where you can let your individual creativity flourish. The point is to experiment and find a format that works for you. Any structure that clarifies your preferred future and moves you into action is fine.

Create flexible plans

Most of us know what it's like to cook according to a recipe. We assemble the ingredients, prepare our utensils, and follow the instructions step by step. In the end, we hope that the resulting meal is as appealing as the photograph in the cookbook.

Life is far more complex than this. There's no sure-fire recipe for achieving any goal. Knowing this can actually give us a sense of freedom and mastery. A skilled taxi driver knows alternate routes to take to a city's major areas. A master chef improvises when she cooks, sometimes substituting ingredients and adding new steps to the recipe. A virtuoso jazz musician improvises, playing the same tune differently every night.

We can take the same approach to planning, reminding ourselves that there are multiple paths to any destination. This is especially true when our goals are complex, involving many people. We could end world hunger, for example, through many different paths: inventing new technology for producing and distributing food, providing economic assistance to poor women, or transforming economic policy through new trade agreements. These are just a few of the options.

Life is full of surprises—new relationships, trial and error, and unexpected connections. Knowing this, we can save ourselves the frustration of taking a linear approach to achieving any goal.

Perhaps you're fond of recipes and step-by-step instructions and you want to approach your life plan in the same way. No problem. Just experiment with the strategy of creating at least five different paths to any one of your goals. The path you eventually choose might be a combination of all five—or something completely different.

EXERCISE

Add details to your goals

Review the goals you've set so far, making sure to include the following items on each card:

- *A time line (due date) for the goal*
- *A rating of priority*
- *The category under which you'll file this goal (e.g., career, relationships, health, finances)*
- *A name for the domain of this goal (e.g., values, actions, circumstances, or being, doing, having)*

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Schedule a personal planning retreat

This business of goal setting can become a powerful habit if you schedule periodic breaks for personal planning. To begin, you might want to devote part of a scheduled vacation to setting goals and planning your life.

Another way to reinforce the habit of planning is to turn planning sessions into personal retreats. These can be times devoted to taking care of yourself. To heighten the effect, do your planning in a setting you enjoy—in the woods, at a park, on the beach. During your planning sessions, take periodic breaks for personally rewarding activities, such as long walks at sunset or a massage. You can turn these planning sessions into opportunities for reflection, solitude, and quiet.

A variation on this idea is to invite companions and people you love into the adventure of planning. Ask close friends or family members to take a planning break with you. This experience can renew your relationships and draw you even closer together.

In the space below, set the stage for your personal planning retreat. Write about where you intend to go, who you'd like to go with, what you'd like to do on this retreat, and some possible dates for this activity.

I intend to . . .

Chapter 3

Money

In this chapter you'll find...

Demystify it.
We can get past the fuzzy thinking that turns money into a source of misery.

Talk to someone about it–exercise.
Violate the taboo that keeps financial matters a secret.

Take a First Step about money: Discovery Statement.
Tell the truth about your current strengths and weaknesses in managing money.

Reprogram your attitudes.
Money is not sacred, evil, or scarce. In fact, managing money can be simple and fun.

Choose which beliefs to keep: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Consider which beliefs about money you will retain and which beliefs no longer serve you.

Monitor it.
When we see clearly how money flows in and out of our lives, we're already well on the way to ending money woes.

Spend less of it.
We can decrease spending and maintain high levels of satisfaction in our lives.

Audit your charges: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Calculate the total amount of interest charges you paid for using credit cards last year.

Predict restaurant expenses: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Discover how much you spent in restaurants last month and whether you want to eat out less in the future.

Invest it.
By saving money we build a cushion of material comfort.

Choose how much to save: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Calculate 10 percent of your take-home pay and consider saving that amount regularly.

Match values and money: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Describe how you can bring your spending more in line with your commitments.

Gain wealth without more money.
When we align our spending with our values and celebrate what we already have, we gain a new freedom with money.

Free or inexpensive and still valuable: Discovery/Intention Statement.
Describe free or low-cost activities you will do for enjoyment on a regular basis.

Ways to cry uncle.
If you get into trouble with money, admit it and contact people who can help.

DEMYSTIFY IT

One purpose of learning about personal finance is to manage your money instead of letting money manage you. It's great to have money. But many people let money have *them*. That is, worries and frustration over money take up an inordinate amount of their time and emotional energy. Getting past this dilemma is the subject of this chapter.

The term *manage* (as in *money management*) often brings to mind another word: *control*. Being overly controlling in some areas of our lives is not healthy. It can lead to rigidity and narrow-mindedness. Yet, in some circumstances it's appropriate to be totally in control. One of those circumstances regards money.

Money—or the lack of it—may be the most common barrier which people claim stops them from being as happy as they could be. Ask people why they're not doing what they really want to do in life. Most are likely to answer, "Because I don't have enough money." That's all the more reason to get this aspect of our lives under control.

Consider what money is—and what it isn't

To become more effective in our dealing with money, we can begin by understanding what money is—and what it is not.

Begin by considering some things that are not accurate to say about money.

Money is *not:*

- The ultimate measure of our competence. Some incompetent people have lots of money. Some competent people have none.
- A cure-all. It won't buy health, happiness, or love.
- The source of all evil. There are numerous and sterling examples of people who have used money in wonderful and contributing ways.
- Scarce. Although most people complain that they don't have enough money, it is plentiful.
- Power. Some of the most powerful leaders of this century have been poor. Ghandi, Mother Theresa, Nelson Mandela, and many more powerful people had little or no money.

Once we clearly identify what money isn't, we can program our attitudes about money. These fallacies are further described in the next article, "Reprogramming your attitudes."

Next consider some accurate and useful things we can say about money.

Money is:

- A fact that colors how people and organizations relate to each other.
- A stimulus for many people to work, take action, and do something that others are willing to pay for.
- Something that few of us are born with or inherit.
- Our responsibility to manage.
- A source of more unnecessary worries than almost anything else. This is true no matter how much money we have. People who earn $15,000 a year often feel they don't have enough money. People who earn $150,000 a year can feel the same way, if they're not skilled at managing money.
- A way that people measure the value of their time and energy. When we agree to work for an hourly wage, for example, we in effect say, "One hour of my life is worth this much money in this society at this time."
- A wonderful tool. Money can be considered nothing more than a powerful, useful tool. Money can accomplish a tremendous amount. Used effectively, it can end starvation on the planet or cure many fatal diseases. It's even possible that world peace could occur through the wise use of money.
- Money is also a mirror. How we handle our money tells us an amazing amount about ourselves. When we learn to be totally comfortable about money, our whole lives can begin to look and feel very different.
- A measure of our values. The way in which we spend and earn money is a no-nonsense guide to what we truly value, often far more accurate than what we say we value.

Remember the big picture about money

For many people, the subject of money has a real emotional charge. People worry about money even while trying hard not to worry about it. They respect and envy people who have a lot of money and often hold them in contempt at the same time. Feelings about money not only run strong—they're pretty mixed up.

It's no wonder that we often avoid dealing with money. Some of us would rather leap off a cliff than balance a checkbook. We'd rather get a root canal than live on a budget.

In this light, it makes sense not to beat yourself up over money. Just consider the ideas in this chapter and take what works for you right now. Start with gradual steps to your financial goals. After all, a budget or a savings plan is not there to control you. They are merely tools for you to use—tools you choose.

What's more, remember that the purpose of managing money is far more than being a "good" person or setting an example. The purpose is to have a wonderful life. Managing your money well can be one means to that end.

Get clear about your intentions regarding money. If you keep handling money in the same old ways, expect your life to stay largely the same. If you're willing to start handling money in a way that aligns with who you really are and what you truly want, then prepare for a new and satisfying relationship with money.

Change the way you decide about money

The drive for money can be so strong that it compromises other values. For example, people cheat on their income taxes, walk away from stores with more change than they are due, or spend hours looking for ways to beat the system, even while they claim to value honesty.

Few people take the time to make the connection between their values and the way they spend money. Yet, this perspective is powerful and puts money in a whole new light. One option is to make decisions about money based on your values, rather than on greed or immediate gratification. At the end of every month, for example, examine your checkbook and ask, "Did the way I spent money in the last 30 days take me closer to what I want to have, do, and be?" As a delightful byproduct of asking this question and acting on the answer, you'll probably find that you're getting more of what you really want from life.

Managing money creates freedom

Tell others about the suggestions in this chapter about managing money. You're likely to hear responses like this: "Save 10 percent every month? Keep my credit card balances at zero? Save enough to live on for six months, even if I can't work? You're crazy! I could never do that. I might as well sign up for prison."

If you put such ideas to work, however, the reality can be far different. Instead of giving up your freedom, you're bound to increase it. You'll know where your money goes. You'll be free to spend it on what really matters most. You'll be free from worry if you need to look for a new job or pay a large medical bill. Instead of money having you, you'll have money. You will be in charge.

EXERCISE

Talk to someone about it

In some circles, money is more of a private matter than sex, death, politics, or religion. Even married people or long-time business partners might judiciously avoid the subject.

When people treat it as a taboo topic, money begins to acquire an aura of mystery and secret power. Suddenly, managing finances can seem a lot more complicated or important than it really is.

You can break this cycle. Begin by talking to someone about money. You don't have to reveal the extent of your income or expenses (unless you choose to.) Simply begin by sharing your frustrations or successes with managing money. Talk about hopes and fears that relate to finances. Share the results of the previous Discovery/ Intention Statement. Once you have revealed to another person your general feelings and thoughts about money, you can take this exercise a step further to really demystify money. Share specifics. Talk in detail about how much you make, what you spend, and how much you owe. Getting all of this on the table increases your ability to deal with money more realistically.

Take a First Step about Money

The aim of this exercise is help you tell the truth about how money works in your life. For right now, it doesn't matter whether you're serene about money, occasionally troubled about it, or continually upset about it. Just tell the truth. Begin by completing the following sentences:

When it comes to money, I usually feel . . .

My greatest difficulty with money right now is . . .

One thing I do well about managing money is . . .

To me, financial success means . . .

What I most want to change about my relationship with money is . . .

The career I want to have five years from now is . . .

The things I want to be doing in my non-working hours five years from now include . . .

The biggest change I would like to make in my life regarding money is . . .

Managing money more effectively could help me make that change by . . .

Reprogram your attitudes

Problems with money often start not in our wallets, but in our heads. Each of us was raised with certain attitudes and beliefs about money. People can try for years to manage money without stopping to question the value or usefulness of their beliefs. Our attempts to manage money can be more efficient if we tune up our attitudes first. In particular, we can benefit by weeding some of the following fallacies out of our thinking.

Fallacy: Money is evil

Money is a powerful tool when we consider it as such. However, many people consider it evil. Certainly there are people who use money in evil ways, and some people do evil things to get money. But no one has ever seen money do anything evil. In fact, money doesn't do anything at all. It just sits there, waiting to be used for some purpose. Though money can be used in ways that benefit or harm, there is nothing inherently good or bad about money.

Even the Bible points out that it's not money, but the *love* of money that leads to evil. Today we can say that there are evil people with money, but money itself is not evil. Money is inert. It just lies there until somebody uses it and puts it into motion.

Fallacy: Money is sacred

Some people revere money and use the lack of it as an excuse for all kinds of difficulties in their lives. They idealize money, looking to it as a kind of savior. Money too easily takes on a kind of supernatural existence in their minds—something mysterious, ultimately desirable, and elusive. In the process, money becomes sacred, and these people can end up worshipping the rich and famous.

In reality, riches and fame are no big deal. The rich and famous aren't much different from the rest of us—other than the fact that they're rich and famous. Like some of us, these people can be worried, driven, anxious, unhappy, frustrated, forlorn, loveless—and even frustrated about money.

So, money is not sacred or a source of salvation. This is an important point, since many people in our society approach the subject of money with the fear and trembling often reserved for deities. In reality, money does not merit this kind of awe. It's just a powerful tool for achieving whatever ends we choose.

Fallacy: Money is complicated

Money can be quite complicated, especially at the level of macroeconomics, international finance, or the tax code.

Personal finance is a different story. This aspect of money is not complicated. In fact, it's quite simple. We don't need high-powered math skills to manage money. Effective money management just hangs on the ability to add and subtract. That's it.

Money Management 101 has one basic premise, and it's amazingly simple: Spend less than you earn. Almost always, money worries result from spending more than is available. To solve those worries, make more money or spend less money or do both. Those three strategies just about exhaust all the options.

There's a payoff in believing that money (at least the personal finance part of it) is more complicated than it really is. After all, if money is complicated, no one can reasonably expect us to master it. If money is complicated, then we can blame our money problems on those few enlightened (and probably unscrupulous) people who really do understand it—and hoard it for themselves.

On the other hand, if managing our money is simple, we have every reason to take responsibility for this area of our lives. If we're in trouble with money, we might have to admit that we got ourselves there by making some ineffective choices or by developing some unwise habits.

That might sound frightening. Actually, it's liberating.

You could say that the core message of this chapter is a "bad news—good news" story. The "bad" news is that many of our money problems are self-imposed. There is a sense in which we choose to have money problems through the beliefs we have, the choices we make, and the actions we take.

The "good" news is that we can alter our beliefs, make new choices, and take new actions when it comes to money. If we dig ourselves into a financial hole, then we can climb out.

We can also drop the labels "good" and "bad." Instead of judging ourselves, we can just tell the truth about how we behave around money, choose what to change about that behavior, and get on with it.

Fallacy: Money is scarce

Another potent step to effectively handling money is to free yourself from believing that money is scarce.

The belief in scarcity is widespread. It's reflected in comments such as, "These days both people in a marriage have to work to make ends meet," or, "There's just not enough money to go around," or "Inflation makes it difficult for almost anyone to get ahead these days."

These ideas are common. They are also wrong.

Right now, the world's economy is teeming with trillions of dollars. Money is not scarce, and there's plenty of it to go around.

Fallacy: Frugality ain't fun

Frugality is an old-fashioned word that's received a lot of bad press in recent years. Frugality does not mean being cheap. It means getting the maximum enjoyment and value from every penny you spend. Despite what people say, it is possible for most of us to live happily on less than we earn. Penny-pinching can be a pleasure.

Aim to live on less money than you make. Save anywhere from 10 to 50 percent of your monthly income. If that suggestion sounds like science fiction, keep an open mind and give serious consideration to the ideas that follow in this chapter.

Keep in mind, too, that spending less and lowering your consumption not only offers personal benefits—it helps the planet as well. It takes energy and natural resources to produce every product and service we consume or use, and many of those resources are running out. Living a simpler lifestyle is a practical path toward conservation and preventing pollution.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Choose which beliefs to keep

My beliefs about money include . .

Now consider which beliefs you will keep and which beliefs you will choose to let go.

I intend to keep the following beliefs about money:

I intend to let go of the following beliefs about money:

List any new beliefs about money that you choose to adopt.

I now believe that money . . .

MONITOR IT

If you want to manage money more effectively, begin by telling the truth. Start by discovering exactly how much money you spend and make every month. Befriend the data. It matters not one iota how much or how little you make. Solutions begin to happen when you practice honesty about your current income and expenses—whatever they are.

Create specific categories for keeping track of how much you spend and earn each month. For example, track your expenses in categories, including those such as housing, food, entertainment, gifts, and interest payments. Do the same for income. Sample categories are wages, salary, tips, inheritances, interest payments from bonds, stock dividends, and capital gains.

In short, design a way to keep track of how money flows into and out of your life. This is especially useful when it comes to managing expenses. A little purchase here, a little purchase there, and pretty soon you've parted with a lot of money. Know—down to the penny—how much you spend and earn each month.

Most of us have three means of spending money: cash, checks, and credit cards. We can devise a system that, at the end of each month, shows us how much we spent in each of these ways.

Cash spending might be the most difficult to track. One possibility is to fold a 3x5 card around the bills in your wallet and keep a pen or pencil on you at all times. Every time you go into your wallet for cash, you will have to take money out from the folded card. Use this as a reminder to jot down how much you're spending and on what. At the end of the month, you can total the amounts in all your categories. It's tedious and very illuminating at the same time. You'll probably be surprised at how you actually spend your cash.

Checks are easier. If you enter each check as you write it, you will have a complete record whenever you need it.

When you use credit cards, keep all copies of credit card slips. A drawer, an envelope, or a manila file can work well. At the end of the month, take out all your slips and add them to the totals of each spending category.

By keeping track of all you spend in these three ways, you can know at the end of each month exactly how much you spent in every category. In the process, watch the fog roll out of your money life. There's power in knowing the details.

SPEND LESS OF IT

There are basically two schools of thought about how to solve personal money problems: the "more money in" school and the "less money out" school. For many people, the phrase *mastery of money* means learning fabulous and foolproof ways to increase income. This is the "more money in" school. Mastery of money is just as likely to come from the opposite direction—decreasing what is spent. This is the "less money out" school.

It's not that the two schools are incompatible. It's just that when people experience money woes, many of them believe that increasing their income is the only way out. It's not. If you want to develop a workable life with money, then you can develop your skills at spending it instead of just devising new ways to earn it.

Many of us have experienced the shortcomings of the "more money in" school. At first, it seems to offer the answer to money problems, and, perhaps, for a short time it does. After a while, though, many people discover that their spending rises steadily until it overtakes their increased income. Hello again, debt city.

The art of personal money management rests to a greater extent than many of us imagine on clearing out the clutter. You can reduce or cut out expenses that contribute little or nothing to your quality of life. You can think of your overall goal in money management as deciding what *not* to buy.

We can maintain a steady level of fulfillment in life, even as our spending decreases. Some people live on as little as 50 percent of what they earn. Often they report the joys of a pared-down lifestyle. There are fewer possessions to maintain, fewer loan payments with crippling interest charges, and less pressure to work at a job that pays well but scores high on the misery index. Add to that the pleasure of having a comfortable cushion of cash savings, and they just might sleep better, too.

If you're determined to cut your expenses, you'll find plenty of ways to do so. Following are a few possibilities:

Create a budget

One way to spend less money is to budget—that is, to develop a plan for spending money. Create one budget for the short-term (usually the next month) and another for the long-term (a year or more from now.)

Determine in advance how much money you'll spend for major, periodic expenses such insurance premiums or income taxes. Also budget for the routine expenses like housing, food, and entertainment. Once you know in advance how much money you plan to spend, you can begin setting that amount aside. Budgets are one way to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Weed out expenses that fail the "values test"

Clarify exactly what you want to gain from working and having money to spend. Each month, review what you spent and earned. Get the specific figures. Then ask, "Did money flow in and out of my life in a way that's consistent with my values? Is the way I spend and earn money allowing me time for the activities I consider most worthwhile?"

Some people find that they spend hundreds of dollars each year on magazines and books that they have no time to read. That's a clue to one expense that can be lowered or eliminated.

We can also re-examine expenses like the pricey vacation in Mexico that yielded little more than a sunburn and indigestion, the collector car that sits on blocks in the garage all year, the membership to the health club that you seldom visit because you'd rather be outside walking, the new clothes that are seldom worn, or the cable television subscription that just tempts you to watch more television than you want. If you're not really enjoying it, stop paying for it or sell it. You'll see the difference in your bank account. Ask, "Does this expense actually contribute to what I want to be, do, or have?"

Go after the big fish first

If you want to make a real dent in your expenses, look to the big-ticket items. Notice what you spend the most money on each month. Many people write their biggest checks for car payments, rent, or home mortgages.

See what you can do to reduce these expenses. If you own two cars, consider getting along with one. You can use public transportation, take cabs, or even rent cars when you're in a crunch. When looking for a place to live, consider a more modest house or an apartment. Shy away from major urban areas, where housing costs often border on astronomical. Rent, share a house, or buy a duplex and rent half. If you're sending children to college, consider a public school over a private one. These are just a few examples.

Pay yourself first

You are as valuable as your car, your house, and all the other things you pay for each month. So pay yourself, and do it first.

The money you pay yourself is called savings. This is the money you invest in yourself—your education, retirement, vacations, and other major expenses. It's the money you invest in your future.

If you wait until the end of the month to set aside your savings, you might end up with only pocket change. Instead, pay yourself as soon as you get your paycheck. Right up front, before you have a chance to spend it, put 10 percent (or 20 percent or more) of your take-home pay into an insured savings account or another safe investment. Save this money first, and you may not even miss it.

Put a lid on plastic

Interest charges on credit cards can range climb as high as 20 percent. That's a lot. It's one-fifth of the cost of any item you charge. Imagine working for five days a week and getting paid for only four. That's what happens when people rely on high-interest credit cards to make it from month to month. Up to one-fifth of what they earn can go down the drain in interest payments.

To avoid this trap, use credit cards only as a substitute for carrying cash. Don't use them as a substitute for having the cash in the first place. If you pay for something with a credit card, set aside the same amount in cash. Then pay off the balance on your credit cards each month.

If you have thoughtlessly accumulated large credit card balances, remember that many banks offer "bill payer" loans. These are loans that you can use to consolidate all your debts and pay off your cards at a lower interest rate.

Buy it for less

The coat that costs $150 at the store closest to your house might be available for $75 at the shopping center two miles away. Likewise, you might be able to save hundreds of dollars on a stereo system or thousands of dollars on a car, just by shopping around. Keeping a lookout for sales, price wars, discount stores, coupons, and estate sales is another way to trim your expenses with little extra effort.

Get the same benefit for less

Before you plunk down your hard-earned cash, ask, "What is the benefit that spending this money will get me?" Go beneath the obvious payoff to the hidden benefit.

Say, for example, that you see a car you really want. You ask, "What's the benefit of owning this item?" The obvious answer is that you get a car to drive. Beneath that payoff, however, is the true benefit, which is having access to a reliable source of transportation.

With that answer, you can brainstorm other ways to get the same benefit without buying that car—or for that matter, any car. Buying a less expensive car or taking the bus might deliver the benefit you're really after.

When we're honest, we might discover that our desired benefits include status, prestige, and keeping up appearances. Then we can choose if we are really willing to pay extra money for such intangible, and often fleeting, benefits.

Without examining our spending motives, it's difficult to see whether a purchase is fulfilling a subconscious goal and if the true benefit is worth the cost.

Don't buy it

If you're a procrastinator, use your habit as a tool to avoid spending. When you spot something that's just itching to leap off the store shelf into your shopping bag, tell yourself that you're pressed for time right now and that you'll get around to buying it later. Keep putting off the purchase, and you might discover yourself living a wonderful life without that precious item.

If this doesn't work for you, experiment with a cooling-off period before major purchases. Consider allowing one hour of waiting time for every 10 dollars of purchase price. So, if you're contemplating buying a pair of pants that costs $50, give yourself five hours before you buy it. It's amazing how frivolous that pair of pants might seem five hours from now.

Leave your cash in the bank

One way to spend less is to have less money in your pocket. Keep $100 dollars of spare cash in your billfold, and you're likely to spend all of it over the next few days or weeks. Put a $20 bill in its place, and you might discover yourself skipping that extra ice cream cone or your twice-weekly dose of burgers and fries at Cow Kingdom.

Fix things yourself

The bills for plumbers, carpenters, and mechanics can add up to hundreds or thousands of dollars over the course of a year. Often it's worth hiring professionals to do tasks that are beyond your current skills. Another option is to increase your skills and learn to fix some things yourself. You may not be able to do a full-fledged tune-up on your car, but you could learn to change the oil, rotate the tires, or replace the battery. That might save you the going rate for parts and labor at your local garage.

Look for the hidden expenses in eating

Many people would be amazed to find out what they spend on fast food and pizza deliveries during the year. Those extra doses of fat, calories, and cholesterol can drain your pockets with lightning speed.

And then there are those luscious pies, gourmet cookies, and premium coffee brands that look so tantalizing on the grocery store shelves—especially when you shop on an empty stomach. Within seconds, such temptations can send a food budget down the garbage disposal.

You can avoid such unnecessary food expenses by cooking for yourself, shopping for food after you eat, bagging your own lunches, and avoiding snacks. The difference in changing these habits is likely to show up in improved health as well as in decreased spending. It's very possible that in the long run, your medical bills will significantly decrease as well.

Use a journal to focus your thinking and action

After you discover the truth about the way you handle money, decide what to do about it. If you're worried about money, write Intention Statements about specific ways to 1) earn more money, 2) spend less money, or 3) do some combination of both. Pay special attention to the option of spending less.

> ***Develop a plan of control over your spending. Then you will make progress toward the kind of living which means the most to you.***
>
> –Sylvia Porter

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Audit your charges

Get copies of all your monthly credit card statements for the last year. Calculate the total amount of interest charges you paid.

The total amount of interest payments I made during the last year was . . .

In the future, I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Predict restaurant expenses

First, without checking any records, guess how much you spend in an average month on dining out in restaurants.

My guess is that I spend about $_____ a month .

Now review your records and search your memory. Ask others who might have been involved to help you. Come as close as you can to determining exactly how much you spent eating out during the last three months. Divide by three to get your average.

I calculate that I spend $_____ eating out in restaurants in an average month.

Now ask if you want to make any changes in this habit.

I intend to . . .

INVEST IT

Once you gain skill at handling the month-to-month bills, it pays to adopt some strategies for taking care of yourself in the future.

Here's where you enter the vast world of saving, investing, and financial planning. When you ask for help with these issues, you're likely to receive lots of contradictory advice—often from people who have something to sell you.

A stockbroker might tell you to put all your extra money in the stock market. A realtor might swear that buying a house is the best investment you could ever make. And meanwhile, Uncle Sam wants you to buy savings bonds.

Sorting through all the hype can give you a headache. Save yourself from pain you don't need by keeping in mind a few basic principles.

Take the 10 percent solution

Simply set aside some portion of your money up front, every time you get paid. A commonly recommended amount is 10 percent of your income, after taxes.

Of course, you can save less than that, or lots more. The main idea is to get into a regular savings habit. Stash this money away in a safe place where you can get it on short notice if you need it. Possibilities include an insured savings account or a money market mutual fund. It's amazing how quickly your money can build, even at modest interest rates, when you regularly save 10 percent of your income.

You can start saving even if you're living in an efficiency apartment on a diet of brown rice and beans. Almost everyone has "fluff stuff" in their budget—items such as CDs we'll never listen to, clothes we'll never wear, books we'll never crack, or food we'll never eat. Often these are things we buy compulsively, month after month, even though we derive little or no value from them. By carefully tracking our income and expenses each month, we can spot these items and purge them from our possessions.

Discover the joy of a cushion

After you get into the habit of saving, develop an emergency fund. Many financial planners recommend that in this fund you include enough money to live on for six months. This is a place to store money for a genuine emergency or other unanticipated expense.

After you develop this cash cushion, maintain it. If you withdraw money from this fund, replace the money as soon as possible. Add to this fund from time to time. Many people find that their monthly living expenses increase over time. The amount you keep in your emergency fund can grow to reflect this fact.

Save for big expenses

Once your emergency fund is securely in place, you can start saving money for something you value. Examples are a college education for you or your children, a secure retirement, a house, a car, or a vacation.

Although money lenders won't like this idea, it may make lots of sense not to borrow money for a car, a vacation, or even a home. Having to repay loans for a car or last year's vacation can be a real drag if you're also unemployed and unsure about how to pay for your next meal. Living loan-free can provide amazing freedom.

Go into debt consciously

If you do borrow money to buy something, consider what you could sell the object for if you needed to get cash in a hurry. Then borrow only that amount of money. If, for example, you borrow $15,000 (the list price) to buy a car, keep in mind that the resale value of that car may go down to $12,000 the second you drive it off the

lot. In a sense, you've lost $3,000 in just a few minutes. Instead, save up for a $5,000 down payment and borrow only the $10,000.

Using the same logic, we can see that it's usually unwise to borrow money to go on a holiday trip overseas. It's hard to find any buyers for a used vacation.

In certain situations, you can sometimes eventually gain back all the money you borrow if it is invested wisely. Borrowing money to attend college is an example. The overall increase in your lifetime earnings can be far greater than the amount of your student loan. In such cases, it may make sense to go into debt.

Don't gamble the grocery money

It pays to keep your savings safe. Determine how much risk you can tolerate when you have extra money to invest.

When you have money beyond your emergency fund, manage it wisely. Invest most of it in safe, relatively liquid investments such as certificates of deposit, money market mutual funds, and treasury bills, notes, or bonds. This is not a get-rich-quick scheme, but you'll build a solid foundation for the future.

If you decide to put money in more risky investments (such as stocks, other types of bonds, or aggressive mutual funds), do it consciously. When considering these alternatives, part only with money that you can afford to lose.

Financial advice: Consider the source

Most of the time, we hear financial advice from people who have a vested interest in persuading us—realtors, stockbrokers, and bankers. This information is like asking the American Dairy Association whether or not it's a good idea to drink milk. What do we expect them to say?

Realtors and bankers gain a lot in interest and commissions when we buy homes. It's no wonder that they say, "One of the best investments you can make is to buy a house. Owning a home is a great deal. You'll make money in the long run."

Of course, stockbrokers recommend that you invest in the stock market. What's more, many will recommend that you buy and sell your stocks a lot, since that's how they get their commissions.

This is not to condemn all bankers, realtors, and stockbrokers. Some of them do suspend their own short-term interests to give outstanding advice to clients. Even so, finding these people is tricky. That's why it pays to consider the source whenever you ask for financial advice.

Neither is this to say that bankers, realtors, and stockbrokers are villains who want to rip you off. The point is that these are salespeople, not advisers. Here's one way to remember the difference: Suppose you walk into a department store looking for a television set. A salesperson greets you and points to the newest model. "It's the best one we carry," she says. "All the most up-to-date features. You can't go wrong with it." Most people recognize this to be something other than expert advice. In fact, it's a sales pitch. There's nothing wrong with a sales pitch. It's just useful to recognize one when we hear it.

Realtors, bankers, and stockbrokers are salespeople; their main purpose is persuading you to buy. The bankers are selling money, the realtors are selling home ownership, and the stockbrokers are selling investment in the stock market. We can relate to them in the same way we relate to the salesperson in the department store: listen, weigh the facts, and take into account the salesperson's self-interest.

Consider seeing a certified financial planner rather than a stockbroker. It can be wise to put some of your extra money in the stock market—but not all of it. Also consider putting that money elsewhere, such as in real estate or mutual funds.

So, empower yourself. No one takes your financial interest as deeply to heart as you do. For the most part, manage your own money instead of relegating that task to someone else. If you do seek financial advice, find an adviser who has no vested interest in the financial decision you make.

Choose how much to save

Figure out your total take-home pay per month or per year. Now multiply the sum by .10. The result is 10 percent of your take-home pay—$100 for every $1,000 you earn. This is a commonly recommended amount for people to save.

If this seems like a lot, keep in mind that you can build up to it in steps. Also, realize that some people with modest incomes save as much as 30 percent of their income and still live comfortable and fulfilling lives. Many people find that painless budget trimming—such as cutting down on fast food and movie tickets—can yield extra savings very quickly.

Write down how much of your income you will be saving each month, one year from now. Also list how much you will save a month, starting now. Then describe the actions you will take immediately to save that much of your income.

I intend to . . .

Match values and money

Begin this exercise with a stack of blank 3x5 cards. On each card, write one of the expenses that you incurred during the last month. Be sure to put just one expense per card—for example, "Rent: $500." Create at least 20 of these cards. If you need help, consult your check register.

Next, create a list of your fundamental values. (For some pointers, see the power process in Part One titled, "Define your values, aligh your actions.") List these values on 3x5 cards, also, one value per card. Examples of values include health, happiness, contribution, fun, integrity, and so on.

Now, sort your cards. See if you can pair every expense card with a value card. For example, the $15 you spent on a health club membership last month could fit with the value of health. You might end up with a stack of cards that do not fit under any of your values or commitments.

Afterward, assess how well your spending aligns with your values. Write a Discovery Statement that sums up what you learned.

I discovered that I . . .

Finish by describing how you will bring your future spending more in line with your values.

I intend to . . .

GAIN WEALTH WITHOUT MORE MONEY

As strange as it might sound, being wealthy and having a lot of money might be two different things. Wealth could mean enjoying what you already have. Financial independence could mean having enough money to live a life that's consistent with your values. It could also include having enough money saved so that you can meet an unexpected emergency, avoid borrowing to replace items that wear out, or live comfortably for months in case you quit your job.

It's tempting to divide humanity into the "haves" and the "have-nots", according to how much money and material goods we possess. When we do, it's easy for most of us to assign ourselves to the "have-nots" category. Just look at soap operas or prime-time television shows that take us inside the homes of celebrities. We come away dazzled by shots of 20-room houses with Olympic-sized pools and private movie theaters. Millions conclude such scenarios offer a true definition of wealth.

This concept of wealth is a real put-down for the rest of us who don't live in mansions or own a fleet of Mercedes. Consider instead, that the vast majority of people in Canada, the United States, and Europe are truly rich. The term *wealthy* could apply to more than just a tiny elite. It could apply to most of us.

At first that sounds outrageous. Yet keep in mind the facts. For most of human history, people lived with far fewer luxuries than the average wage-earner has today. Even royal families in the past had little or nothing that resembled electricity, central heating, air conditioning, CD players, or telephones. For centuries, even the most affluent people had to wash clothes by hand, travel by horse and carriage, and live with the threat of countless diseases that modern medicine has eradicated.

Today, you can access the collective knowledge of humanity for free since countless volumes are there for the taking in the library. For a nominal fee, you can travel across town at speeds that would have dizzied Louis XIV; just hop on the bus. For as little as $1.50 you can see a spectacle of sight and sound that would put to shame the most lavish entertainment of the past; just go to a movie.

Today, if you sleep in a warm, dry place, have enough to eat, and use public transportation, you are better off materially than most human beings of the past—and hundreds of millions of human beings still alive today. You are already wealthy.

Free or inexpensive and still valuable

When most people ask themselves, "What can I do for some fun?, they end up opting for activities that cost money. By staying with the question a little longer, we can emerge with a long list of fun to be had for free.

Of course, there are vast areas of life that have nothing to do with money. Demonstrate this for yourself. Make a list of the activities you could do and enjoy that cost little or nothing. Examples might include stargazing, visiting a neighbor, going to the library to listen to tapes or read, skipping stones on a lake, or catching fireflies. Brainstorm as many items as you can in the space below:

Now write an Intention Statement that describes the free or low-cost activities you will try out or even do on a regular basis.

I intend to . . .

Ways to Cry Uncle

Anyone can get into financial trouble. Even the most strong-willed consumers can cave in to those voices on television and radio that urge us to buy, buy, buy. At other times, a divorce, a hospital stay, or other crisis can drain our savings with little or no warning.

In any case, you have options. Following are four strategies to keep in mind if you have left-over month at the end of your money:

Befriend the data

People often drift into financial trouble slowly, a few dollars at a time, because they remain in a fog about the details of their spending and earning. Credit card debts and installment loans can reproduce like rabbits when nobody is looking. (Frequently nobody *is* looking.) We can often prevent a serious money problem if we just keep our eyes open and are aware of the facts.

If you're in financial trouble, begin by finding out all the details: how much you owe, to whom, and how much money you can count on earning in the near future. Knowing the real figures involved might lower your anxiety level and prepare you to manage the details.

Befriend your creditors

You might not be able to pay the full monthly amounts due on your loans or other obligations. If so, contact your creditors and explain that you're willing to send as much money as you can every month, even if it's not the full amount. Many companies will reason that it's better to get something rather than nothing, and will cooperate with your plan.

You could even ask them to suspend the interest in consideration of your difficult circumstances and genuine willingness to repay.

Befriend a credit counselor

Most cities offer sources of free or low-cost credit counseling. Among them are county social service offices, legal aid societies, community mental health clinics, and community credit counseling agencies. Credit counselors can help you create a workable plan. Many will even help you contact your creditors and describe your plan to them.

If you do see a counselor, have the data you need in hand: records of your income, receipts, bills, and the past year's income tax forms.

Befriend a budget

Making a big mistake with money can be the most powerful incentive to manage it wisely in the future. The experience of financial failure will not be a disaster if it leads to permanent changes in the way you spend and earn money. Use the experience as an opportunity to start implementing the suggestions in this chapter.

One of the habits we can adopt after experiencing financial difficulty is to maintaining a budget, as explained earlier in this chapter. A budget need not be a straightjacket. Instead, you can view it as a way to take charge of your finances and prevent money troubles in the future.

Chapter 4

Career

In this chapter you'll find...

Two attitudes that can turbo-charge your career search.
Just choose and remember that you can use the "chooser's remorse clause."

List your job skills: Discovery Statement.
After reviewing significant accomplishments in your life, make a comprehensive list of your job skills.

List possible jobs: Discovery Statement.
List at least five possible jobs that you would enjoy—jobs that draw on skills you want to use.

Start talking: Discovery Statement.
Interview people in positions that you are interested in obtaining.

Nine ways to choose your next career.
Use a variety of strategies to plunge headfirst into career planning.

Discover what you already know–exercise
People who say they have no clue about what career they want, actually have made many choices already.

Write your career plan now–exercise
List specific and detailed steps you will take to make your next career change.

Use four steps to begin networking–exercise
Set goals, carry a card, evaluate your present contacts, and expand your career network.

Two Attitudes That Can Turbocharge Your Career Search

People often come to career planning with a lot of fear and trembling. Often they're afraid of making a mistake of choosing the wrong career. This fear can grow to such proportions that it prevents people from ever beginning a career plan. Keeping the following two points in mind can help us get unstuck.

Just choose

Career planning is a matter of creation and choice, not discovery. It's appropriate that this field is called career planning and not career revelation. The name of your next career will probably not be inscribed on stone tablets that you discover in an ancient Myan ruin. It's more likely that you will choose your next career after making an inventory of your skills and examining the available job options.

There's no one right career for you, waiting to be discovered through magic or mystical revelation. There's no formula for revealing the secret job that's just right for you. At some point, you just consider all your current career options and choose.

Use the "chooser's remorse clause"

At one time or another, all of us have difficulty selecting among the many career options. When this happens, we can think in terms of *choices* rather than *decisions*. Some people think this is just playing with words; there's more to it than that.

A choice is a selection of one thing over another, a preference. To *decide* more often involves passing judgment, forming a definite opinion, or arriving at a final conclusion.

Cide—the root of the word *decide*—gives us a clue here. That's the same syllable found in *suicide, genocide,* and *homicide*. With it comes an image of killing something. Indeed, deciding can feel like a kind of murder—a killing of alternatives.

Career planning offers many examples. Some people facing this process say, "Well, I don't want to be a firefighter. I don't want to be an engineer or a teacher. I guess all that's left is to go into sales." And with that type of reasoning they have killed off the alternatives and assumed their decision is final, forever: "If I decide to go into sales, I have to be in sales until I retire. My fate is sealed." No wonder deciding is tough.

Deciding in this way is not a freeing experience. In fact, it might feel more like entering prison.

There's another option: choosing. Choosing is a process that leaves other options intact. Return to the person who's planning a career. She could look at a list of potential careers and say, "Let's see. What do I want to do? I could be a teacher, an engineer, or a firefighter. And I could even go into sales. Well, I'm not sure, so I'll just choose for now." This person has left open her options. She can opt for sales now and reconsider her choice later. At that time, she might choose to stay in sales. Or she might change careers totally and train to be a teacher. Either way, there's no harm done. According to employment research, it's likely that most of us will change careers—not just jobs—several times in our life.

The key feature of this process of choosing is that no killing takes place. Not only do the alternatives escape unharmed—they're in robust health. Choosing for now does not rule out choosing again in the future. Our options are still alive.

One tool that promotes this attitude is the "chooser's remorse clause." This is like the buyer's remorse clause, an early effort at consumer protection. Such measures date back to the days when some door-to-door salesmen used tricks, manipulations, and half-truths to peddle a year's supply of soap or enough cutlery to require a mortgage on your home. In response, some states passed laws stating that within, say, three days, you could change your mind. You could return the items and tear up the sales agreement. You owned nothing and were not obligated to pay.

A chooser's remorse clause is much the same. The advantage of using one is that you can experiment. "Well, I'm not sure which option to pick," you can say, "But, today I feel like this one." So, you choose that option and sleep on it. You also talk to other people about it and see how it feels after some hours pass. And, if that choice just doesn't sit right at the end of your remorse period—whether that's three hours or three weeks—you'll know it. Then, you can choose again with no penalty or guilt.

Seeing this, some people may accuse you of being fickle. "I'm not fickle," you can justly reply, "I'm merely exercising my chooser's remorse clause."

Even when a choice makes it past the remorse period, you can still review it later. After you've chosen a career, for example, you can review that choice every month or every year. At those times, you can step back, get the big picture, and see if your choice still makes sense.

Note that invoking the chooser's remorse clause is not the same as being wishy-washy or uncommitted. We can be 100 percent committed to trying an alternative or experimenting with a strategy. We can play full out even as we keep our options open.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

List your job skills

To discover your potential job skills, on a separate piece of paper, write a mini-autobiography. Describe times when you succeeded at tasks that were important to you. Don't worry about the quality of your writing. Just get as many details down as fast as you can.

Now, study what you've written for a few minutes. Ask yourself what skills you were using during each incident you described. Some examples of skills are writing, drawing, teaching, listening, managing, organizing, counseling, and administrating. List those skills in the space below.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

List possible jobs

Using the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* or the *Occupational Outlook Handbook,* write at least five possible jobs that you would enjoy and that draw on the skills you listed in the previous exercise. The jobs that I would enjoy include . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Start talking

Find and interview at least one person who is currently in a job that interests you. Write a Discovery Statement about what you learned in the interview. I discovered that I . . .

NINE WAYS TO CHOOSE YOUR NEXT CAREER

You may have no idea where to start in planning your career. Listing job skills, going on interviews, preparing résumés, going to the library—it all starts to sound like a lot of work.

The solution is to get started somewhere—anywhere. Don't worry about doing the "right" thing first. Just dig in and tackle the task that appeals to you most. That task can lead to others, which in turn lead to more. In due time, you can emerge with an impressive plan for your next career.

Keep in mind a couple of points before you go further. First, be willing to invest some time in planning your career. Usually there's little chance of a quick fix when it comes to choosing a career. Career planning does not represent an overnight solution; it's a skill we get to practice for most of our life.

Second, be willing to experiment and learn through trial and error. A wise career choice might follow one or more stints at doing what you *don't* want to do. This is valuable information that's hard to get in other ways. Don't label the jobs you disliked in the past as failures. See them as "career research" instead.

Use the following nine suggestions to begin creating a specific and detailed career plan. Although the suggestions are numbered, you can take the steps in any order. You can use them to take yourself one step closer to a career you'll love.

(The following suggestions are presented as if you were looking for employment in a job as your career choice. There are many people who want to own a business or do freelance work instead of working for another. If you are interested in starting your own business or doing consulting, please translate the examples in these nine steps to fit your career direction.)

1. Know yourself

Instead of starting your job search by revising your résumé and scouring the want ads, be introspective and look inside. Reflect on your past. Bring to mind the times in your life when you demonstrated a mastery of certain skills. Recall the projects in school and earlier jobs that allowed you to play full out and experience high satisfaction.

In each of these cases, you used certain skills. Skills are the core of what you have to offer a future employer or client. Skills are what people pay big money for.

To get the most out of this reflection, describe these successful times in writing. Doing this is not only fun—it's the foundation of an effective job search.

This is the stage at which many people flounder or give up. They emerge with a short list of skills, or no skills at all. Usually this results from misunderstanding the term *skill*. This word refers only in part to specialized areas of expertise—such as knowledge of accounting, knowing how to operate large construction equipment, or physics—that prepare you for a specific job. Those are examples of *content skills*. Also keep in mind *transferable skills*—those that we're likely to use in our daily routine. These skills can apply across the board to many jobs. Speaking, listening, writing, organizing, planning, budgeting, supervising—all are examples of transferable skills. If you remember to include these on your inventory of skills, you'll find that your list expands as if by magic.

2. Know the world of work

Once you have a list of skills that you'd like to use in a new job, find out which jobs call for those skills.

Many people underestimate the vast universe of jobs out there in the world. If you don't believe it, just go to the library and check out two government publications: the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Listed there are hundreds of jobs, many of which may be new to you. Everyone knows about job titles like lawyer, police officer, accountant, or journalist. But you might have forgotten or may never have heard about titles such as piano tuner, video artist, grant writer, massage therapist, or studio musician.

As you study the vast array of job titles, hone in on those that call for the skills you want to use. Then search out people currently working in those jobs and find out everything you can about what they do. (Keep in mind that any one job may have several different titles.) Invest a few bucks and a few hours in interviewing these people or taking them out to lunch. Your investment will pay off one hundredfold, if what they tell you leads to a job you love.

Use lots of resources to find out about jobs. A librarian can help. There are more jobs to choose from than most of us imagine, and the list is growing constantly.

3. Create a match

There comes a time in every career plan to name names. Locate specific organizations that employ people with your preferred job title or set of skills. Now contact the people who can hire you directly. Write. Call. Visit. Make yourself known. Do this even if your target companies or clients have no current job openings. They'll likely remember you when it does come time to hire, and in some cases, they might even create a position for you. In addition, tell everybody you know that you're looking for a job.

This kind of direct approach eliminates depending on the want ads. Most of the available jobs aren't listed there, anyway. When people rely only on the want ads, they become reactive instead of proactive. They're like pigeons hoping to nibble on a few crumbs that happen to be lying about. When you undertake a job search that's based on a thorough self-assessment and a detailed knowledge of the work world, you're more likely to fly straight to the feast.

Write a résumé that your prospective employers will remember. Give it visual impact and keep it short. A résumé generally gets only 10 to 30 seconds of attention. Remember that the main purpose of a résumé is to get an interview.

Before interviewing, do your homework. Learn as much about the organization as you can. Then present yourself as a problem solver, not a job hunter. Show how the skills you offer can help the company attain its goals or increase its profit. Back up your claims by describing past accomplishments. Listen. Ask questions. Then lighten up, smile, and ask for the job. Follow up on the interview with a thank-you letter and then stay in contact. Keep in mind that every "no" you encounter when looking for a new job is just one step closer to the "yes" that awaits you.

4. Network

Networking is a fancy word for seeking and maintaining contacts. Those contacts can exist for many purposes, including getting a job, providing emotional support, or simply exchanging ideas. Knowing the "right" people is not something you have to leave to chance. It's a skill that can be learned and practiced.

The best networks are based on both giving and receiving. Be willing to offer services and information as well as get them. You may forge lasting relationships by helping people get what they want.

5. Re-create your current job

Getting a new job does not always mean leaving your current job. Instead, consider a strategy for transforming your current job.

Say that you're a waiter in a restaurant. A large proportion of your income comes from tips. You can therefore earn more money by striving for excellence at customer service. Without changing jobs or your base hourly rate, you might be able to significantly re-create your job into one that pays much more than the one you used to have.

Doing your current job with real excellence is a strategy for anyone, even those who don't depend on tips or commissions. Increase the energy, enthusiasm, and skill that you bring to your daily work, and you may well find a promotion, raise, or a better job waiting in the wings.

6. Ask someone else to plan your career

Invite someone who knows you fairly well to brainstorm some possible career goals for you. Ask this person, "If you were going to live my life, what would you do for a living?" Ask your friend to make up ideas for at least 10 minutes while you take notes.

Some people find this to be a strange suggestion at first. Keep in mind that creating plans for others is something that many of us do. Teachers plan activities for their students. Parents plan activities for their children. Salespeople help create plans for their customers. Employers devise plans for employee performance.

Asking others to help plan our career is a fast and sure-fire way to gain new ideas. Even people who've known us for only a short time, can come up with surprisingly useful and creative suggestions. And, it is always up to us whether to accept their ideas.

If you want to get the most from this suggestion, practice nonjudgmental listening. Reacting defensively to another's ideas for your career defeats the purpose of this exercise. If someone suggests a career for you that's obviously off the mark, just write it down without judging it. Know that you can reject the idea later if you choose.

7. Stand in the future and work backward

One approach to career planning involves creative visualization. Mentally project five to 10 years into the future, and see yourself as already working at your dream career. Imagine in detail what you do each day. Also, visualize the location of your work and picture the people who work with you. To remember this visualization in the future, put it in writing.

With this image in mind, ask yourself what you did to arrive at this ideal job. Don't worry about being complete or accurate at this point. Just write quickly, listing as many possible paths to your dream career as you can.

After taking a break, come back to the descriptions of your dream career and what you wrote about how you achieved it. While letting go of notions that seem truly inappropriate, look carefully for ideas that can become a working part of your career plan.

8. Be a shadow

Seek out people who work at the kind of jobs that interest you. Then actually accompany these people on the job. See what they do. Observe their moment-to-moment activities. If possible, do parts of their jobs yourself. Also, ask people how they trained for and arrived at their current job. This kind of applied research can generate practical ideas for your career plan.

9. Forget about money . . . for a while

When some people begin choosing careers, they allow financial considerations to squash their sense of possibility: "Training for that career would cost too much money," or "I can't do what I really want, because I probably wouldn't make enough money."

As a quick aid to increasing your creativity in career planning, ask, and answer the following questions:

1. How would you fill your time for the rest of your life if you were financially independent and didn't have to work?

2. What would you do if a philanthropist paid you $150,000 a year to do whatever you said would benefit your community?

3. Pretend that a philanthropist will pay enough to employ you and 10 people you supervise to do something of value in your community. What would you do? What if you had 50 people working for you? 100 people?

After reviewing your answers, decide if any of them indicate a goal that you're actually willing to pursue. Put those goals in writing and add them to your career plan.

EXERCISE

Discover what you already know

People often draw a blank when asked what they would like to do for a living." They often respond, "I have no idea!" The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that even the people who say this already have a career plan of sorts. They probably know a lot about what they really want to do.

See this for yourself. Begin by getting a stack of 3x5 cards and a pencil. Using a library reference book such as the Dictionary of Occupational Titles *or the* Occupational Outlook Handbook, *list 30 to 50 random job titles on these cards, one title for each card. Then sort the cards into three piles: Yes, No, Maybe. The "yes" cards are jobs you'd probably like to do. "Maybe" cards are jobs you'd consider, and "no" cards are those you'd eliminate right off the bat.*

People who do this exercise often discover that they have a big stack of "no" cards. This is a useful insight. An essential aspect of career planning is knowing what you don't want to do for a living.

Pay special attention to your "yes" pile. It's tough to make a mistake in career planning if you choose one of these for your next job. Chances are you'd be happy with any one of them. At the very least, you owe it to yourself to learn some more about these jobs.

By the way, don't throw away your "maybe" cards. Save them as options for a future career.

EXERCISE

Write your career plan now

Career planning offers a potent application for the Discovery and Intention Journal System. You can write Discovery Statements that sum up the key insights you gained from library research and interviews. You can also write a series of Intention Statements. In small, specific steps, lay out what you will do to land your next job. Assign a due date for getting each step done, and—voilá!—your career plan is done.

If you're not sure how to do this, that's fine. Just do it anyway. There is no one "right" way to lay out a career plan. If a plan excites you and moves you into action, then it's right for you.

After completing the exercises and Journal Entries in this chapter, write a detailed career plan. Do this in a special journal or notebook. List specific steps you will take. Remember to include time lines for accomplishing each task.

EXERCISE

Use four steps to begin networking

One way to learn about possible careers you'd enjoy, and to actually land new jobs, is to network. Use this exercise to get started. It involves four steps.

Step 1. Set goals

Focus your efforts by choosing your networking goals. What kind of information, help, or service are you looking for from other people? You might want an instructor's name, a classmate's phone number, a job lead, a résumé writing tip, or something else. Be specific. What changes do you want in your life as a result of making contacts? They can range from a new fact to a new relationship or a new career.

Step 2. Carry a card

Carry something to give to people when you meet them. This can be a business card, rolodex card, or simply a card with your name, address, and phone number. Ask if the person you're talking to has a card for you.

Step 3. Evaluate present contacts

Think about the people you already know. What are their areas of expertise? Do they know others who could offer the information you want? Record this data on 3x5 cards or on a computer so you can frequently review your contacts.

Step 4. Write an Intention Statement

After you have a list of names and phone numbers, you can get down to work by setting specific goals. For example, make an intention to call three people on your list within the next week.

Concerning networking, I intend to . . .

Chapter 5

Contribution

In this chapter you'll find...

Give yourself away.
Enjoy more happiness, health, love and wealth by giving yourself away.

Explore reasons for not contributing: Discovery/ Intention Statement.
Spend a few minutes thinking about opportunities to contribute that you have passed up.

Bring the problem home: Discovery Statement.
Bring a social problem home in a vivid, concrete way. Then, look for ways to contribute.

Imagine then contribute: Intention Statement.
Imagine you had all the time and money you wanted. Decide how you could contribute and whether you will start today.

Contribute before knowing how
When it comes to contribution, we can accomplish much by relating to people, not organizations or bureaucracies.

Form a support group
Contribute to others by joining with them for a common purpose.

Make your struggles public.
By sharing our problems and solutions, we can help others who are grappling with the same issues.

GIVE YOURSELF AWAY

As we grow up, we receive two different messages regarding the path to happiness. These messages seem to contradict each other. One message is to be selfish and take care of ourselves. The other message is to be generous and to take care of others. Maybe these two concepts are more related than they seem.

As we read popular magazines and books, the ever-present message is to take care of ourselves. We are advised how to exercise more effectively and eat healthier. Even the focus of this book has been on promoting our own happiness, health, love, and wealth.

On the other hand, the wisest members of the human race seem to suggest a different course. All the world's major spiritual traditions claim that we will achieve fulfillment in life by devoting our energies to something other than ourselves—another person, a project, or a value that transcends us.

They suggest that our lives be one sustained opportunity to promote the health and well-being of family members and friends. And they recommend that we don't stop there, but that we give our time, talent, and money to organizations and projects that promote the well-being of the entire human race.

Maybe these two points of view are not as contradictory as they first appear. Contributing to others may be the most practical way we can contribute to ourselves. It may be that we should give to others, not because it's noble or moral, but because it will make our lives more interesting, fulfilling, and fun. As one philosopher put it, "The self is too small and object for perpetual enthusiasm."

This same idea is expressed in the following quote, attributed to playwright George Bernard Shaw:

> This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.
>
> I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and that as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.
>
> I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" to me. It is a sort of splendid torch that I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

Through contributing to others, we say yes to taking on more in our lives. In the process, we'll find that problems we used to worry about get handled or disappear. For example, when we promise to organize a fundraiser for our children's school next week, decisions like whether or not to watch television tonight start to take care of themselves.

Whether we operate from a sense of selfishness or from a sense of contribution, we may end up making the same choices. If we are truly selfish, we might discover that the fastest road to happiness is through contribution. If we are indeed noble and altruistic, we may discover that the best way to fulfill our purpose of giving to others is to start by being selfish.

Practice the following strategies whether your purpose is to fill yourself up or to give yourself away.

Contribute to yourself

Effective service comes from strength. Feeling inadequate or inferior gets in the way of service. It takes a self-assured person to serve another. Serving is not the same as being a servant. When we are reasonably satisfied with ourselves, we can begin to contribute to others.

We can begin by filling our lives with happiness, health, love, and wealth. Then we're in a position to promote those qualities in other people. It's hard to give what we don't have.

Give from desire, not obligation

We give to others because we think we should or because it's the right thing to do. We also might expect something in return. Such giving can get mired in resentment, especially when other people don't give back. A true gift is one that is given with no expectation of receiving anything in return.

In the name of contribution we can also use feelings of obligation to be hard on ourselves and others. We might berate ourselves for taking time off, relaxing in front of the television, or just sitting and doing nothing. We might judge ourselves harshly after saying something foolish. We can punish ourselves after making a mistake. Or we might scold others for the way they spend their lives, accusing them of not contributing enough.

Actions and gifts that come from obligation often become contaminated will resentment or blame. When this happens, we are no longer contributing. We are doing a disservice both to ourselves and others.

Avoid assumptions

It also pays to be careful about assuming what is good for another person. When contributing to people, trust their judgment about what is good for them. If you think that what they want is not good for them, then don't feel obligated to contribute.

Choose how much to contribute

Contribute your money. Contribute your time. How much? There's no ironclad rule, though you can follow this guideline: Give so that it's more than a token gesture and less than a sacrifice.

Give enough money to generate your own excitement about what you're doing—and not enough to drain your account. Give enough time to generate your enthusiasm—and not so much that you drain your energy.

Grant requests

Start contributing by responding to what others ask of you. Grant both spoken and unspoken requests. Make more and bigger promises and work like mad to keep them. This is one way that you can naturally generate enthusiasm.

Get past resignation

People often feel overwhelmed when contributing. Some people feel resigned, and they put off contributing: "My efforts are so futile. There is just too much to do." Of course, there is. There always is too much to do. If we ever think we are caught up, either we've fallen asleep to what's possible or our goals are far too limited.

Once we recognize our own resignation, it begins to lose its power. We can see getting past resignation as just one more step on the road to contributing to others. In this light, resignation becomes evidence of our commitments rather than a reason not to move forward.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Explore reasons for not contributing

It's a good bet that none of us has done all that we can to contribute to others. This Journal Entry provides you with a chance to explore any reasons you have used for not contributing. Spend a few minutes thinking about all the opportunities to contribute that you have passed up and write about a few of them in the space below.

I realize that I could have contributed by . . .

The barriers or reasons I chose not to contribute include . . .

In this exercise, I discovered that I . . .

When it comes to contributing in the future, I intend to . . .

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Bring the problem home

In deciding how to contribute, we can often invent new actions by bringing a social problem home in our imagination in a vivid, concrete way. For instance, imagine that 10 homeless and starving children are camped out in your back yard. What would you do? Describe possible responses here.

The same strategy works for any problem. Bring the problem home in your imagination and you'll soon discover ways to contribute.

Imagine then contribute

To imagine where you might contribute, pretend that you are someone else and then dream about what you'd do. For example, see yourself as the head of a company that makes $100 million in annual profits and employs 200 people. Or, see yourself as the governor of a state or the director of a foundation that has $3 billion a year to give away. Or, imagine that your life is everything you want it to be and you know that you'll live to be 200.

Choose any of the above scenarios, or invent one of your own. Then describe exactly what you could do to begin contributing.

I could . . .

Now modify the idea you've just written in some way so that you can act on it immediately. If you can't take all of the actions you've listed, then choose or create at least one you can. Describe exactly what you intend to do.

I intend to . . .

CONTRIBUTE BEFORE KNOWING HOW

Champion your cause without antagonism

We can promote our cause without becoming rebels or champions of righteousness. Instead of berating others, we can enroll them in our cause. We can do this while listening to their ideas and letting go of our need to be right.

Focus on people

When it comes to contribution, we can accomplish much by relating to people, not organizations or bureaucracies. Organizations don't talk. Nor do they have ears or make decisions. People do. It pays to organize for change with people—people at the grassroots level, people at the top of the organization, and people at any level in between.

See conflict as a chance to contribute

If you avoid conflict . . . well, welcome to the human race. Many of us don't like what happens when we experience conflict with other people. So we avoid it. Some people even develop this avoidance into an art.

"Be nice to people." "Be polite." "Be kind." These ideas are in wide circulation in our culture. The trouble is, people think being nice and polite and kind means avoiding conflict at all costs.

It's ironic. Many avoid conflict with the belief that doing so contributes to people; most of the time, it just seems like the right thing to do. Yet, precisely the opposite could be true. That is, being kind and nurturing and supportive may mean facing conflict head-on at times. By avoiding conflict, in fact, we may miss our biggest opportunity to contribute to the happiness of others. Most of the time, there are ways to turn conflict into problem solving and end up with outcomes that are a win for everyone involved.

Practice contributing every moment

Some years ago, a popular article urged us to practice "random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty." It's easy to find opportunities. Pay someone's dinner bill, or double the tip you were going to give. Shovel someone else's sidewalk, or put money in a stranger's expired parking meter. Compliment a clerk on what a good job he is doing. Open the door for another person, or let someone move in front of you in line. Pass a book or magazine you have finished on to a stranger. Offer directions to someone who looks lost, or send someone an anonymous gift.

We continually have the opportunity to fill ourselves up and give ourselves away. We can begin to take actions every minute that accomplish both of these goals. Moment by moment, we can act in a way that is both self-fulfilling and contributing.

Form a Support Group

Supporting other people means saying and doing things that contribute to their experience of happiness, health, love, and wealth. A well-organized support group is one powerful way to do this. The "technology" of successful groups—how they work and what they can do—has been well explored. You can take advantage of what's been learned.

Working in mutually supportive groups is not a new idea. In fact, it's quite old-fashioned. In the recent past, farmers enlisted the help of neighbors to raise barns, plant seeds, and harvest crops. Politicians found networks to raise money, and executives found mentors to teach them business skills. Today, group support is becoming a popular strategy for everyone.

The most effective support groups will often involve people you do not live or work with. After all, the purpose might be to find a setting where you are willing to put it all on the line. The group can be a place where you feel detached, safe, accepted, and supported—a place where you're willing to take risks and say anything.

Some people can do this with people from their home and work environments. Many of us are attached to how coworkers and family members see us. We're concerned about the future of our relationships with them. For that reason, it can be hard for us to tell them the absolute truth about what we think, feel, and want. The same thing can happen when a support group stays together for a long time and the members become attached to each other.

To keep your group effective, consider these suggestions:

- Be open to revolving group members, and be flexible about how long the group stays together. You may even start an entirely new group every few years.

- Decide on a format for your group. A popular option is to use a book such as *Human Being*. You can read and discuss the articles in this book. Do the suggested exercises together. Write Discovery Statements and share them with the group. Also, write Intention Statements about what you plan to do before the next group meeting, and ask other members to support you in these commitments.

- Elect one person to keep track of the time, keep the group on task, and mediate conflict. This role can be rotated among all group members.

- Do exercises that encourage people to open up and avoid keeping secrets. Many of the exercises and Journal Entries in this book are suitable for this purpose.

- Help each other articulate problems, brainstorm solutions, set goals, and create action plans.

- Invite guest speakers or special one-time group leaders.

MAKE YOUR STRUGGLES PUBLIC

One way of contributing to others is to make our struggles public. We can let others in on our secrets. We can go public with our problems. Walk the journey with others. In doing so, we give a gift to humanity: the chance to learn with us, to ride on our coattails as we ascend to new heights.

After all, this is what the greatest figures in history have done. What we remember most about Jesus, the Buddha, Gandhi, or Mother Theresa is not where they were born, where they went to school, or the other details of their biography. What we remember is how they struggled. We remember what they fought for, what they grappled with, and what they labored over.

When we're working to lose weight, we can provide an example for others to do the same. When we're learning to control stress, we can be helping others by demonstrating that it is possible to learn how to relax.

In large part, our religion, our history, and our art are the stories of people who did intense work on themselves. It's the story of Jesus, who fasted 40 days in the wilderness, or the Jews who wandered forty years through the desert in anticipation of reaching the Holy Land. And the reason we remember them so well is that they struggled with the most universal of human problems. When we learn what they learned, we too can be helped by their journey. When we recall how they struggled, our life can become more meaningful.

Our effort to become happy is the story of everyone's effort to create a wonderful life. Our story is the human story.

> *Wealth consists not in having possessions but in having few wants.*
>
> –Esther De Waal

Human Being

Conclusion

In this conclusion you'll find...

Renew your First Step-exercise.

Gauge where you stand after working with this book.

Do this book again and raise the stakes-exercise.

Be willing to go through this book several times and commit to getting more out of it each time.

Follow up on your current First Step: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Choose how to apply what you learned from the previous exercise.

EXERCISE

Renew your Survey

Use this exercise as another opportunity to gauge where you stand after working with this book. Essentially, you'll be repeating the Survey Yourself *exercise from page 47 and probably getting some new results and insights.*

To complete this exercise, read the following lists of statements and write a number from 1 to 5 in front of each statement:

5—*This statement is always or almost always true.*
4—*This statement is often true.*
3—*This statement is true about half the time.*
2—*This statement is seldom true.*
1—*This statement is never or almost never true.*

After you have completed each of the four sections of this survey, total your scores and then complete the following Discovery/Intention Statement.

Happiness

_____I have an abiding sense of fulfillment that I can return to, even when circumstances are difficult.

_____I periodically examine the quality of my thinking and choose beliefs that promote my happiness.

_____I have a clear sense of the factors in life that I can control and also of the factors that I cannot control.

_____I focus my thinking and action on the factors I can control.

_____I take risks, even if it means making mistakes.

_____I make a habit of forgiving myself and others.

_____I have a clear strategy for responding to negative feelings such as anger, fear, resentment, and sadness.

_____I can take constructive action, even when I don't feel like doing anything.

_____I know of and use effective strategies for solving problems and changing habits.

_____When my life is not working well, I look to my own thinking and action for solutions rather than blaming others.

_____***Total score—Happiness***

Health

_____I am knowledgeable about the nutritional value of the foods I eat each day.

_____I choose foods that promote my health.

_____I exercise to increase my aerobic capacity and gain strength, and I stretch to maintain muscle flexibility.

_____I have more than enough emotional and physical energy to meet the demands of my daily life.

_____I am aware of the factors in my life that are associated with feelings of stress.

_____I have a clear and effective set of strategies for responding to stress.

_____I have organized my immediate environment (including my home and car) to help prevent accidents.

_____I practice habits (such as buckling my seat-belt) that promote my safety.

_____I am clearly in control of the alcohol, nicotine, or other drugs that I put into my body.

_____I notice early signs of health problems and respond promptly and effectively.

_____***Total score—Health***

Love

_____I know how to develop and sustain relationships that support myself and the others involved.

_____I practice speaking candidly with the people I trust.

_____When my relationships are not working, I know how to respond effectively.

_____I listen attentively and with skill.

_____I communicate my thoughts and feelings without blaming others.

_____I like who I am, and I know that I am lovable.

_____I make big promises and keep my word.

_____I can learn from other people even when I don't like them.

_____I have clear and effective strategies for resolving conflict.

_____I give my time, money, and talent in ways that contribute to other people.

_____***Total score—Love***

Wealth

_____I know how much money I spend and earn.

_____I am wealthy: I have more than enough time, money, and possessions to live the life I choose.

_____I earn more than I spend, and I save the difference.

_____I have enough money saved to handle an emergency or financial crisis.

_____I have a clear plan for saving money, investing money, and protecting my assets.

_____I periodically monitor myself to see how I spend my time.

_____I regularly set goals and plan how to achieve them.

_____I have a clear sense of personal mission and know what I want to accomplish in my lifetime.

_____I rarely worry about having enough time or money.

_____I do work that creates value for myself and for the world.

_____***Total score—Wealth***

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

Follow up on your current First Step

Begin a new direction for the future by completing the following sentences:

After repeating the *Survey Yourself* exercise and comparing my scores, I discovered that my life has changed in the following ways . . .

After reviewing my testimonials from page xi and my experience with this book, the most important thing I can do to raise the quality of my life is . . .

EXERCISE

Do this book again and raise the stakes

The message behind every line in this book is that each of us can have a wonderful life. What we can do is to look at how to create such a life, moment by moment. If we want to create effectively, it helps, if we have a plan . . . a vision . . . a dream. For example, if you asked a building contractor to build your dream house, the contractor would first go to an architect. The architect's job is to take your vision, your dream and turn it into a specific design—a set of blueprints. The process needed to create a house also works for creating a book, a car, a computer, or even a life.

The cover of this book listed two authors. That was merely a convenience for the publisher—a trick, really. What you bring to this book is far more important than what the authors put on the page. You bring something to this book that an author can never bring: your visions, your dreams, your choices. *What you get out of this book ultimately depends on your choices—how well you absorb its message, and what you do in response to that message.*

Right now, the people whose names are listed on the cover of this book—the "authors"—are asking you to make a commitment. Please be willing to go through this book several times and commit to getting a lot out of it each time. Make this a book a force that you use to raise the quality of your life, forever.

Caution: There are people who don't believe they can create the life of their dreams. They don't believe their lives can change. They don't believe that they can co-create a book. This is a typical, reasonable, and sensible thought. Please suspend it.

One of the first exercises in this book asked you to write your own testimonials for this book—and then to act in ways that would make your testimonial come true. It's time to repeat this strategy. As you write your testimonials for your next reading of Human Being, *consider that you create this book, and every book you read. In a real way, the author of this book is you. Some possible testimonials include:*

> *Every hour I use the ideas in this book to make the choices to have my life continue to be outstanding.*
>
> *I read this book several years ago and made remarkable changes in my life. I continue to use the strategies.*
>
> *After I read this book, I transformed the quality of my life— dramatically—in just a few days.*
>
> *After reviewing parts of this book, I realized that I totally missed many tremendous ideas. My life continues to get better and better as I go through the whole book again and find even more ways to be happier, healthier, more loving, and wealthier.*

Now, write your testimonials in the space below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

MEET THE AUTHORS

Stan Lankowitz

Stan Lankowitz is a licensed professional counselor in private practice. He taught high school, counseled students in all grade levels, and consulted with hundreds of colleges and universities about promoting student success. He has assisted businesses and other organizations in designing and implementing programs that improve morale and increase effectiveness.

His other experiences include being a newspaper paste-up artist, a dishwasher, a cab driver, a waiter, and a horse wrangler at a children's camp in Colorado.

Stan's interest in writing this book stems from the purpose of his counseling practice: "When I left the security of the educational and corporate worlds several years ago, I was both frightened and excited. Following my passions, I intended to improve my skills in assisting others to get what they want in their lives and to become a successful entrepreneur. Writing this book has been a wonderful way for me to promote all of my professional goals."

David B. Ellis

David B. Ellis is the author of several books, including the world's best-selling college textbook, *Becoming a Master Student,* which has been translated into French and Spanish. It is designed to promote student success inside and outside of the classroom. Ellis is also a nationally-known lecturer and workshop leader. He has facilitated four-day workshops on topics ranging from "Becoming a more effective college instructor," to "Creating individual life plans." These workshops have attracted over 10,000 people.

Dave taught computer programming at the college level. He counseled students and worked as Assistant Dean of Student Services. He also did accounting for an engineering research and development firm and founded a nonprofit foundation, through which he has given away millions of dollars.

One of the reasons Dave wrote this book is his love for his family: "When creating my life plan, I discovered a major goal was to communicate to my family (my parents, my four sisters, their spouses and children, my children, and my wife) the ideas that thousands of people report make a huge difference in their lives. I wanted to communicate these in a way that would be easy to understand and implement."

PHILOSOPHY OF THE BOOK DESIGN

The considerations that are made when designing a 528-page book are tremendous: typography (style, quantity, weights), photography, illustration, production method, ink colors, paper stock, page counts, binding, target audience, packaging, distribution, readability, related texts, labeling systems, learning styles, graphic standards, and overall "look and feel" to name a few.

It is crucial that each of these considerations work in concert toward the ultimate objective of communicating human effectiveness strategies as effectively as possible.

This book is comprised of five quasi-autonomous sections (Power Processes, Happiness, Health, Love, and Wealth)–each with its own front and back cover–promoting the authors' intention that each section be an encyclopedia full of strategies, any of which is strong enough to stand alone.

This concept was further built upon with the use of a spiral binding system that would enable the book to begin wherever the reader chose—thus creating many new beginnings and endings.

By carefully dividing the book into printing signatures, it was possible to print using only two colors of ink per signature, resulting in a book with a total of six colors—adding visual interest and a color guide.

The text paper is recycled and was selected for its excellent opacity and clean white appearance.

There are four primary typefaces used in this text. The basal text is Stone Serif—selected for its legibility. It's familial counterpart, Stone Sans, is used for subheads, Industrial was used for the headlines and Discovery/Intention Statement labels, and Swaimer is a handwriting font used in the *Book Under Construction* notes.

The photography—simple portraits of "human beings" from all ages, races, colors, sexes, and backgrounds—was selected as the primary visual element because the human face is ideally suited to capture the human element contained in the many ideas, suggestions, strategies, and philosophies of this book.

A unusual book size was selected to introduce *Human Being* as a nontraditional book.

The cover design is a collage of the faces found throughout the book, with a photographic composition of objects selected to symbolize happiness, health, love, and wealth.

The Discovery/Intention icon—a pencil twisted into an infinity symbol—connotes a continuous cycle of discovery and intention. The exercise icon—a tennis shoe—implies exercise, and the Book Under Construction icon is represented by the familiar construction site hard hat.

This book was produced completely digitally, using a Power Macintosh 8100, Quark XPress™, and Adobe Photoshop™. It was output to color-separated film for compositing and printing on a six-color Heidelberg press.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Happiness

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MEET THE HUMAN BEINGS

Bob Keger, p. 1
Misti Hellman, p. 25
Julie Farrell, p. 37
Jeremy Smith, p. 51
Justina Licata, p. 200
Zulfidar Azi, p. 59
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Danielle Franke, p. 477
Kari Bauman, p. 487

The following blank pages are provided so that you can complete the exercises in this book that ask you to write on a separate piece of paper. Also, some of the exercises may not have as much space as you want to fully express yourself. Please continue to write this book by filling up these pages with your discoveries and intentions.

The preceeding blank pages are provided so that you can complete the exercises in this book that ask you to write on a separate piece of paper. Also, some of the exercises may not have as much space as you want to fully express yourself. Please continue to write this book by filling up these pages with your discoveries and intentions.

REGISTER YOUR BOOK

Filling out and returning the registration card below is a way for you to stay informed about the progress of this book. We plan to publish addendums to this edition as human effectiveness ideas and improvements to existing articles are fed back to us by our readers. We will also publish several more editions of *Human Being*.

If you register your book, we will send you periodic addendums and keep you informed about new editions as well as videotapes, audiotapes, telephone consultation, and workshops as they become available. Also, please tell us something about yourself—if there is not enough room on the card, use an additional sheet of paper. We are very interested in the human beings that use this book.

POWER PROCESSES

Power Processes are general strategies for increasing your experience of happiness, health, love, and wealth. Keep this list handy as a reminder of ways to create a wonderful life.

1. **Determine what you want**
2. **Tell the truth**
3. **Practice acceptance**
4. **Examine moment-to-moment choices**
5. **Investigate your role**
6. **Focus your attention**
7. **Speak candidly**
8. **Make and keep promises**
9. **Surrender**
10. **Keep looking for answer**
11. **Notice your expectations**
12. **Listen fully**
13. **Enjoy**
14. **Detach and play full out**
15. **Choose your conversations**
16. **Revise your habits**
17. **Appreciate mistakes**
18. **Choose courageously**
19. **Manage your associations**
20. **Contribute**
21. **Define your values, align your actions**

These Power Processes are taken from the book *Human Being* by Dave Ellis and Stan Lankowitz. Copyright 1995 by David B. Ellis. Published by Breakthrough Enterprises, Inc., P.O. 8396, Rapid City, SD 57709-8396.

Save the Power Processes. See details on the next page.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Zip / Postal Code _____ E-mail _____

Telephone (optional) _____ FAX (optional) _____

I am interested in:

❏ future editions of this book ❏ human effectiveness workshops

❏ telephone consultation ❏ videotapes ❏ audiotapes ❏ other _____

My favorite success strategy is: _____

_____

I want to learn more success strategies in the area of: _____

Something I'd like you to know about me is: _____

_____

POWER PROCESSES

Power Processes are general strategies for increasing your experience of happiness, health, love, and wealth. Keep this list handy as a reminder of ways to create a wonderful life.

1. Determine what you want
2. Tell the truth
3. Practice acceptance
4. Examine moment-to-moment choices
5. Investigate your role
6. Focus your attention
7. Speak candidly
8. Make and keep promises
9. Surrender
10. Keep looking for answer
11. Notice your expectations
12. Listen fully
13. Enjoy
14. Detach and play full out
15. Choose your conversations
16. Revise your habits
17. Appreciate mistakes
18. Choose courageously
19. Manage your associations
20. Contribute
21. Define your values, align your actions

These Power Processes are taken from the book *Human Being* by Dave Ellis and Stan Lankowitz. Copyright 1995 by David B. Ellis. Published by Breakthrough Enterprises, Inc., P.O. 8396, Rapid City, SD 57709-8396.

SAVE THE POWER PROCESSES

Please remove the Power Process cards at the left and keep them handy as reminders of the general strategies outlined in Part 1 of this book.

Register your book. See details on the reverse side of this page.
If the registration form below is missing, please call 1-800-335-9938 to request another.

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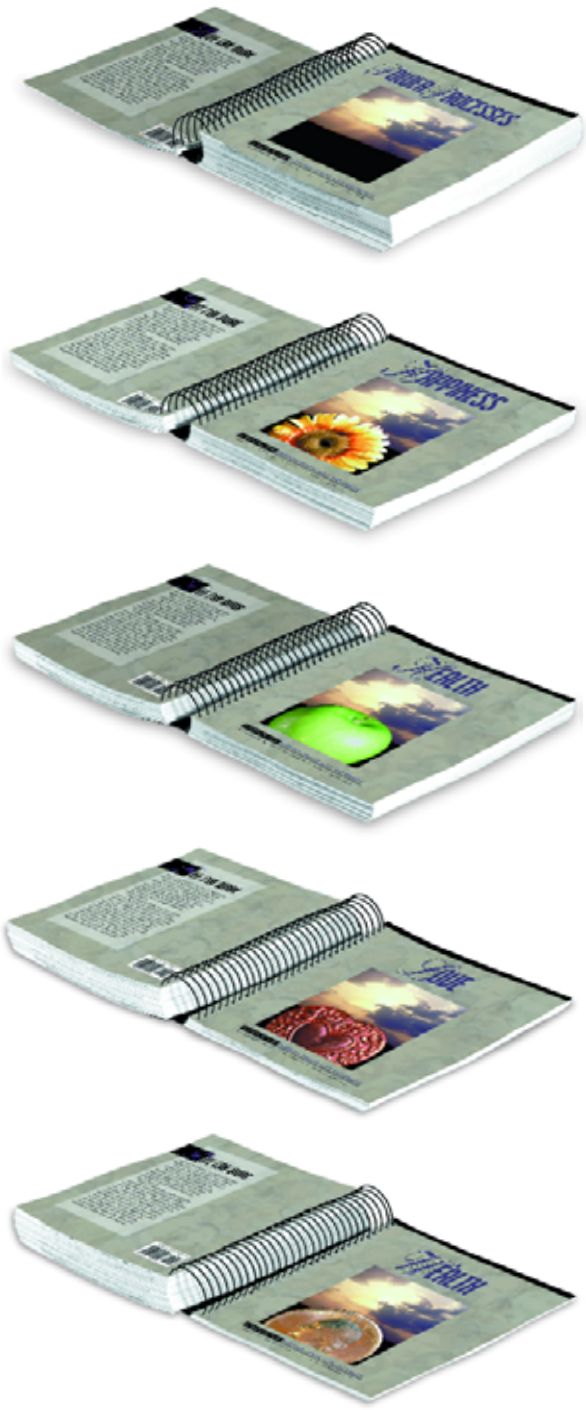
THANK YOU

One of the best compliments authors can receive is when someone buys their book and completes it.

If this book has been valuable to you, and you would like to order copies for your family, co-workers, or friends, call 1-800-335-9938.

HUMAN BEING IS FIVE BOOKS IN ONE.



LIFE CAN WORK.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE as much happiness, health, love, and wealth as you choose.

You can feel happy and fulfilled no matter what your current circumstances.

Each of us can be essentially free from insecurity, depression, fear, worry, jealousy, aggression, turmoil, anxiety, boredom, vanity, hostility, irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and frustration.

Within a short time, and with some new skills, you can experience vitality, satisfaction, joy, serenity, health, contribution, fun, confidence, happiness, pleasure, love, peace, effectiveness, and security far beyond your current expectations. These positive experiences are always available and can be developed when you tell the truth about your current experiences and when you practice creating new ones. You are invited to use the techniques in this book to create a life filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.

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