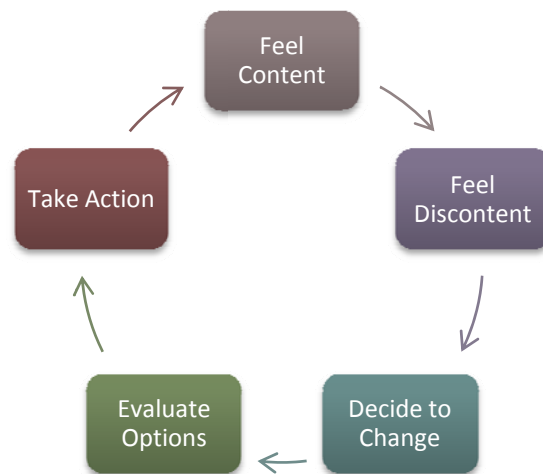


Lesson 1 — The Foundation of Your Amazing Life Plan

Are you living in a state of discontent? Are there major things you don't like about yourself or your life? Do you wish for more money? A better girlfriend? More respectful kids? A better job? To be more attractive? Have more time for yourself? A successful business?

If you feel discontented, then you're perfectly normal. Contentment and discontentment are simply normal parts of the cycle of human existence that drive us to excellence. Like a pendulum, as soon as we feel start to feel content and happy, we begin to swing the other way. Our drive to get the pendulum to swing back is what fuels human behavior.

In fact, we're never completely happy or unhappy. As humans, we are in a constant state of flux, always moving through a cycle that goes from being satisfied, to being dissatisfied, to making a decision to change, to evaluating options, to finally taking action. If we've taken the right action, we achieve contentment again. If not, we keep evaluating options and taking different actions until we find contentment.



The Cycle of Contentment

How We Change

Most people recognize that to change, we have to take action of some kind. We can't just "wish" it to be different. We have to exercise to improve our looks and health. We send out resumes to change jobs. We ask advice about our unruly kids. We consider divorce or counseling to solve marital problems.

But not everyone takes action in the same way.

Highly effective people tend to proactively seek equilibrium by taking action sooner. They recognize the discomfort of discontent, and begin exploring options and taking action sooner.

Others have gotten into the habit of waiting for a compelling event to force them into action. Instead of looking for another job, they wait until they're fired. Instead of losing weight and exercising, they wait until the doctor tells them they have diabetes. Then they decide it's time to fix the situation.

Here's an example on a less extreme scale to illustrate. Suppose you have a headlight out on your car. Every evening as it grows dark and you're heading home from work, you think about it. It nags at you, but you're too tired to do anything about it. Then one evening you get pulled over and ticketed for having a headlight out. The next day you drive over to the auto repair shop near work on your lunch break and get it fixed. The compelling event finally made you take action. You could have done the same thing at any time and saved yourself the embarrassment and ticket.

This illustrates a kind of gambling or fatalistic mentality that many of us have when it comes to change. We're aware of our discontent, but don't feel compelled to change it. We accept the odds, take the risk, or are comfortably numb. It takes energy to change. That's why we wait for compelling events—**because they create energy that propels us into action.**

On the other hand, if we want to have control in our lives, we have to act before we're compelled to act. Or act on lesser compelling events before they become bigger. The sense of control from deciding our own fate gives us strength and often puts us in a better position than we would have been if we'd waited for a more assertive compelling event.

The most successful people in life are those who make the decision to fix discontent **proactively**, or at least quickly—before they're compelled by more serious circumstances. Less successful people are those who make most of their decisions **reactively**—taking action only when compelled.

Being proactive doesn't mean life will always work in your favor. But you certainly can see how it could increase the odds in your favor.

In my own life, I've tried to always be proactive. But I've still lost jobs. I've screwed up contracts. I've been divorced. But I was working at it or I learned from the situation and improved next time. It wasn't the *success* of my proactivity that mattered. **It was the fact of taking action sooner that gave me control.** Proactivity makes me more effective over all, regardless of the outcome of any one action.

*"I am not a product of my circumstances.
I am a product of my decisions."*

~ Stephen Covey

Reactive people tend to see the world in terms of "They did it to me, it's someone else's fault, I can't do anything about it." Proactive people tend to see situations in opposite terms. Not necessarily optimistic terms—I know some very cynical people who are still proactive and successful. But they see themselves as having control in the world—"They did it to me, but I can change it; it may be someone else's fault this happened, but I don't need to live with it; I can do something about it."

You might say, "Well, I like waiting for the compelling event to trigger my actions." True, compelling events give you energy to do something about your situation, but until the compelling event occurs, you're living in a state of stress.

Stress can lead to such things as anger, depression, and ill health—like weight gain. And waiting until compelling events occur can often lead to financial ruin. Imagine the person who fails to get their library books back on time, then fails to pay the simple fines, until finally the account goes to collection a few hundred dollars. This kind of person can pay thousands of dollars in fines, fees, and lost opportunity if this is endemic behavior.

By taking proactive forward-moving action to respond to change when it's called for, you will not only be more productive, you will experience power and

strength. That power will further drive you. In this way, we can say that success breeds success.

Championship Behavior

Some of us will fight reactive behaviors all our lives. The best we can do is adopt strategies that compensate for our underlying motivations. For instance, my mother was a “neatnic.” She required me to pick up everything immediately and she nagged constantly. My brother adopted her habits. I rebelled and adopted opposite habits and consequently have a less than ideal household environment.

My brother and I had the same experiences, but our very different personalities drove us to interpret our experience of our mother differently. As an adult he is far more likely to respond to situations before being compelled than I am. I tend to take on more risk and wait for compelling events to force my hand.

For people like me who tend to wait for compelling events, the question is **what can we do to change, so that we act sooner and gain the advantages of a more proactive life?**

There are two approaches we can take to changing: We can work through underlying influences by going to personal growth workshops or therapy and having breakthroughs. I believe that’s a useful strategy for disappearing some of the non-working habits we’ve adopted.

At the same time, it’s not always feasible or desirable to work through underlying causes, so a more practical approach you can start immediately is to say, “Yes, I’m like this and here’s the strategy I’m going to use to **compensate.**”

That compensating strategy is what a friend of mine calls Championship Behavior. It’s a concept that has gotten me through many tight spots and funks, spurring me to action instead of reaction.

On my very first job, for example, I was put on a team to manage a workplace health fair that was coming up in two days. Because I was put on the team late, I didn’t know that being on the team was a reward for many employees who saw it as an advancement. It became apparent that my quick promotion was resented. At the start of the second day—a day before the fair—a friend took me aside and said that someone else on the team was trash talking me behind my

back, creating factions like a reality TV show. It made me angry and embarrassed, and I walked around with a dark cloud over my head. No one wanted to come near me and I became distracted.

Seeing my attitude, the manager took me aside and lectured me about my responsibility to the team. I felt so angry that I was being singled out, so I pointed the finger at others. The manager pointed out that there was no time for this right now with the fair coming up the next day. Then he suggested an approach that has stayed with me for the rest of my life. He suggested that I spend five minutes making a list of possible actions I could take to solve the problem after the health fair was done, then show him the list. I finished the list and took it to him, and he said, "Great, now which one will you do first?" I told him which one, and he said that was fine. Then he asked, "Can you do your work wholeheartedly and take that action when the workshop is finished?" I decided that Yes I could. And I did, with a much-lightened heart.

It was later, after the fair was done and the issue was resolved, that the manager "debriefed" me about the whole situation. He pointed out that Championship Behavior means **deciding** what needs to be done as much as it does doing it. The moment of decision gives us a measure of control, allowing us to plan ahead what actions we will take. The decision itself is proactive versus reactive.

"It is in your moments of decision that your destiny is shaped."

~ Anthony Robbins

This works for short-term problems, as in my example of having to get the job done before dealing with the problem, and it works for big life problems.

If you're failing to get a job you love, you might need to go back to school and retrain for a new job. If you're in a relationship that makes you sad all the time, you need to choose if you're going to stay in the relationship or not, and then pick actions accordingly. These decisions are Championship Behavior.

What major problem are you facing in your life right now? Can you decide now on a list of actions you could take to solve the problem—even if you can't take those actions sometimes for weeks, months, or even years?

I realize life isn't that simple. DOING the actions you choose will be much, much harder than the choosing. And your actions won't always turn out the way you

intended, either. But choosing your actions will force the situation to resolve itself, rather than you waiting until a compelling event forces you to take action.

I could have had a different kind of manager in my health fair job. As it was, I was lucky that the compelling event for change in that situation was a positive and wise manager taking me aside and helping me.

Change Begins with Acknowledgement

There's one thing you need to know about Championship Behavior. You have to recognize when to use it. Many of us live in a reactionary state, waiting for compelling events to drive us forward. But it's probably subconscious to us. We're not consciously saying, "Gee, I hope my I get a ticket so that I'll feel compelled to get my headlight changed."

We need to shorten the time between noticing a problem and consciously deciding what specific action to take. To make a painfully obvious point, when you notice the headlight is out on the car—that's the time to decide on Championship Behavior. What specific actions can you take to resolve the problem? You can say to yourself, "I need to go to the shop. The shop near work is close. I can do it on my lunch hour. I can do it tomorrow on my lunch hour."

We'll practice in a moment. But first, there's the question of what happens when you can't figure out what Championship Behaviors to use? Here's an example.

My young nephew has been fired from three jobs in three years for negligence. In each case it was something he did not specifically do wrong, but a strange set of circumstances that made him look untrustworthy—for instance, putting a pair of glasses in his pocket to free his hands while helping a customer try on another pair. Each time he was fired, he lifted himself up by the bootstraps and chose the Championship Behavior that would land him another great job. But then something else would happen—for instance, forgetting to clean out the coffee machine at the end of the day because someone rushed in with a problem that needed immediate attention.

Each time he was let go, he picked himself up and quickly landed another job—great Championship Behavior! But not useful in solving the real problem here—that he is easily distracted and forgetful. He's recently been hired by a fourth

company and I give it a year before something similar happens, because he hasn't shifted the fundamental problem that is driving these strange situations.

When, like my young nephew, your situations keep pounding you down and the pendulum seems to be stuck on the side of discontent—when you can't get out of your job or you constantly feel ugly or your business keeps failing, when someone else has control over you, or when you do not have control over the situation, and when you keep trying over and over again and getting the same results no matter how much you try—then you need something more than just figuring out what actions to take.

You need a fundamental shift. Imagine if you have a continuous stomach ache. You can keep doing what you know how to try—eating different foods, exercising, etc.—but if it keeps hurting, you may you may need a doctor to help you evaluate causes and offer potential solutions that you simply don't have the knowledge or skill to see on your own.

While I do believe outside help in the form of coaching or therapy can make a big difference in your life results, there's much you can do on your own, if you're sufficiently motivated. The purpose of this book and course is to provide you with tools and guidance in creating a self-generated intervention in your life, providing you with options that you might not have thought of before.

We will explore the realities of concepts like “The Secret,” how to do effective goal setting rather than wishing, how to resolve the causes of a problem that reoccurs, and how to take the incremental actions and decisions that will ultimately change you in the ways you want to change.

You will take a journey, and like all journeys you will follow a map, have experiences, and adjust course as needed.

This book is grounded in years of experience, practice, and research into personal growth approaches, as well as the fields of NLP, gestalt therapy, and performance psychology. But it is not a boring description of methods. Rather, it draws on those methods to provide **deeply practical advice** for changing your life, getting off the hamster wheel in whatever area you feel stuck, and having an amazing life.

Please go to Exercise 1 now.

Lesson 2 — The Greatest Gift

Discontent is a state of mind that stems from situations in life. But *situations* in and of themselves are neutral. They're just there. It's our perceptions in situations that cause discontent. As Shakespeare said:

"Nothing is good or bad; but our thoughts make it so."

Shakespeare isn't talking about evil and good, he's talking about opinions and reactions. My friend looks down upon her next door neighbor because his yard is messy. He looks down upon my friend because she's too strict with her kids. I like the messy yard because the neighbor plays with his kids a lot and they're very happy. Another friend of mine admires the strict friend more because "that's the way you have to be with kids to raise them right in this day and age."

My associate, Tom, was preparing to wash his brand new car one Saturday afternoon. He noticed scratches on the driver side rear passenger door that he hadn't seen yesterday evening in the dark. He was furious and began thinking about who had done it. Was it someone in the parking lot at work? Was it neighborhood kids? Had someone run a shopping cart into the door at the supermarket? He was so angry that he decided to get into the car and take a drive to let off some steam. As he opened the door to get in, he felt the button on his back pants pocket brush across the rear door. He spun around, and sure enough, there was another small scratch. Bob was chagrined, and instantly all his anger at the neighbors and co-workers left him.

Nothing about the scratched car was any different. The situation was neutral. It was Tom's state of mind that changed.

There is nothing new in this concept. I can provide quote after quote as far back and farther than the Biblical times to prove that mankind has almost always been aware that, as Napoleon Hill put it:

"No one can make you jealous, angry, vengeful, or greedy - unless you let him."

In today's language, it's a matter of perspective. Suppose you're driving down the freeway and notice a sleek black car race up behind you and then pull around you, cutting off someone else. Then he cuts in front of you and you have

to slam on your brakes. The anger boils up and you experience the rush of road rage. When you pull up to an off ramp, you notice the same black car stuck behind a line of cars at the light. As you pull parallel to him, you think to give him a piece of your mind. Then you notice he's frantically waving at the car in front of him, a look of panic on his face, and you realize something else is going on. He tears around the car in front and cuts you off again, then races to the next turn—into the entrance of the hospital.

Nothing about the situation changed. But your perspective did change and now you feel it was acceptable that the car cut you off.

What if the next time someone cut you off in traffic, you remembered that moment and decided it's possible—just possible that they've got an emergency. Could that make your feelings of anger a little less extreme?

Anger is a reaction over which we have little control. But we have the ability to take a different perspective in response to that reaction. By consciously choosing a different perspective, we can indirectly control our physiology and cool off our anger.

This is the great gift of mankind. We have the ability to control our own state of mind, to literally make use of the natural ability of mindshift available to us in the concept of differing perspectives.

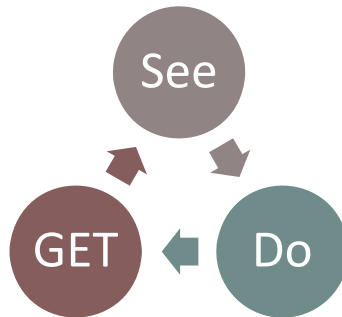
Stephen Covey famously tells this story to illustrate the point:

One night at sea Captain Horatio Hornblower is warned by his lookout that there is the light of another ship in his sea-lane about 20 miles away. The Captain tells his watch to signal the other ship to move out of the sea lane, but the light remains steady. As the lights grow closer, the Captain sends another message towards the light, instructing them to move starboard, 20 degrees at once. The other sends a signal back telling the Captain that he must give way and move 20 degrees at once or risk disaster. Angered by this response, the Captain then tells the watch to signal that he's a captain on a large battle ship and if he knows what's good for him he'd better move. The other replies that it's the lighthouse.

The Captain moved, and quickly.

The point, again, is that perspective affects how we perceive a situation. We can make use of that power consciously to choose how we want to see something. Covey calls this the See-Do-Get model.

How we see a situation affects what we do, and what we do affects the results we get. We may not be able to choose what happens to us, but we can always choose our response. Period.



See-Do-Get Model

And in choosing our response, we can affect our physiology. The reason Championship Behavior works to move us forward is that we have made a conscious choice, and in doing so, we've taken control in a situation where we felt like we had none. Our choice in the matter—whether or not it really changed the situation—is what has made us feel more powerful, more effective. The conscious choice changed our physiology, just as surely as the lighthouse changed Captain Hornblower's physiology.

Which color makes you feel better: brown or yellow, green or red? Or some other color? What clothes make you feel better? What car makes you feel better? What house, what level of education, what pet dog? All of these are choices you make because they make you feel good.

Choice is what makes us move forward in life. By realizing we can choose our thoughts in any situation—choose what to do with an emotional reaction, choose how to respond to a seemingly untenable situation, we become more powerful and are less controlled by our circumstances.

The Greatest of Human Freedoms

Effective people are “response – able.” They’re able to respond appropriately, pausing for a mental breath between their reaction and their response, giving them a moment to choose, rather than blundering forward based on old tapes playing in their brain stem.

They know that genetics, circumstances, conditions, or experience might cause them to feel or think certain ways. But ultimately, they don’t use that as an excuse for reactive behavior. They choose their behavior, despite those influences in their past and in their circumstances.

OK, you may be 80 pounds overweight, have a lopsided face, have a mean boss, have a low-wage job, have ten children depending on you, and live with poor health. But these situations in and of themselves, are neutral. They just *are*. Some overweight people are very happy. Some mothers with ten children are grateful. Some workers are delighted by their jobs, despite low wages. Some people with debilitating health cling to life because they love the sunshine.

The point is, our circumstances don’t have to dictate how we feel. We get to choose. For example, Viktor Frankl, a concentration camp survivor describes choice as “the last of the human freedoms:”

“We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”

~ Viktor E. Frankl

Practicing Choice

Becoming the best you can be in life involves practicing the art of choice. We saw how using Championship Behavior is one way of choosing your own future. You are choosing what you will do in the face of a given situation.

Having a positive mental attitude is the result of choice. While facing untold horrors in a concentration camp, some people just simply decided to care and help.

They had a different mental attitude. I don't pretend to know if they chose a positive attitude and that led to helping, or if in choosing to help they were led to having a positive mental attitude. I just know that choice was involved and it made all the difference.

What is it you want to become in life? Do you want more money? Do you need more respect from your peers? Are you hoping to find a wonderful wife or husband or partner? Or are you just looking for a sense of contentment?

When you recognize that you have a choice in the matter—that through Championship Behavior and the ability to intentionally adjust your perspective you can choose—then you will feel more in control of your own destiny. I don't mean that by *choosing* you can simply manifest those things that you want in life, especially if they are physically impossible—you can't choose to be brown-eyed. But by choosing your actions and attitudes you can direct the results.

Working Your “Choice” Muscle

When you're not getting the results you want in life it *always* means that you need to make different choices—somewhere in your life. Where you need to make those choices isn't always immediately obvious, and we'll address that further on in this material. But at this point, focusing on the concept of choice and building your “choice muscle” is enough.

One of the oldest and easiest ways to practice choice is to “count to ten.” The practice of counting to ten forces us to slow our immediate reaction and allows us to choose our attitude and actions, rather than thoughtlessly reacting.

Now, in my world, ten is too long. Many choices require a more immediate response. Your spouse will wonder if she needs to call 911 when she offers you a choice between peas or carrots and you sit there quietly counting to ten. To see what I mean, try it now. *Count to ten at a measured and even pace, not even a second apart.* You'll see how long it feels.

I prefer counting to four, and Mark Twain agrees. He makes another valid point:

“When angry, count to four. When very angry, swear.” ~Mark Twain

Don't be shy about letting off steam, appropriately. As long as the way you let off steam doesn't create more harm or further incite the situation, it's appropriate.

Please go to Exercise 2 now.

Lesson 3 — The Power of Intention

Have you ever heard of the book and movie called “The Secret?” The Secret being alluded to is the power of the “law of attraction.” The Secret seems to claim that we can *will* things to happen, literally *willing* things into existence on our own behalf based on the power of *intention*. One example given is of a boy who intended to have a bicycle, and his intention was so powerful that it literally showed up— just appeared. When believers are challenged that this is no better than wishing, their answer is that you have to *really* believe.

Now, I don’t know if this works for other people or not. It does not work for me, and believe me, I’ve given it my all—fully intending to have a new house. But it never came about. I was told that there must be some part of me that didn’t really intend it to happen, or perhaps the time wasn’t right yet. OK, I can’t argue with that.

But from a purely practical perspective, I’ll probably manifest a house faster by getting a part time job and saving for it.

This brings me to the point. My intention to have a house is real. But rather than scrunching my eyes closed and wishing with all my might, I actually have more control than that.

Through my intention, I dictate my actions and my attention. And as my actions and attention are focused on having a house, I will see opportunities and take action in the direction I need to go to get the house. I’ll be more aware of sights, sounds, smells and stories, comments and news reports related to getting a house.

You’ve probably heard the saying, “We make our own luck.” This is what I believe is at the heart of the power of intention—that by intending something, we act accordingly and attract opportunities to us because that’s what we’re paying attention to.

What are you paying attention to? What are you intending in your life—really intending, not just wishing. Intention is a serious focus on taking action.

The power of intention cannot be understated. As far back as 2,500 years, we can see acknowledgement of this mighty power:

“Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.”

~ Sun Tzu, The Art of War (500 BC)

By having faith that you can succeed at what you intend, you win the war before you begin the war, so to speak.

The importance of faith as part of intention is explored in an excellent study by MIT professor Rae Langton, in which she quotes author William James:

*Suppose...that I am climbing in the Alps, and have had the ill-luck to work myself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Being without similar experience, I have no evidence of my ability to perform it successfully; but hope and confidence in myself make me sure I shall not miss my aim, and nerve my feet to execute what without those subjective emotions would perhaps have been impossible. But suppose that, on the contrary, the emotions of fear and mistrust preponderate; or suppose that...I feel it would be sinful to act upon an assumption unverified by previous experience,— why, then I shall hesitate so long that at last, exhausted and trembling, and launching myself in a moment of despair, I miss my foothold and roll into the abyss...There are then cases where faith creates its own verification. Believe, and you shall be right, for you shall save yourself; doubt, and you shall again be right, for you shall perish. (William James, ‘The Sentiment of Rationality’, in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Norwood, Mass: Plimpton Press, 1896), 96-7.*

Again, from a purely practical perspective, intention precedes the journey to a goal. When you set an idle goal without intention, there’s little chance of it succeeding, especially if it’s a major life change goal, such as losing weight or becoming independently wealthy. For these goals, your intention must be an ever-present driving force.

Creating a Powerful Intention

How do you create powerful intention to accomplish your goals so that you activate the law of attraction and things come to you easier? Here are three principles that might help you:

- The first principle necessary for using intention to your advantage is that the thing you intend **must be possible**. I can intend to go to the moon some day, but the odds for me (maybe not for you) make it highly improbable. In another example, if I believe I'm too tall, I can't intend myself to be shorter. These things are not possible for me, so I can't intend to change them.

On the other hand, I can intend to create a secure financial situation for my family. I can intend to live my life so that I'll be a healthy 85 year old like my grandmother. I can intend to have a loving relationship with my spouse. These are things that are possible.

- The second principle necessary for using intention to your advantage is that intention **has to be actionable**. You must intend to DO, not to have. Intention to act, coupled with faith that it's possible create an irresistible force in the world.

*“Unless you marry intention to action,
you end up with only a brief affair.”*

~Anonymous

Action goes the direction of intention. When you are focused on a goal, faithfully intending it and believing it's possible, you will increase the likelihood of it happening. You cannot ensure it happening, but you will get closer to it than by wishing it to into existence.

I can intend to win the lottery all day long and it won't happen. But I can also intend to buy a lottery ticket every day for the rest of my life, believing it can happen. It's much more likely I'll win the lottery by intending to take an action and believing it's possible than by intending simply to manifest a result without action.

- The third principle necessary for using intention to your advantage is **applying Championship Behavior** to your intentions. What are the actions necessary to move in the direction of your intention? If you intend to lose weight, then throwing away all the junk food in the house is one such action. Going to the doctor to face the realities of your weight on your health is another. Choosing a physical hobby is another. There are many others. Make a list of these actions, prioritize the list, and begin

working through it. Have faith that you will lose weight by taking the steps. The more specific your action plan—your Championship Behaviors—the more likely you will be to accomplish your goal.

What to Do When You Can't See What to Do

If you intend something, such as quitting smoking, or rekindling the love in your relationship, or finding a better work position, but you don't know what Championship Behavior steps to take, you need to do the following:

1. **Research.** When you don't know what to do, the Championship Behavior is to find out. Not knowing what to do is an excuse. A friend of mine uses the following equation to describe excuses:

No Result + A Story About It = An Excuse

- Research means asking people for advice and references to other resources, looking in books for answers, talking to a consultant or therapist. Sometimes it means spending money to get help. Sometimes it means spending time to learn. Often it means making mistakes and learning from the mistakes.
2. **Try things.** Sometimes experimentation is the only way to discover what to do. If you do nothing new, nothing will change. If you try something different, you'll at least have a result to measure against. If you're the kind of person who can't tolerate mistakes, you'll have to adopt another kind of Championship Behavior, because fear of failure is a whole different issue. When the obstacles in your life are so deeply rooted, your Championship Behavior may include seeing a therapist.
 3. **Get outside help.** Many of the things you want in life are attainable, but you can't break out of your own perspectives long enough to see the path forward. You keep looping around the See-Do-Get model because you can't seem to see a different approach. Research and experimentation are ways to break you out of your current See-Do-Get patterns. But sometimes you can move a lot faster to a new paradigm—or model of what works—by having someone else point out what you can't see.

Please go to Exercise 3 now.

Lesson 4 — Abundance Mentality

You might have heard of the concept of abundance mentality before. It's a term coined and registered by Stephen Covey and is cited by him as one of the key principles of living an effective life. In the decades since Covey published *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the concept has been co-opted and borrowed by many other people, sometimes in new ways. For instance, Covey's original concept of abundance referred to win-win-thinking; that people have enough emotional maturity to allow others to win along side of them instead of only feeling successful when others lose. Newer perspectives on abundance mentality have used it loosely to refer to a general feeling of good will towards others.

Even if the term "abundance mentality" is a recent invention, the concept of living a beneficent lifestyle where you share your good fortune with others to expand your own satisfaction is not new. Consider that highly successful people often talk about the role of giving back as a measure of success in the world, as in the following examples:

"The value of a man resides in what he gives and not in what he is capable of receiving."

~Albert Einstein

"I choose to rise up out of that storm and see that in moments of desperation, fear, and helplessness, each of us can be a rainbow of hope, doing what we can to extend ourselves in kindness and grace to one another. And I know for sure that there is no them... there's only us."

~Oprah Winfrey

"You can have everything in life that you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want."

~Zig Ziglar

Successful business people tell us that we are more successful in life when we come from an abundant mentality. In fact, the word *generosity* in ancient times referred to a way of life expected of nobility. It was recognized that there was a responsibility of successful people to give back to the community—not from guilt, but from a sense of duty and love. It was the higher good expected of those who did not need to spend all their time scraping for food.

The great benefactors of today, like Bill Gates, Richard Branson, and Oprah Winfrey have made billions and given back millions. You may be tempted to dismiss their generosity as “tax shelter” or “guilt.” But in truth, their generosity is merely an expression of something many of us feel. They have the means to be abundant with their money because they have plenty of it.

You can give voice to abundance in your own way, within your means. You can feel abundant with your love, time, expertise, possessions, or your money—when you feel you have enough to share. Or you can simply feel abundant with your good will.

Imagine driving down the freeway during rush hour with the mindset of abundant good will. Now when someone cuts in front of you, you allow it to happen graciously, realizing that you win by being more relaxed, not by speeding up or flipping the driver off. The other driver wins something important to him, too; perhaps getting to work on time or a feeling gratified. Instead of feeling that his win means your loss, you focus on winning by letting him win. This is the source of Stephen Covey’s concept of “Win-Win Thinking.”

Abundance Thinking and Your Success

Let’s explore the idea of using abundance thinking in the context of win-win. The most important feature of abundance thinking in this way is that it’s *expansive* versus *contractive*.

Expansive thinking means feeling that there is enough for everyone. I have two real estate agent friends. One often gripes about how other real estate agents are “stealing” her good ideas. The other friend runs free classes to teach younger agents how to get more business. Guess which of them is more successful?

The first agent is *contractive*. She hoards her ideas out of fear that she’ll lose clients by helping other agents win business. The second agent is *expansive*. He’s not worried about the possibility of losing a deal to someone he helps. He’d consider that a success! People who have an abundance mindset are able to celebrate the successes of others without feeling threatened by them.

Of course you can be successful in business using contractive thinking. We see it all the time when people are taken advantage of or pressured to buy something they may not really need.

Win-win thinking is a choice you make. Often it genuinely improves your odds in business and life. The great products and services are always those that help customers win. Bill Gates wanted to make computers more accessible to the average person. Oprah Winfrey wanted to make people feel good. Henry Ford wanted people to be able to afford to buy a car. Mother Theresa wanted to feed hungry children. Zig Ziglar had it right. *“You can have everything in life that you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want.”*

Win-win thinking also has a very practical application in your daily life.

Abundance Thinking as a Communication Tool

Suppose you and your partner are trying to decide where to go for dinner. You want to go to the Japanese restaurant. He or she wants to go to the Thai place. You argue about it and it turns into a fight with hurt feelings. (Don't laugh—this sort of “petty” argument happens every day.)

Now suppose you approach the question of dinner with an abundance mindset. You have nothing to lose by hearing your partner out fully. When your partner has finished stating the case for Thai food, you can present your own case for Japanese food. If you cannot agree on one or the other, you can present third options that would satisfy both of you.

Finding neutral ground is one of the most powerful communication tactics in existence. It's one of the most used negotiation strategies in business and politics, so why not in relationships? In most cases of interpersonal conflict, if you can stop your instantaneous, contractive reaction to not getting what you want, and *proactively choose* to think abundantly, then you can open up the space for true dialog.

The great thing about abundance thinking is that it's really just a choice. Even in the middle of a negative conversation, as long as you have the strength of *will* and *character* to suppress your knee-jerk reaction, you can make a conscious choice to seek the win-win. A win-win can take the following forms:

- Agree when you genuinely can.
- State a counter-argument when it's important to you.
- Seek neutral ground.

- Agree to disagree without blame. Move on.

The only other alternative is to disagree and choose a win-lose mentality.

Abundance Thinking and Self-Worth

An important element of abundance mentality is a feeling of self-worth. High self-worth, or self-esteem, stems in part from the realization that no one can take your freedom of choice from you. No matter what happens, you always have the freedom to choose your *response* to a situation—even if you can't choose the situation itself.

High self-worth also comes from accomplishment, feelings of love and security, being able to view mistakes as opportunities, and more. Many of the chapters in this book offer tools and ideas for increasing self-worth, such as knowing how to talk back to your self-doubts and how to increase your levels of personal accomplishment.

Abundance Thinking Can't Solve Every Problem

When you find yourself in an unsupportive relationship, there's often nothing you can do about it, despite your courage to have win-win conversations with them. Someone who's stuck in a win-lose mindset will continually sabotage the communication to keep you from winning. This isn't because they're evil. It's most likely because they don't know what's happening. Unless they're already aware of what you've been reading about in this chapter, they won't understand the four win-win options available to them or the value of win-win.

My friend Thomas hates his boss. He goes to work every day with a heavy heart. His boss monitors his every move, doesn't trust him, and challenges him to prove himself daily. He seldom feels acknowledged. Thomas is evaluated on his work appearance, following the rules, and how many times he screws up, while his successes are seldom mentioned. He's tried talking to his boss—trying to create a win-win, but the boss doesn't get it or only pays “lip service” to Thomas' ideas. Possibly the boss lacks a sense of accomplishment and confidence and is subconsciously afraid he'll lose power if he negotiates a win-win with Thomas. The boss' lack of abundance thinking is making this a poisonous relationship.

Thomas may have no choice but to choose a new path that will take him away from this relationship.

What *Isn't* Abundance?

We've seen in this chapter that abundance thinking can refer to a general sense of good will towards others, a generosity of time and money, and a tool for negotiating expansive relationships. There's one more idea related to abundance that deserves a quick mention. That's the sense of abundance that comes from having enough "stuff."

When constantly seeking more stuff—a bigger house, a fancier car, a better neighborhood, etc.—you run the risk of living in a win-lose mentality because you're only able to feel content when comparing yourself to others.

The opposite is also true. When telling yourself that what you have is "good enough" and you don't really need a bigger house, fancier car, etc. then what appears to be abundance thinking is really founded in guilt. I can hear my mother, saying "Be grateful for what you have."

It's important to evaluate your "stuff" realistically. If you genuinely feel content with something you have, then you'll know it. For instance, I love my car. It's a mid-priced Chevy, about 8 years old now. I've thought about getting something newer or more prestigious, but I genuinely don't feel the need for one. On the other hand, I'd love a bigger house. My family is always on top of one another. Compared to someone living in an even smaller house in a less desirable neighborhood, I should feel abundant. But when it comes to my house, I don't.

While I agree that it's important to be grateful for what you have, forcing yourself to be grateful when you don't really feel it is poor motivation for succeeding in life. Success is born of ambition and creativity, coupled with a win-win mentality. You have to *want* more in order to get more. Abundance in this context means believing that it's possible for you to have what you want.

Please go to Exercise 4 now.

Lesson 5 — Resistance Disease

I think most people agree that taking action is critical to manifesting your intentions. But as a coach, I've seen that intentions don't automatically spur a person to action, even when the intention is vitally important.

We've talked before about how some people will wait until a compelling event motivates them to take action. These people will put off changing the bald tire until it goes flat or avoid mowing the grass until the neighbors complain.

But what if we're talking about day to day activities where a person can't afford to wait for the compelling event? For example, salespeople who resist prospecting for new clients. Homemakers who resist organizing and cleaning. College students who resist studying. Overweight people who resist exercising.

These are not problems with an instant negative consequence; the negativity is manifested over time. The College student gets by on C's and D's and gets a degree, but can't get a competitive job. The Homemaker gets by with a cluttered house until mold invades or there's a fire and the house is essentially a loss. The salesperson doesn't have enough money for retirement or to buy a house because she has gotten by with the bare minimum income for so long. The overweight person gets diabetes and heart disease.

These are not the kinds of one-time compelling events that can be recovered from quickly, if at all. These people are living in a state of perpetual resistance that haunts them all their lives. I call it "resistance disease."

"Nothing is so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task." ~William James

I'm guessing there are a variety of underlying causes for resistance disease that a person could explore with the right kinds of professionals. I'm not qualified to address the deep psychological reasons that might exist, but I can point to some successes I've had using practical techniques for moving past resistance and improving lives measurably.

I don't want to call this procrastination. To me procrastination means putting something off that you will do shortly, perhaps just before or after a compelling event. Resistance disease is chronic procrastination.

What causes resistance disease? We can trace the problem to 8 causes. A person may have some or all of these at the root of their resistance disease:

- Lack of time
- Lack of consciousness
- Lack of truthfulness
- Lack of money
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of instant gratification
- Lack of willpower
- Lack of planning

Lack of Time: I'm amazed how often two people in the same job, with essentially the same size of family in similar circumstances can have such different perceptions of time. Take two housewives who live near me. One is perpetually neat and organized. The other is sloppy and forgetful. The sloppy wife complains about a lack of time. The neat wife says that she has a lot of free time. Of course, both have exactly the same amount of time in their day before the kids and spouses come home. Each chooses to do something different with that time. What the sloppy wife is really saying is "Something else is a higher priority to me than cleaning right now." And the neat wife is saying, "Being tidy is a higher priority to me than another thing right now."

From that perspective, you can evaluate things that you are chronically resisting by asking yourself, "Which thing is a higher priority to me right now?" For example, if I'm overweight and thinking of eating a donut, I can ask myself, "*Is it a higher priority for me to eat this donut or to skip these calories?*"

Which brings me to the second point—consciousness.

Lack of Consciousness: For example, if you're overweight, have you ever found yourself putting the donut in your mouth before you realized you were doing it? Or if you're extremely disorganized have you ever found yourself shoving a box in the corner without even considering putting it in the right place? Or if you're a salesperson, have you ever found yourself driving past a client's house and not noticing until you were around the corner?

The failure to take action on chronic resistance often is accompanied by lack of consciousness at the critical moment. A person “goes blank” or maybe suppresses the flicker of recognition so quickly that they hardly notice it.

There are two underlying causes that many psychologists cite as *possible* reasons for going blank—fear of failure and perfectionism. Most people can understand fear of failure. But perfectionism? Here’s what happens. Chronic resisters sometimes have a desire to do everything completely, thoroughly. Any small amount of effort feels insufficient. If they can’t see the entire job done, they hate to start it at all. Once they do start it, they want to immerse themselves in it fully, but they know that life won’t let them, so they don’t start at all. I’m not condoning it. I’m just pointing out that it’s a common subconscious excuse. It’s also not true for everyone.

If you’re a chronic resister, one solution is to have a trigger that raises your consciousness about priorities in the moment of decision. I once joked with an overweight client that she needed a device that would give her a mild shock whenever she reached for food—as a reminder of her priorities. Triggers can be visual reminders in strategic locations, bells, phone calls from friends or coaches, etc. For instance, arrange with a friend to call you at 5pm to tell you to finish your report before going home.

Lack of Truthfulness: “I can do it later.” “I can stop any time I want to.” “I can find a better way.” These are the lies that some chronic resisters tell themselves. The only solution to this problem is continual, ever-present saturation in the truth. An overweight person needs to put a mirror on the refrigerator. A salesperson needs to keep their bank account information front and center on a piece of paper. The chronically disorganized person needs to, perhaps, have a comparison photo of their house vs. the kind of house that’s not cluttered. You need to look for ways to saturate yourself in the truth.

These triggers are what I call “existence visual.” They bring something into visual existence that’s typically hidden or not visual. Go for shock value. Underneath your existence visual add a sign that says, “*Is it a higher priority for me to _____ or to _____?*” Be sure to add the benefit of doing the right thing. For example:

“Is it a higher priority for me to eat this donut, or to skip these calories and not have to work off this weight?”

“Is it a higher priority for me to go home to watch TV or to call 5 clients and potentially have a sale?”

“Is it a higher priority for me to read this chapter and get an A on my test, or to play a video game?”

Lack of Money (or the things money can buy): Not having enough money, or not having the right car, house, clothes, etc. are all reasons some chronic resisters use for not taking consistent action. It may be true that you don’t have enough money or time, etc., but it’s also true that you can use Championship Behavior to move past a lack of resources. If you need money to solve a chronic problem, then you can certainly get the money, or you can change the parameters of your solution. One of the keys to overcoming this problem is forward planning, which we’ll talk more about in another chapter.

Lack of Knowledge: Not knowing how to do something—or lacking confidence that you can do it—is a big reason for chronic resistance in some people. This is particularly true of workplace tasks, such as selling, writing reports, managing staff. A person naturally tends to avoid doing something that makes them feel insecure. If I don’t know how to communicate effectively with my staff, then as a manager I might avoid having challenging conversations. If I don’t know how to have sales conversations, I’ll tend to avoid prospecting for new clients. Lack of knowledge isn’t the biggest cause of resistance in many cases. For instance, we know that exercising and eating right are keys to losing weight. Knowing those facts about weight loss doesn’t remove resistance for most overweight people. If it did, then a simple advertising campaign would eliminate obesity. But in some cases, lack of knowledge does play a role in resistance.

Lack of Instant Gratification: I can’t say what percentage of a person’s resistance is caused by any one of these factors, but I am willing to bet that in many cases a lack of instant gratification is involved. Human beings like to see results. When the results are postponed, people are less motivated. Overcoming issues of instant gratification involves two approaches: saturating yourself in the truth and providing yourself with an alternative instant result. For weight loss clients, I often suggest using a pinch of pepper on the tongue.

Lack of Willpower: By willpower, I don’t mean desire. Paradoxically, you can desire something in the extreme, yet still not act upon that desire. Sometimes people resist just because they don’t like doing something. Whatever it is they’re

resisting is just difficult, scary, or boring and they find it more pleasurable to do something else. All the other reasons for resistance might be a small part of it, but at the root, the person places a higher value on self-gratification than on the thing that's not getting done. There is a kind of slothfulness or indolence in this that is often caused by physical lethargy.

One approach for overcoming a lack of willpower is to increase your vitality. Vitality is a physical attribute that comes from good health, good sleep, and lack of stress. While there is an entire chapter devoted to vitality in this book, I will say here that one of the easiest ways to noticeably increase your vitality in about a day is to eat lightly or fast and get some moderate exercise, like a brisk half-mile walk. Research has shown that by reducing the daily intake of food and getting a daily dose of moderate exercise, we sharpen our minds, sleep better, and live longer.

Lack of Planning: The final piece of the resistance puzzle is planning. While there is a complete chapter about planning, I wanted to emphasize the concept here as a means to overcoming resistance.

If I'm going to make a gourmet dinner, I don't go to the store and guess what ingredients to buy; I take a recipe with me. If I'm going to drive to the west coast from the middle of the country, I don't jump in the car and begin driving generally in the direction of west; I look at a map and decide the route first.

By the same reasoning, I don't decide I'm going to lose weight by simply saying, "I'm going to lose weight now." I have to decide how I'm going to lose weight so that I can have short little targets that lead me the direction I need to go. I don't decide to become a great manager by waking up one day and throwing a bunch of leadership techniques at my staff. I decide what a great manager looks and behaves like, and then begin to implement a daily regimen of strategies consistently, based on the outcomes I'm trying to achieve.

Imagine your journey to being the best you can be when you can zap the resistance that slows you down and stops you now. You will find yourself flying through goal after goal in an ever spiraling rise to satisfaction. The greatest thing about humanity is that there is no top to what we can become, if we can remove resistance and live a proactive, abundant life!

Please go to Exercise 5 now.

Lesson 6 — Distractions & Tolerations

In every era of mankind it can be said that somebody turned to somebody else and said, “Things are a lot more hectic today than they used to be.”

And in every case, they were right. Every era of mankind has grown more complex and hectic. That doesn't mean life is harder from one era to the next. But it is hard in a different way. In our world today, for example, we've taken the expectation of personal productivity to new heights. It's barely acceptable any more to not be available by phone, and people will complain about not being able to get hold of a person in minutes. Vast numbers of people are in charge of us, from our friends and family who demand our attention by phone and Facebook, to our kids and partners to want to be entertained, to a plethora of unskilled bosses in an increasingly stratified corporate world. It's a recipe for stress.

Perhaps one of the most important survival skills in this current world view is our ability to manage distractions. Distractions are things that take our attention away from what we're trying to focus on. Think “texting and driving,” or “walking and chewing gum.” These are things that aren't supposed to go together, but we do them together, just as we eat and drive, program the gps and drive, do our makeup, read, and talk while we drive. And while doing one of those things, our coordination for doing the other slips.

And it's not just a problem for drivers. Several years ago two pilots got distracted by their laptops while on autopilot and overshot the runway. I saw a news report about a woman who was texting and walked into an intersection where she was struck by a car.

Beyond technology, we're also distracted by our own thoughts. With competing demands on our attention and time, we're always thinking about several tasks at once—multitasking mentally as well as physically. And our world has become intensely mental. While our grandmother might have multitasked by getting all the parts of a good meal on the table at the same time, we have to be evaluating different ideas, planning multiple programs, writing several different reports, and thinking about how to keep everyone happy.

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who tells us in his book called *Happiness*, that we should do things mindfully. His meaning is to be aware in the moment you are in of all that you are doing. When you are walking, think about walking. When you are sitting, think about sitting. When you are driving, think about driving. He says, “The present moment is the only moment that is real. Your most important task is to be here and now and enjoy the present.”

What’s the point in that, right? If you can multitask and you need to get a lot done, what is the point in slowing down and focusing on one task at a time? Well, for one, if we’re talking about driving, it’s safer. But more to the point, Thich Nhat Hanh is not talking about being able to do something better because you’re focused. He’s talking about calming the mind, something that has measureable benefits in other ways.

A calm, still mind is more able to detach from complexities and feel at peace. A peaceful mind is better able to connect to abundance and win-win thinking. It is said by the Buddhists that a person will have become enlightened when he does not have a single thought for one whole minute.

The person who can effectively manage distractions is likely to be more attractive to others. For instance, networking events are wonderful places to view distracted minds. You walk into the room and the first thing you do is walk up to someone and catch their eye to see if you can get into conversation with them. You can tell instantly if they’re “with you” or not. Sometimes it’s subtle, a frozen smile, a flick of the eyes. Other times it’s more overt with them turning and talking to other people in the middle of your conversation. And then other times you feel like you’re the only person in that other person’s world right then. Ah, that feels nice.

The practical application of this discussion about distraction is that by being more mindful, we can put ourselves in a more receptive state of mind, calming our stress, and improving both our health and our relationships. Wow, that’s a lot of goodies from the most simple of exercises.

In *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, Dan Millman’s lead character, Socrates, tells his young protégé that any job can become a meditation, a labor of great intention, by doing it mindfully. Those who are the very best at what they do get that way by mindful practice, not by mindless repetition. Our greatest examples of mindful practice come from athletes. For example, in the story *Golf in the*

Kingdom, Michael Murphy describes the concentration of golfers where everything around them drops away and they are in an altered state that allows them to achieve incredible shots. What if you pursued your job with that level of focus, where every detail mattered and you didn't allow anything else to impinge upon your concentration? What could you accomplish then?

Tolerations

Then there's the evil cousin of distractions—tolerations. Tolerations are a kind of distraction that we don't acknowledge. Tolerations are distractions we ignore, but that are in our peripheral vision and at the edge of our consciousness. In 1984, when I was in my heyday of attending personal growth workshops, a guru friend of mine introduced me to the concept of tolerations by asking me if there was anything about my appearance at that moment that bothered me—anything about my hair, clothes, skin, etc. I said, "Yeah. I wish I had worn nicer pants instead of jeans today." He asked what affect, if any, that had on my presence of mind today. I realized I was afraid others would be judging me for wearing jeans and I was feeling a little sheepish, perhaps hiding out just a little. He asked me if there was anything else. "Yeah, now that you mention it, I didn't put on nail polish. It doesn't really mean anything, but I do notice some of the other women have nice nails and I'm a bit envious." We talked about how the cumulative effect of tolerations can become a drag on our spirit, awareness, and energy.

These kinds of physical tolerations can consist of a multitude of small, petty details—like a dirty car, the torn curtain, a spot on the floor, the annoying piece of tape stuck to our computer, the door in the bathroom that sticks. Or they can be large projects—like the house needs painting, the filing system is in disarray, the car is too small for a growing family, etc.

Major Life Tolerations

But tolerations go well beyond the physical environment to include situations and people that make you feel drained of energy. Critical parents or partners, misbehaving kids, being overweight, a petty boss, sullen subordinates, and more. Like distractions, these are things that rob you of attention and focus. But they're a bit different from distractions in that they're permanently "in your space," robbing you of your full attention like a slow but steady drip of water.

Be aware that there are people who will strive to steal your energy and power. They may be doing it intentionally, or they may be doing it subconsciously. Either they are in power over you and enjoying the addictive feeling of being in control—as sometimes happens with managers over subordinates, or they're resentful of you and in a position to make your life difficult—as sometimes happens between coworkers when having “turf battles.”

When dealing with people you're forced to tolerate, you have to make a conscious decision about the situation. The situation will not change by itself, because the other person has no desire to reach a win-win with you. And you will not be able to change it alone unless you have enormous personal power.

Interestingly, you can have enormous personal power with some people and not with others. Different personalities and levels of power change the dynamics of relationships. It's even possible to meet the same person in a different context and like them.

So what are you supposed to do about tolerations? Well, for the petty tolerations in your environment, make a list and start fixing them. For the larger physical tolerations, make a list of projects and prioritize them. And finally, for the really big tolerations, especially those that involve other people, you will have to make very difficult decisions. Do you want to change jobs? Can you meet with a counselor so that there's an intermediary? Should you join a support program? These are huge, life-changing decisions that must be dealt with if you want to move past them. They WILL NOT go away on their own. You may get used to them, but that's just a way of letting the toleration become permanent—along with the loss of energy.

Tolerations are often missed on the journey to being the best you can be, precisely because they're things you try to ignore and overlook. Distractions take your attention away from what you should be focused on, but for the most part the distraction will go away with focus. Tolerations, on the other hand, take your energy in more subtle ways and will not go away with focus. They must be fixed.

Please go to Exercise 6 now.

Lesson 7 — Vitality

Of all the ways you can improve your life to be the best you can be, the one thing that underlies all is vitality. People who feel good physically are generally more energetic, happier, and quicker to make changes. People who are tired, overweight, or stressed are not as “alive” or “vital” as they need to be to take full control of their lives.

You probably have noticed that it is possible to be more vital when you feel good. After a good night’s sleep, you have more energy than after a poor night’s sleep. After eating light, you have more energy than when you eat heavy. After having a success at something, you feel more alive than you do after you fail at something.

When you feel vital, it’s easier to get things done without trying. You’re full of life and energy. You jump to do things that you wouldn’t have done if you felt lethargic or bored or distracted. To enjoy abundance, gain financial, emotional, and spiritual wealth, and live confidently, you have to be in control the engine of all of your accomplishments—your body.

Good health is within reach of most people—within the bounds of any extreme physical diseases. But many people don’t do what it takes to attain vitality because of their lifestyle choices. Just as with environmental tolerations, they allow health tolerations into their lives. They stay up late, allow bad foods into the house and mouth, forget to drink water, and so on. This chapter explores health tolerations so you can begin the process of small, slow, incremental changes in how you think, eat, and move.

Sleep

Sleep is the most misunderstood of all physical needs. In 1972, Peter Farrell was a salesman, selling medical supplies when he dropped by the sleep lab at a hospital, where he met with a doctor who was studying why some people can’t get a good night’s sleep. The doctor showed Peter a movie he’d taken of a patient. The man was tossing and turning in bed in the sleep lab. His face was bluish in color and he periodically gasped for breath before his color returned to normal. Then the process would repeat itself. The image switched to show the

man being strapped into an elaborate device that wrapped around his head. Hoses were attached to a large green industrial-looking ventilator that chugged away next to the bed, then the image fast forwarded to the man sleeping peacefully behind the mask without changing color. That was the start of our understanding of sleep apnea and the birth of the now small, light, and nice-looking flow generators that today sit next to many bedsides across the world.

In later sleep studies, healthy young men volunteered to be woken up every ten to fifteen minutes—just briefly—for a week of sleep. Before the week began, the men’s vitals were checked and shown to be excellent—perfect blood pressure, cognitive function, and reflexes. After the week of interrupted sleep, all of the men were in a state of physical health called “pre-diabetic.” Their blood pressure was dangerously high; they were unable to perform well on cognitive tests; their reflexes were marginally slower than before.

In recent years, it’s been proven that many of our body’s restorative hormones are only produced in sleep, especially among children where growth hormones are released during sleep.

The affects of sleep apnea and sleep deprivation include high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, poor growth patterns, lower brain function, and more.

Can there be any doubt that getting enough sleep is important to our vitality?

The solutions are simple: Avoid long-term patterns of sleep deprivation. If you have medical reasons for a lack of sleep, you owe it to yourself to correct the problems. Sleep apnea can be diagnosed by a questionnaire. Hormonal sleep problems, such as body aches (growing pains) and hot flashes can be addressed by medications—natural or otherwise. More severe problems will have to be addressed in other ways that you and your doctor can discuss. Other than that, go to bed in enough time to get eight hours of sleep.

Food Choices

Food has a profound effect on our vitality; not only our food choices, but our quantity of food. Studies have shown that people who eat less food actually live longer than fleshier people. When coupled with energy-producing foods, eating less is simply good for your body, your body image, and your mind.

You've always known this about food. You KNOW you need to eat right. No adult has ever said to themselves, "If I eat this cookie, I will lose weight." So the advice in making correct food choices to take small steps and be proactive:

1. Championship behaviors:
 - Remove the wrong foods from your house, and so from temptation. If you have kids who like the occasional cookie or other treat, make sure those foods are in a separate cabinet. Take from that cabinet sparingly for the kids and not at all for yourself.
 - Create menus and shop for the week ahead of time so that you prepare good meals that you can eat less of and still feel satisfied.
 - Prepare ahead. If time is not on your side, you'll have to plan ahead by cooking healthy meals that freeze well so that you can have your own healthy TV dinners.
2. Eat on purpose instead of distractedly. When we eat distractedly, we tend to look for foods we can prepare quickly—by popping them in the microwave, toaster, or oven right from the box. These tend to be processed foods that are high in carbohydrates, sodium, and sugar.
3. Remember that intention is a combination of having an actionable goal, having the faith that it can be achieved, and taking steps to achieve it. One of those steps is creating a visual reminder, such as a mirror on the refrigerator and typed sign containing an affirmation of your goal, such as: *"Is it a higher priority for me to eat junk food or to remain alert and vital so that I have the energy to _____?"*

Eat Wisely

Certain foods will trigger autoimmune responses in the body that cause it to work harder than it needs to in fighting off such things as inflammation and gastro-intestinal anomalies. The following foods are all highly allergenic and will frequently over-stimulate your immune system:

- White flour products such as cookies, pastries, baked goods
- Pasteurized cow's milk products
- Highly processed grain-based products **like the ones below:**
 - Breads
 - Pasta
 - Cereal
 - Bagels
 - French fries
 - Chips

- Pretzels
- Waffles
- Pancakes
- Baked goods

This is sometimes called “The White Diet” as it has us avoid things made with white flour, potatoes, processed sugar, and milk—all white foods or food sources.

But white is not the only problem. Think very carefully about wheat products as well, even supposedly “good for you” wheat flour and wheat-based cereals. Just because your tortillas or pasta are “whole wheat” doesn’t make them good for your body. Wheat is one of the hidden challenges to good health, and is the most likely of all foods to cause inflammation and gastro-intestinal problems in the body. If you suspect that you’re sensitive to wheat, you can make gluten-free choices. Look for gluten-free restaurants or menus in your community. Shop gluten free products. You may not need to create a completely gluten-free lifestyle, but you can benefit from reduced wheat glutes in your diet.

Eat Live Foods

Try to eat a diet of about 1/3 raw foods. Important micronutrients get destroyed in heating by changing their shape and chemical composition. In fact, people can get plenty of calories in their diets and still suffer from malnutrition, as in nutrient deficiencies. When your body is nutritionally deficient, it will trigger an eating response—trying to find the nutrients that are missing. This is one reason that some people can’t lose weight. Another reason is that an excess of “bad” carbohydrates—the kind found in the white diet, above, trigger cravings.

If you're consistently feeling hungry, lethargic, and lacking in vitality, you're likely eating too many white-sourced carbohydrates and not enough raw food nutrients.

What *can* you eat then? A million different things. Get some healthy-eating cookbooks and prepare better-for-you meals, such as lightly tossed stir-frys, fresh tomato spaghetti over cauliflower, fresh fruit cobbler, and so much more. For foods that you love, but know you should avoid, remember rule number one: eat in moderation. Have a spoonful and savor it slowly. If you will allow your brain time to record satisfaction, you will want to gobble less. There’s even one weight loss technique where you imagine eating the food you want, allowing yourself to salivate and fully experience the eating—including the texture and smell of the food—without putting anything near your mouth. If you do it

thoroughly, you can trigger the satisfaction response that gets you over the instantaneous craving so you can assert control.

Exercise Choices

There are literally hundreds of ways to get exercise, from hula-hooping in front of the television to yoga, free-weights, spin, Pilates, running, walking briskly, and more. Some forms of exercise can be done throughout your day, as in desk exercises, parking farther away from entrances, walking briskly instead of sauntering, taking the stairs.

Exercise, like sleep, engages the right chemicals and hormones to encourage growth and mental acuity. Furthermore, exercise strengthens the muscles so that from a purely mechanical standpoint, your muscles snap to the work you ask of them. You take physical action because your body is springier. Human bodies are made to move. When they don't, they break down, get rusty, and our parts deteriorate. We remove the rust, oil the parts, and repair the damage by exercising, eating right, and getting enough sleep.

Yet there is still more to vitality than our physical health. There is our spiritual and emotional health. We've talked a lot already about the effects of stress and how to reduce the stress of life by taking Championship Behavior, creating win-wins by thinking abundantly and acting courageously. But there is still more to this side of our health.

Spiritual Health

Human beings have something other animals don't have. That's the capability of seeing the higher good. In fact, we're physically connected to seeing the higher good. When we're showing compassion, praying, giving, showing gratitude, and thinking positive thoughts about ourselves and others, we're triggering positive chemicals in our brains.

Everyone's brain is different. Everyone has a different level and type of intelligence, as well as an upbringing that "sets" our patterns when we're young. We don't expect less of someone just because they're more artistic or more outgoing or more technically-minded than someone else. We expect them to fulfill themselves according to "who they are."

The same is true of spirit. People access spirit differently. Some are God-focused. Others see spirituality as “doing good.” Still others see it as thinking good thoughts or believing in an indefinable “force” running through the universe. Whatever your way of accessing spiritual health, it’s important to maintain it.

Go to church, if that’s your way. Read uplifting books, if that’s your way. Attend motivational workshops, if that’s your way. Do all of the above, if you want. But don’t do “nothing” in the area of spirituality. Or I should say, DO something to support your spirituality.

The Missing Piece

Between sleeping well and eating right, exercising, and taking care of your spirituality, you achieve a vitality that makes you emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually vital! But there is still one more piece of the puzzle missing. It’s the middle piece, the one that pulls the whole picture together.

It’s the thing that is most YOU about you. Your purpose in life. What is possible for you and your stamp on the world. We will address purpose in greater detail in a future chapter. In the meantime, build the puzzle out so that all that remains is the missing piece. Create the physical and emotional framework to be the best you can be and the next piece will come to you easier.

Please go to Exercise 7 now.

Lesson 8 — Compassion and Success

A wise, kind old man was walking through the woods. It was apparent that he was very weak with hunger and as he sat on a rock to rest, the animals of the woods, who knew him well, brought him all sorts of grasses and seeds to eat. But he couldn't eat any of those things and he continued to get weaker. As evening fell, he made a small fire and lay down next to it. Finally in despair, a rabbit threw herself on the fire to make a meal for the man. The Gods looked down and saw the rabbit and drew her spirit up and placed her into the moon for all to worship.

All throughout human history in every culture we find fairy tales, folk stories (like the one above), and religious parables that venerate selfless compassion. In modern times we applaud people like Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King Jr. and others who have given up the pursuit of new cars and the latest fashions for a greater good. These people have discovered profound satisfaction and contentment from the work they've taken on. In fact, some would argue that compassion is THE greatest good.

It's not just a "sense" or a "feeling" that compassion is a powerful force. Compassion triggers very real and hugely beneficial hormones in the body. A study completed in 2002 by University of Michigan psychologist Stephanie Brown reports that elderly couples who were helpful to others with problems were half as likely to die as couples who didn't get involved with other's problems.

Harvard University teaches a course called "Positive Psychology," nicknamed Happiness 101. The course talks about how some people are able to rise above their circumstances and reach out to help others, and those are the happiest people of all, whether or not they have material wealth.

Remember the story told by Viktor Frankl about how some people in the Nazi concentration camps would choose to give a kind word or a last crust of bread to others? Not everyone was capable of that compassion, embroiled as they were in their own misery. But in the end compassion was all any of them had—there are stories about bodies in the gas chambers piled in a cone shape, and at the

top of the cone of bodies were always children. At the end, it seems that the entire group of people would strive together to push the children towards the small air hole at the top of the chamber, driven to compassion as their last act on earth.

Does that mean you need to give up everything, be ultimately compassionate in order to find contentment —like the rabbit, throw yourself on the fire for a greater good?

Of course not. All things in moderation. If you've got hungry mouths to feed at home, you can't abandon your family to take care of the poor. And you may genuinely want to have a mansion and a private jet someday, which are less likely to manifest themselves if you're off treating victims of every disaster to hit the world. Compassion is not necessary for success in the world. But it does add something—a sense of “expandedness,” a sense that we're bigger and more connected, as opposed to small and isolated.

There may be opportunities for you to show compassion in everyday situations, from allowing the person who's late for work to cut in front of you, to popping a dime in the meter for a perfect stranger, to offering to pick up a load of give-aways from neighbors while on your way to the Goodwill to drop off your own cast-offs.

The more you can grasp those opportunities, the more you benefit from the intrinsic rewards of compassion, such as the good hormones and feelings of strength, the vitality and energy that you can use to further improve your situation. The more you improve your situation in life, the more you are able to improve others in an upward spiral of goodness.

Compassion begins in the mind, and manifests itself in your actions. It's easy to feel compassion, and even relatively easy to act compassionately when faced with a situation that calls for it. But it's less easy to *plan* to act compassionately. Planned compassion—where you think ahead about what you want to do to help others—is a tool in your own growth.

Reflect on Compassion in Your Own Life

Try this small activity. Read the following instruction and reflect on your answer for a few moments.

- Remember someone who has been particularly generous with you in your life. Close your eyes for a few moments and remember all the ways they supported you or continue to support you.

Notice how it felt to remember their compassion for you. Maybe you even smiled a bit and felt grateful for them. That's the feeling of your body releasing what I call "happiness hormones," which are endorphins that trigger good feelings in the physical body.

I am a supremely selfish person. I like triggering those hormones in myself and others. I go out of my way to offer a helping hand, donate to good causes, give away hundreds of dollars each year from my meager salary. I'm so selfish that I even put together little care packets and keep them in my car so I'll have something to pass out to the homeless I see when I'm driving around town.

Some people have told me that I'm patting myself on the back and I should be ashamed. Others tell me that giving to beggars supports that behavior. Others have told me that if I really want to help I should ___ (fill in the blank). Each of us has a structure of what is acceptable or not for whatever reasons make sense to us.

But showing compassion is a deeply personal thing, and the positive benefits of compassion will only be triggered fully when you've made a conscious choice to give according to your own system of values and experiences. For instance, my boss will periodically send our work team to serve at the food bank. While I enjoy my time there, I can see that some of my co-workers do not appreciate spending their time this way—not because they don't think the food bank is a good idea, but because they didn't choose to do this. To them it is not an optimal way to spend their time. They're not feeling it.

This individualization of compassion makes it so that we don't all care about the same things at the same time. And in a way, that's good, right? If we all cared all the time equally about everything, we'd go insane trying to help literally the whole world simultaneously. Each of us gives according to his or her capacity, whether emotional or physical.

What we must do, though, is to DECIDE to do something compassionate. It's the conscious decision to be compassionate that gives us power.

It takes us back to the discussion about proactive vs. reactive behavior. When we make a choice, we're much more likely to affect our physiology positively than when we react automatically or under duress. We take control of our physiology by taking control of our choices, regardless of the circumstances.

Pay It Forward

In the year 2000, a movie came out called Pay It Forward. The premise was that a young boy gets an assignment to think of a way to change the world. He chooses the idea of paying a favor forward instead of back. When a good deed is done to you, you do a good deed in turn for three new people. He demonstrates the exponential growth of the good deeds that would come out of one good act.

Far from being a new concept, the notion of paying it forward has been around in writing at least since the 1800's, and probably long before that. In 1841 Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "In the order of nature we cannot render benefits to those from whom we receive them, or only seldom. But the benefit we receive must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, cent for cent, to somebody." (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Compensation*, 1841).

There are a number of organizations around the world dedicated to the idea of paying it forward. Many of them are well-meaning start-ups that unfortunately never garner much organized support. Perhaps that's because the notion of paying it forward is so common that we don't need an organization to promote reminders out in the world?

Compassion's Evil Cousin

Compassion is the counter-balance to bad deeds. Bad deeds are the kinds of deeds that rob people of their energy and vitality. If you're someone who commutes to and from work every day on a major freeway in a crowded metropolitan area, then you've experienced how bad deeds can steal your energy. Every day my neighbor comes home from work in a state of rage from the 20-minute drive home after being cut off, threatened, and kept out of line at the exit.

Once he experimented with driving in the slow lane home to see if he could generate a different sort of emotional response. The same sorts of patterns

occurred and it took 40 minutes to get home instead of 20. He decided it was worth the rage to have the extra 20 minutes at home. I quipped that there was something wrong with our society when 20 minutes cost so much, but he wasn't interested in discussing it at the time.

Negative acts, thoughts, and behaviors result in an increase in stress chemicals, just as compassionate acts seem to result in beneficial chemicals. The facts are clear. Deliberately chosen acts of compassion, such as paying it forward and lending a helping hand, contribute to us feeling happier, living longer, and experiencing a more successful life.

Please go to Exercise 8 now.

Lesson 9 — Talking to Our Self Doubts

There is a poison in our hearts so damaging to our effectiveness in the world that it alone can cause all of our failures and misery. It is called self-doubt.

Self-doubt is a lack of confidence, but also it's a lack of will, belief, or faith. Self-doubt can be a subtle killer of dreams, quietly sabotaging intentions and robbing us of the rewards we seek. Fortunately, self-doubts can be addressed handily through a few techniques, rather than having to go through years of therapy to uncover underlying belief systems.

For many years, my friend Lisa was driven by the desire to be a commercially successful adventure novelist. She spent hours every weekend in her spare time writing. She made draft after draft of chapters, polishing her words and her craft. But in 6 years, she never published anything. Then one day circumstances delivered an opportunity for Lisa to speak with a well-known author about her desire to publish a book. The author listened sympathetically as Lori described the pain of getting it right so that an agent would accept it. Then the author asked a simple question: "What would happen if you sent a draft of your book to 40 agents right now and one of them accepted it?" Lisa's pulse started pounding and she felt almost faint. She began to invent reasons she couldn't send it off now—not in its current condition, not when she has a vacation coming up, not before giving it another reading, etc.

Lisa's self-doubts were her biggest impediment, not the quality of her writing. Her fear was that her writing skill would be judged negatively, that she would be criticized, that her book would be a commercial flop. She let those self-doubts speak to her subconscious, whispering negative "what if's..." in her ear instead of positive "what if's..."

What if your self-doubts were a Muppet-like character that sat on your shoulder like some sort of self-doubt devil? Let's call him "Wilbur." You can imagine him any way you like. My Wilbur is a blue and red puppet that looks a little like the Count on Sesame Street (the loveable vampire that helps kids learn to count). He sits on my shoulder whispering warnings in my ear, telling me to be careful, not put myself out there, avoid pain, avoid embarrassment, saying "Watch out, they might criticize you." He's really just trying to help.

If you had a self-doubt character like that on your shoulder, what would it look like?

My Wilbur is an imperfect creature. There are plenty of times when he should speak up, but he doesn't. For instance, when I make a suggestion to my boss, my experience has been that my boss doesn't like to do things that aren't her idea. But Wilbur never steps in to remind me of that fact and I keep making suggestions that keep getting shot down.

The value of personifying my self-doubts in the form of Wilbur is that it allows me to speak to my subconscious mind directly. By having an external conversation with my self-doubts, I can escape the dark cave where I'm blindly running into obstacles, never really sure what the problem is. I can say to my Wilbur, "Thank you for trying to keep me safe, but now I'm going to go ahead and ____ (publish this book, ask this person for a date, apply for this job, etc.). I am essentially reprogramming my subconscious mind. Remember our discussion of NLP (neurolinguistic programming)? When you use positive self-talk, you are triggering your brain to believe it.

The right way to talk to Wilbur is to thank "him or her" for keeping you safe, then say something like, "What would happen if ____ (I applied for the job and got it, I sent my manuscript and they liked it, I asked her on a date and she accepted)."

Of course, Wilbur will kick and scream. "But they won't accept you! Don't do it!" And you calmly repeat yourself. "Yes, it's possible they could reject me. But they might not."

Wilbur's role is to always speak up to prevent you from doing something that could cause you embarrassment or failure. The upside to this is that Wilbur does keep us from making a fool of ourselves. The downside is that Wilbur can make you *spin your wheels*, continuously doing what's comfortable instead of breaking into a new level of accomplishment.

When you're comfortable, you may not be aware that "Wilbur" is talking. Every so often you have to check in with yourself. Do you have a dream that you keep not acting on? Are you providing lots of reasons not to act? Are you getting close, then finding other things to do, or reasons to not take the final step? Are you holding back in some small way so that you intentionally fail and Wilbur can say, "See, I told you so?"

Talking back to your self-doubts—your version of “Wilbur”— can help you move to the next step in fulfilling your dreams, but only if you know how to get by Wilbur. To succeed you need to know what it feels like to go at 100%, rather than holding onto the lifeline, “just in case.” Once you recognize what 100% feels like, you will be able to talk to your self doubts in a way that reprograms them.

Going at 100%

Being 100% committed often makes the difference between success and failure, as opposed to being smarter, better looking, or more experienced. As the anonymous quote says, “*I CAN is more important than IQ.*” Even a less skilled or less experienced person can succeed over a more skilled or more experienced person by virtue of commitment level.

Athletes understand the concept of 100% commitment, as in this example from a surfing blog:

Imagine standing on the coarse Hawaiian sand, looking out at waves that have enough force to easily snap a surfboard in half. Hearing the loud explosions and the roar these monsters make can be very intimidating. Talk about pre-game jitters. One error in judgment or timing can have catastrophic results for surfers who wipe out. Just getting off the beach takes supreme fortitude and focus that can only come from being 100 percent committed.

But having success is still not the ultimate benefit of “going at 100%.” Success is nice, but the ultimate value in being 100% committed is that failure seems less important. When you put 100% effort in and fail, far from being excruciatingly disappointed, you feel disappointed, but also strangely accepting. Because you gave it everything you had, there’s no faulting yourself for not doing more. There’s nothing to berate yourself about. It’s only when you don’t give it your all that you beat yourself up because you know you could have done just a little more. That’s when you say, “Wilbur was right,” and you go back to your comfort zone.

What would happen if you pursued the next important task in your life with 100% commitment? Suppose you went to a job interview with 100% commitment? Or you asked someone on a date with 100% commitment? It may

be hard for you to imagine because you might be wondering what 100% commitment looks or feels like.

Fortunately, we can raise our level of commitment-awareness by making a conscious effort to recognize what 100% commitment feels like within ourselves. My friend Gary Acevedo runs week long workshops where he helps people find a reference point for what “going 100%” feels like. He has them literally out-shout Wilbur. In the safety of the workshop environment, he has each person stand in front of the room and he instructs them to “*Say YES at 100%.*” That’s the only instruction he gives them. Then he asks the rest of the group to evaluate at what percent they felt the person went.

The results are interesting. Some people shout “YES” at the top of their lungs and the room says “60 to 70%.” Other people whisper “yes,” and the room says “90 to 100%.” The point is that your commitment level is obvious to others around you, but doesn’t look like any particular thing in general. It’s very personal to you. Gary has each person continue upping their commitment level until they “ring the bell” and the other participants acknowledge that the person is going at 100%.

If you feel you have a safe place to do this, you can try it yourself without a crowd to evaluate you. Perhaps in your car with the windows rolled up? Or in your house when no one else is around? Just say “yes” at 100%. You won’t have anyone giving you feedback, so each time you try it, try squeezing just a bit more commitment into saying “yes.” It’s interesting how even in the security of our own cars with the windows rolled up and the freeway humming loudly, people can still feel a bit awkward yelling in their cars.

The point of doing this is to recognize when you’re really going at 100% and when you’re allowing Wilbur to influence you. It may be that Wilbur is protecting you appropriately, helping you not get fired or not lose your girlfriend or boyfriend. But by being aware, you get to make that choice consciously and mindfully rather than caving into your self-doubts.

Combining the techniques of talking to your self-doubts and choosing when you want to go at 100%, you have the power to move out of your comfort zone and accomplish dreams that have eluded you up to now.

Please go to Exercise 9 now.

Lesson 10 — Old Ways

In their book *The Oz Principle*, Hickman, Connors and Smith describe what they call the results pyramid, which is a handy model for discussing how to make lasting change in your results. The idea is much like Stephen Covey's See-Do-Get model: How we see the world (our foundational beliefs) determines our actions and results. The Oz Principle adds an important foundational layer—experiences, which ultimately determine our beliefs, from childhood onward.



The Oz Principle Pyramid

The plane that cuts the pyramid in the middle is our level of awareness. It illustrates that beneath our actions are beliefs that we're not entirely aware of. Covey calls the layer below the plane our paradigms. Paradigm is another word for model, so this layer consists of models of how we view the world. For example, if a person is raised in a highly Catholic household, one of their paradigms will be the rules and values of Catholicism. When they hear someone discussing social issues that conflict with those Catholic values, they'll *automatically* react in opposition.

The same is true of someone raised in a wealthy household, a "hippy" household, or an agnostic household. We're all going to react automatically to situations in the world according to the underlying beliefs we were raised with and the experiences we're most steeped in.

By themselves, situations are neutral. It's our paradigms that give situations meaning.

In the news I once heard a heart-breaking story about a mother and daughter, both deaf, who were shot as they waited for a bus. Several gang members had stopped their car at a red light adjacent to the bus stop and saw the mother and daughter signing to one another. The gang members didn't understand signing and interpreted the women's hand gestures as gang signs, and shot them. This is a tragic example of how a neutral situation is interpreted based on a paradigm.

Yet this sort of misunderstanding happens all the time, everyday, in hundreds of ways. Yesterday I was pulling into the gas station and as I was inching up to the pump, a car reversed into that spot before I could get there. Naturally I interpreted this situation based on scarcity. "What the ____! You #@!" The young woman who jumped out of the car started apologizing profusely, explaining that she had to get to a job interview and was completely out of gas and just needed a couple of dollars worth and it would only take a moment. I went below the line and decided that I could "see" her point of view and lighten up.

These everyday situations are a window into what happens in life. Have you ever had a goal or a dream that you've strived for, yet it remains steadfastly out of reach? Perhaps you keep trying over and over to make it happen, but you never quite get there. Perhaps your relationships always turn out wrong or your jobs always turn stressful or people always impose on your goodwill or you can't get your business off the ground?

You suspect you're doing something wrong, or perhaps you think the world is doing it to you. But the truth is that your results are exactly aligned with the actions you're taking. You just *think* you're taking the right actions to make your dreams come true. But in reality, you're taking lots of little actions that add up to the results you're getting—the wrong results.

There's a positive side to this, too. When things are going well, it means you're taking actions that give you a result you *like*. It's only when you're getting results you don't like that you want to change. So instead of spinning your wheels on actions that give unsatisfactory results, let's look at how you can get some traction.

Self-Made Men

We're all "self-made men;" we create our circumstances by the actions we take.