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ANTHONY ROBBINS



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WITHIN

Excerpts from the original *Awaken the Giant Within*

by

Anthony Robbins

*"This is a gift of possibility...Send it to everyone you care about!"*

—ANTHONY ROBBINS

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# WHAT LEADERS ARE SAYING

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“Tony Robbins is one of the great influences of this generation. *Awaken the Giant Within* is a fascinating, intriguing presentation of cutting-edge findings and insights across a broad spectrum of issues, including the growing consciousness that true success is first anchored to enduring values and service to others.”

— **Dr. Stephen Covey**  
**Author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People***

“*Awaken the Giant Within* is yet another profound and powerful tool in the Robbins arsenal of self-awareness. It has been an enormous source of strength and insight for me both personally and professionally.”

— **Peter Guber**  
**Chairman of Mandalay Pictures and**  
**Co-owner of the L.A. Dodgers and Golden State Warriors**

“Tony Robbins is the leading thinker in the psychology of personal achievement and peak performance. Not only does *Awaken the Giant Within* give you every tool you need to achieve personal excellence, but Tony’s warmth, passion and commitment will inspire you to truly master your life and to touch others in the process.”

— **Kenneth Blanchard, PhD**  
**Coauthor, *One Minute Manager***

“No matter who you are, no matter how successful, no matter how happy—Tony has something to offer you.”

— **Hugh Jackman**  
**Actor**

“He has a great gift. He has the gift to inspire.”

— **President Bill Clinton**

“Tony Robbins’ coaching has made a remarkable difference in my life both on and off the court. He’s helped me discover what I’m really made of, and he’s enabled me to see things from an empowering new vantage point. With Tony’s help, I’ve set new standards for myself, and I’ve taken my tennis game—and my life—to a whole new level!”

— **Serena Williams**  
**17-Time Grand Slam Tennis Champion and**  
**Olympic Gold Medalist**

# Dreams of Destiny: A Special Message From Anthony Robbins

We all have dreams...We all want to believe deep down in our souls that we have a special gift, that we can make a difference, that we can touch others in a special way, and that we can make the world a better place. At one time in our lives, we all had a vision for the quality of life that we desire and deserve. Yet, for many of us, those dreams have become so shrouded in the frustrations and routines of daily life that we no longer even make an effort to accomplish them. For far too many, the dream has dissipated—and with it, so has the will to shape our destinies. Many have lost that sense of certainty that creates the winner's edge. My life's quest has been to restore the dream and to make it real, to get each of us to remember and use the unlimited power that lies sleeping within us all.

I'll never forget the day it really hit me that I was truly living my dream. I was flying my jet helicopter from a business meeting in Los Angeles, traveling to Orange County on the way to one of my seminars. As I flew over the city of Glendale, I suddenly recognized a large building, and I stopped the helicopter and hovered above it. As I looked down, I realized this was the building that I'd worked in as a janitor a mere twelve years ago!

In those days, I had been concerned whether my 1960 Volkswagen would hang together for the 30-minute trip to work. My life had been focused on how I was going to survive; I had felt fearful and alone. But that day, as I hovered there in the sky, I thought, "What a difference a decade can make!" I did have dreams back then, but at the time, it seemed they'd never be realized. Today, though, I've come to believe that all my past failures and frustrations were actually laying the foundation for the understanding that has created the new level of living I enjoy. All these experiences have given me gifts that I'm now able to contribute to others. As I continued my flight south along the coastal route, I spotted dolphins playing with the surfers in the waves below. It's a sight that I treasure as one of life's special gifts. Finally, I reached Irvine, California. Looking below, I was a little disturbed when I saw that the off ramp to my seminar was jammed with bumper-to-bumper traffic for more than a mile. I thought to myself, "Boy, I hope whatever else is going on tonight gets started soon so that the people coming to my seminar arrive on time."

But as I descended to the helipad, I began to see a new picture: thousands of people being held back by security where I was just about to land. Suddenly I began to grasp the reality. The traffic jam had been caused by people going to *my event!* Although we had expected approximately 2,000 attendees, I was facing a crowd of 7,000 – in an auditorium that would only hold 5,000! When I walked into the arena from the landing pad, I was surrounded by hundreds of people who wanted to give me a hug or tell me how my work had positively impacted their lives.

The stories they shared with me were incredible. One mother introduced me to her son who had been labeled "hyperactive" and "learning disabled." Utilizing the principles taught in this book, she was not only able to get him off the drug Ritalin, but they had also since been transferred to California where her

son had been retested and evaluated at the level of genius! You should have seen her face as she shared with me this new label. A gentleman talked about how he had freed himself from cocaine using some of the conditioning techniques you'll learn in this book. A couple in their mid-fifties shared with me that, after fifteen years of marriage, they had been on the brink of divorce until they learned about personal rules. A salesman told me his monthly income had jumped from \$2,000 to over \$12,000 in a mere six months, and an entrepreneur related that he had increased corporate revenues by over \$3 million in eighteen months by applying the principles of emotional management.

I was touched so deeply by the emotions in that room that I got choked up, and at first I couldn't speak. As I looked out on my audience and saw 5,000 smiling, cheering, loving faces, in that moment I realized *that I am living my dream!* What a feeling to know that beyond a shadow of a doubt I had the information, strategies, philosophies, and skills that could assist any one of these people in empowering themselves to make the changes they desired most! A flood of images and emotions flowed over me. I began to remember an experience I'd had only a few years before, sitting in my 400-square-foot bachelor apartment in Venice, California, all alone and crying as I listened to the lyrics of a Neil Diamond song: "I am, I said, to no one there. And no one heard at all, not even the chair. I am, I cried, I am, said I. And I am lost, and I can't even say why, leavin' me lonely still." I remembered feeling like my life didn't matter, as if the events of the world were controlling me. I also remember the moment my life changed, the moment I finally said, "I've had it! I know I'm much more than I'm demonstrating mentally, emotionally, and physically in my life." *I made a decision* in that moment which was to alter my life forever. I decided to change virtually every aspect of my life. *I decided I would never again settle for less than I could be.* Who would have guessed that this decision would bring me to such an incredible moment?

I gave my all at the seminar that night, and when I left the auditorium, crowds of people followed me to the helicopter to see me off. To say I was deeply moved by the experience would be an understatement. A tear slid down my cheek as I thanked my Creator for these wonderful gifts. As I lifted off the grass and ascended into the moonlight, I had to pinch myself. *Could this be real?* Am I the same guy who eight years ago was struggling, frustrated, feeling alone and incapable of making my life work? Fat, broke, and wondering if I could even survive? How could a young kid like me with nothing but a high school education have created such dramatic changes?

My answer is simple: I learned to harness the principle I now call concentration of power. Most people have no idea of the giant capacity we can immediately command when we focus all of our resources on mastering a single area of our lives. Controlled focus is like a laser beam that can cut through anything that seems to be stopping you. When we focus consistently on improvement in any area, we develop unique distinctions on how to make that area better. One reason so few of us achieve what we truly want is that we never direct our focus; concentrate our power. Most people dabble their way through life, never deciding to master anything in particular. In fact, I believe most people fail in life simply because *they major in minor things.* I believe that one of life's major lessons is learning to understand what makes us do what we do. What shapes human behavior? The answers to this question provide critical keys to shaping your own destiny.

My entire life has been continually driven by a singular, compelling focus: *What makes the difference in the quality of peoples lives?* How is it that so often people from such humble beginnings and devastating backgrounds manage in spite of it all to create lives that inspire us? Conversely, why do so many of those born into privileged environments, with every resource for success at their fingertips, end up fat, frustrated, and often chemically addicted? What makes some people's lives an example and others' a warning? What is the secret that creates passionate, happy, and grateful lives in many, while for others the refrain might be, "Is that all there is?"

My own magnificent obsession began with some simple questions: "How can I take immediate control of my life? What can I do today that can make a difference—that could help me and others to shape our destinies? How can I expand, learn, grow, and share that knowledge with others in a meaningful and enjoyable way?"

At a very early age, I developed a belief that we're all here to contribute something unique, that deep within each of us lies a special gift. You see, I truly believe we all have a sleeping giant within us. Each of us has a talent, a gift, our own bit of genius just waiting to be tapped. It might be a talent for art or music. It might be a special way of relating to the ones you love. It might be a genius for selling or innovating or reaching out in your business or your career. I choose to believe that our Creator doesn't play favorites, that we've all been created unique, but with equal opportunities for experiencing life to the fullest. I decided many years ago that the most important way I could spend my life would be to invest it in something that would outlast it. *I decided that somehow I must contribute in some way that would live on long after I was gone.*

Today, I have the incredible privilege of sharing my ideas and feelings with literally millions of people through my books, tapes, and seminars. I've assisted members of Congress, CEOs, presidents of companies and countries, managers and mothers, salespeople, accountants, lawyers, doctors, psychiatrists, counselors, and professional athletes. I've worked with phobics, the clinically depressed, people with multiple personalities, and those who thought they had no personality. Now I have the unique good fortune of sharing the best of what I've learned with you, and for that opportunity I am truly grateful and excited.

Through it all, I've continued to recognize the power individuals have to change virtually anything and everything in their lives in an instant. I've learned that the resources we need to turn our dreams into reality are within us, merely waiting for the day when we decide to wake up and claim our birthright. I wrote this book for one reason: to be a wake-up call that will challenge those who are committed to living and being more to tap their God-given power. There are ideas and strategies in this book to help you produce specific, measurable, long-lasting changes in yourself and others.

You see, I believe I know who you really are. I believe you and I must be kindred souls. Your desire to expand has brought you to this book. It is the invisible hand that guided you. I know that no matter where you are in your life, you want more! No matter how well you're already doing or how challenged you now may be, deep inside of you there lies a belief that your experience of life can and will be much greater than it already is. You are destined for your own unique form of greatness, whether it is as an

outstanding professional, teacher, businessperson, mother, or father. Most importantly, you not only believe this, but you've taken action. You not only clicked to view this book, but now you're also reading it! The promise of this book is to produce incredible results in your life. Clearly, you're the kind of person who won't cheat yourself by dabbling. By consistently taking advantage of each of the chapters in this book, you'll ensure your ability to maximize your potential.

I challenge you not only to do whatever it takes to read this book in its entirety (unlike the masses who quit) but also to use what you learn in simple ways each day. This is the all-important step that's necessary for you to produce the results you're committed to! Let your journey begin!

With love and respect,

Tony Robbins

P.S.: As I read these words this morning in 2013—more than 20 years after I wrote them—the only thing that has changed is that I'm even more grateful for all that I've learned and all that I can share. Today, I've had the privilege of serving more than 50 million people in over 100 countries, with more than 4 million people attending my live seminars.

I'm sending you this gift of a condensed version of my 544-page original book in the hope it will touch your life in a powerful and empowering way. If it does, please take what you've learned and pay it forward by helping someone else, and keep the gift growing. I hope someday I'll get the chance to meet you, perhaps at a seminar or walking down the street, and then I'll get to learn exactly how you've applied these strategies to significantly enhance the quality of your life, and perhaps the lives of those you love!

*Now back to your journey. Let's begin with...*

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Insights from:

# UNLEASH YOUR POWER

(Part 1)

# CREATING LASTING CHANGE



For changes to be of any true value, they've got to be lasting and consistent. We've all experienced change for a moment, only to feel let down and disappointed in the end. In fact, many people attempt change with a sense of fear and dread because unconsciously they believe the changes will only be temporary. A prime example of this is someone who needs to begin dieting, but finds himself putting it off, primarily because he unconsciously knows that whatever pain he endures in order to create the change will bring him only a short-term reward. For most of my life I've pursued what I consider to be the organizing principles of lasting change, and you'll learn many of these and how to utilize them in the pages that follow. But for now, I'd like to share with you three elementary principles of change that you and I can use immediately to change our lives. While these principles are simple, they are also extremely powerful when they are skillfully applied. These are the exact same changes that an individual must make in order to create personal change, that a company must make in order to maximize its potential, and that a country must make in order to carve out its place in the world. In fact, as a world community these are the changes that we all must make to preserve the quality of life around the globe.

## STEP ONE

### Raise Your Standards

Any time you sincerely want to make a change, the first thing you must do is to raise your standards. When people ask me what really changed my life 30 years ago, I tell them that absolutely the most important thing was changing what I demanded of myself. I wrote down all the things I would no longer accept in my life, all the things I would no longer tolerate, and all the things that I aspired to becoming. Think of the far-reaching consequences set in motion by men and women who raised their standards and acted in accordance with them, deciding they would tolerate no less. History chronicles the inspiring examples of people like Leonardo da Vinci, Abraham Lincoln, Helen Keller, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Albert Einstein, Cesar Chavez, Soichiro Honda, and many others who took the magnificently powerful step of raising their standards. The same power that was available to them is available to you, if you have the courage to claim it. Changing an organization, a company, a country—or a world—begins with the simple step of changing yourself.

## STEP TWO

### Change Your Limiting Beliefs

If you raise your standards but don't really believe you can meet them, you've already sabotaged yourself. You won't even try; you'll be lacking that sense of certainty that allows you to tap the deepest capacity that's within you even as you read this. Our beliefs are like unquestioned commands, telling us how things are, what's possible and what's impossible, what we can and cannot do. They shape every

action, every thought, and every feeling that we experience. As a result, changing our belief systems is central to making any real and lasting change in our lives. We must develop a sense of certainty that we can and will meet the new standards before we actually do. Without taking control of your belief systems, you can raise your standards as much as you like, but you'll never have the conviction to back them up. How much do you think Gandhi would have accomplished had he not believed with every fiber of his being in the power of nonviolent opposition? It was the congruence of his beliefs which gave him access to his inner resources and enabled him to meet challenges which would have swayed a less committed man. Empowering beliefs—this sense of certainty—is the force behind any great success throughout history.

## STEP THREE

### Change Your Strategy

In order to keep your commitment, you need the best strategies for achieving results. One of my core beliefs is that if you set a higher standard, and you can get yourself to believe, then you certainly can figure out the strategies. You simply will find a way. Ultimately, that's what this whole book is about. It shows you strategies for getting the job done, and I'll tell you now that the best strategy in almost any case is to find a role model, someone who's already getting the results you want, and then tap into their knowledge. Learn what they're doing, what their core beliefs are, and how they think. Not only will this make you more effective, it will also save you a huge amount of time because you won't have to reinvent the wheel. You can fine-tune it, reshape it, and perhaps even make it better.

This book will provide you with the information and impetus to commit to all three of these master principles of quality change: it will help you raise your standards by discovering what they currently are and realizing what you want them to be; it will help you change the core beliefs that are keeping you from where you want to go and enhance those that already serve you; and it will assist you in developing a series of strategies for more elegantly, quickly, and efficiently producing the results you desire.

You see, in life, lots of people know what to do, but few people actually do what they know. Knowing is not enough! You must take action. If you will allow me the opportunity, through this book I'll be your personal coach. What do coaches do? Well, first, they care about you. They've spent years focusing on a particular area of expertise, and they've continued to make key distinctions about how to produce results more quickly. By utilizing the strategies your coach shares with you, you can immediately and dramatically change your performance. Sometimes, your coach doesn't even tell you something new, but reminds you of what you already know, and then gets you to do it. This is the role, with your permission, that I'll be playing for you.

On what, specifically, will I be coaching you? I'll offer you distinctions of power in how to create lasting improvements in the quality of your life. Together, we will concentrate on (not dabble in!) the mastery of the five areas of life that I believe impact us most. They are:

# 1. Emotional Mastery

Mastering this lesson alone will take you most of the way toward mastering the other four! Think about it. Why do you want to lose weight? Is it just to have less fat on your body? Or is it because of the way you think you'd feel if you freed yourself of those unwanted pounds, giving yourself more energy and vitality, making yourself feel more attractive to others, and boosting your confidence and self-esteem to the stratosphere? Virtually everything we do is to change the way we feel—yet most of us have little or no training in how to do this quickly and effectively. It's amazing how often we use the intelligence at our command to work ourselves into unresourceful emotional states, forgetting about the multitude of innate talents each of us already possesses. Too many of us leave ourselves at the mercy of outside events over which we may have no control, failing to take charge of our emotions—over which we have all the control—and relying instead on short-term quick fixes. How else can we explain the fact that, while less than 5 percent of the world's population lives in the United States, we consume almost 37 percent of the world's cocaine?\* Or that our national defense budget, which currently runs in the billions, is equaled by what we spend on alcohol consumption? Or that 15 million American adults experience clinical depression every year, and that the number of antidepressant prescriptions in the U.S. has gone up 400 percent since 1988?

\* Updated to reflect current statistics.

In this book, you will discover what makes you do what you do, and the triggers for the emotions you experience most often. You will then be given a step-by-step plan to show you how to identify which emotions are empowering, which are disempowering, and how to use both kinds to your best advantage so that your emotions become not a hindrance, but instead a powerful tool in helping you achieve your highest potential.

## 2. Physical Mastery

Is it worth it to have everything you've ever dreamed of, yet not have the physical health to be able to enjoy it? Do you wake up every morning feeling energized, powerful, and ready to take on a new day? Or do you wake up feeling as tired as the night before, riddled with aches, and resentful at having to start all over again? Will your current lifestyle make you a statistic? One of every four Americans dies of coronary disease; approximately the same percentage dies of cancer. To borrow a phrase from the sixteenth-century physician Thomas Muffet, we are "digging our graves with our teeth" as we cram our bodies with high-fat, nutritionally empty foods, poison our systems with cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs, and sit passively in front of our TV sets. This second master lesson will help you take control of your physical health so that you not only look good, but you feel good and know that you're in control of your life, in a body that radiates vitality and allows you to accomplish your outcomes.

## 3. Relationship Mastery

Other than mastering your own emotions and physical health, there is nothing I can think of that is more important than learning to master your relationships—romantic, family, business, and social. After all, who wants to learn, grow, and become successful and happy all by themselves? The third master lesson

in this book will reveal the secrets to enable you to create quality relationships—first with yourself, then with others. You will begin by discovering what you value most highly, what your expectations are, the rules by which you play the game of life, and how it all relates to the other players. Then, as you achieve mastery of this all-important skill, you will learn how to connect with people at the deepest level and be rewarded with something we all want to experience: a sense of contribution, of knowing that we have made a difference in other people’s lives. I’ve found that, for me, the greatest resource is a relationship because it opens the doors to every resource I need. Mastery of this lesson will give you unlimited resources for growing and contributing.

## 4. Financial Mastery

By the time they reach the age of sixty-five, most Americans are either dead broke—or dead! That’s hardly what most people envision for themselves as they look ahead to the golden age of retirement. Yet without the conviction that you deserve financial wellbeing, backed up by a workable game plan, how can you turn your treasured scenario into reality? The fourth master lesson in this book will teach you how to go beyond the goal of mere survival in your autumn years of life, and even now, for that matter. Because we have the good fortune to live in a capitalist society, each of us has the capability to carry out our dreams. Yet most of us experience financial pressure on an ongoing basis, and we fantasize that having more money would relieve that pressure. This is a grand cultural delusion—let me assure you that the more money you have, the more pressure you’re likely to feel. The key is not the mere pursuit of wealth, but changing your beliefs and attitudes about it so you see it as a means for contribution, not the end-all and be-all for happiness. To forge a financial destiny of abundance, you will first learn how to change what causes scarcity in your life, and then how to experience on a consistent basis the values, beliefs, and emotions that are essential to experiencing wealth, holding on to it and expanding it. Then you’ll define your goals and shape your dreams with an eye toward achieving the highest possible level of well-being, filling you with peace of mind and freeing you to look forward with excitement to all the possibilities that life has to offer.

## 5. Time Mastery

Masterpieces take time. Yet how many of us really know how to use our time? I’m not talking about time management; I’m talking about actually taking time and distorting it, manipulating it so that it becomes your ally rather than your enemy. The fifth master lesson in this book will teach you, first, how short-term evaluations can lead to long-term pain. You will learn how to make a real decision and how to manage your desire for instantaneous gratification, thus allowing your ideas, your creations—even your own potential—the time to reach full fruition. Next you’ll learn how to design the necessary maps and strategies for following up on your decision, making it a reality with the willingness to take massive action, the patience to experience “lag time,” and the flexibility to change your approach as often as needed. Once you have mastered time, you will understand how true it is that most people overestimate what they can accomplish in a year—and underestimate what they can achieve in a decade!

I’m not sharing these lessons with you to say that I have all the answers or that my life has been perfect or smooth. I’ve certainly had my share of challenging times. But through it all, I’ve managed to learn, persist,

and continually succeed throughout the years. Each time I've met a challenge, I've used what I've learned to take my life to a new level. And, like yours, my level of mastery in these five areas continues to expand.

Also, living my lifestyle may not be the answer for you. My dreams and goals may not be yours. I believe, though, that the lessons I've learned about how to turn dreams into reality—how to take the intangible and make it real—are fundamental to achieving any level of personal or professional success.

**I wrote this book to be an action guide—a textbook for increasing the quality of your life and the amount of enjoyment that you can pull from it.** While I'm obviously extremely proud of my first book, *Unlimited Power*, and the impact it's had on people all over the world, I feel this book will bring you some new and unique distinctions of power that can help you move your life to the next level.

We'll be reviewing some of the fundamentals, since repetition is the mother of skill. Therefore, I hope this will be a book you'll read again and again, a book you'll come back to and utilize as a tool to trigger yourself to find the answers that already lie inside you. Even so, remember that as you read this book, you don't have to believe or use everything within it. *Grab hold of the things you think are useful; put them in action immediately.* You won't have to implement all of the strategies or use all of the tools in this book to make some major changes. All have life-changing potential individually; used together, however, they will produce explosive results.

This book is filled with the strategies for achieving the success you desire, with organizing principles that I have modeled from some of the most powerful and interesting people in our culture. I've had the unique opportunity to meet, interview, and model a huge variety of people—people with impact and unique character—from Norman Cousins to Michael Jackson, from coach John Wooden to financial wizard John Templeton, from the captains of industry to cab drivers. In the following pages, you'll find not only the benefits of my own experience, but that of the thousands of books, tapes, seminars, and interviews that I've accumulated over the last ten years of my life, as I continue the exciting, ongoing quest of learning and growing a little bit more, every single day.

The purpose of this book is not just to help you make a singular change in your life, but rather to be a **pivot point** that can assist you in taking your entire life to a new level. The focus of this book is on creating **global changes**. What do I mean by this? Well, you can learn to make changes in your life—overcome a fear or a phobia, increase the quality of a relationship, or overcome your pattern of procrastinating. All these are incredibly valuable skills, and if you've read *Unlimited Power*, you've already learned many of them. However, as you continue through the following pages, you'll find that there are key **leverage points** within your life that, if you make one small change, will literally transform every aspect of your life.

# DECISIONS: THE PATHWAY TO POWER



In *Unlimited Power*, I made it abundantly clear that the most powerful way to shape our lives is to get ourselves to take action. The difference in the results that people produce comes down to what they've done differently from others in the same situations. **Different actions produce different results.** Why? Because any action is a cause set in motion, and its effect builds on past effects to move us in a definite direction. Every direction leads to an ultimate destination: our destiny.

In essence, if we want to direct our lives, we must take control of our consistent actions. It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives, but what we do consistently. The key and most important question, then, is this: What precedes all of our actions? What determines what actions we take, and therefore, who we become and what our ultimate destination is in life? What is the father of action?

The answer, of course, is what I've been alluding to all along: the **power of decision**. Everything that happens in your life—both what you're thrilled with and what you're challenged by—began with a decision. **I believe that it's in your moments of decision that your destiny is shaped.** The decisions that you're making right now, every day, will shape how you feel today as well as whom you're going to become this year, next year, and in the decades to come.

As you look back over the last ten years, were there times when a different decision would have made your life radically different from today, either for better or for worse? Maybe, for example, you made a career decision that changed your life. Or maybe you *failed* to make one. Maybe you decided during the last ten years to get married—or divorced. You might have purchased a tape, a book, or attended a seminar and, as a result, changed your beliefs and actions. Maybe you decided to have children, or to put it off in pursuit of a career. Perhaps you decided to invest in a home or a business. Maybe you decided to start exercising, or to give it up. It could be that you decided to stop smoking. Maybe you decided to move to another part of the country, or to take a trip around the world. How have these decisions brought you to this point in your life?

Did you experience emotions of tragedy and frustration, injustice or hopelessness during the last decade of your life? I know I certainly did. If so, what did you decide to do about them? Did you push beyond your limits, or did you just give up? How have these decisions shaped your current life path?

More than anything else, I believe it's our decisions, not the conditions of our lives, that determine our destiny. You and I both know that there are people who were born with advantages: they've had genetic advantages, environmental advantages, family advantages, or relationship advantages. Yet you and I also know that we constantly meet, read, and hear about people who against all odds have exploded beyond

the limitations of their conditions by making new decisions about what to do with their lives. They've become examples of the *unlimited power* of the human spirit.

**If we decide to, you and I can make our lives one of these inspiring examples.** How? Simply by making decisions today about how we're going to live in this decade and beyond. If you don't make decisions about how you're going to live, then you've already made a decision, haven't you? You're making a decision to be directed by the environment instead of shaping your own destiny. My whole life changed in just one day—the day I determined not just what I'd like to have in my life or what I wanted to become, but when I decided who and what I was committed to having and being in my life. That's a simple distinction, but a critical one.

Three decisions that you make every moment of your life control your destiny. These three decisions determine what you'll notice, how you'll feel, what you'll do, and ultimately what you will contribute and who you become. If you don't control these three decisions, you simply aren't in control of your life. When you do control them, you begin to sculpt your experience.

The three decisions that control your destiny are:

1. Your decisions about **what to focus on**.
2. Your decisions about **what things mean to you**.
3. Your decisions about **what to do** to create the results you desire.

You see, it's not what's happening to you now or what has happened in your past that determines who you become. Rather, **it's your decisions about what to focus on, what things mean to you, and what you're going to do about them that will determine your ultimate destiny.** Know that if anyone is enjoying greater success than you in any area, they're making these three decisions differently from you in some context or situation.

Too many of us don't make the majority of our decisions consciously, especially these three absolutely crucial ones; in so doing, we pay a major price. In fact, most people live what I call "**The Niagara Syndrome**." I believe that life is like a river, and that most people jump on the river of life without ever really deciding where they want to end up. So, in a short period of time, they get caught up in the current: current events, current fears, current challenges. When they come to forks in the river, they don't consciously decide where they want to go, or which is the right direction for them. They merely "go with the flow." They become a part of the mass of people who are directed by the environment instead of by their own values. As a result, they feel out of control. They remain in this unconscious state until one day the sound of the raging water awakens them, and they discover that they're five feet from Niagara Falls in a boat with no oars. At this point, they say, "Oh, shoot!" But by then it's too late. They're going to take a fall. Sometimes it's an emotional fall. Sometimes it's a physical fall. Sometimes it's a financial fall. **It's likely that whatever challenges you have in your life currently could have been avoided by some better decisions upstream.**

There will be times when you're on the river solo and you'll have to make some important decisions on your own. The good news is that if you're willing to learn from your experience, then even times you

might think were difficult become great because they provide valuable information—**key distinctions**—that you will use to make better decisions in the future. In fact, any extremely successful person you meet will tell you—if they're honest with you—that the reason they're more successful is that they've made more poor decisions than you have. People in my seminars often ask me, "How long do you think it will take for me to really master this particular skill?" And my immediate response is, "How long do you want it to take?" If you take action ten times a day (and have the proportionate "learning experiences") while other people act on a new skill once a month, you'll have ten months of experience in a day, you will soon master the skill, and will, ironically, probably be considered "talented and lucky."

I became an excellent public speaker because, rather than once a week, I booked myself to speak three times a day to anyone who would listen. While others in my organization had forty-eight speaking engagements a year, I would have a similar number within two weeks. Within a month, I'd have two years of experience. And within a year, I'd have a decade's worth of growth. My associates talked about how "lucky" I was to have been born with such an "innate" talent. I tried to tell them what I'm telling you now: mastery takes as long as you want it to take. By the way, were all of my speeches great? Far from it! But I did make sure that I learned from every experience and that I somehow improved until very soon I could enter a room of any size and be able to reach people from virtually all walks of life.

No matter how prepared you are, there's one thing that I can absolutely guarantee: if you're on the river of life, it's likely you're going to hit a few rocks. That's not being negative; that's being accurate. The key is that when you do run aground, instead of beating yourself up for being such a "failure," remember that **there are no failures in life. There are only results.** If you didn't get the results you wanted, learn from this experience so that you have references about how to make better decisions in the future.

One of the most important decisions you can make to ensure your long-term happiness is to decide to **use whatever life gives you in the moment.** The truth of the matter is that there's nothing you can't accomplish if: 1) You clearly decide what it is that you're absolutely committed to achieving, 2) You are willing to take massive action, 3) You notice what's working or not, and 4) You continue to change your approach until you achieve what you want, using whatever life gives you along the way.

# LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT LESSON



Donald Trump and the late Mother Teresa were driven by the exact same force. I can hear you saying, “Are you off your rocker, Tony? They couldn’t have been more different!” It’s absolutely true that their values lay at opposite ends of the spectrum, but they were both driven by pain and pleasure. Their lives have been shaped by what they’ve learned to get pleasure from, and what they’ve learned will create pain. The most important lesson we learn in life is what creates pain for us and what creates pleasure. This lesson is different for each of us and, therefore, so are our behaviors. What’s driven Donald Trump throughout his life? He’s learned to achieve pleasure by having the largest and most expensive yachts, acquiring the most extravagant buildings, making the shrewdest deals—in short, accumulating the biggest and best toys. What did he learn to link pain to? In interviews he has revealed that his ultimate pain in life is being second-best at anything—he equates it with failure. In fact, his greatest drive to achieve comes from his compulsion to avoid this pain. It’s a far more powerful motivator than his desire to gain pleasure. Many competitors have taken great joy in the pain that Trump has experienced from the collapse of much of his economic empire. Rather than judge him—or anyone else, including yourself—it might be more valuable to understand what’s driving him and to have some compassion for his obvious pain. By contrast, look at Mother Teresa. Here was a woman who cared so deeply that when she saw other people in pain, she also suffered. Seeing the injustice of the caste system wounded her. She discovered that when she took action to help these people, their pain disappeared, and so did hers. For Mother Teresa, the ultimate meaning of life could be found in one of the most impoverished sections of Calcutta, the City of Joy, which is swollen past the bursting point with millions of starving and diseased refugees. For her, pleasure might have meant wading through knee-deep muck, sewage, and filth in order to reach a squalid hut and minister to the infants and children within, their tiny bodies ravaged by cholera and dysentery. She was powerfully driven by the belief that helping others out of their misery helped alleviate her own pain, that in helping them experience life in a better way—giving them pleasure—she would feel pleasure. She learned that putting yourself on the line for others is the highest good; it gave her a sense that her life had true meaning. While it may be a stretch for most of us to liken the sublime humility of Mother Teresa to the materialism of Donald Trump, it’s critical to remember that these two individuals shaped their destinies based upon what they linked pain and pleasure to. Certainly their backgrounds and environments played a role in their choices, but ultimately they made conscious decisions about what to reward or punish themselves for.

## **WHAT YOU LINK PAIN TO AND WHAT YOU LINK PLEASURE TO SHAPES YOUR DESTINY**

One decision that has made a tremendous difference in the quality of my life is that at an early age I began to link incredible pleasure to learning. I realized that discovering ideas and strategies that could

help me to shape human behavior and emotion could give me virtually everything I wanted in my life. It could get me out of pain and into pleasure. Learning to unlock the secrets behind our actions could help me to become more healthy, to feel better physically, to connect more deeply with the people I cared about. Learning provided me with something to give, the opportunity to truly contribute something of value to all those around me. It offered me a sense of joy and fulfillment. At the same time, I discovered an even more powerful form of pleasure, and that was achieved by sharing what I'd learned in a passionate way. When I began to see that what I could share helps people increase the quality of their lives, I discovered the ultimate level of pleasure! And my life's purpose began to evolve.

What are some of the experiences of pain and pleasure that have shaped your life? Whether you've linked pain or pleasure to drugs, for example, certainly has affected your destiny. So have the emotions you've learned to associate to cigarettes or alcohol, relationships, or even the concepts of giving or trusting.

If you're a doctor, isn't it true that the decision to pursue a medical career so many years ago was motivated by your belief that becoming a physician would make you feel good? Every doctor I've talked to links massive pleasure to helping people: stopping pain, healing illness, and saving lives. Often the pride of being a respected member of society was an additional motivator. Musicians have dedicated themselves to their art because few things can give them that same level of pleasure. And CEOs of top organizations have learned to link pleasure to making powerful decisions that have a huge potential to build something unique and to contribute to people's lives in a lasting way.

Think of the limiting pain and pleasure associations of John Belushi, Jimi Hendrix, Elvis Presley, Janis Joplin, and Jim Morrison. Their associations to drugs as an escape, a quick fix, or a way out of pain and into temporary pleasure created their downfalls. They paid the ultimate price for not directing their own minds and emotions. Think of the example they set for millions of fans. I never did learn to consume drugs or alcohol. Is it because I was so brilliant? No, it's because I was very fortunate. One reason I never drank alcohol is that, as a child, there were a couple of people in my family who acted so obnoxiously when drunk that I associated extreme pain to drinking any alcohol. One especially graphic image I have is the memory of my best friend's mom. She was extremely obese, weighing close to 300 pounds, and she drank constantly. Whenever she did, she wanted to hug me and drool all over me. To this day, the smell of alcohol on anyone's breath nauseates me.

Beer, though, was another story. When I was about eleven or twelve, I didn't consider it an alcoholic drink. After all, my dad drank beer, and he didn't get that "obnoxious" or disgusting. In fact, he seemed to be a little more fun when he'd had a few beers. Plus, I linked pleasure to drinking because I wanted to be just like Dad. Would drinking beer really make me like Dad? No, but we frequently create false associations in our nervous systems (neuro-associations) as to what will create pain or pleasure in our lives.

One day I asked my mom for a "brew." She began arguing that it wasn't good for me. But trying to convince me when my mind was made up, when my observations of my father so clearly contradicted hers, was not going to work. We don't believe what we hear; rather, we are certain that our perceptions are accurate—and I was certain that day that drinking beer was the next step in my personal growth. Finally,

my mom realized I'd probably just go drink somewhere else if she didn't give me an experience I wouldn't forget. At some level, she must have known she had to change what I associated to beer. So she said, "Okay, you want to drink beer and be like Dad? Then you've really got to drink beer just like your dad." I said, "Well, what does that mean?" She said, "You've got to drink a whole six-pack." I said, "No problem."

She said, "You've got to drink it right here." When I took my first sip, it tasted disgusting, nothing like what I'd anticipated. Of course, I wouldn't admit it at the time because, after all, my pride was on the line. So I took a few more sips. After finishing one beer I said, "Now I'm really full, Mom." She said, "No, here's another one," and popped it open. After the third or fourth can, I started feeling sick to my stomach. I'm sure you can guess what happened next: I threw up all over myself and the kitchen table. It was disgusting, and so was cleaning up the mess! I immediately linked the smell of beer to the vomit and horrible feelings. I no longer had an intellectual association to what drinking beer meant. I now had an emotional association in my nervous system, a gut-level neuro-association—one that would clearly guide my future decisions. As a result, I've never had even a sip of beer since!

Can our pain and pleasure linkages produce a processional effect in our lives? You bet. This negative neuro-association for beer affected many of my decisions in life. It influenced whom I hung out with at school. It determined how I learned to get pleasure. I didn't use alcohol: I used learning; I used laughter; I used sports. I also learned that it felt incredible to help other people, so I became the guy in school everybody came to with their problems, and solving their problems made both them and me feel good. Some things haven't changed through the years! I also never used drugs because of a similar experience: when I was in the third or fourth grade, the police department came to my school and showed us some films about the consequences of getting involved in the drug scene. I watched as people shot up, passed out, spaced out, and leaped out of windows. As a young boy, I associated drugs to ugliness and death, so I never tried them myself. My good fortune was that the police had helped me form painful neuro-associations to even the idea of using drugs. Therefore, I have never even considered the possibility.

What can we learn from this? Simply this: **If we link massive pain to any behavior or emotional pattern, we will avoid indulging in it at all costs. We can use this understanding to harness the force of pain and pleasure to change virtually anything in our lives**, from a pattern of procrastinating to drug use. How do we do this? Let's say, for example, you want to keep your children off drugs. The time to reach them is before they experiment and before someone else teaches them the false association that drugs equal pleasure.

Our behavior, both conscious and unconscious, has been rigged by pain and pleasure from so many sources: childhood peers, moms and dads, teachers, coaches, movie and television heroes, and the list goes on. You may or may not know precisely when programming and conditioning occurred. It might have been something someone said, an incident at school, an award-winning sports event, an embarrassing moment, straight A's on your report card—or maybe failing grades. All of these contributed to who you are today. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that **what you link pain and pleasure to will shape your destiny**.

As you review your own life, can you recall experiences that formed your neuro-associations and thus

set in motion the chain of causes and effects that brought you to where you are today? What meaning do you attach to things? If you're single, do you look upon marriage wistfully as a joyous adventure with your life's mate, or do you dread it as a heavy ball and chain? As you sit down to dinner tonight, do you consume food matter-of-factly as an opportunity to refuel your body, or do you devour it as your sole source of pleasure?

Though we'd like to deny it, the fact remains that what drives our behavior is instinctive reaction to pain and pleasure, not intellectual calculation. Intellectually, we may believe that eating chocolate is bad for us, but we'll still reach for it. Why? Because we're not driven so much by what we intellectually know, but rather by what we've learned to link pain and pleasure to in our nervous systems. It's our neuro-associations—the associations we've established in our nervous systems—that determine what we'll do. Although we'd like to believe it's our intellect that really drives us, in most cases our emotions—the sensations that we link to our thoughts—are what truly drive us.

Many times we try to override the system. For a while we stick to a diet; we've finally pushed ourselves over the edge because we have so much pain. **We will have solved the problem for the moment—but if we haven't eliminated the cause of the problem, it will resurface.** Ultimately, in order for a change to last, we must link pain to our old behavior and pleasure to our new behavior, and condition it until it's consistent. Remember, we will all do more to avoid pain than we will to gain pleasure. Going on a diet and overriding our pain in the short term by pure willpower never lasts simply because we still link pain to giving up fattening foods. For this change to be long-term, we've got to link pain to eating those foods so that we no longer even desire them, and pleasure to eat more of the foods that nourish us. People who are fit and healthy believe that nothing tastes as good as thin feels! And they love foods that nourish them. In fact, they often link pleasure to pushing the plate away with food still on it. It symbolizes to them that they're in control of their lives. **The truth is that we can learn to condition our minds, bodies, and emotions to link pain or pleasure to whatever we choose. By changing what we link pain and pleasure to, we will instantly change our behaviors.** With smoking, for example, all you must do is link enough pain to smoking and enough pleasure to quitting. You have the ability to do this right now, but you might not exercise this capability because you've trained your body to link pleasure to smoking, or you fear that stopping would be too painful. Yet, if you meet anyone who has stopped, you will find that this behavior changed in one day: the day they truly changed what smoking meant to them.

# BELIEF SYSTEMS: THE POWER TO CREATE AND DESTROY



He was bitter and cruel, an alcoholic and drug addict who almost killed himself several times. Today he serves a life sentence in prison for the murder of a liquor store cashier who “got in his way.” He has two sons, born a mere eleven months apart, one of whom grew up to be “just like Dad”: a drug addict who lived by stealing and threatening others until he, too, was put in jail for attempted murder. His brother, however, is a different story: a man who’s raising three kids, enjoys his marriage, and appears to be truly happy. As regional manager for a major national concern, he finds his work both challenging and rewarding. He’s physically fit, and has no alcohol or drug addictions! How could these two young men have turned out so differently, having grown up in virtually the same environment? Both were asked privately, unbeknownst to the other, “Why has your life turned out this way?” Surprisingly, they both provided the exact same answer: “What else could I have become, having grown up with a father like that?”

So often we’re seduced into believing that events control our lives and that our environment has shaped who we are today. No greater lie was ever told. **It’s not the events of our lives that shape us, but our beliefs as to what those events mean.**

Two men are shot down in Vietnam and imprisoned in the infamous Hoa Lo prison. They are isolated, chained to cement slabs, and continuously beaten with rusty shackles and tortured for information. Yet although these men are receiving the same abuse, they form radically different beliefs about their experience. One man decides that his life is over, and in order to avoid any additional pain, commits suicide. The other pulls from these brutalizing events a deeper belief in himself, his fellow man, and his Creator than he’s ever had before. Captain Gerald Coffee uses his experience of this to remind people all over the world of the power of the human spirit to overcome virtually any level of pain, any challenge, or any problem.

Two women turn seventy years old, yet each takes a different meaning from the event. One “knows” that her life is coming to an end. To her, seven decades of living mean that her body must be breaking down and she’d better start winding up her affairs. The other woman decides that what a person is capable of at any age depends upon her belief, and sets a higher standard for herself. She decides that mountain climbing might be a good sport to begin at the age of seventy. For the next twenty-five years she devotes herself to this new adventure in mastery, scaling some of the highest peaks in the world, until, in her nineties, Hulda Crooks becomes the oldest woman to ascend Mount Fuji.

You see, it's never the environment; it's never the events of our lives, but the **meaning** we attach to the events—how we interpret them—that shapes who we are today and who we'll become tomorrow. Beliefs are what make the difference between a lifetime of joyous contribution and one of misery and devastation. Beliefs are what separate a Mozart from a Manson. Beliefs are what cause some individuals to become heroes, while others “lead lives of quiet desperation.”

What are our beliefs designed for? They're the guiding force to tell us what will lead to pain and what will lead to pleasure. Whenever something happens in your life, your brain asks two questions: 1) Will this mean pain or pleasure? 2) What must I do now to avoid pain and/or gain pleasure? The answers to these two questions are based on our **beliefs**, and our beliefs are driven by our **generalizations** about what we've learned could lead to pain and pleasure. These generalizations guide all of our actions and thus the direction and quality of our lives.

Generalizations can be very useful; they are simply the identification of similar patterns. For example, what allows you to open a door? You look down at a handle and, although you've never seen this specific one before, you can generally feel certain that this door will open if you turn the handle right or left, if you push or pull it. Why do you believe this? Simply, your experience of doors has provided enough references to create a sense of certainty that allows you to follow through. Without this **sense of certainty**, we would virtually be unable to leave the house, drive our cars, use a telephone, or do any one of the dozens of things we do in a day. Generalizations simplify our lives and allow us to function.

Unfortunately, generalizations in more complex areas of our lives can oversimplify and sometimes create limiting beliefs. Maybe you've failed to follow through on various endeavors a few times in your life, and based on that, you developed a belief that you are incompetent. Once you believe this is true, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. You may say, “Why even try if I'm not going to follow through anyway?” Or perhaps you've made a few poor decisions in business or in relationships, and have interpreted that to mean you will always “sabotage” yourself. Or maybe in school you didn't learn as quickly as you thought other kids did, and rather than considering the idea that you had a different learning strategy, you may have decided that you were “learning-disabled.” On another level, isn't racial prejudice fueled by a wholesale generalization about an entire group of people?

The challenge with all these beliefs is that they become limitations for future decisions about who you are and what you're capable of. We need to remember that **most of our beliefs are generalizations about our past, based on our interpretations of painful and pleasurable experiences**. The challenge is threefold: 1) most of us do not consciously decide what we're going to believe; 2) often our beliefs are based on misinterpretation of past experiences; and 3) once we adopt a belief, we forget it's merely an interpretation. We begin to treat our beliefs as if they're realities, as if they are gospel. In fact, we rarely, if ever, question our long-held beliefs. If you ever wonder why people do what they do, again, you need to remember that human beings are not random creatures: all of our actions are the result of our beliefs. Whatever we do, it is out of our conscious or unconscious beliefs about what will lead to pleasure or away from pain. If you want to create long-term and consistent changes in your behaviors, you must change the beliefs that are holding you back.

**Beliefs have the power to create and the power to destroy.** Human beings have the awesome ability to take any experience of their lives and create a meaning that disempowers them or one that can literally save their lives. Some people have taken the pain of their past and said, “Because of this, I will help others. Because I was raped, no one else will be harmed again.” Or, “Because I lost my son or daughter, I will make a difference in the world.” It’s not something they wanted to believe, but rather, adopting this type of belief was a necessity for them to be able to pick up the pieces and move on to live empowering lives. We all have the capacity to create meanings that empower us, but so many of us never tap into it, or even recognize it. If we don’t adopt the faith that there is a reason for the unexplainable tragedies of life, then we begin to destroy our capacity to truly live. The need to be able to create a meaning out of life’s most painful experiences was observed by psychiatrist Viktor Frankl as he and other Holocaust victims survived the horrors of Auschwitz and other concentration camps. Frankl noted that those special few who were able to make it through this “hell on earth” shared one thing in common: they were able to endure and transform their experience by finding an empowering meaning for their pain. They developed the belief that because they suffered and survived, they would be able to tell the story and make certain that no human being would ever suffer this way again.

Beliefs are not limited to impacting our emotions or actions. They can literally change our bodies in a matter of moments. I had the pleasure of interviewing Yale professor and best-selling author Dr. Bernie Siegel. As we began to speak about the power of belief, Bernie shared with me some of the research he’d done on people with Multiple Personality Disorder. Incredibly, the potency of these people’s beliefs that they had become a different person resulted in an unquestioned command to their nervous system to make measurable changes in their biochemistry. The result? Their bodies would literally transform before the researchers’ eyes and begin to reflect a new identity at a moment’s notice. Studies document such remarkable occurrences as patients’ eye color actually changing as their personality changes, or physical marks disappearing and reappearing! Even diseases such as diabetes or high blood pressure come and go depending on the person’s belief as to which personality they’re manifesting.

Beliefs even have the capacity to override the impact of drugs on the body. While most people believe that drugs heal, studies in the science of psychoneuroimmunology (the mind/body relationship) have begun to bear out what many others have suspected for centuries: our beliefs about the illness and its treatment play as significant a role, maybe an even more significant role, than the treatment itself. Dr. Henry Beecher from Harvard University has done extensive research that clearly demonstrates that we often give credit to a drug, when in reality it’s the patient’s belief that makes the difference.

One demonstration of this was a groundbreaking experiment in which 100 medical students were asked to participate in testing two new drugs. One was described to them as a super-stimulant in a red capsule, the other as a super-tranquilizer in a blue capsule. Unbeknownst to the students, the contents of the capsules had been switched: the red capsule was actually a barbiturate, and the blue capsule was actually an amphetamine. Yet half of the students developed physical reactions that went along with their expectations— exactly the opposite of the chemical reaction the drugs should have produced in their bodies! These students were not just given placebos; they were given actual drugs. But their beliefs overrode the chemical impact of the drug on their bodies. As Dr. Beecher later stated, a drug’s usefulness

“is a direct result of not only the chemical properties of the drug, but also the patient’s belief in the usefulness and effectiveness of the drug.”

I had the privilege of knowing Norman Cousins for almost seven years, and I was fortunate enough to have the last taped interview with him just one month before he passed on. In that interview, he shared a story about how strongly our beliefs affect our physical bodies. At a football game in Monterey Park, a Los Angeles suburb, several people experienced the symptoms of food poisoning. The examining physician deduced that the cause was a certain soft drink from the dispensing machines because all of his patients had purchased some prior to becoming ill. An announcement was made over the loudspeaker requesting that no one patronize the dispensing machine, saying some people had become ill and describing the symptoms. Pandemonium immediately broke out in the stands as people retched and fainted in droves. Even a few people who had not even gone near the machine became ill! Ambulances from local hospitals did a booming business that day, as they drove back and forth to the stadium, transporting multitudes of stricken fans. When it was discovered that the dispensing machine was not the culprit, people immediately and “miraculously” recovered.

We need to realize that our beliefs have the capacity to make us sick or make us healthy in a moment. Beliefs have been documented to affect our immune systems. And most importantly, beliefs can either give us the resolve to take action, or weaken and destroy our drive. In this moment beliefs are shaping how you respond to what you’ve just read and what you’re going to do with what you’re learning in this book. Sometimes we develop beliefs that create limitations or strengths within a very specific context; for instance, how we feel about our ability to sing or dance, fix a car, or do calculus. Other beliefs are so generalized that they dominate virtually every aspect of our lives, either negatively or positively. I call these **global beliefs**.

Global beliefs are the giant beliefs we have about everything in our lives: beliefs about our identities, people, work, time, money, and life itself, for that matter. These giant generalizations are often phrased as is/am/are: “Life is . . .” “I am . . .” “People are . . .” As you can imagine, beliefs of this size and scope can shape and color every aspect of our lives. The good news about this is that making one change in a limiting global belief you currently hold can change virtually every aspect of your life in a moment! Remember: Once accepted, our beliefs become unquestioned commands to our nervous systems, and they have the power to expand or destroy the possibilities of our present and future.

If we want to direct our lives, then, we must take conscious control over our beliefs. And in order to do that, we first need to understand what they really are and how they are formed.

**All personal breakthroughs begin with a change in beliefs.** So how do we change? The most effective way is to *get your brain to associate massive pain to the old belief*. You must feel deep in your gut that not only has this belief caused you pain in the past, but it’s costing you pleasure in the present and, ultimately, can only bring you pain in the future. Then you must associate tremendous pleasure to the idea of adopting a new, empowering belief. This is the basic pattern that we’ll review again and again in creating change in our lives. Remember, we can never forget that everything we do, we do either out of our need to avoid pain or our desire to gain pleasure, and **if we associate enough pain to anything,**

**we'll change.** The only reason we have a belief about something is that we've linked massive pain to not believing it or massive pleasure to keeping it alive.

Secondly, *create doubt*. If you're really honest with yourself, aren't there some beliefs that you used to defend heart and soul years ago that you'd be almost embarrassed to admit to today? What happened? Something caused you to *doubt*: maybe a new experience, maybe a counterexample to your past belief.

However, new experience in and of itself doesn't guarantee a change in belief. People can have an experience that runs directly counter to their belief, yet reinterpret it any way they want in order to bolster their conviction. On a personal level, a woman at one of my seminars started to experience some rather unique mental and emotional states, claiming that I was a Nazi and was poisoning the people in the room with invisible gases flowing through the air conditioning vents. As I tried to calm her down by slowing my speech patterns—a standard approach in causing someone to relax—she pointed out, "See, it's already beginning to slur your speech!" No matter what happened, she managed to use it to back up her conviction that we were all being poisoned. Eventually I was able to break her pattern. How exactly do you create a power interrupt? We'll talk more about that in Part 2.

**New experiences trigger change only if they cause us to question our beliefs. Remember, whenever we believe something, we no longer question it in any way.** The moment we begin to honestly question our beliefs, we no longer feel absolutely certain about them. We are beginning to shake the reference legs of our cognitive tables, and as a result start to lose our feeling of absolute certainty. Have you ever doubted your ability to do something? How did you do it? You probably asked yourself some poor questions like "What if I screw up?" "What if it doesn't work out?" "What if they don't like me?" But questions can obviously be tremendously empowering if we use them to examine the validity of beliefs we may have just blindly accepted. In fact, many of our beliefs are supported by information we've received from others that we failed to question at the time. If we scrutinize them, we may find that what we've unconsciously believed for years may be based on a false set of presuppositions.

How many other beliefs do you have in daily life about who you are, or what you can or cannot do, or how people should act, or what capabilities your kids have that you're failing to question also—**disempowering** beliefs you've begun to accept that limit your life, and you're not even aware of it?

**If you question anything enough, eventually you'll begin to doubt it.** This includes things that you absolutely believe "beyond the shadow of a doubt." Years ago, I had the unique opportunity of working with the U. S. Army, with whom I negotiated a contract to reduce certain training times for specialized areas. My work was so successful that I also went through top-secret clearance and had a chance to model one of the top officials in the CIA, a man **who'd** worked his way up from the bottom of the organization. Let me tell you that the skills that he and others like him have developed for shaking another person's convictions and changing their beliefs are absolutely astounding. They create an environment that causes people to doubt what they've always believed, and then give them new ideas and experiences to support the adoption of new beliefs. Watching the speed at which they can change someone's belief is almost scary, yet it's powerfully fascinating. I've learned to use these techniques on myself to be able to eliminate my disempowering beliefs and replace them with empowering ones.

Our beliefs have different levels of emotional certainty and intensity, and it's important to know just how intense they really are. In fact, I've classified beliefs into three categories: **opinions**, **beliefs**, and **convictions**. An **opinion** is something we feel relatively certain about, but the certainty is only temporary because it can be changed easily. Our cognitive **tabletop** is supported by wobbly, unverified reference legs that may be based on impressions. For example, many people originally perceived George H.W. Bush as a "wimp," based solely on his tone of voice. But when they saw how he was able to galvanize support from leaders around the world and effectively deal with Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, there was a clear shift in the public opinion polls. But opinions are easily swayed, and usually based on only a few references that a person has focused on in the moment. A **belief**, on the other hand, is formed when we begin to develop a much larger base of reference legs, and especially reference legs about which we have strong emotion. These references give us an absolute sense of certainty about something. And again, as I've said before, these references can come in a variety of forms: anything from our personal experiences to information that we've taken in from other sources, or even things we've imagined vividly. A **conviction**, however, eclipses a belief, primarily because of the emotional intensity a person links to an idea. A person holding a conviction does not only feel certain, but gets angry if their conviction is even questioned. A person with a conviction is unwilling to ever question their references, even for a moment; they are totally resistant to new input, often to the point of obsession.

# CHANGE CAN HAPPEN IN AN INSTANT



For as long as I can remember, I've always dreamed of having the ability to help people change virtually anything in their lives. Instinctively, at an early age, I realized that to be able to help others change, I had to be able to change myself. Even in junior high school, I began to pursue knowledge through books and tapes that I thought could teach me the fundamentals of how to shift human behavior and emotion.

Of course I wanted to improve certain aspects of my own life: get myself motivated, get myself to follow through and take action, learn how to enjoy life, and learn how to connect and bond with people. I'm not sure why, but somehow I linked pleasure to learning and sharing things that could make a difference in the quality of people's lives and lead them to appreciate and maybe even love me. As a result, by the time I was in high school, I was known as the "Solutions Man." If you had a problem, I was the guy to see, and I took great pride in this identity.

The more I learned, the more addicted I became to learning even more. Understanding how to influence human emotion and behavior became an obsession for me. I took a speed-reading class and developed a voracious appetite for books. I read close to 700 books in just a few years, almost all of them in the areas of human development, psychology, influence, and physiological development. I wanted to know anything and everything there was to know about how we can increase the quality of our lives, and tried to immediately apply it to myself as well as share it with other people. But I didn't stop with books. I became a fanatic for motivational tapes and, while still in high school, saved my money to go to different types of personal development seminars. As you can imagine, it didn't take long for me to feel like I was hearing nothing but the same messages reworked over and over again. There appeared to be nothing new, and I became a bit jaded.

Just after my twenty-first birthday, though, I was exposed to a series of technologies that could make changes in people's lives with lightning-like speed: simple technologies like Gestalt therapy, and tools of influence like Ericksonian hypnosis and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. When I saw that these tools could really help people create changes in minutes that previously took months, years, or decades to achieve, I became an evangelist in my approach to them. I decided to commit all of my resources to mastering these technologies. And I didn't stop there: as soon as I learned something, I applied it immediately.

I'll never forget my first week of training in Neuro-Linguistic Programming. We learned things like how to eliminate a lifetime phobia in less than an hour—something that through many forms of traditional therapy could take as much as five years or more! On the fifth day, I turned to the psychologists and psychiatrists in the class and said, "Hey, guys, let's find some phobics and cure them!" They all looked at me like I was crazy. They made it very clear to me that I obviously wasn't an educated man, that we had to wait until the six-month Certification program was completed, go through a testing procedure,

and if we were successful, only then would we be ready to use this material! I wasn't willing to wait. So I launched my career by appearing on radio and television programs throughout Canada and eventually the United States as well. In each of these, I talked to people about these technologies for creating change and made it clear that if we wanted to change our lives, whether it was a disempowering habit or a phobia that had been controlling us for years, that behavior or that emotional pattern could be changed in a matter of minutes, even though they might have tried to change it for years previously.

Was this a radical concept? You bet. But I passionately argued that **all changes are created in a moment**. It's just that most of us wait until certain things happen before we finally decide to make a shift. If we truly understood how the brain worked, I argued, we could stop the endless process of analyzing why things had happened to us, and if we could just simply change what we linked pain and pleasure to, we could just as easily change the way our nervous systems had been conditioned and take charge of our lives immediately. As you can imagine, a young kid with no Ph.D. who was making these controversial claims on the radio didn't go over very well with some traditionally trained mental health professionals. A few psychiatrists and psychologists attacked me, some on the air.

So I learned to build my career in changing people on two principles: technology and challenge. I knew I had a superior technology, a superior way of creating change based on crucial understandings of human behavior that most traditional psychologists were not trained in. And I believed that if I challenged myself and the people I worked with enough, I could find a way to turn virtually anything around.

One particular psychiatrist called me a charlatan and a liar and charged that I was making false claims. I challenged this psychiatrist to suspend his pessimism and give me an opportunity to work with one of his patients, someone he hadn't been able to change after working with her for years. It was a bold move, and at first he did not comply with my request. But after utilizing a little leverage, I finally got the psychiatrist to let a patient come on her own to one of my free guest events and allow me, in front of the room, to work with her. In fifteen minutes I wiped out the woman's phobia of snakes—at the time she'd been treated for over seven years by the psychiatrist who attacked me. To say the least, he was amazed. But more importantly, can you imagine the references this created for me and the sense of certainty it gave me about what I could accomplish? I became a wild man! I stormed across the country demonstrating to people how quickly change could occur. I found that no matter where I went, people were initially skeptical. But, as I was able to demonstrate measurable results before their eyes, I was able to get not only their attention and interest but also their willingness to apply what I'd talked about to produce measurable results in their own lives.

Why is it that most people think change takes so long? One reason, obviously, is that most people have tried again and again through willpower to make changes, and failed. The assumption that they then make is that important changes must take a long time and be very difficult to make. In reality, it's only difficult because most of us don't know how to change! We don't have an effective strategy. Willpower by itself is not enough—not if we want to achieve lasting change.

The second reason we don't change quickly is that in our culture, we have a set of beliefs that prevents

us from being able to utilize our own inherent abilities. Culturally, we link negative associations to the idea of instant change. For most, instant change means you never really had a problem at all. If you can change that easily, why didn't you change a week ago, a month ago, a year ago, and stop complaining?

For example, how quickly could a person recover from the loss of a loved one and begin to feel differently? Physically, they have the capability to do it the next morning. But they don't. Why? Because we have a set of beliefs in our culture that we need to grieve for a certain period of time. How long do we have to grieve? It all depends upon your own conditioning. Think about this. If the next day after you lost a loved one, you didn't grieve, wouldn't that cause a great deal of pain in your life? First, people would immediately believe you didn't care about the loved one you lost. And, based on cultural conditioning, you might begin to believe that you didn't care, either. The concept of overcoming death this easily is just too painful. We choose the pain of grieving rather than changing our emotions until we're satisfied that our rules and cultural standards about what's appropriate have been met.

There are, in fact, cultures where people celebrate when someone dies! Why? They believe that God always knows the right time for us to leave the earth, and that death is graduation. They also believe that if you were to grieve about someone's death, you would be indicating nothing but your own lack of understanding of life, and you would be demonstrating your own selfishness. Since this person has gone on to a better place, you're feeling sorry for no one but yourself. They link pleasure to death, and pain to grieving, so grief is not a part of their culture. I'm not saying that grief is bad or wrong. I'm just saying that we need to realize it's based upon our beliefs that pain takes a long time to recover from.

As I spoke from coast to coast, I kept encouraging people to make life-changing shifts, often in thirty minutes or less. There was no doubt I created controversy, and the more successes I had, the more assured and intense I became as well. To tell the truth, I was occasionally confrontational and more than a little cocky. I started out doing private therapy, helping people turn things around, and then began to do seminars. Within a few short years, I was travelling on the road three weeks out of four, constantly pushing myself and giving my all as I worked to extend my ability to positively impact the largest number of people I could in the shortest period of time. The results I produced became somewhat legendary. Eventually the psychiatrists and psychologists stopped attacking and actually became interested in learning my techniques for use with their own patients. At the same time, my attitudes changed and I became more balanced. But I never lost my passion for wanting to help as many people as I could.

One day about four and a half years ago, not long after *Unlimited Power* was first published, I was signing books after giving one of my business seminars in San Francisco. All the while I was reflecting on the incredible rewards that had come from following through on the commitments I had made to myself while still in high school: the commitments to grow, expand, contribute, and thereby make a difference. I realized as each smiling face came forward how deeply grateful I was to have developed skills that can make a difference in helping people to change virtually anything in their lives.

As the last group of people finally began to disperse, one man approached me and asked, "Do you recognize me?" Having seen literally thousands of people in that month alone, I had to admit that I didn't. He said, "Think about it for a second." After looking at him for a few moments, suddenly it clicked. I said,

“New York City, right?” He said, “That’s true.” I said, “I did some private work with you in helping you to wipe out your smoking habit.” He nodded again. I said, “Wow, that was years ago! How are you doing?” He reached in his pocket, pulled out a package of Marlboros, pointed at me with an accusing look on his face and said, “You failed!” Then he launched into a tirade about my inability to “program” him effectively.

I have to admit I was rattled! After all, I had built my career on my absolute willingness to put myself on the line, on my total commitment to challenging myself and other people, on my dedication to trying anything in order to create lasting and effective change with lightning-like speed. As this man continued to berate my ineffectiveness in “curing” his smoking habit, I wondered what could have gone wrong. Could it be that my ego had outgrown my true level of capability and skill? Gradually I began to ask myself better questions: What could I learn from this situation? What was really going on here?

“What happened after we worked together?” I asked him, expecting to hear that he had resumed smoking a week or so after the therapy. It turned out that he’d stopped smoking for two and a half years, after I’d worked with him for less than an hour! But one day he took a puff, and now he was back to his four-pack-a-day habit, plainly blaming me because the change had not endured.

Then it hit me: this man was not being completely unreasonable. After all, I had been teaching something called Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Think about the word “programming.” It suggests that you could come to me, I would program you, and then everything would be fine. You wouldn’t have to do anything! Out of my desire to help people at the deepest level, I’d made the very mistake that I saw other leaders in the personal development industry make: I had begun to take responsibility for other people’s changes.

That day, I realized I had inadvertently placed the responsibility with the wrong person —me—and that this man, or any one of the other thousands of people I’d worked with, could easily go back to their old behaviors if they ran into a difficult enough challenge because they saw me as the person responsible for their change. If things didn’t work out, they could just conveniently blame somebody else. They had no personal responsibility, and therefore, no pain if they didn’t follow through on the new behavior.

As a result of this new perspective, I decided to change the metaphor for what I do. I stopped using the word “programming” because, while I continue to use many NLP techniques, I believe it’s inaccurate. A better metaphor for long-term change is conditioning. This was solidified for me when, a few days later, a piano tuner came to tune my new baby grand. This man was a true craftsman. He worked on every string in that piano for literally hours and hours, stretching each one to just the right level of tension to create the perfect vibration. At the end of the day, the piano played magnificently. When I asked him how much I owed, he said, “Don’t worry, I’ll drop off a bill on my next visit.” My response was, “Next visit? What do you mean?” He said, “I’ll be back tomorrow, and then I’ll come back once a week for the next month. Then I’ll return every three months for the rest of the year, only because you live by the ocean.”

I said, “What are you talking about? Didn’t you already make all the adjustments on the piano? Isn’t it set up properly?” He said, “Yes, but these strings are strong; to keep them at the perfect level of tension, we’ve got to condition them to stay at this level. I’ve got to come back and re-tighten them on a regular basis until the wire is trained to stay at this level.” I thought, “What a business this guy has!” But I also got a great

lesson that day.

This is exactly what we have to do if we're going to succeed in creating long-term change. Once we effect a change, we should reinforce it immediately. Then, we have to condition our nervous systems to succeed not just once, but consistently. You wouldn't go to an aerobics class just one time and say, "Okay, now I've got a great body and I'll be healthy for life!" The same is true of your emotions and behavior. We've got to condition ourselves for success, for love, for breaking through our fears. And through that conditioning, we can develop patterns that automatically lead us to consistent, lifelong success.

We need to remember that pain and pleasure shape all our behaviors, and that pain and pleasure can change our behaviors. Conditioning requires that we understand how to use pain and pleasure. What you're going to learn in the next chapter is the science that I've developed to create any change you want in your life. I call it the Science of Neuro-Associative Conditioning™, or NAC. What is it? NAC is a step-by-step process that can condition your nervous system to associate pleasure to those things you want to continuously move toward and pain to those things you need to avoid in order to succeed consistently in your life without constant effort or willpower. Remember, it's the feelings that we've been conditioned to associate in our nervous systems—our neuro-associations—that determine our emotions and our behavior.

When we take control of our neuro-associations, we take control of our lives. This chapter will show you how to condition your neuro-associations so that you are empowered to take action and produce the results you've always dreamed of. It's designed to give you the kNACk of creating consistent and lasting change.

What are the two changes everyone wants in life? Isn't it true that we all want to change either 1) how we feel about things or 2) our behaviors? If a person has been through a tragedy—they were abused as a child, they were raped, lost a loved one, are lacking in self-esteem—this person clearly will remain in pain until the sensations they link to themselves, these events, or situations are changed. Likewise, if a person overeats, drinks, smokes, or takes drugs, they have a set of behaviors that must change. The only way this can happen is by linking pain to the old behavior and pleasure to a new behavior.

This sounds so simple, but what I've found is that in order for us to be able to create true change—change that lasts—we need to develop a specific system for utilizing any techniques you and I learn to create change, and there are many. Every day I'm picking up new skills and new technologies from a variety of sciences. I continue to use many of the NLP and Ericksonian techniques that I began my career with; some of them are the finest available. Yet I always come back to utilizing them within the framework of the same six fundamental steps that the science of NAC represents. I created NAC as a way to use any technology for change. What NAC really provides is a specific syntax—an order and sequence—of ways to use any set of skills to create long-term change.

I'm sure you recall that in the first chapter I said that one of the key components of creating long-term change is a shift in beliefs. The first belief we must have if we're going to create change quickly is that we can change now. Again, most people in our society have unconsciously linked a lot of pain to the

idea of being able to change quickly. On one hand, we desire to change quickly, and on the other, our cultural programming teaches us that to change quickly means that maybe we never even had a problem at all. Maybe we were just faking it or being lazy. We must adopt the belief that we can change in a moment. After all, if you can create a problem in a moment, you should be able to create a solution, too! You and I both know that when people finally do change, they do it in a moment, don't they? There's an instant when the change occurs. Why not make that instant now? Usually it's the getting ready to change that takes people time. We've all heard the joke: Q: How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb? A: just one ... but it's very expensive, it takes a long time, and the light bulb has to want to change.

Garbage! You and I have to get ourselves ready to change. You and I have to become our own counselors and master our own lives. **The second belief that you and I must have if we're going to create long-term change is that we're responsible for our own change, not anyone else.** In fact, there are three specific beliefs about responsibility that a person must have if they're going to create long-term change:

**1) First, we must believe, "Something must change"**—not that it should change, not that it could or ought to, but that it absolutely must. So often I hear people say, "This weight should come off," "Procrastinating is a lousy habit," "My relationships should be better." But you know, we can "should" all over ourselves, and our life still won't change! It's only when something becomes a must that we begin the process of truly doing what's necessary to shift the quality of our lives.

**2) Second, we must not only believe that things must change, but we must believe, "I must change it."** We must see ourselves as the source of the change. Otherwise, we'll always be looking for someone else to make the changes for us, and we'll always have someone else to blame when it doesn't work out. We must be the source of our change if our change is going to last.

**3) Third, we have to believe, "I can change it."** Without believing that it's possible for us to change, as we've already discussed in the last chapter, we stand no chance of carrying through on our desires.

Without these three core beliefs, I can assure you that any change you make stands a good chance of being only temporary. Please don't misunderstand me—it's always smart to get a great coach (an expert, a therapist, a counselor, someone who's already produced these results for many other people) to support you in taking the proper steps to conquer your phobia or quit smoking or lose weight. But in the end, **you have to be the source of your change.**

The interaction I had with the relapsed smoker that day triggered me to ask new questions of myself about the sources of change. Why was I so effective throughout the years? What had set me apart from others who'd tried to help these same people who had equal intention but were unable to produce the result? And when I'd tried to create a change in someone and failed, what had happened then? What had prevented me from producing the change that I was really committed to helping this person make?

Then I began to ask larger questions, like "What really makes change happen in any form of therapy?" All therapies work some of the time, and all forms of therapy fail to work at other times. I also began to

notice two other interesting things: 1.) Some people went to therapists I didn't think were particularly skilled, and still managed to make their desired change in a very short period of time in spite of the therapist, and 2.) Some people who went to therapists I considered excellent, yet were not helped to produce the results they wanted in the short term.

After a few years of witnessing thousands of transformations and looking for the common denominator, finally it hit me: We can analyze our problems for years, but nothing changes until we change the sensations we link to an experience in our nervous system, and we have the capacity to do this quickly and powerfully if we understand . . .

## HOW TO GET WHAT YOU REALLY WANT



Ask yourself what you truly want in life. Do you want a loving marriage, the respect of your children? Do you want plenty of money, fast cars, a thriving business, a house on the hill? Do you want to travel the world, visit exotic ports of call, see historical landmarks firsthand? Do you want to be idolized by millions as a rock musician or as a celebrity with your star on Hollywood Boulevard? Do you want to leave your mark for posterity as the inventor of a time-travel machine? Do you want to work with the Mother Teresa Foundation to save the world, or take a proactive role in making a measurable impact environmentally?

Whatever you desire or crave, perhaps you should ask yourself, "Why do I want these things?" Don't you want fine cars, for example, because you really desire the feelings of accomplishment and prestige you think they would bring? Why do you want a great family life? Is it because you think it will give you feelings of love, intimacy, connection, or warmth? Do you want to save the world because of the feelings of contribution and making a difference you believe this will give you? In short, then, isn't it true that what you really want is simply to change the way you feel? **What it all comes down to is the fact that you want these things or results because you see them as a means to achieving certain feelings, emotions, or states that you desire.**

When somebody kisses you, what makes you feel good in that moment? Is it wet tissue touching wet tissue that really triggers the feeling? Of course not! If that's true, kissing your dog would turn you on! All of our emotions are nothing but a flurry of biochemical storms in our brains—and we can spark them at any moment. But first we must learn how to take control of them consciously instead of living in reaction. Most of our emotional responses are learned responses to the environment. We've deliberately modeled some of them, and stumbled across others.

Simply being aware of these factors is the foundation for understanding the power of state. Without a doubt, everything you and I do, we do to avoid pain or gain pleasure, but we can instantly change what we believe will lead to pain or pleasure by redirecting our focus and changing our mental/emotional-

physiological states. As I said in Chapter 3 of *Unlimited Power*:

A state can be defined as the sum of millions of neurological processes happening within us—the sum total of our experience at any moment in time. Most of our states happen without any conscious direction on our part. We see something, and we respond to it by going into a state. It may be a resourceful and useful state, or an unresourceful and limiting state, but there's not much that most of us do to control it.

Have you ever found yourself unable to remember a friend's name? Or how to spell a "difficult" word like... "house"? How come you weren't able to do this? You certainly knew the answer. Is it because you're stupid? No, it's because you were in a stupid state! **The difference between acting badly or brilliantly is not based on your ability, but on the state of your mind and/or body in any given moment.** You can be gifted with the courage and determination of Marva Collins, the grace and flair of Fred Astaire, the strength and endurance of Nolan Ryan, the compassion and intellect of Albert Einstein—but if you continually submerge yourself in negative states, you'll never fulfill that promise of excellence.

However, if you know the secret of accessing your most resourceful states, you can literally work wonders. The state that you're in at any given moment determines your perceptions of reality and thus your decisions and behavior. In other words, your behavior is not the result of your ability, but of the state that you're in at this moment. To change your ability, change your state. To open up the multitude of resources that lie within you, put yourself in a state of resourcefulness and active expectancy—and watch miracles happen!

So how can we change our own emotional states? Think of your states as operating a lot like a TV set. In order to have "bright, vivid color with incredible sound," you need to plug in and turn on. Turning on your physiology is like giving the set the electricity it needs to operate. If you don't have the juice, you'll have no picture, no sound, just a blank screen. Similarly, if you don't turn on by using your entire body, in other words, your physiology, you may indeed find yourself unable to spell "house." Have you ever woken up and stumbled around, not able to think clearly or function until you moved around enough to get your blood flowing? Once the "static" has cleared, you're turned on, and the ideas begin to flow. If you're in the wrong state, you're not going to get any reception, even if you've got the right ideas.

Of course, once you're plugged in, you've got to be tuned to the right channel to get what you really want. Mentally, you've got to focus on what empowers you. Whatever you focus on—whatever you tune in to—you will feel more intensely. So if you don't like what you're doing, maybe it's time to change the channel.

There are unlimited sensations, unlimited ways of looking at virtually anything in life. All of the sensations that you want are available all of the time, and all you've got to do is to tune in to the right channel. There are two primary ways, then, to change your emotional state: by changing the way you use your physical body, or by changing your focus.

## PHYSIOLOGY: THE POWER OF MOVEMENT

One of the most powerful distinctions that I've made in the last ten years of my life is simply this: **Emotion is created by motion.** Everything that we feel is the result of how we use our bodies. Even the most minute changes in our facial expressions or our gestures will shift the way that we're feeling in any moment, and therefore the way we evaluate our lives—the way we think and the way we act.

Try something ridiculous with me for a second. Pretend you're a rather bored and humorless symphony conductor rhythmically swinging your arms in and out. Do it very s-l-o-w-l-y. Don't get too excited; just do it as a matter of r-o-u-t-i-n-e and make sure your face reflects a state of boredom. Notice how that feels. Now take your hands, clap them together explosively, and SNAP them back out as fast as you can with a big, silly grin on your face! Intensify this by adding the vocal movement of an outrageously loud and explosive sound—the movement of air through your chest, throat, and mouth will change how you feel even more radically. That motion and speed you've created, both in your body and your vocal chords, will instantly change the way you feel.

Every emotion you ever feel has specific physiology linked to it: posture, breathing, patterns of movement, facial expressions. For depression, these are certainly obvious. In *Unlimited Power*, I talked about the physical attributes of depression—where your eyes are focused, how you hold yourself, and so forth. Once you learn how you use your body when in certain emotional states, you can return to those states, or avoid them, simply by changing your physiology. The challenge is that most of us limit ourselves to just a few habitual patterns of physiology. We assume them automatically, not realizing how great a role they play in shaping our behavior from moment to moment.

We each have over eighty different muscles in our faces, and if these muscles get accustomed to expressing depression, boredom, or frustration, then this habitual muscular pattern literally begins to dictate our states, not to mention our physical character. I always have people in my Date With Destiny seminar write down all the emotions they feel in an average week, and out of the myriad of possibilities, I've found that the average is less than a dozen. Why? Because most people have limited patterns of physiology that result in limited patterns of expression.

### TYPES OF EMOTIONS AN INDIVIDUAL MIGHT FEEL IN A WEEK

Stressed | Frustrated | Angry | Insecure | Lonely | Bored | Miserable  
Happy | Relieved | Loved | Excited | Joyous

This is such a short menu of emotional choices when you consider the thousands of enticing states available. Take care not to limit yourself to such a short list! I suggest you take advantage of the whole buffet—try new things and cultivate a refined palate. How about experiencing more enthusiasm, fascination, cheerfulness, playfulness, intrigue, sensuality, desire, gratitude, enchantment, curiosity, creativity, capability, confidence, outrageousness, boldness, consideration, kindness, gentleness,

humor . . . Why not come up with a long list of your own?

You can experience any of these just by changing the way you use your body! You can feel strong, you can smile, you can change anything in a minute just by laughing. You've heard the old adage, "Someday you'll look back on this and laugh." If that's true, why not look back and laugh now? Why wait? Wake your body up; learn to put it in pleasurable states consistently no matter what's happened. How? Create energy by the way you think of something over and over again, and you'll change the sensations you link to that situation in the future.

If you repeatedly use your body in weak ways, if you drop your shoulders on a regular basis, if you walk around like you're tired, you will feel tired. How could you do otherwise? Your body leads your emotions. The emotional state you're in then begins to affect your body, and it becomes a sort of endless loop. Notice how you're sitting even now. Sit up right now and create more energy in your body as you continue not only to read but also to master these principles.

What are some things you can do immediately to change your state and therefore how you feel and how you perform? Take deep breaths in through your nose and exhale strongly through your mouth. Put a huge grin on your face and smile at your children. If you really want to change your life, commit for the next seven days to spending one minute, five times a day, grinning from ear to ear in the mirror. This will feel incredibly stupid, but remember: By this physical act, you will be constantly triggering this part of your brain and creating a neurological pathway to pleasure that will become habitual. So do it, and make it fun!

Better yet, go out for a skip instead of a jog. Skipping is such a powerful way to change your state because it does four things: 1) It's great exercise; 2) You'll have less stress on your body than running; 3) You won't be able to keep a serious look on your face; and 4) You'll entertain everybody who's driving by! So you'll be changing other people's states, too, by making them laugh.

What a powerful thing laughter is! My son Joshua has a friend named Matt who finds it so easy to laugh that it's infectious, and everyone who hears him starts laughing, too. If you really want to improve your life, learn to laugh. Along with your five smiles each day, make yourself laugh for no reason at all, three times each day for seven days.

In a poll conducted by *Entertainment Weekly* magazine, they found that 82 percent of the people who go to movies want to laugh, 7 percent want to cry, and 3 percent want to scream. This gives you an idea how we value the sensations of laughter over so many other things. And if you've read Norman Cousins's books, or Dr. Deepak Chopra's, or Dr. Bernie Siegel's, or studied psychoneuroimmunology at all, you know what laughter can do to the physical body to stimulate the immune system.

Why not find somebody who laughs and mirror them? Have some fun. Say, "Will you do me a favor? You've got a great laugh. Let me try and duplicate it. Coach me." I guarantee you'll crack each other up in the process! Breathe the way they breathe; take on their posture and body movements; use the same facial expressions; make the same sounds. You'll feel stupid when you start, but after a while you'll get into it, and you'll both be laughing hysterically because you both look so silly. But in the process, you'll

begin to lay the neurological networking to create laughter on a regular basis. As you do this again and again, you'll find it very easy to laugh and you'll certainly have fun.

Anyone can continue to feel good if they already feel good, or if they're "on a roll"—it doesn't take much to accomplish this. But the real key in life is to be able to make yourself feel good when you don't feel good, or when you don't even want to feel good. Know that you can do this instantaneously by using your body as a tool to change state. Once you identify the physiology attached to a state, you can use it to create the states you desire at will. Just by changing our physiology, we can change our level of performance. Our capability is always there, and what we've got to do is put ourselves into states where it is accessible.

The key to success is to **create patterns of movement that create confidence, a sense of strength, flexibility, a sense of personal power, and fun.** Realize that stagnation comes from lack of movement. Can you think of an old person, someone who doesn't "get around much anymore"? Getting old is not a matter of age; it's a lack of movement. And the ultimate lack of movement is death.

If you see children walking along the sidewalk after a rain, and there's a puddle in front of them, what are they going to do when they get to that puddle? They're going to jump in! They're going to laugh, splash around, and have a good time. What does an older person do? Walk around it? No, they won't just walk around it—they'll complain the whole time! You want to live differently. You want to live with a spring in your step, a smile on your face. Why not make cheerfulness, outrageousness, playfulness a new priority for yourself? Make feeling good your expectation. You don't have to have a reason to feel good—you're alive; you can feel good for no reason at all!

## *FOCUS: THE POWER OF CONCENTRATION*

If you wanted to, couldn't you get depressed at a moment's notice? You bet you could, **just by focusing on something in your past that was horrible.** We all have some experience in our past that's pretty bad, don't we? If you focus on it enough, and you picture it and think about it, pretty soon you'll start to feel it. Have you ever gone to an awful movie? Would you go back to that awful movie hundreds of times? Of course not. Why? Because it wouldn't feel good to do this! Then why would you go back to the awful movies in your head on a regular basis? Why watch yourself in your least favorite roles, playing against your least favorite leading lady or man? Why play out business disasters or bad career decisions again and again? Of course, these "B" movies are not limited only to your past experiences. You can focus on something right now that you think you're missing out on, and feel bad. Better yet, you can focus on something that hasn't even happened yet, and feel bad about it in advance! Though you may laugh at this now, unfortunately that's what most of us do day to day.

If you wanted to feel like you were in ecstasy right now, could you? You could do this just as easily. Could you focus on or remember a time when you were in absolute, total ecstasy? Could you focus on how your body felt? Could you remember it with such vivid detail that you are fully associated to those feelings again? You bet you could. Or you could focus on things you're ecstatic about in your life right now, on what you feel is great in your life. And again, you could focus on things that haven't happened

yet, and feel good about them in advance.

## *WHATEVER WE FOCUS ON BECOMES OUR IDEA OF REALITY*

The truth is that very few things are absolute. Usually, how you feel about things, and the meaning of a particular experience, is all dependent upon your focus. Elizabeth, the woman with Multiple Personality Disorder, had been in pain constantly. Her escape route was to create a new personality for each incident that had to be handled emotionally. It allowed her to change her focus by seeing the problem through “somebody else’s” eyes. Yet she still felt pain even after integration. It wasn’t until she learned how to control her state by consciously changing her physiology and her focus that she was able to take control of her life.

Focus is not true reality, because it’s one view; it’s only one perception of the way things really are. Think of that view—the power of our focus—as being a camera lens. The camera lens shows only the picture and angle of what you are focused on. Because of that, photographs you take can easily distort reality, presenting only a small portion of the big picture.

Suppose you went to a party with your camera, and you sat in one corner, focused on a group of people who were arguing. How would that party be represented? It would be pictured as an unpleasant, frustrating party where no one had a good time and everyone was fighting. And it’s important for us to remember that how we represent things in our minds will determine how we feel. But what if you were to focus your camera on another end of the room where people were laughing and telling jokes and having a great time? It would be shown to have been the best party of all, with everyone getting along famously!

This is why there is so much turmoil over “unauthorized” biographies: they are only one person’s perception of another’s life. And often, this view is offered by people whose jealousy gives them a vested interest in distorting things. The problem is, the biography’s view is limited only to the author’s “camera angle,” and we all know that cameras distort reality, that a close-up can make things look bigger than they really are. And when manipulated expertly, a camera can minimize or blur important parts of the reality. To paraphrase Ralph Waldo Emerson, each of us sees in others what we carry in our own hearts.

## *MEANING IS OFTEN A MATTER OF FOCUS*

If you’ve scheduled a business meeting, and someone is not there on time, how you feel is based strictly on what you focus on. Do you represent in your mind that the reason they are not there is that they don’t care, or do you interpret it as their having great difficulties in getting to the meeting? Whichever you focus on will definitely affect your emotions. What if you were upset with them, and the real reason they were late is that they were fighting to get a better bid on the business proposal they were bringing you? Remember, whatever we focus on will determine how we feel. Maybe we shouldn’t jump to conclusions; we should choose what to focus on very carefully.

Focus determines whether you perceive your reality as good or bad, whether you feel happy or sad. A fantastic metaphor for the power of focus is racing cars—a real passion for me. Driving a Formula racecar can sometimes make flying a jet helicopter seem like a very relaxing experience! In a racecar you cannot allow your focus to wander even for a moment from your outcome. Your attention can’t be limited to

where you are; neither can it be stuck in the past or fixed too far in the future. While remaining fully aware of where you are, you have to be anticipating what's about to happen in the near future.

This was one of the first lessons I learned when I started racing school. The instructors put me in what's called a "skid car"—an automobile that has a computer built into it with hydraulic lifts that can pull any wheel off the ground on a moment's signal from the instructor. The number-one fundamental they teach in driving is: **Focus on where you want to go, not on what you fear.**

If you start to skid out of control, the tendency, of course, is to look at the wall. But if you keep focusing on it, that's exactly where you'll end up. Drivers know that you go where you look; you travel in the direction of your focus. If you resist your fear, have faith, and focus on where you want to go, your actions will take you in that direction, and if it's possible to turn out of it, you will—but you stand no chance if you focus on what you fear. Invariably people say, "What if you're going to crash anyway?" The answer is that you increase your chances of survival by focusing on what you want. Focusing on the solution is always to your benefit. If you have too much momentum in the direction of the wall, then focusing on the problem just before the crash is not going to help you anyway.

When the instructors first explained this to me, I nodded my head and thought, "Of course! I know all about this. After all, I teach this stuff." My first time out on the road I was screaming along, and all of a sudden, unbeknownst to me, they pushed the button. I started to skid out of control. Where do you think my eyes went? You bet! Right at the wall! In the final seconds, I was terrified because I knew I was going to hit it. The instructor grabbed my head and yanked it to the left, forcing me to look in the direction I needed to go. We kept skidding, and I knew we were going to crash, but I was forced to look only in the direction I wanted to go. Sure enough, as I looked in that direction, I couldn't help but turn the wheel accordingly. It caught at the last moment, and we pulled out. You can imagine my relief.

One thing that's useful to know about all of this: when you change your focus, often you don't immediately change direction. Isn't that true in life as well? Often there's a lag time between when you redirect your focus and when your body and your life's experience catch up. That's all the more reason to start focusing on what you want quicker and not wait any longer with the problem.

Did I learn my lesson? No. I'd had an experience, but I had not created a strong enough neuro-association. I had to condition in the new pattern. So sure enough, the next time I headed for the wall, the instructor had to loudly remind me to look at my goal. On the third time, though, I turned my head deliberately and consciously. I trusted it, and it worked. After doing it enough times, now when I go into a skid, wham! my head goes where I want it to go, the wheel turns, and my car follows. Does this guarantee I'll always succeed by controlling my focus? No. Does it increase my chances? One hundredfold! The same thing is true in life. In later chapters, you'll learn some ways to make sure you condition your focus to be positive. For now, realize that you've got to discipline your mind. A mind out of control will play tricks on you. Directed, it's your greatest friend.

The most powerful way to control focus is through the use of questions. For whatever you ask, your brain provides an answer; whatever you look for, you'll find. If you ask, "Why is this person taking advantage

of me?" you're going to focus on how you're being taken advantage of, whether it's true or not. If you ask, "How can I turn this around?" you'll get a more empowering answer. Questions are such a powerful tool for changing your life, I've reserved the next chapter to talk exclusively about them. They are one of the most powerful and simple ways to change the way you're feeling about virtually anything, and thus change the direction of your life at a moment's notice. Questions provide the key to unlocking our unlimited potential.

One of the best illustrations of this is the story of a young man who grew up in Alabama. About fifteen years ago, a seventh-grade bully picked a fight with him, punched him in the nose and knocked him out. When the boy regained consciousness, he vowed to get revenge and kill the bully. He went home, grabbed his mother's .22, and set out to find his target. In a matter of moments, his destiny hung in the balance.

With the bully in his gun sight, he could simply fire and his schoolmate would be history. But at that very instant, he asked himself a question: What will happen to me if I pull the trigger? And another image came into focus: a picture as painful as any imaginable. In that split second which would take the boy's life in one of two very different directions, he visualized, with chilling clarity, what it would be like to go to jail. He pictured having to stay up all night to keep the other prisoners from raping him. That potential pain was greater than the anticipation of revenge. He rearmed his gun, and shot a tree.

This boy was Bo Jackson, and as he describes this scene in his biography, there's no question that at that pivot point in his life, the pain associated with prison was a force more powerful than the pleasure of satisfaction he thought killing the other boy would bring. One change in focus, one decision about pain and pleasure, probably made the difference between a kid with no future and one of the greatest athletes of our time.

## EMOTIONS OF POWER



I'd like to introduce you to a fellow named Walt. Walt is a good, decent human being who always tries to do the right thing. He has his life down to a science: everything in its proper place and in the correct order. Weekdays he arises at exactly 6:30, showers and shaves, gulps down some coffee, grabs his lunch pail filled with the requisite bologna sandwich and Twinkies, and runs out the door by 7:10 to spend forty-five minutes in traffic. He arrives at his desk by 8:00, where he sits down to do the same job he's been doing for the past twenty years.

At 5:00 he goes home, pops the top on a "cold one," and grabs the TV remote control. An hour later his wife comes home and they decide whether to eat leftovers or throw a pizza in the microwave. After dinner he watches the news while his wife bathes their kid and puts him to bed. By no later than 9:30 he's in the sack. He devotes his weekends to yard work, car maintenance, and sleeping in. Walt and his

new wife have been married for three years, and while he wouldn't exactly describe their relationship as "inflamed with passion," it's comfortable—even though lately it seems to be repeating a lot of the same patterns of his first marriage.

Do you know someone just like Walt? Maybe he's someone you know intimately— someone who never suffers the depths of utter devastation or despondency, but also someone who never revels in the heights of passion and joy. I've heard it said that the only difference between a rut and a grave is a few feet, and over a century ago, Thoreau observed that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." As we move into the next century, this phrase is unfortunately more applicable than ever. If there's one thing I've noticed in the countless letters I've received since I wrote *Unlimited Power*, it's the overwhelming prevalence of this kind of disassociation in people's lives—something that just "happened" out of their desire to avoid pain—and the hunger with which they seize upon an opportunity to feel more alive, more passionate, more electric. From my perspective, as I travel around the world, meeting people from all walks of life and "feeling the pulse" of literally hundreds of thousands of individuals, we all seem to instinctively realize the risk of emotional "flatline," and desperately seek ways to get our hearts pumping again.

So many suffer from the delusion that emotions are entirely out of their control, that they're just something that spontaneously occurs in reaction to the events of our lives. Often we dread emotions as if they were viruses that zero in on us and attack when we're most vulnerable. Sometimes we think of them as "inferior cousins" to our intellect and discount their validity. Or we assume that emotions arise in response to what others do or say to us. What's the common element in all these global beliefs? It's the misconception that we have no control over these mysterious things called emotions.

Out of their need to avoid feeling certain emotions, people will often go to great, even ridiculous, lengths. They'll turn to drugs, alcohol, overeating, gambling; they'll lapse into debilitating depression. In order to avoid "hurting" a loved one (or being hurt by one), they'll suppress all emotions, end up as emotional androids, and ultimately destroy all the feelings of connection that got them together in the first place, thus devastating the ones they love most. I believe there are four basic ways in which people deal with emotion. Which of these have you used today?

1. **Avoidance.** We all want to avoid painful emotions. As a result, most people try to avoid any situation that could lead to the emotions that they fear—or worse, some people try not to feel any emotions at all! If, for example, they fear rejection, they try to avoid any situation that could lead to rejection. They shy away from relationships. They don't apply for challenging jobs. Dealing with emotions in this way is the ultimate trap, because while avoiding negative situations may protect you in the short term, it keeps you from feeling the very love, intimacy, and connection that you desire most. And ultimately, you can't avoid feeling. A much more powerful approach is to learn to find the hidden, positive meaning in those things you once thought were negative emotions.

2. **Denial.** A second approach to dealing with emotion is the denial strategy. People often try to disassociate from their feelings by saying, "It doesn't feel that bad." Meanwhile, they keep stoking the fire within themselves by thinking about how horrible things are, or how someone has taken advantage of them, or how they do everything right but things still turn out wrong, and why does this always

happen to them? In other words, they never change their focus or physiology, and they keep asking the same disempowering questions. Experiencing an emotion and trying to pretend it's not there only creates more pain. Once again, ignoring the messages that your emotions are trying to give you will not make things better. If the message your emotions are trying to deliver is ignored, the emotions simply increase their amperage; they intensify until you finally pay attention. Trying to deny your emotions is not the solution. Understanding them and using them is the strategy you'll learn in this chapter.

3. **Competition.** Many people stop fighting their painful emotions and decide to fully indulge in them. Rather than learn the positive message their emotion is trying to give them, they intensify it and make it even worse than it is. It becomes a “badge of courage,” and they begin to compete with others, saying, “You think you’ve got it bad? Let me tell you how bad I’ve got it!” It literally becomes part of their identity, a way of being unique; they begin to pride themselves on being worse off than anyone else. As you can imagine, this is one of the deadliest traps of all. This approach must be avoided at all costs, because it becomes a self fulfilling prophecy where the person ends up having an investment in feeling bad on a regular basis—and then they are truly trapped. A much more powerful and healthy approach to dealing with the emotions that we think are painful is to realize that they serve a positive purpose, and that is ...

4. **Learning and using.** If you want to make your life really work, you must make your emotions work for you. You can't run from them; you can't tune them out; you can't trivialize them or delude yourself about what they mean. Nor can you just allow them to run your life. Emotions, even those that seem painful in the short term, are truly like an internal compass that points you toward the actions you must take to arrive at your goals. Without knowing how to use this compass, you'll be forever at the mercy of any psychic tempest that blows your way.

Many therapeutic disciplines begin with the mistaken presupposition that emotions are our enemies or that our emotional wellbeing is rooted in our past. The truth is that you and I can go from crying to laughing in a heartbeat if the pattern of our mental focus and physiology is merely interrupted strongly enough. Freudian psychoanalysis, for example, searches for those “deep, dark secrets” in our past to explain our present difficulties. Yet we all know that whatever you continually look for, you will surely find. If you're constantly looking for the reasons why your past has hamstrung your present, or why you're so “screwed up,” then your brain will comply by providing references to back up your request and generate the appropriate negative emotions. How much better it would be to adopt the global belief that “your past does not equal your future”!

The only way to effectively use your emotions is to understand that they all serve you. You must learn from your emotions and use them to create the results you want for a greater quality of life. The emotions you once thought of as negative are merely a call to action. In fact, instead of calling them negative emotions, from now on in this chapter, let's call them Action Signals. Once you're familiar with each signal and its message, your emotions become not your enemy but your ally. They become your friend, your mentor, your coach; they guide you through life's most soaring highs and its most demoralizing lows. Learning to use these signals frees you from your fears and allows you to experience all the richness of which we humans are capable. To get to this point, then, you must change your

global beliefs about what emotions are. They are not predators, substitutes for logic, or products of other people's whims. They are Action Signals trying to guide you to the promise of a greater quality of life.

If you merely react to your emotions through an avoidance pattern, then you'll miss out on the invaluable message they have to offer you. If you continue to miss the message and fail to handle the emotions when they first turn up, they'll grow into full-blown crises. All our emotions are important and valuable in the proper amounts, timing, and context.

**Realize that the emotions you are feeling at this very moment are a gift, a guideline, a support system, a call to action. If you suppress your emotions and try to drive them out of your life, or if you magnify them and allow them to take over everything, then you're squandering one of life's most precious resources.**

So what is the source of emotions? **You are the source of all your emotions; you are the one who creates them.** So many people feel that they have to wait for certain experiences in order to feel the emotions they desire. For instance, they don't give themselves permission to feel loved or happy or confident unless a particular set of expectations is met. I'm here to tell you that **you can feel any way you choose at any moment in time.**

At the seminars I used to conduct near my home in Del Mar, California, we've created a fun anchor to remind us who is really responsible for our emotions. These seminars are held in an exquisite, four-star resort, the Inn L'Auberge, which sits right on the ocean, and is also near the train station. About four times a day, you can hear the train whistle loudly as it passes through. Some seminar participants would become irritated at the interruption, so I decided that this was the perfect opportunity to turn frustration into fun. "From now on," I said, "whenever we hear that train howl, we'll celebrate. I want to see how good you can make yourselves feel whenever you hear that train. We're always waiting for the right person or right situation to come along before we feel good. But who determines whether this is the right person or situation? When you do feel good, who's making you feel good? You are! But you simply have a rule that says you have to wait until A, B, and C occur before you allow yourself to feel good. Why wait? Why not set up a rule that says that whenever you hear a train whistle, you'll automatically feel great? The good news is that the train whistle is probably more consistent and predictable than the people you're hoping will show up to make you feel good!"

Now, whenever we hear the train pass, jubilation ensues. People immediately jump out of their chairs, cheer and holler, and act like silly maniacs—including doctors, lawyers, CEOs—people who were supposedly intelligent before they arrived! As everyone sits back down, uproarious laughter ensues. What's the lesson? You don't have to wait for anything or anyone! **You don't need any special reason to feel good—you can just decide to feel good right now, simply because you're alive, simply because you want to.**

So if you're the source of all your emotions, why don't you feel good all the time? Again, it's because your so-called negative emotions are giving you a message. **What is the message of these Action Signals? They're telling you that what you're currently doing is not working, that the reason you have pain is either the way you're perceiving things or the procedures you're using: specifically, the way you're communicating your needs and desires to people, or the actions you're taking.**

What you're doing is not producing the result you want, and you have to change your approach. Remember that your perceptions are controlled by what you focus on and the meanings you interpret from things. And you can change your perception in a moment, just by changing the way you're using your physiology or by asking yourself a better question.

Your procedures include your style of communication. Maybe you're being too harsh in the way you communicate, or maybe your procedure is not even communicating your needs, and you're expecting other people to know what you need. This could create a lot of frustration, anger, and hurt in your life. Maybe this Action Signal of feeling hurt is trying to tell you that you need to change your way of communicating so you don't feel hurt again in the future. Feeling depressed is another call to action, telling you that you need to change your perception that the problems you're dealing with are permanent or out of control. Or, you need to take some kind of physical action to handle one area of your life so that once again you remember that you are in control.

This is the true message of all your Action Signals. They're merely trying to support you in taking action to change the way you think, change the way you're perceiving things, or change your procedures for communicating or behaving. These calls to action are there to remind you that you don't want to be like the fly that keeps banging himself against the window, trying to get through the glass—if you don't change your approach, all the persistence in the world will never pay off. Your Action Signals are whispering to you (perhaps screaming!), through the experience of pain, that you need to change what you're doing.

Think of your mind, your emotions, and your spirit as the ultimate garden. The way to ensure a bountiful, nourishing harvest is to plant seeds like love, warmth, and appreciation, instead of seeds like disappointment, anger, and fear. Begin to think of those Action Signals as weeds in your garden. A weed is a call to action, isn't it? It says, "You've got to do something; you've got to pull this out to make room for better, healthier plants to grow." Keep cultivating the kinds of plants you want, and pull the weeds as soon as you notice them. Let me offer you ten emotional seeds you can plant in your garden. If you nurture these seeds by focusing on feeling what you want to feel every day, you will hold yourself to a standard of greatness. These seeds create a life that flourishes and fulfills its highest potential. Let's explore them briefly now, and realize that each of these emotions represents an antidote to any of the "negative" emotions you may have been feeling previously.

## *THE TEN EMOTIONS OF POWER*

**1. LOVE AND WARMTH.** The consistent expression of love seems to be able to melt almost any negative emotions it comes in contact with. If someone is angry with you, you can easily remain loving with them by adopting a core belief such as this marvelous one from the book *A Course in Miracles*: **all communication is either a loving response or a cry for help.** If someone comes to you in a state of hurt or anger, and you consistently respond to them with love and warmth, eventually their state will change and their intensity will melt away.

**2. APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE.** I believe that all of the most powerful emotions are some expression of love, each directed in different ways. For me, appreciation and gratitude are two of the most spiritual emotions, actively expressing through thought and action my appreciation and love for all the gifts that life has given me, that people have given me, that experience has given me. Living in this emotional state will enhance your life more than almost anything I know of. Cultivating this is cultivating life. Live with an attitude of gratitude.

**3. CURIOSITY.** If you really want to grow in your life, learn to be as curious as a child. Children know how to wonder—that’s why they’re so endearing. If you want to cure boredom, be curious. If you’re curious, nothing is a chore; it’s automatic—you want to study. Cultivate curiosity, and life becomes an unending study of joy.

**4. EXCITEMENT AND PASSION.** Excitement and passion can add juice to anything. Passion can turn any challenge into a tremendous opportunity. Passion is unbridled power to move our lives forward at a faster tempo than ever before. To paraphrase Benjamin Disraeli, man is only truly great when he acts from the passions. How do we “get” passion? The same way we “get” love, warmth, appreciation, gratefulness, and curiosity—we decide to feel it! Use your physiology: speak more rapidly, visualize images more rapidly, move your body in the direction you want to go. Don’t just casually sit and think. You can’t be filled with passion if you’re slumping over your desk, breathing shallowly, and slurring your speech.

**5. DETERMINATION.** All of the above emotions are invaluable, but there is one that you must have if you’re going to create lasting value in this world. It will dictate how you deal with upsets and challenges, with disappointment and disillusionments. **Determination means the difference between being stuck and being struck with the lightning power of commitment.** If you want to get yourself to lose weight, make those business calls, or follow through on anything, “pushing” yourself won’t do it. Putting yourself in a state of determination will. All your actions will spring from that source, and you’ll just automatically do whatever it takes to accomplish your aim. Acting with determination means making a congruent, committed decision where you’ve cut off any other possibility.

With determination, you can accomplish anything. Without it, you’re doomed to frustration and disappointment. **Our willingness to do whatever it takes, to act in spite of fear, is the basis of courage.** And courage is the foundation from which determination is born. The difference between feeling accomplishment or feeling despondency is the cultivation of the emotional muscle of determination. With all that determination at your command, though, be sure you can also break your own pattern and change your approach. Why smash through a wall if you can just look a little to your left and find a door? Sometimes determination can be a limitation; you need to cultivate . . .

**6. FLEXIBILITY.** If there’s one seed to plant that will guarantee success, it’s the ability to change your approach. In fact, all those Action Signals—those things you used to call negative emotions—are just messages to be more flexible! Choosing to be flexible is choosing to be happy. Throughout your life there will be times when there are things you will not be able to control, and your ability to be flexible in your rules, the meaning you attach to things, and your actions will determine your long-term success or

failure, not to mention your level of personal joy. The reed that bends will survive the windstorm, while the mighty oak tree will crack. If you cultivate all of the above emotions, then you'll surely develop...

**7. CONFIDENCE.** Unshakable confidence is the sense of certainty we all want. The only way you can consistently experience confidence, even in environments and situations you've never previously encountered, is through the power of faith. Imagine and feel certain about the emotions you deserve to have now, rather than wait for them to spontaneously appear someday in the far distant future. When you're confident, you're willing to experiment, to put yourself on the line. One way to develop faith and confidence is simply to practice using it. If I were to ask whether you're confident that you can tie your own shoes, I'm sure you could tell me with perfect confidence that you can. Why? Only because you've done it thousands of times! So practice confidence by using it consistently, and you'll be amazed at the dividends it reaps in every area of your life.

In order to get yourself to do anything, it's imperative to exercise confidence rather than fear. The tragedy of many people's lives is that they avoid doing things because they're afraid; they even feel bad about things in advance. But remember: the source of success for outstanding achievers often finds its origin in a set of nurtured beliefs for which that individual had no references! The ability to act on faith is what moves the human race forward. Another emotion you'll automatically experience once you've succeeded in cultivating all the above is ...

**8. CHEERFULNESS.** When I added cheerfulness to my list of most important values, people commented, "There's something different about you. You seem so happy." I realized that I had been happy, but I hadn't told my face about it! There's a big difference between being happy on the inside, and being outwardly cheerful. Cheerfulness enhances your self-esteem, makes life more fun, and makes the people around you feel happier as well. Cheerfulness has the power to eliminate the feelings of fear, hurt, anger, frustration, disappointment, depression, guilt, and inadequacy from your life. You've achieved cheerfulness the day you realize that no matter what's happening around you, being anything other than cheerful will not make it better.

Being cheerful does not mean that you're Pollyanna or that you look at the world through rose-colored glasses and refuse to acknowledge challenges. **Being cheerful means you're incredibly intelligent because you know that if you live life in a state of pleasure— one that's so intense that you transmit a sense of joy to those around you—you can have the impact to meet virtually any challenge that comes your way.** Cultivate cheerfulness, and you won't need so many of those "painful" Action Signals to get your attention! Make it easy for yourself to feel cheerful by planting the seed of...

**9. VITALITY.** Handling this area is critical. If you don't take care of your physical body, it's more difficult to be able to enjoy these emotions. Make sure that physical vitality is available; remember that all emotions are directed through your body. If you're feeling out of sorts emotionally, you need to look at the basics. How are you breathing? When people are stressed, they stop breathing, sapping their vitality. Learning to breathe properly is the most important avenue toward good health. Another critical element to physical vitality is ensuring that you have an abundant level of nerve energy.

How do you do this? Realize that day to day you're expending nerve energy through your actions, and as obvious as it sounds, you do need to make sure that you rest and recharge. By the way, how much sleep are you getting? If you're regularly logging eight to ten hours of sack time, you're probably getting too much sleep! Six to seven hours has been found to be optimum for most people. Contrary to popular belief, sitting still doesn't preserve energy. The truth is, that's usually when you feel most tired. The human nervous system needs to move to have energy. To a certain extent, expending energy gives you a greater sense of energy. As you move, oxygen flows through your system, and that physical level of health creates the emotional sense of vitality that can help you to deal with virtually any negative challenge you could have in your life, **so realize that a sense of vitality is a critical emotion to cultivate in order to handle virtually any emotions that come up in your life**, not to mention the critical resource in experiencing consistent passion. Once your garden is filled with these powerful emotions, then you can share your bounty through . . .

**10. CONTRIBUTION.** Years ago, I remember being in one of the toughest times in my life, driving down the freeway in the middle of the night. I kept asking, "What do I need to do to turn my life around?" Suddenly an insight came to me, accompanied by such intense emotion that I was compelled to pull my car off the road immediately and write down one key phrase in my journal: **"The secret to living is giving."**

There's no richer emotion I know of in life than the sense that who you are as a person, something you've said or done, has added to more than just your own life, that somehow it has enhanced life's experience for someone you care about, or maybe someone you don't even know. The stories that move me most profoundly are about people who follow the highest spiritual emotion of caring unconditionally and acting for others' benefit. When I saw the musical *Les Misérables*, I was deeply moved by the character of Jean Valjean, because he was such a good man who wanted to give so much to others. Each day we should cultivate that sense of contribution by focusing not only on ourselves, but on others as well.

Don't fall into the trap, though, of trying to contribute to others at your own expense —**playing the martyr won't give you a true sense of contribution.** But if you can consistently give to yourself and others on a measurable scale that allows you to know that your life has mattered, you'll have a sense of connection with people and a sense of pride and self-esteem that no amount of money, accomplishments, fame, or acknowledgment could ever give. A sense of contribution makes all of life worthwhile. Imagine what a better world it would be if all of us cultivated a sense of contribution!

# CHALLENGE: THE TEN-DAY MENTAL CHALLENGE



Here's your opportunity now to really apply all the new disciplines you've learned in the previous chapters. My challenge to you is simply this:

**For the next ten days, beginning immediately, commit to taking full control of all your mental and emotional faculties by deciding right now that you will not indulge in or dwell on any unresourceful thoughts or emotions for ten consecutive days.**

It sounds easy, doesn't it? And I'm sure it could be. But those who begin it are frequently surprised to discover how often their brains are engaged in nonproductive, fearful, worrisome, or destructive thinking.

Why would we continually indulge in mental and emotional patterns that create unnecessary stress in our lives? The answer is simple: we actually think it helps! Many people live in a state of worry. In order to accomplish this state, they continually focus and dwell on the worst possible scenario. Why would they do this? Because they believe it will get them to do something—to take action. But the truth of the matter is that worry usually puts a person in an extremely unresourceful emotional state. It doesn't usually empower us to take action, but rather, it tends to cause us to become overwhelmed with frustration or fear.

Yet, using some of the simplest tools in this book, you could change your worried state immediately by focusing on a solution. You could ask yourself a better question like, "What do I need to do right now to make this better?" Or you could change your state by changing the vocabulary you use to describe the sensations you're feeling: from "worried" to "a little bit concerned."

In essence, if you decide to accept my Ten-Day Challenge, it means that you've committed to putting yourself and keeping yourself in a passionately positive state, no matter what happens. It means that if you find yourself in any unresourceful emotional states, you'll instantaneously change your physiology or focus into a resourceful state regardless of your desires of the moment. For example, if someone does something that you believe is destructive or even hateful toward you, and you begin to find yourself becoming angry, you must immediately change your emotional state, regardless of the situation, during these ten consecutive days.

Again, remember that you have a multitude of strategies for changing your state. You could ask yourself a more empowering question like, "What could I learn from this?" or "What's great about this situation, and what's not yet perfect?" These questions will lead you into resourceful states where you'll find solutions instead of dwelling on and habitually running the cycle of increased anger and frustration.

How many other ways could you change your state if you were really committed?

**Remember, our goal is not to ignore the problems of life, but to put ourselves in better mental and emotional states where we can not only come up with solutions, but act upon them.** Those people who focus on what they can't control are continually disempowered. Yes, it's true, we can't control the wind or the rain or the other vagaries of weather, but we can tack our sails in a way that allows us to shape the direction of our lives. When I first considered going on a mental diet, I believed that staying positive would get me hurt. After all, I had been positive in the past, and my expectations weren't met. I had felt devastated. Eventually, though, I found that by changing my focus I was able to take more control of my life by avoiding the problem state and immediately focusing on solutions. My requests for inner answers were quickly met when I was in a resourceful state.

Every great, successful person I know shares the capacity to remain centered, clear and powerful in the midst of emotional "storms." How do they accomplish this? Most of them have a fundamental rule: **In life, never spend more than 10 percent of your time on the problem, and spend at least 90 percent of your time on the solution. Most important, don't sweat the small stuff. . . and remember, it's all small stuff!**

If you decide that you're going to take on my Ten-Day Challenge—and I sense you will, since you've made it this far in the book—then realize that for the next ten days, you're going to spend 100 percent of your time on solutions, and no time on problems!

But won't this make the problems worse? "If I don't worry about my problems, won't they get out of control?" I seriously doubt it. Ten days of focusing entirely upon solutions, on what's great in your life, on what works and how lucky you are will not make your problems worse. But these new patterns may make you so strong that what you once thought was a problem may disappear as you assume a new identity of an unstoppable and joyous human being.

This Ten-Day Challenge is not easy. If you habitually feel sorry for yourself, it's not easy to stop. If you're focusing on financial pressure, operating out of fear won't make it any better. If you blame your spouse for everything that goes wrong in your life, the easy thing is to keep doing it. If you mask your insecurities by being angry all the time, if you wallow in guilt, if you blame your looks or your financial situation or your upbringing for all your problems, it's not easy to change. **But you already have so many tools to improve your life. This is my challenge to you to start using them.**

Believe me, the power inherent in this little exercise is amazing. If you stick with it, it will do four things for you. First, it will make you acutely aware of all the habitual mental patterns that hold you back. Second, it will make your brain search for empowering alternatives to them. Third, it will give you an incredible jolt of confidence as you see that you can turn your life around. Fourth, and most importantly, it will create new habits, new standards, and new expectations that will help you expand more than you could ever believe.

Success is processional. It's the result of a series of small disciplines that lead us into habitual patterns of success that no longer require consistent will or effort. Like a freight train picking up speed, this exercise

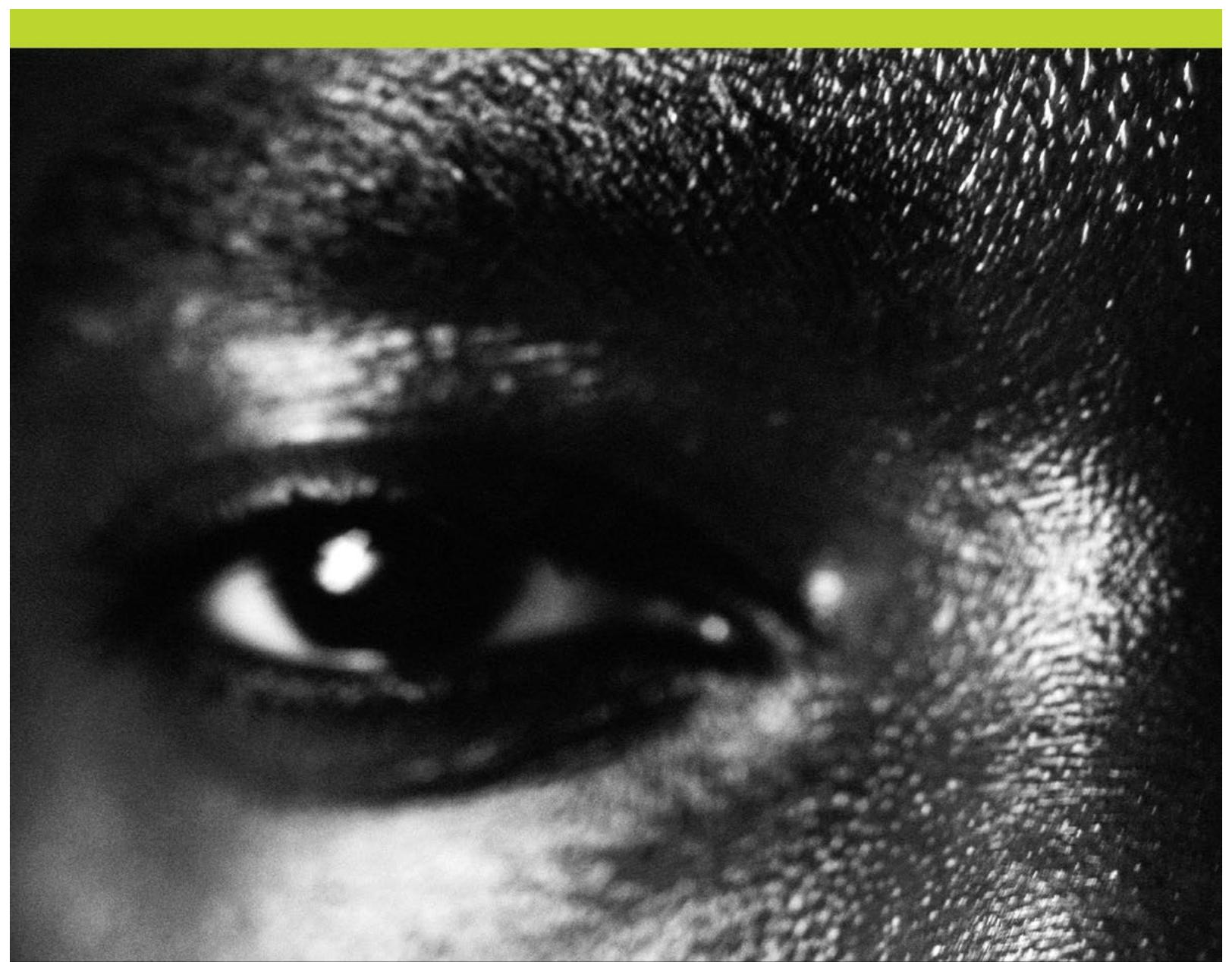
in doing things right consciously, in erasing the patterns that hold you back and installing new ones that can propel you forward, will give you a sense of momentum like very few things you've done in your life.

The great news about this is that, unlike a diet where you starve yourself and eventually have to go back to eating, your old pattern of finding the negative is not one you ever have to return to again. This may not be a Ten-Day exercise in the end. It's really an opportunity for you to become "addicted" to a positive focus for the rest of your life. But if, after banishing your toxic mental patterns for ten days, you want to return, be my guest. The truth is that once you experience life in this mentally vital and alive way, going back would disgust you. But if you ever find yourself getting off track, you have the tools to immediately put yourself back on the high road again.

Remember, though, only you can make this Ten-Day Mental Challenge work. Only you can make the commitment to really follow through. You might consider getting extra leverage on yourself to make certain you follow through. One way of providing yourself extra incentive is to announce to the people around you what you're committing to, or find a partner who wants to take on this Ten-Day Mental Challenge with you. In addition, it would be ideal for you to keep a written journal while you're meeting the Ten-Day Mental Challenge, writing your experiences each day and recording how you successfully dealt with those various challenges. I think you'll find it invaluable to review later on.

Finally, one of the most valuable tools in creating a change is not just interrupting your old pattern, but replacing it with something new. What you may decide to commit to doing is something I do on an ongoing basis throughout my life: **become a reader**.

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(Part 2)

# LIFE VALUES: YOUR PERSONAL COMPASS



Courage, determination, perseverance, dedication. As Ross Perot conducted the tense briefing in Dallas, he saw those qualities reflected in the faces of the men he had handpicked for an extraordinary rescue mission. Do you remember when, in the early days of 1979, civil unrest and anti-America hysteria were rising to a fever pitch in Iran? Only a few days before this briefing, two of Perot's corporate executives in Tehran had been inexplicably jailed. Bail was set at \$13 million.

When high-powered diplomatic negotiations failed to get results, Perot decided that there was only one way to get his men out: he'd have to do it himself. Calling upon the expertise of legendary army colonel Arthur "Bull" Simons to lead this daring raid, Perot quickly assembled a crack team of his top executives to pull off the jailbreak. They were selected because they'd all been in Tehran and had military experience. He called his men "Eagles" to signify "high fliers who used their initiative, got the job done, and gave results, not excuses."

The rewards would be high if they won, but the risks were even greater: the mission was completely unauthorized, and not only was failure a possibility, but so was death. What drove Ross Perot to muster all his resources, take the risks, and defy the odds? Clearly, he's a man who lives by his values. Courage, loyalty, love, commitment, and determination are all values that give him an exceptional capacity to care and strength of will that is legendary. These same values were the force that drove him to build his company, EDS (Electronic Data Systems Corporation), from a thousand-dollar investment into an enterprise worth billions of dollars. He rose to the top because of his capacity to evaluate and select the right men. He chose them based on a strict code of values and he knew that with the right people, those who held high enough standards, all he'd have to do was give them the job to do and get out of their way.

Now he would have the ultimate test of the people he'd selected as he called upon them to summon their finest resources and rescue a few members of the corporate "family." The story of their mission and the challenges they met can be found in the book *On Wings of Eagles*. Suffice it to say that despite obstacles beyond compare, Perot's heroic rescue mission succeeded and brought home his most valued assets: his people.

Values guide our every decision and, therefore, our destiny. Those who know their values and live by them become the leaders of our society. They are exemplified by outstanding individuals throughout our nation, from the boardroom to the classroom. For example, did you see the movie *Stand and Deliver*? It told the story of the maverick math teacher Jaime Escalante.

Were you as inspired as I was by the heroic strides he made in transmitting to his students his passion for learning? He got them to associate in their nervous systems, at the deepest level, a sense of pride in their capacity to master those things others were certain they could never learn. His example of commitment

translated to these young people the power of values. They learned from him discipline, confidence, the importance of the team, flexibility, and the power of absolute determination.

He didn't talk to these kids in the barrio about what they should do with their lives; he was a living demonstration, a new definition of what was possible. He not only got them to pass a calculus placement test in numbers that everyone thought were impossible, but he also got them to change their beliefs about who they were and what they were capable of if they consistently committed to holding themselves to a higher standard.

If we want the deepest level of life fulfillment, we can achieve it in only one way, and that is by doing what these two men have done: by deciding upon what we value most in life, what our highest values are, and then committing to live by them every single day. Unfortunately, this action is far too rare in today's society. Too often, people have no clear idea of what's important to them. They waffle on any issue; the world is a mass of gray to them; they never take a stand for anything or anyone.

If you and I are not clear about what's most important in our lives—what we truly stand for—then how can we ever expect to lay the foundation for a sense of self-esteem, much less have the capacity to make effective decisions? If you've ever found yourself in a situation where you had a tough time making a decision about something, the reason is that you weren't clear about what you value most within that situation. **We must remember that all decision-making comes down to values clarification.**

When you know what's most important to you, making a decision is quite simple. Most people, though, are unclear about what's most important in their lives, and thus decision-making becomes a form of internal torture. This is not true for those who've clearly defined the highest principles of their lives. It wasn't tough for Ross Perot to know what to do. His values dictated it. They acted as his personal compass to guide him through a situation fraught with peril. Recently, Escalante left the Los Angeles school system that he'd been working in to move to Northern California. Why? He could no longer be a part of an organization where he believed there were no standards for a teacher's performance.

Who are the most universally admired and respected people in our culture? Aren't they those who have a solid grasp of their own values, people who not only profess their standards, but live by them? We all respect people who take a stand for what they believe, even if we don't concur with their ideas about what's right and what's wrong. There is power in individuals who congruently lead lives where their philosophies and actions are one.

Most often we recognize this unique state of the human condition as an individual with integrity. Culturally, these people have come in many forms, from the John Waynes and Ross Perots, to the Bob Hopes and Jerry Lewises, to the Martin Sheens and Ralph Naders, to the Norman Cousinses and Walter Cronkites. The fact of the matter is that those we perceive to be congruent in their values have a tremendous capacity to have an influence within our culture.

Do you remember the nightly newscasts with Walter Cronkite? Walter was with us on all the most important days of our lives: during tragedies and triumphs, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and

when Neil Armstrong first set foot on the moon. Walter was part of our family. We trusted him implicitly.

At the beginning of the Vietnam War, he reported on it in the standard way, with an objective view of our involvement, but after visiting Vietnam his view of the war changed, and his values of integrity and honesty required that, rightly or wrongly, he communicate his disillusionment. Regardless of whether you agreed with him or not, the impact he had may have been one of the final straws that caused many in Middle America to begin to question the war for the first time. Now it wasn't just a few radical students protesting Vietnam, but "Uncle Walt."

The conflict in Vietnam was truly a values conflict within our culture. People's perception of what was right and wrong, what could make a difference, was the battle fought at home while the boys overseas put their blood and guts on the line, some not knowing why. An inconsistency of values among our leaders has been one of the greatest sources of pain in our culture. Watergate certainly wounded many Americans. Yet, through it all, our country has continued to grow and expand because there are individuals who continually come forth to demonstrate what's possible and hold us to a higher standard— whether it's Bob Geldof focusing the attention of the world on the famine in Africa or the late Ed Roberts mobilizing the political forces necessary to change the quality of life for the physically challenged.

We need to realize that the direction of our lives is controlled by the magnetic pull of our values. They are the force in front of us, consistently leading us to make decisions that create the direction and ultimate destination of our lives. This is true, not only for us as individuals, but also for the companies, organizations, and the nation of which we're a part. Clearly, the values that our Founding Fathers held most dear have shaped our nation's destiny: The values of freedom, choice, equality, a sense of community, hard work, individuality, challenge, competition, prosperity, and respect for those who have the strength to overcome great adversity have consistently sculpted the experience of American life and thus our joint destinies. These values have caused us to be an ever-expanding country that innovates and continually provides a vision of possibility for people the world over.

Would a different set of national and cultural values have shaped our country differently? You bet! What if the value held most important by our forefathers was stability? Or conformity? How would that have changed the face of our great land? In China, for example, one of the highest values in the culture is the value of the group versus that of the individual, the idea that an individual's needs must be subservient to the group's. How has this shaped Chinese life differently than American life? The fact is, within our own nation there are constant shifts going on within the values of the culture as a whole. While there are certain foundational values, **significant emotional events can create shifts in individuals and therefore in the companies, organizations, and countries that they make up. Remember the changes in Eastern Europe? They are clearly among the most profound value shifts that have occurred in the world community in our lifetimes.**

What happens with countries and individuals also happens with companies. IBM is an example of a corporation whose direction and destiny was set up by its founder, Tom Watson. How? He clearly defined what the company stood for, what would be most important for all people to experience regardless of what products, services, or financial climates they would enter in the future. He guided

“Big Blue” into being one of the world’s largest and most successful companies.

What can we learn from all this? In our personal and professional lives, as well as on the global front, we must **get clear about what is most important in our lives and decide that we will live by these values, no matter what happens.** This consistency must occur regardless of whether the environment rewards us for living by our standards or not. We must live by our principles even when it “rains on our parade,” even if no one gives us the support we need. The only way for us to have long-term happiness is to live by our highest ideals, to consistently act in accordance with what we believe our life is truly about.

**But we can’t do this if we don’t clearly know what our values are!** This is the biggest tragedy in most people’s lives: **many people know what they want to have, but have no idea of who they want to be.** Getting “things” simply will not fulfill you. Only living and doing what you believe is “the right thing” will give you that sense of inner strength that we all deserve.

**Remember that your values—whatever they are—are the compass that is guiding you to your ultimate destiny.** They are creating your life path by guiding you to make certain decisions and take certain actions consistently. Not using your internal compass intelligently results in frustration, disappointment, lack of fulfillment, and a nagging sense that life could be more if only somehow, something were different. On the other hand, there’s an unbelievable power in living your values: a sense of certainty, an inner peace, a total congruency that few people ever experience.

## *IF YOU DON’T KNOW YOUR TRUE VALUES, PREPARE FOR PAIN*

The only way we can ever feel happy and fulfilled in the long term is to live in accordance with our true values. If we don’t, we’re sure to experience intense pain. So often, people develop habitual patterns of behavior that frustrate or could potentially destroy them: smoking, drinking, overeating, abusing drugs, attempting to control or dominate others, watching hour upon hour of television, and so on.

What’s the real problem here? These behaviors are really the result of frustration, anger, and emptiness that people feel because they don’t have a sense of fulfillment in their lives. They’re trying to distract themselves from those empty feelings by filling the gap with the behavior that produces a “quick fix” change of state. This behavior becomes a pattern, and people often focus on changing the behavior itself rather than dealing with the cause. They don’t just have a drinking problem; they have a values problem. The only reason they’re drinking is to try to change their emotional state because they don’t like the way they feel, moment by moment. They don’t know what’s most important to them in their lives.

The consolation is that whenever we do live by our highest standards, whenever we fulfill and meet our values, we feel immense joy. We don’t need the excess food or drink. We don’t need to put ourselves into a stupor, because life itself becomes so incredibly rich without these excesses. Distracting ourselves from such incredible heights would be like taking sleeping pills on Christmas morning.

Guess what the challenge is! As always, we were already asleep when the essence of what would shape our lives was formed. We were children who didn’t understand the importance of having a clear sense of our values, or adults dealing with the pressures of life, already distracted to the point where we couldn’t

direct the formation of our values. I must reiterate that **every decision is guided by these values, and in most cases, we didn't set them up.**

If I asked you to make a list of your top ten values in life, to write them in precise order of importance, I'd be willing to bet that only one in 10,000 could do it. (And that iota of a percent would have attended my Date With Destiny seminar!) But if you don't know the answer to this question, how can you make any clear decisions at all? How can you make choices that you know in the long term will meet your deepest emotional needs? It's hard to hit a target when you don't know what it is! Knowing your values is critical to being able to live them.

**Anytime you have difficulty making an important decision, you can be sure that it's the result of being unclear about your values.** What if you were asked to move your family across the country in connection with a new job? If you knew that there was some risk involved, but that the compensation would be better and the job would be more interesting, what would you do? How you answer this question will depend entirely on what's most important to you: personal growth or security? Adventure or comfort?

By the way, what determines whether you value adventure more than comfort? Your values came from a mixed bag of experiences, of lifelong conditioning through punishment and reward. Your parents congratulated and supported you when you did things that agreed with their values, and when you clashed with their values, you were punished either physically, verbally, or through the pain of being ignored. Your teachers, too, encouraged and applauded you when you did things they agreed with, and applied similar forms of punishment when you violated their most deeply held views. This cycle was perpetuated by your friends and employers. You modeled the values of your heroes, and maybe some of your antiheroes as well.

Today, new economic factors come into play. With most families having both parents working outside the home, there is no traditional role model for values in the home. Schools, churches, and, on the less appetizing side, TV and the internet have all stepped in to fill the gap. Indeed, TV, computers and mobile devices are our most convenient babysitter, with the average American child watching three to four hours of television a day! Am I suggesting that the "traditional" family structure is the only way to raise children who have strong values? Of course not. What I suggest is that we teach our children our philosophy of life by being strong role models, by knowing our own values and living by them.

## *WHAT ARE VALUES?*

To value something means to place importance upon it; anything that you hold dear can be called a "value." In this chapter, I'm specifically referring to life values, those things that are most important to you in life. For this kind of value, there are two types: ends and means. If I ask you, "What do you value most?," you might answer, "Love, family, money . . ." Of these, love is the end value you're pursuing; in other words, the emotional state you desire. Conversely, family and money are merely means values. In other words, they are simply a way for you to trigger the emotional states you really desire. If I asked you, "What does family give you?" you might say, "Love, security, happiness." What you truly value—

the ends you're after—are love, security, and happiness. Similarly, with money, I could ask you, “What does money really mean to you? What does it give you?” You might say, “Freedom, impact, the ability to contribute, a sense of security.” Again, you see, money is merely a means to achieving a much deeper set of values, a set of emotions that you desire to experience on a consistent basis in your life.

The challenge in life is that most people are not clear on the difference between means and ends values, and therefore, they experience a lot of pain. So often people are too busy pursuing means values that they don't achieve their true desire: their ends values. The ends values are those that will fulfill you, make your life rich and rewarding. One of the biggest challenges I see is that people keep setting goals without knowing what they truly value in life, and therefore they end up achieving their goals and saying, “Is this all there is?”

For example, let's say a woman's highest values are caring and contribution, and she chooses to become an attorney because she once met a lawyer who really impressed her as being able to make a difference and help people through his work. As time goes by, she gets caught up in the whirlwind of practicing law, and aspires to become a partner in her firm. As she pursues this position, her work takes on an entirely different focus. She begins to dominate and run the firm, and becomes one of the most successful women she knows, yet she feels unhappy because she no longer has any contact with clients. Her position has created a different relationship with her peers, and she spends all her time in meetings ironing out protocol and procedure. She achieved her goal, but missed out on her life's desire. Have you ever fallen into this trap of pursuing the means as if they were the end you were after? In order to be truly happy, we must know the difference, and be sure to pursue the end itself.

## *MOVING-TOWARD VALUES*

While it's absolutely true that you and I are constantly motivated to move toward pleasurable emotional states, it's also true that we value some emotions more than others. For example, what are the emotional states that you value most in life? What are the emotions that you think will give you the most pleasure? Love or success? Freedom or intimacy? Adventure or security?

I call these pleasurable states that we value most moving-toward values because these are the emotional states we'll do the most to attain. What are some of the feelings that are most important for you to experience in your life on a consistent basis? When asked this question at seminars, my audiences invariably respond with words like: love, success, freedom, intimacy, security, adventure, power, passion, comfort, health. It's certainly true that you probably value all of these emotions, and that they're all important for you to feel. But wouldn't it be fair to say that you don't value them all equally? **Obviously there are some emotional states that you'll do more to achieve than others. In truth, we all have a hierarchy of values.** Each person who looks at this list will see some emotional states as being more important to them than others. The hierarchy of your values is controlling the way you make decisions in each moment. Some people value comfort over passion, or freedom over security, or intimacy over success.

Take a moment right now, and discover from this list which of these emotions you value most. Simply rewrite the list in your order of importance, with 1 being the emotional state you hold as most important, and 10 being least important. Please take a moment now and fill in the blanks in your order of importance.

So what did you learn by doing this ranking? If I were sitting next to you, I could probably give you some quality feedback. For example, I'd know a lot about you if your number-one value was freedom, followed by passion, adventure, and power. I know you're going to make different decisions than someone whose top values are security, comfort, intimacy, and health. Do you think a person whose number-one value is adventure makes decisions the same way as someone whose number-one value is security? Do you think these people would drive the same kind of car? Take the same kind of vacation? Seek out the same profession? Far from it.

Remember, whatever your values are, they affect the direction of your life. We have all learned through our life's experience that certain emotions give us more pleasure than others. For example, some people have learned that the way to have the most pleasurable emotions in life is to have a sense of control, so they pursue it with incredible vigor. It becomes the dominant focus of all their actions: It shapes who they will have relationships with, what they will do within those relationships, and how they'll live. It also causes them, as you can imagine, to feel quite uncomfortable in any environment where they're not in charge.

Conversely, some people link pain to the idea of control. What they want more than anything else is a sense of freedom and adventure. Therefore, they make decisions completely differently. Others get the same level of pleasure through a different emotion: contribution. This value causes that person to constantly ask, "What can I give? How can I make a difference?" This would certainly send them in a different direction from someone whose highest value was control.

Once you know what your values are, you can clearly understand why you head in the directions that you do on a consistent basis. Also, by seeing the hierarchy of your values, you can see why sometimes you have difficulty making decisions or why there may be conflicts in your life. For example, if a person's number-one value is freedom, and number two is intimacy, these two incompatible values are so closely ranked that often this person will have challenges.

I remember a man I counseled at one time who was constantly feeling this push-pull. He consistently sought autonomy, but when he achieved it, he felt alone and craved intimacy. Then, as he pursued intimacy, he became fearful he would lose his freedom, and so he'd sabotage the relationship. One particular relationship was continually on-again, off-again while he cycled between these two values. After I helped him make a simple change in the hierarchy of his values, his relationship and his life was instantly changed. Shifting priorities produces power.

Knowing your own values helps you to get more clarity as to why you do what you do and how you can live more consistently, but knowing the values of others is equally important. Might it be valuable to know the values of someone you're in a relationship with, or somebody you're in business with?

Knowing a person's values gives you a fix on their compass, and allows you to have insight into their decision-making.

Knowing your own hierarchy is also absolutely critical because your top values are those that are going to bring you the most happiness. Of course, what you really want to do is **set it up so that you're meeting all of your values every day**. If you don't, you'll experience what seems like an inexplicable feeling of emptiness or unhappiness.

My daughter, Jolie, lives an incredibly rich life in which her highest values are almost always met. She is also a wonderful actress, dancer, and singer. At the age of sixteen, she auditioned to perform at Disneyland (something she knew would fulfill her value of accomplishment if she succeeded). Incredibly, she beat out 700 other girls to win a part in the fabled amusement park's Electric Light Parade.

Initially, Jolie was ecstatic. We, along with her friends, were all so delighted and proud of her, and we would frequently drive up on weekends to see her perform. Her schedule, however, was extremely taxing. Jolie had to perform every weeknight as well as weekends, and her school term wasn't over for the summer yet. So she had to drive from San Diego to Orange County every evening in rush-hour traffic, rehearse and perform for several hours, then drive back home in the wee hours of the night so she could get up again early the next morning in time for school. As you can imagine, the daily commute and long hours soon turned the experience into a grueling ordeal, not to mention the extremely heavy costume she had to wear that hurt her back.

Even worse, however, from Jolie's perspective, was the fact that her demanding schedule cut drastically into her personal life and prevented her from spending any time with our family and her friends. I began to notice her wandering about in a series of very unresourceful emotional states. She would cry at the drop of a hat, and began to complain about things on a consistent basis. This was totally unlike Jolie

The final straw was that the whole family was preparing to go to Hawaii for our three-week Certification program— everyone except Jolie, who had to stay home in order to continue to work at Disneyland. One morning, she hit threshold and came to me in tears, undecided and confused. She felt so frustrated, so unhappy and unfulfilled, yet she had achieved what seemed like an unbelievable goal only six months earlier. Disneyland had become painful for her. Why? Because it became an obstacle to her ability to spend time with all those she loved most. Plus Jolie always had felt that the time she spent at Certification, where she participated as a trainer, helped her to grow more than virtually anything else in her life. Many of her friends from around the country attended this program each year, and Disneyland was beginning to feel frustrating to her because she really didn't feel like she was expanding or growing there at all. She would feel pain if she decided to come with us to Certification (because she didn't want to be a quitter) and pain if she continued to work at Disneyland because it would mean she'd miss out on the things that seemed so important to her.

We sat down together so that I could help her take a close look at what her top four values were in life. They turned out to be: 1) love, 2) health and vibrancy, 3) growth, and 4) accomplishment. By turning to her values, I knew that I could help her get the clarity she needed to

make the decision that would be right for her. So I asked her, “What does working at Disneyland give you? What’s important about working at Disneyland?” She told me that she was originally excited about it because she saw it as an opportunity to make new friends, receive recognition for her work, have fun, and experience a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

At this point, though, she said she wasn’t feeling very much accomplishment at all because she didn’t feel like she was growing anymore, and she knew there were other things she could be doing that would accelerate her career more rapidly. She also said, “I’m burning myself into the ground. I’m not healthy, and I miss being with the family tremendously.”

Then I asked her, “What would making a change in this area of your life mean? If you left Disneyland, spent time at home, and then went to Hawaii, what would that give you?” She immediately brightened. Smiling, she said, “Well, I’d get to be with you guys. I could have some time with my boyfriend. I’d feel free again. I could get some rest and start exercising to get my body back in shape. I’d keep my 4.0 grade point average in school. I could find other ways to grow and achieve. I’d be happy!”

Her answer as to what to do was plainly in front of her. The source of her unhappiness was also clear. Before she started working at Disneyland, she was fulfilling her top three values: She felt loved, she was very healthy and fit and she felt like she was growing. Thus she began to pursue the next value on her list: accomplishment. But in so doing, she’d created an environment where she achieved, but missed out on her top three values.

This is such a common experience. We all need to realize that we must accomplish our highest values first—these are our utmost priority. And remember, there is always a way to accomplish all our values simultaneously, and we need to make certain we don’t settle for anything less.

There still was one final obstacle to Jolie’s decision: she also linked pain to leaving Disneyland. One of the things she avoided most in life was quitting. I certainly had contributed to this view, since I believe nothing is ever achieved by those who give up whenever it gets tough. So she saw leaving her work at Disneyland as giving up. I assured her that making a decision to live congruently with your values is not quitting, nor is foolish consistency a virtue. I would be the first person to ensure that she continue if I thought she was just giving up because the work was too tough. But that was not the case, and I offered her the opportunity to turn this transition into a gift for someone else.

I said, “Jolie, can you imagine how you’d feel if you were the first runner-up, and all of a sudden the winner stepped down, and now you had a chance to be in the parade? Why don’t you give that gift to someone else?” Because part of Jolie’s definition of love is contribution, this immediately tapped into her highest value. She stopped linking pain to quitting, and now associated pleasure to her decision. This values lesson is one she’s never forgotten, and the most exciting thing was that she found a new way to meet all of her values that began to move her more precisely in the direction of her goals. She not only began to feel more fun and happiness, but shortly thereafter she got her first job in a San Diego Starlight Theater production.

## LESSONS IN PAIN

Just as there are emotions we desire to experience because they're pleasurable, and that's why we're always moving toward them, we also have a list of emotions that we'll do almost anything to move away from. Very early in my career, when I was just beginning to build my first company, I experienced tremendous frustration in being on the road and trying to run my business simultaneously. At one point, it appeared that a person representing me had not been completely honest. When you deal, as I have, with hundreds of thousands of people, and literally thousands of business arrangements, the law of averages says that a few will attempt to take advantage of you. Unfortunately, these are the ones that tend to stick out in our minds rather than the hundreds or even thousands of business relationships that have far surpassed our expectations.

As a result of one such painful situation, I sought out a new CEO, a man who I thought could really run my company. Armed with my new tool of being able to elicit someone's values, I asked each of the potential candidates, "What's most important to you in your life?" Some of them said things like "success" or "accomplishment" or "being the best." But one man used the magic word. He said, "Honesty."

I didn't just take him at his word; I checked him out with several people he'd worked with. They confirmed that he was "honest as the day was long" and that, in fact, at times he had set aside his own needs if there was any question of integrity. I thought, "This is the kind of man I want representing me." And he did a fine job. Soon, though, it became clear that we needed an additional associate in order to really run my rapidly expanding business: someone who had additional skills. My CEO recommended someone he thought could become his partner, and they could jointly run my organization. This sounded great to me.

I met this man, whom I'll call Mr. Smith (names have been changed to protect the not-so-innocent), and he did a fabulous presentation, demonstrating for me how he could use all the skills he'd developed throughout the years to take my company to the next level. He could free up my time, and allow me to do even larger seminars and impact even more people without having to live on the road. At the time, I was spending almost 150 days a year away from home, conducting my seminars. In addition, he didn't want to be paid until he'd produced the result! It sounded almost too good to be true. I agreed to the arrangement. Mr. Smith and my honest CEO would run my company.

A year and a half later, I woke up and discovered that it was too good to be true. Yes, my seminars had gotten bigger, but now I was on the road almost 270 days a year. My skill and impact had grown, I'd helped more people than ever before, but suddenly I was informed that I was \$758,000 in debt after I'd given more than I ever had in my entire lifetime. How could this possibly be? Well, management is everything, both within companies and within ourselves. And I clearly did not have the right managers. But worse, Mr. Smith had over this eighteen-month period of time misappropriated more than a quarter of a million dollars from our coffers. He had a new house, a new car— I had assumed he'd gotten them from his other businesses. Boy, was I in for a surprise! To say that I was angry or devastated by this experience would certainly be using Transformational Vocabulary to lower the intensity of my feelings.

The metaphors I used at the time were things like “I feel stabbed in the back” and “He tried to murder my firstborn.” How’s that for emotional intensity?

However, the thing that perplexed me the most was how my honest CEO could stand by and not warn me that all this was happening. He was aware of what was going on! This was when I began to realize that people don’t just pursue pleasure, but they clearly also move away from pain. My honest CEO had tried to tell me that he was concerned about his partner. He came to me after I’d been on the road for three straight months. On my first day home, he approached me to tell me that he had questions about Mr. Smith’s integrity. I immediately became concerned and asked him why. He said, “When we moved to our new offices, he took the biggest office.” This was so petty that I got extremely angry and said, “Listen. You brought him into this business; you deal with him yourself personally.” And I stormed off. I should have realized that day that I’d given this man pain when he was trying to give me information. In my exhausted and stressed state I failed to evaluate the deeper meaning of what was going on. As if this weren’t bad enough, my honest CEO approached me again to give me similar feedback. I told him that he was not being totally honest by talking to me instead of Mr. Smith. I marched into his associate’s office and said, “He’s telling me all these things about you. You guys work this out!” Can you imagine the pain he got from Mr. Smith?

As I look back on the experience now, I can see clearly why he didn’t tell me the truth. Telling me the truth—that he’d brought someone into my business who’d misappropriate more than a quarter of a million dollars—seemed to him, in the short term, to be much more painful than just putting it off and trying to find some other way to deal with it eventually.

In fact, as I look back on all the upsets I ever had with this CEO, invariably they all came down to times when he didn’t do things he needed to do simply because he wanted to avoid the feeling of confrontation. This was the ultimate pain for him, so while honesty was important to him, avoiding confrontation was more important. Thus he simply did not communicate to me, and rationalized that he was being honest because, after all, I had never asked him if Mr. Smith was taking money. If I had, he would have told me.

As angry as this situation made me, and as painful as it was financially and emotionally, it provided me with one of the most valuable lessons of my life because it gave me one of the final pieces in the puzzle of understanding human behavior. Understanding these twin forces of pain and pleasure has helped me not only to positively influence myself and my family, but people around the world with greater precision.

## *MOVING-AWAY-FROM VALUES*

We must remember, then, that any time we make a decision about what to do, our brain first evaluates whether that action can possibly lead to either pleasurable or painful states. Your brain is constantly juggling, or weighing, your alternatives to see what the impact may be, based upon your value hierarchy. If, for example, I asked you to go skydiving, and the number-one emotion you try to avoid at all costs is a sense of fear, it’s pretty obvious that you’re not going to take action, are you? If, however, the number-one value you want to avoid at all costs is a feeling of rejection, and you believe that I may reject you if

you don't go, you may decide to jump out of a plane in spite of your fear. **The relative levels of pain we associate with certain emotions will affect all of our decisions.**

**What are some of the emotions that are most important for you to avoid experiencing on a consistent basis?** Often when I ask people this question at seminars, they come up with a list such as the following: rejection, anger, frustration, loneliness, depression, failure, humiliation, and guilt.

Again, would it be fair to say that all these emotions are states you'd like to avoid having to feel? Of course, because they're painful. Wouldn't it also be true to say that, while you want to avoid feeling all of these emotions, some are more painful to you than others? That, in fact, you have a hierarchy of moving-away-from values as well? **Which value on the above list would you do the most to avoid having to feel?** Rejection, depression, humiliation? The answer to this question will determine your behavior in almost any environment.

Before we go any further, write out this list, ranking them from the emotional states you'll do the most to avoid having to feel, to those you'll do the least to avoid having to feel.

As you look at your list, what does it tell you? If, for example, you put at the top of your list that the emotion you would do the most to avoid having to feel is humiliation, then can you see how you would consistently avoid entering any situations where you might be judged harshly? If loneliness is the emotion you want to avoid most, it may drive you to be a nurturing person, reaching out to others and trying to give to them on a regular basis so that they'll want to be with you, and so that you'll be surrounded by many grateful friends.

## *THE SOURCE OF SELF-SABOTAGE: VALUES CONFLICTS*

Now let's look at the dynamics created by your values hierarchy. If you selected success, for example, as your top moving-toward value, and rejection as your top moving-away-from value, do you see any possible challenges that this hierarchy might create in your life? I'm here to tell you that a person who's trying to achieve the pleasure of success without ever experiencing the pain of rejection will never succeed long term. In fact, this person will sabotage himself before he ever truly succeeds on a major scale.

How can I make such a claim? Remember the basic organizing principle we've talked about so often here: **People will do more to avoid pain than they will to gain pleasure.** If you're truly going to succeed at the highest level in life, don't you have to be willing to risk rejection? Don't you have to be willing to experience it? Isn't it true that even if you're an honest and sincere person and give your all to others every day, there are still people who will misinterpret your actions and judge you without even having met you? Whether you want to be a writer, a singer, a speaker, or a businessperson, the potential for rejection is ever-present. Since your brain inherently knows that in order to succeed you have to risk rejection, and it's already decided that the feelings of rejection are the ultimate levels of pain, it will make the decision that the pleasure of success is not worth the price, and will cause you to sabotage your behavior before you even get in this position!

So often I see people who take huge strides forward, only to mysteriously pull back at the last minute. Or they'll say or do things that sabotage the very personal, emotional, or physical success they're pursuing. Invariably the reason is that they have a major values conflict. Part of their brain is saying, "Go for it!" while the other part is saying, "If you do you're going to get too much pain." So they take two steps forward and one step back.

During the 1988 election year, I used to call this principle the "Gary Hart Syndrome." Here was a nice guy who truly seemed to care passionately about people and society, but whose value conflicts were played out for all to see. Was Gary Hart a horrible guy? I doubt it. He was just someone who had values in massive conflict. He grew up in a church that taught him he was committing a sin if he even danced. Simultaneously he was exposed to role models like Warren Beatty. These conflicting desires obviously played a role in his political downfall.

Do you think that a person as intelligent as Gary Hart clearly seemed to be would tell the media, "If you've got questions about me, follow me," and then immediately afterward go visit his mistress? Clearly this was his brain's way of getting out of the pain of being in a position where he had to play by rules other than his own. You can call this pop psychology if you want but doesn't it make sense that if you are being pulled in two different directions, you will not be able to serve both masters? Something has to give. We'll do whatever's necessary, consciously or unconsciously, to keep ourselves from having to experience our most intense levels of pain.

We've all seen people in the public eye who've experienced the pain of values conflicts, but rather than be judgmental, we need to realize that each of us has values conflicts within ourselves. Why? Again simply because we never set the system up for ourselves. We've allowed our environment to shape us, but we can begin to change this now. How? Simply by taking two steps:

**Step One:** Gain awareness of what your current values are so you understand why you do what you do. What are the emotional states you are moving toward, and what are the states you are moving away from? By reviewing your lists side by side, you'll be able to have an understanding of the force that's creating your present and future.

**Step Two:** You can then make conscious decisions about what values you want to live by in order to shape the quality of life and destiny you truly desire and deserve.

# RULES: SETTING UP THE GAME SO YOU CAN WIN



As I write these words, I'm looking out over the deep blue Pacific from my room at what was once the Hyatt Regency Waikoloa resort on the Big Island of Hawaii. I've just observed something that won't happen in North America again until 2017: a total eclipse of the sun. I got up this morning at 5:30 a.m. so that I, along with thousands of other visitors, could witness this rare astronomical event.

As crowds of people gathered at the viewing site, I began to entertain myself by watching the diversity of people who had come to share this occasion: everyone from top businesspeople to vacationing families, from scientists lugging dozens of telescopes to hikers who'd pitched their tents in the lava pits overnight, and little children who knew this was an exciting event only because their parents had told them so. Here were hordes of people who had flown in from all over the world, at a cost of thousands of dollars, just for the chance to see something that would take about four minutes! What were we doing here? We wanted to stand in a shadow! We're an interesting species, aren't we?

By 6:28 a.m., the drama had begun to unfold. There was anxiety in the air, not just the anticipation of seeing the eclipse, but the fear of disappointment. For on this unique morning, the clouds had begun to gather, and the sky was becoming overcast. It was interesting to see how people were dealing with the possibility that their expectations would not be met. What they had come to see was not merely a brief flitting of the moon over the sun, but a four-minute total eclipse—when the shadow of the moon would completely block the sun's rays and envelop us in darkness. They even had a name for it: totality!

By 7:10 a.m., the clouds had increased and were getting larger by the minute. Suddenly, the sun broke through a hole in the clouds, and for a moment we could all see a partial eclipse. The crowd greeted it with excited applause, but soon the clouds rolled back in, thicker and thicker, completely obscuring our view. Nearing the moment of totality— utter darkness—it became obvious that we wouldn't be able to watch the moon overtake the sun.

Suddenly, thousands of people began to run over to a big-screen television set that one of the many TV crews had erected. There we sat, watching the eclipse on national television, just like everyone else in the world! In those moments I had a chance to observe an unlimited range of human emotion. Each person responded according to **their rules: their beliefs about what had to happen in order for them to feel good about this experience.**

One man behind me started cursing, saying, "I spent \$4,000 and traveled all this way, just so I could watch this for four minutes on television?" A woman only a few feet away kept saying, "I can't believe we missed it!" while her bright little daughter enthusiastically reminded her, "But, Mom, it's happening right now!" Another woman sitting just to my right said, "Isn't this incredible? I feel so lucky to be here!"

Then a dramatic thing happened. As I observed on TV the last sliver of sunlight disappear behind the moon, in that instant we were engulfed in darkness. It was completely unlike nightfall, when the sky darkens gradually. This was immediate and total darkness! Initially there was a roar through the crowd, but then a hush fell upon us. The birds flew into the trees and became silent. It was a truly amazing moment. Then something hysterical happened. As people sat in the dark, staring at the eclipse on the television screen, some of those who had brought their cameras and were determined to get their outcome began taking pictures of the screen. In a moment, we were flooded with light again—not because of the sun—but because of all the flash bulbs!

Almost as soon as it had begun, though, totality was over. The most dramatic moment of the whole event for me was the instant that a thin sliver of the sun slipped out from behind the moon, instantly bringing full daylight with it. It occurred to me then that **it doesn't take very much light to wipe out the darkness.** Within moments of the return of sunlight, a large number of people got up and began to leave. I was puzzled. After all, the eclipse was still happening. Most of them were muttering complaints about how they'd "come all this way and missed out on the experience of a lifetime." A few enraptured souls, however, lingered to watch every minute, feeling great excitement and joy. The most ironic thing of all was that within fifteen to twenty minutes, the trade winds had cleared all the clouds from the sky. It was now blue and clear, and the eclipse was revealed for everyone to see. But few people had remained; most had already returned to their rooms disgruntled. They continued to give themselves the sensations of pain because their expectations had not been met.

As I usually do, I started interviewing people. I wanted to find out what their experience of the eclipse had been. Many people talked about how it was the most incredible, spiritual experience of their lives. One pregnant woman rubbed her swollen tummy and shared with me that the eclipse somehow had created a feeling of stronger connection with her unborn child, and that this was just the right place on Earth for her to be. What a contrast of beliefs and rules I noticed today!

What struck me as most humorous, though, was that people would get so excited and emotional about something like this, which was merely a four-minute shadow. If you really think about it, it's no more of a miracle than the sun coming up each morning! Can you imagine if every morning people from all over the world got up early so they could watch the sun come up? What if national and international news ardently covered every phase of the event with in-depth reports, passionately tracking the sun's rise into the sky, and everybody spent their mornings talking about what a miracle it is? Can you imagine the kind of days we'd have? What if CNN opened every broadcast with, "Good morning. Once again, the miracle has happened—the sun has risen!"? Why don't we respond this way? Could we? You bet we could. But the problem is that we've become habituated. We're so accustomed to the miracles happening around us every day that we don't even see them as miracles anymore.

For most of us, our rules for what's valuable dictate that we covet things that are scarce, instead of appreciating the miracles that abound. What determined the differences in these people's responses, from one man who got so upset he destroyed his camera on the spot, to those who not only experienced joy today, but would experience it every time they told others about the eclipse in the coming weeks, months, and years?

Our experience of this reality had nothing to do with reality, but was interpreted through the controlling force of our beliefs: specifically, the rules we had about what had to happen in order for us to feel good. **I call these specific beliefs that determine when we get pain and when we get pleasure rules.** Failure to understand their power can destroy any possibility for lifelong happiness, and a full understanding and utilization of them can transform your life as much as anything we've covered in this entire book.

Let me ask you a question before we go any further. **What has to happen in order for you to feel good?** Do you have to have someone hug you, kiss you, make love to you, tell you how much they respect and appreciate you? Must you make a million dollars? Do you have to hit below-par golf? Do you have to be acknowledged by your boss? Do you have to achieve all of your goals? Do you have to drive the right car, go to the right parties, be known by the right people? Do you have to be spiritually evolved or wait until you achieve total enlightenment? Do you have to run five miles a day? What really has to happen in order for you to feel good?

**The truth is that nothing has to happen in order for you to feel good.** You don't need an eclipse to feel good. You could feel good right now for absolutely no reason whatsoever! Think about it. If you make a million dollars, the million dollars doesn't give you any pleasure. It's your rule that says, "When I hit this mark, then I'll give myself permission to feel good." In that moment, when you decide to feel good, you send a message to your brain to change your responses in the muscles of your face, chest, and body, to change your breathing, and to change the biochemistry within your nervous system that causes you to feel the sensations you call pleasure.

Who do you think had the worst time the day of the eclipse? Those with the most intense rules about what had to happen before they could feel good! There's no doubt that the scientists, and the tourists who saw themselves as scientists, probably had the most pain. Many of them had huge agendas they were trying to complete in those four minutes before they could feel good about it.

Don't misunderstand; there's nothing wrong with being committed to accomplishing and doing everything you can. But years ago, I made a distinction that changed the quality of my life forever: **as long as we structure our lives in a way where our happiness is dependent upon something we cannot control, then we will experience pain.** Since I wasn't willing to live with the fear that pain could shake me anymore, and I considered myself to be intelligent, I redesigned my rules so that when I feel pain and when I feel pleasure is whenever I feel it's appropriate based on my capacity to direct my own mind, body, and emotions. I enjoyed the eclipse immensely. I was in Hawaii for other reasons anyway (to conduct my three-week Certification program), so coming here a few days early to watch the eclipse was a bonus.

But the real reason I enjoyed it was not that I had low expectations; I was looking forward to it. The key to my happiness could be found in one rule: my rule for the day was that I was going to enjoy this event no matter what happened. It wasn't that I didn't have expectations; it was that I decided that no matter what happened, I'd find a way to enjoy it.

Now, if you adopted and consistently applied this rule to your own life, can you see how that would change virtually everything you experience? When I tell people about this rule, some of them respond,

“Yeah, but you’re just lowering your standards.” Nothing could be further from the truth! To adopt this rule is to raise your standards. It means you’ll hold yourself to a higher standard of enjoying yourself despite the conditions of the moment. It means you’ve committed to being intelligent enough, flexible enough, and creative enough to direct your focus and evaluations in a way that allows you to experience the true richness of life—maybe that’s the ultimate rule.

In the last chapter, you began to design for yourself a hierarchy of values to refine and define the direction of your life. You need to understand that whether or not you feel like you’re achieving your values is totally dependent upon your rules—your beliefs about what has to happen for you to feel successful or happy or experiencing love. You can decide to make happiness a priority, but if your rule for happiness is that everything must go just as you planned, I guarantee you’re not going to experience this value on a consistent basis. Life is a variable event, so our rules must be organized in ways that allow us to adapt, grow, and enjoy. It’s critical for us to understand these unconscious beliefs that control when we give ourselves pain and when we give ourselves pleasure.

## *JUDGE AND JURY*

We all have different rules and standards that govern not only the way we feel about the things that happen in our lives, but how we’ll behave and respond to a given situation. Ultimately what we do and who we become is dependent upon the direction that our values have taken us. But equally, or possibly even more importantly, what will determine our emotions and behaviors is our **beliefs about what is good and what is bad, what we should do and what we must do. These precise standards and criteria are what I’ve labeled rules.**

Rules are the trigger for any pain or pleasure you feel in your nervous system at any moment. It’s as if we have a miniature court system set up within our brains. Our personal rules are the ultimate judge and jury. They determine whether or not a certain value is met, whether we’ll feel good or bad, whether we’ll give ourselves pain or pleasure. If I were to ask you, for example, “Do you have a great body?,” how would you respond? It would depend on whether you think you meet a certain set of criteria that you believe constitutes having a great body.

Here’s another question: “Are you a great lover?” Your answer will be based upon your rules of what’s required to be a great lover, the standards to which you hold yourself. If you told me, “Yes, I’m a great lover,” I’d discover your rules by asking the key question, “How do you know you’re a great lover? What has to happen in order for you to feel you’re a great lover?”

You might say something like, “I know I’m a great lover because when I make love with a person, they usually say that it feels great.” Others might say, “I know I’m a great lover because my lover tells me so.” Or “I know I’m a great lover because of the responses I get from my partner.” Others might say, “I know I’m a great lover because I feel good when I’m making love.” (Doesn’t their partner’s response matter at all? Hmm.) Or your answer might just be, “Ask around!”

On the other hand, some people don't feel that they're great lovers. Is this because they aren't great lovers? Or is it because their rules are inappropriate? This is an important question to answer. In many cases, people won't feel that they're a great lover because their partner doesn't tell them that they're a great lover. Their partner may respond passionately, but because they don't meet the specific rule of this individual, the person is certain they're not a great lover.

This predicament of not feeling the emotions we deserve is not limited to relationships or lovemaking. Most of us have rules that are just as inappropriate for defining success, making a difference, security, intelligence, or anything else. Everything in our lives, from work to play, is presided over by this judge-and-jury system. The point here is simple: our rules are controlling our responses every moment we're alive. And, of course, as you've already guessed, they have been set up in a totally arbitrary fashion. Like so many other elements of the Master System that directs our lives, our rules have resulted from a dizzying collage of influences to which we've been exposed. The same punishment and reward system that shapes our values shapes our rules. In fact, as we develop new values, we also develop beliefs about what it will take to have those values met, so rules are added continuously. And, with the addition of more rules, we often tend to distort, generalize, and delete our past rules. We develop rules in conflict. For some people, rules are formed out of their desire to rebel against rules they grew up with.

**Are the rules that guide your life today still appropriate for who you've become?** Or have you clung to rules that helped you in the past, but hurt you in the present? Have you clung to any inappropriate rules from your childhood?

**Rules are a shortcut** for our brains. They help us to have a sense of certainty about the consequences of our actions; thus, they enable us to make lightning-quick decisions as to what things mean and what we should do about them.

When someone smiles at you, if you had to engage in a long, tedious set of calculations in order to figure out what that means, your life would be frustrating. But instead you have a rule that says if a person smiles at you, then it means they're happy, or they're friendly, or maybe they like you. If someone frowns at you, then it triggers another set of rules for what things mean and what you should do about it. For some people, if someone frowns at them, then their rule is that the person is in a bad state and should be avoided. Other people, however, might have a rule that says, "If someone's in a bad state, then I need to change their state."

## *ARE YOU MUDDLED OR PERFECT?*

I remember reading an intricate story in Gregory Bateson's book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. It was a transcript of a conversation he'd had with his daughter years ago, and I'll paraphrase it for you here. One day she approached him and asked an interesting question: "Daddy, how come things get muddled so easily?"

He asked her, "What do you mean by 'muddled,' honey?" She said, "You know, Daddy. When things aren't perfect. Look at my desk right now. Stuff is all over the place. It's muddled. And just last night I worked so hard to make it perfect. But things don't stay perfect. They get muddled so easily!"

Bateson asked his daughter, “Show me what it’s like when things are perfect.” She responded by moving everything on her shelf into individually assigned positions and said, “There, Daddy, now it’s perfect. But it won’t stay that way.”

Bateson asked her, “What if I move your paint box over here twelve inches? Then what happens?”

She said, “No, Daddy, now it’s muddled. Anyway, it would have to be straight, not all crooked the way you put it down.” Then he asked her, “What if I moved your pencil from this spot to the next one?”

“Now you’re making it muddled again,” she responded.

“What if this book were left partially open?” he continued.

“That’s muddled, too!” she replied.

Bateson turned to his daughter and said, “Honey, it’s not that things get muddled so easily. It’s that you have more ways for things to get muddled. You have only one way for things to be perfect.”

Most of us have created numerous ways to feel bad, and only a few ways to truly feel good. I never fail to be amazed at the overwhelming number of people whose rules wire them for pain. It’s as if they have a vast and intricate network of neural pathways leading to the very states they’re trying to avoid, and yet they have only a handful of neural pathways that they’ve connected to pleasure.

A classic example of this is a man who attended one of my Date With Destiny seminars. He was a well-known Fortune 500 executive, beloved by his community for his contributions, a father of five who was very close to his children and wife, and a man who was physically fit—a marathon runner. I asked him, “Are you successful?” To the astonishment of all present, he quite seriously answered, “No.” I asked him, “What has to happen in order for you to feel successful?” (Remember, this is the key question you’ll always ask to discover your rules or anyone else’s.)

What followed was a litany of rigid rules and requirements that he felt he must meet in order to be successful in his life. He had to earn \$3 million a year in salary (he was currently earning only \$1.5 million in straight salary, but an additional \$2 million in bonuses—this didn’t count, though), he had to have 8 percent body fat (he was at 9 percent), and he had to never get frustrated with his kids (remember that he had five of them, all going in different directions in life). What do you think are this man’s chances of feeling successful, when he has to meet all of these intense and arguably unreasonable criteria simultaneously? Will he ever feel successful?

By contrast, there was another gentleman who we had all noticed was practically bouncing off the walls because he had so much energy. He seemed to be enjoying the seminar and life to the utmost. I turned to him and asked the same question: “Are you successful?” He beamed back at me and said, “Absolutely!” So I asked him, “What has to happen in order for you to feel successful?” With a huge grin he explained, “It’s so easy. All I have to do is get up, look down, and see that I am above ground!” The crowd roared. He continued, “Every day above ground is a great day!” This rule has become a favorite of

the Date With Destiny staff, and now at every program we display it to remind each of us how successful we are the moment we pull back the covers each morning.

Like the CEO who wasn't meeting his own rules, you could be winning and feel like you're losing because the scorecard you're using is unfair. Not only is it unfair to you, it's also unfair to your spouse and children, the people you work with every day, and all the others whose lives you touch. If you've set up a system of rules that causes you to feel frustrated, angry, hurt, or unsuccessful—or you have no clear rules for knowing when you're happy, successful, and so on—those emotions affect the way you treat the people around you as well as how they feel when they're near you. Also, whether you are aware of it or not, often you are judging other people through a set of rules that you may never have expressed—but we all expect others to comply with our rules, don't we? If you're being hard on yourself, you're likely to be hard on others as well.

Why would anyone impose such strict regulations on themselves and the people they love most? A lot of it has to do with cultural conditioning. Many of us are afraid that if we don't have very intense rules, then we won't be driven to succeed, we won't be motivated to work hard and achieve. The truth is that you don't have to have ridiculously difficult rules to keep your drive! If a person makes their rules too intense, too painful, pretty soon they'll begin to realize that no matter what they do, they can't win, and they begin to experience learned helplessness. We certainly want to use the power of goals, the allure of a compelling future, to pull ourselves forward, but we must make sure that at the bottom of it all we have rules to allow us to be happy anytime we want.

## *DO YOUR RULES EMPOWER OR DISEMPOWER YOU?*

We want to develop rules that move us to take action, that cause us to feel joy, that cause us to follow through—not rules that stop us short. I've found that there are an amazing number of men and women who set up rules for relationships that make it absolutely impossible for them to succeed in this area of their lives. For example, some people's rule for love is, "If you love me, then you'll do whatever I want you to do." Or "If you love me, then I can whine and complain and nag, and you should just accept it." Are these appropriate rules? Hardly! They'd be unfair to anyone you were sharing a relationship with. One woman who attended Date With Destiny told me that she really wanted to have a close relationship with a man, but just hadn't seemed able to maintain a relationship with one past the initial "thrill of the chase" phase. As I began to ask her, "What has to happen for you to be attracted to a man?" her rules helped us both instantly understand what her challenge was. For her to feel attracted to a man, he had to pursue her constantly, even though she continued to reject him. If he kept working hard, trying to break down the barrier, that made her feel incredibly attracted to him; to her this meant he was a very powerful man.

But what's interesting was her second rule. If he kept on for more than a month, she lost her respect and therefore her attraction to him. So guess what normally would happen? A few men would take her rejection and keep on pursuing her, but of course most would give up after a short period of time. Thus she would never have a relationship with them. Then, the few who persisted would secretly have her favor for a while, but after an arbitrary period of about a month, she'd completely lose interest. She

found herself unable to stay attracted to any man for more than a month because no man was able to anticipate her complex timetable.

What rules do you have that are equally unwinnable? For some people, in order to feel like they're in control in any context, they have to know what's going to happen in advance of its occurrence. For others, in order to feel like they're confident in some area, they have to have experience in doing it. If this were my rule for confidence, I couldn't accomplish most of what I've done in my life! Most of my success has come from my ability to get myself to feel certain I could achieve something, even though I had no references for it. My rule for confidence is, "If I decide to be confident, then I'll feel that way toward anything, and my confidence will help me succeed."

Competence is another interesting rule. Some people's rule for competence is, "If I've done something perfectly over a period of years, then I'm competent." Other people's rule is, "If I've done it effectively once, then I'm competent." And for others, competence is, "If I've done anything like it, then I know I can master this as well, and therefore I'm competent."

Do you see the impact these kinds of rules would have on your confidence, your happiness, your sense of control, the quality of your actions, and your life?

## *SET UP THE GAME SO YOU CAN WIN*

In the last chapter, we devoted a great deal of time to setting up values. But as I've already stated, if you don't make the rules achievable, you'll never feel like those values are being met. When I first started to develop my ideas on designing destiny, I had only the concept of values and not rules, so whether or not a person felt like they were on track was completely arbitrary. The day I discovered rules, I began to understand the source of pain and pleasure in our experience. I understood that rules are the triggering device of human emotion, and began to evaluate how I could use rules more effectively.

As I've mentioned before, it quickly became clear to me that the majority of people are wired for pain. Their rules make it very, very difficult to feel good, and very easy to feel bad. Let me give you a powerful example. Here are the values of a woman we'll call Laurie who attended one of my earliest Date With Destiny seminars: love, health, security, freedom, success, acceptance, excellence, harmony, respect, integrity, honesty, fun.

At first glance, these values look wonderful, don't they? You would think that this person is probably loving and healthy and freedom-oriented. With a closer look, though, we can already see a few challenges. Laurie's third value is security, and her fourth value is freedom. Do those two sound like they go well together?

The reality was that this woman was wired for massive pain. She was frustrated in every sense of the word, and was literally becoming a recluse, hiding out from people. No therapist she'd visited could figure out why. They were all working on her behaviors, her fears, and her emotions, instead of looking at the way her Master System of evaluating every event and experience of her life was wired.

So I began to elicit her rules for each of her values: “What has to happen in order for you to feel \_\_\_\_?” For her to feel love, her answer was, “I have to feel like I’ve earned it. I have to feel like all my beliefs are accepted and approved of by every person I meet. I can’t feel like I’m loved unless I’m perfect. I have to be a great mother, a great wife,” and so forth.

Instantly we began to see the problem. Love was the highest value on her list, the greatest source of pleasure she could possibly feel in her body. Yet her rules did not allow her to give herself this pleasure unless she met these complex criteria that she couldn’t control! If any of us made our ability to feel loved dependent on everyone accepting our views, we wouldn’t feel love very often, would we? There are just too many people with different ideas and beliefs, and therefore too many ways for us to feel bad.

**How do we know if a rule empowers or disempowers us?** There are three primary criteria:

1. It’s a disempowering rule if **it’s impossible to meet**. If your criteria are so complex or varied or intense that you can’t ever win the game of life, clearly you have a disempowering rule.

2. A rule is disempowering if **something that you can’t control determines whether your rule has been met or not**. For example, if other people have to respond to you in a certain way, or if the environment has to be a certain way, you clearly have a disempowering rule. A classic example of this is the people waiting to view the eclipse who couldn’t be happy unless the weather—something they couldn’t control—acted according to their specific expectations.

3. A rule is disempowering if it **gives you only a few ways to feel good and lots of ways to feel bad**. Laurie had managed to meet all three of these criteria for disempowering rules, hadn’t she? Having to feel that all her beliefs were accepted and approved by people was an impossible criterion. It required the outside environment, something she could not control—other people’s opinions—to make her feel good. It provided lots of ways to feel bad, and provided no clear way to feel good. Here are some of the rest of her rules for her values hierarchy:

## *LAURIE’S OLD MOVING-TOWARD VALUES AND RULES*

**Love:** I have to feel like I’ve earned it, like all my beliefs are accepted and approved. I can’t feel like I’m loved unless I’m perfect. I have to be a great mother and wife.

**Health:** I have to feel like my diet is perfect by my strict standards. I have to be completely free of physical pain. I must feel like I’m healthier than everyone I know and be an example.

**Security:** Everyone must like me. I must feel that everyone I meet is certain I’m a good person. I must be certain that there will be no nuclear war. I must have much more money in my savings account than I already do.

**Freedom:** I must be in control of my working demands, hours, fees, opinions, etc. I must be financially secure enough not to live under stress or financially related pressure.

How likely do you think it is that Laurie will meet one of her values, much less all of them? What about her rules for health? “I have to feel like my diet is perfect by my strict standards.” She was not only

a vegetarian, but ate only raw food, and she still didn't feel perfect! What are your chances of being healthier than everyone you know? Not much, unless you hang out in the intensive care unit!

## *LAURIE'S OLD MOVING-AWAY-FROM VALUES AND RULES*

**Rejection:** I feel rejected if someone doesn't share my beliefs, if someone seemingly knows more than I do.

**Failure:** I feel failure if someone doesn't believe I'm a good person. I feel failure if I don't feel I support myself or my family well enough.

**Anger:** I feel anger when I don't feel like what I do is appreciated, when people judge me before they know me.

These moving-away-from rules are equally immobilizing. Notice how easy it is to feel bad, and how hard it is to feel good. If all it takes for her to feel rejected is someone not sharing her beliefs, then she's in for a lot of heartache. And what are the chances in your life of having people judge you before they know you? Only about one hundred percent! With these rules, can you imagine what it would be like to live in her body? She was racked with pain, and one of her biggest sources, if you look at her rules, was people. Any time she was around people, she was risking the possibility they might not share her beliefs, or might not like her, or might judge her. No wonder she was hiding out! At one point I finally said, "It's my guess that a person with values and rules like this would develop an ulcer." She said, "I already have one."

Laurie's experience, unfortunately, is not unique. Certainly some of her rules are more intense than others. But you will be absolutely surprised when you find out how unfair your own rules are when you begin to scrutinize them! At *Date With Destiny*, we attract some of the most successful people in the country—people whose level of skill and influence in the culture is unmatched. And yet, while they're successful on the outside, many are lacking the happiness and fulfillment they deserve. Invariably, it's because of values conflicts or inappropriate rules.

## *THE SOLUTION*

The solution is very simple. All we have to do to make our lives work is set up a system of evaluating that includes rules that are achievable, that make it easy to feel good and hard to feel bad, that constantly pull us in the direction we want to go. Certainly it's useful to have some rules that give us pain. We need to have limits; we need to have some kind of pressure that drives us. I can't taste fresh orange juice unless I have a glass, something with limits to contain the juice. We all have limits, both as a society and as individuals. For starters, though, we should at least rewire ourselves so we can experience pleasure more consistently in life. When people are feeling good all the time, they tend to treat others better, and they tend to maximize their potential as human beings.

So what's our goal? Once we design our values, we must decide what evidence we need to have before we give ourselves pleasure. We need to design rules that will move us in the direction of our values, that will clearly be achievable, using criteria we can control personally so that we're ringing the bell instead

of waiting for the outside world to do it. Based on these requirements, Laurie changed the order of some of her values and completely changed her rules for achieving them. Here are her new values and rules:

## *LAURIE'S NEW MOVING-TOWARD VALUES AND RULES*

**Love:** I experience love anytime I express love, give love to others, or allow myself to receive it.

**Health:** I am healthy when I acknowledge how wonderful I already feel!

**Fun:** I'm having fun when I find pleasure and joy in the process.

**Gratitude:** I feel grateful when I appreciate all the things I have in my life right now.

**Freedom:** I feel free when I live by my convictions and accept the choice to create happiness for myself. Notice that fun is now a priority. This transformed her experience of life, not to mention her relationship with her daughter and husband. But even more powerful were the changes she made in her rules.

Changing the values would have limited impact if the rules were unachievable. What has this woman done? She has rewired her entire life so that she's in control. You and I need to remember that our self-esteem is tied to our ability to feel like we're in control of the events in our environment. These rules allow Laurie to always be in control without even trying.

Are her new rules for love achievable? You bet! Who's in control? She is! At any moment in time, she can decide to be loving to herself and others, and she'll now have permission to give herself the emotion called love. She'll know she's meeting her highest values. How often can she do this? Every single day! There are lots of ways to do it because there are lots of people she can be loving to: herself, her family, her friends, and strangers. How about her new rule for health? What's beautiful about it is that not only is she in charge—because she can acknowledge how wonderful she feels at any moment—and not only is it achievable, but isn't it true that if she regularly acknowledges feeling good, she'll reinforce the pattern of becoming more healthy?

In addition, Laurie adopted some new moving-away-from values. She selected emotions she knew she had to avoid indulging in order to succeed: negativity and procrastination. Remember, we want to reverse the process of how most of us are wired. We want to make it hard to feel bad, and easy to feel good.

## *LAURIE'S NEW MOVING-AWAY-FROM VALUES AND RULES*

**Negativity:** I avoid consistently depending on the acceptance of others for my ultimate happiness and success.

**Procrastination:** I avoid consistently expecting perfection from myself and others.

With Laurie's new moving-away-from rules, she no longer depends upon the acceptance of others. Her

rule for procrastination is based on her realization that expecting perfection created pain, and she hadn't wanted to begin projects that would create pain, so that's why she'd been procrastinating. These changes in values and rules have redirected her life to a level beyond anything she could have imagined.

Now, here's an assignment for you: based on the new values you've set up for yourself in the last chapter, create a set of rules for your moving-toward values that makes it easy to feel good, and a set of rules for your moving-away-from values that makes it hard to feel bad. Ideally, create a menu of possibilities with lots of ways to feel good. Here are a few of mine:

## *A SAMPLING OF MY MOVING-TOWARD VALUES AND RULES*

**Health and Vitality:** Anytime I feel centered, powerful, or balanced; anytime I do anything that increases my strength, flexibility, or endurance; anytime I do anything that moves me toward a sense of physical well-being; anytime I eat water-rich foods or live in accordance with my own health philosophy.

**Love and Warmth:** Anytime I'm being warm and supportive of my friends, family, or strangers; anytime I focus on how to help; anytime I'm loving toward myself; anytime my state of being enhances how other people feel.

**Learning and Growing:** Anytime I make a new distinction that's useful; anytime I stretch myself beyond what was comfortable; anytime I think of a new possibility; anytime I expand or become more effective; anytime I apply anything I know in a positive way.

**Achieving:** Anytime I focus on the value of my life as already created; anytime I set an outcome and make it happen; anytime I learn anything or create value for myself or others.

You may say, "Isn't this just a game? Couldn't I set it up so that I meet my rule for health just by breathing?" Certainly you could base it on something this simple. Ideally, though, you'll design your rules so that by pursuing them you have more of what you want in your life. You also may say, "Won't I lose my drive to succeed if there's no pain motivation?" Trust me. Life will give you enough pain on your own if you don't follow through. You don't need to add to it by creating an intense set of rules that makes you feel lousy all the time.

In sociology there's a concept known as "ethnocentricity," which means we begin to believe that the rules, values, and beliefs of our culture are the only ones that are valid. This is an extremely limiting mindset. Every person around you has different rules and values than you do, and theirs are no better or worse than your own. The key question is not whether rules are right or wrong, but whether they empower or disempower you. In fact:

## *EVERY UPSET IS A RULES UPSET*

Think about the last time you were upset with someone. Was it really about them, or was it about something they did, or said, or failed to do that you thought they ought to? Were you angry with them,

or were you angry because they violated one of your rules? **At the base of every emotional upset you've ever had with another human being is a rules upset.** Somebody did something, or failed to do something, that violated one of your beliefs about what they must or should do.

For example, some people's rule for respect is, "If you respect me, then you never raise your voice." If a person with whom you're in a relationship suddenly starts to yell, you're not going to feel respected if this is your rule. You're going to be angry because it has been violated. But your partner's rule may be, "If I'm respectful, then I'm truthful about all my feelings and all my emotions—good, bad, and indifferent—and I express them with all my intensity in the moment." Can you imagine the conflict these two people can have?

Some people's rule for handling upset is, "If you care about me, then you leave me alone and let me deal with it my own way." Other people's rule is, "If somebody's upset, and you care about them, you immediately intervene to try to help." This creates a tremendous conflict. Both people are trying to accomplish the same thing, which is to respect and care about each other, but their rules dictate different behaviors, and their rules of interpretation will make their actions seem adversarial rather than supportive. **So if you ever feel angry or upset with someone, remember, it's your rules that are upsetting you, not their behavior.** This will help you to stop blaming them. You can get past your upset quickly by first stopping and asking yourself, "Am I reacting to this, or am I responding to the situation intelligently?" Then, communicate with that person right up front and say something like, "I'm sorry I responded the way I did. It's just that you and I have different rules about what we need to do in this situation. My expectations are that if you respect me, you'll do \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. I know those aren't your rules. So please tell me what your rules are. How do you express respect, [love, caring, concern, etc.]?" Once you're both clear on what the other person wants, then you can make a deal. Ask them, "Would you be willing to do \_\_\_\_\_ to make me feel respected? I'd be willing to do \_\_\_\_\_ for you." Any relationship—business or personal—can be instantly transformed just by getting clear on the rules and making an agreement to play by them. After all, how can you ever hope to win a game if you don't even know the rules?

# IDENTITY: THE KEY TO EXPANSION



There were no marks on his body. The Chinese Communists had held him captive in a tiny room for more than twenty hours, but they hadn't beaten or tortured him. They had even offered him a cigarette or two . . . and as a result of their polite conversation, this GI now held a document in his own handwriting detailing the countless injustices and destructiveness of the American way of life—the capitalist society—and praising the superiority and ethical humanity of the Communist system. What's more, the essay this officer of the U.S. Army had written was now being broadcast to his and other POW camps in North Korea, as well as to the American forces stationed in South Korea. He would later divulge military information, turn in his fellow prisoners, and fervently denounce his own country. What caused this man to completely reverse his worldview and dismantle the beliefs that had been instilled in him over a lifetime? What caused him to abandon the core values he'd previously held and become a collaborator with the enemy? What single change would make such a radical shift in the thoughts, emotions, and actions of an individual?

The answer lies in understanding that he was directed down a path that caused him to literally **shift his identity**. He was now simply acting in accordance with his new image of himself.

Throughout this book you've explored with me the impact of beliefs, one of the foundational elements in the Master System that directs all of our evaluations. Beliefs guide us to conclusions, and therefore they teach us how to feel and what to do. However, there are different levels of beliefs that have different levels of impact on the quality of our lives. Some are very specific. For example, the beliefs you have about a particular friend will determine how you think and feel about his behavior, and the meaning that you'll link to anything that he does. If you "know" that he is loving, then even if he appears to be angry at the moment, you will not question his ultimate intent. This belief will guide all of your interactions with this person. But this will not necessarily affect the way you deal with a stranger. These beliefs impact you in only one specific area of your life: your interactions with this friend.

Some beliefs, however, have an expanded influence on your life; I call these global beliefs. These are the beliefs that have much further-reaching consequences. For example, the beliefs you have about people in general will affect not just the way you deal with your friend, but with everyone you meet. These beliefs will powerfully impact your career, your level of trust, your marriage, and so forth.

The global beliefs you have about the concepts of scarcity and abundance, for example, will determine your stress level and your generosity of time, money, energy, and spirit. If you believe we live in a world with scarce resources—where there's only so much money, so much time, so much love—then you'll constantly live in fear that you won't have enough. This stress will affect the way you think of your neighbors, your co-workers, your financial capabilities, and opportunities in general.

More powerful than any of these, though, is the core belief that is the ultimate filter to all of our perceptions. This belief directly controls the consistency of your life's decisions. These are the beliefs you have about your **identity**.

What we can or cannot do, what we consider possible or impossible, is rarely a function of our true capability. It is more likely a function of our beliefs about **who we are**. In fact, if you've ever found yourself unable to even consider doing something, where your response to someone is, "I could never do that" or "I'm just not that kind of person," then you've run up against the barriers of a limited identity. This isn't always bad, of course. Not perceiving yourself as a murderer is a very important distinction! Not perceiving yourself as someone who would take advantage of others is probably very useful. It's important to realize that we define ourselves not only by who we are, but by who we are not.

What exactly is identity? It is simply **the beliefs that we use to define our own individuality, what makes us unique—good, bad, or indifferent—from other individuals**. And our sense of certainty about who we are creates the boundaries and limits within which we live.

**Your capability is constant, but how much of it you use depends upon the identity you have for yourself.** For example, if you feel certain that you are an outgoing, outrageous person, you'll tap the resources of behavior that match your identity. Whether you see yourself as a "wimp" or a "wild man," a "winner" or a "wallflower," will instantly shape which capabilities you access. You may have read the book *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, which details the dramatic change in students' performance when they become convinced that they are gifted.

**Time and again, researchers have shown that students' capabilities are powerfully impacted by the identities they develop for themselves as the result of teachers' belief in their level of intelligence.** In one study, a group of teachers were told that certain students in their classes were truly gifted and to make sure that they challenged them to continue to expand. As can be expected, these children became the top achievers in their class. What makes this study significant is that these students had not actually demonstrated higher levels of intelligence—and, in fact, some had previously been labeled poor students. Yet it was their sense of certainty that they were superior (which had been instilled by a teacher's false belief) that triggered their success.

The impact of this principle is not limited to students. **The kind of person other people perceive you to be controls their responses to you.** Often this has nothing to do with your true character. For example, if a person sees you as a crook, even if you're an honest person and do good things, this person will search for the sinister motive behind your acts. What's worse is that, after making a positive change, we often allow others in our environment who have not changed their image of us to anchor our own emotions and beliefs back into our old behaviors and identities. We all need to remember that we have tremendous power to influence the identities of those we care about most.

This is the power that Marva Collins commands when she influences her students to believe that they are the masters of their destinies, that they are as talented as any human being who has walked on earth. **We all will act consistently with our views of who we truly are, whether that view is accurate or not.**

**The reason is that one of the strongest forces in the human organism is the need for consistency.**

Throughout our lives, we've been socialized to link massive pain to inconsistency and pleasure to being consistent. Think about it. What labels do we attach to people who say one thing and then do another, who claim to be one way and then behave another? We call them hypocritical, fickle, unstable, unreliable, wishy-washy, scatterbrained, flaky, untrustworthy. Would you like to have these labels attached to you? Would you even like to think of yourself in this way? The answer is obvious: a resounding no! As a result, whenever we take a stand—especially a public stand—and state what we believe, who we are, or what we're about, we experience intense pressure to remain consistent with that stand, regardless of what that inflexibility may cost us in the future.

Conversely, there are tremendous rewards for remaining consistent with our stated identities. What do we call people who are consistent? We use words like trustworthy, loyal, steady, solid, intelligent, stable, rational, true-blue. How would you like to have people consistently use these labels to describe you? How would it feel to think of yourself in this way? Again, the answer is obvious: most people would love it. Thus, the need to remain consistent becomes irrevocably tied to your ability to avoid pain and gain pleasure. The Pygmalion effect also works in reverse. If you feel certain that you are "learning-disabled," it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is quite different from believing that your current strategy for learning is ineffective. The ability to change one's strategy is perceived by most of us to be a simple and achievable task, as long as we have the right teacher. However, changing ourselves—changing the essence of who we are—is perceived by most to be next to impossible. **The common response, "I'm just this way," is a phrase that murders dreams.** It carries with it the sentence of an unchangeable and permanent problem.

A person who believes they have developed a drug addiction can clearly change. It will be difficult, but a change can be made, and it can last. Conversely, a person who believes himself to be a drug addict will usually return to the use of drugs even after weeks or months of abstinence. Why? It's because he believes that this is who he is. He doesn't have a drug addiction; he is a drug addict. Remember that once a person has a conviction about anything, he will ignore and even defend against any evidence that's contrary to his belief. Unconsciously, this person will not believe that he can change long-term, and this will control his behavior.

In addition, there's often a secondary gain involved in the process of maintaining this negative behavior. After all, this man can blame his addiction on something he can't control—it's simply "who he is"—instead of facing the reality that taking drugs is a conscious decision. This will be augmented by the need within the human nervous system for consistency, and he will return to this destructive pattern again and again. Surrendering his identity would be even more painful than the clearly destructive effects of the drugs themselves.

Why? Because **we all have a need for a sense of certainty. Most people have tremendous fear of the unknown. Uncertainty implies the potential of having pain strike us,** and we'd rather deal with the pain we already know about than deal with the pain of the unknown. Thus, living in an ever-changing world—one in which we are constantly surrounded by the flux of new relationships, redefined job roles, changing environments, and a steady stream of new information—the one thing that we all count on to

be constant is our sense of identity. If we begin to question who we are, then there is no foundation for all of the understandings upon which we've built our lives.

If you don't know who you are, then how can you decide what to do? How can you formulate values, adopt beliefs, or establish rules? How can you judge whether something is good, bad, or indifferent? The biggest challenge for someone who perceives his identity as a drug addict is: What does he change his identity to? To a "recovering drug addict"? This doesn't change his identity; it merely describes the state he's in currently. "Drug-free" doesn't do it either, because most see it as a temporary state—and it still focuses on drugs as one of the ways of defining oneself. When this person develops the conviction that he is absolutely clean, that he's now a "Christian," "Muslim," "Jew," or "Buddhist," or now that he's a "leader"—or anything else other than a "drug addict"—that's when his behavior changes. **As we develop new beliefs about who we are, our behavior will change to support the new identity.**

The same thing happens with a person who has excess weight whose identity is, "I'm a fat person." This individual may diet and lose weight in the short term, but he will always gain it back because his sense of certainty about who he is will guide all his behaviors until they are once again consistent with his identity. We all must maintain the integrity of our convictions of who we are, even when they are destructive and disempowering.

The only way to create lasting change for an individual who's been using drugs is to change his conviction from "I am a drug addict" to "I'm a health nut" or "I'm a living example that no problem is permanent." Whatever the new identity, it must be one that would never even consider the use of drugs. If drugs are offered again, his immediate response is not to evaluate whether he should use them or not, but to simply state with absolute certainty, "I'm not that kind of person. That's who I used to be." Those with excess weight must transform their identity from a fat person to a vital, healthy, and athletic human being. This identity change will shift all their behaviors, from their diet to their exercise, and allow them to create the long-term physiological changes that are consistent with their new identity. This shift may sound like it's merely a semantic manipulation, but in truth it is a much deeper and more profound transformation of personal reality.

In fact, one **shift in identity can cause a shift of your entire Master System.** Think about it. Doesn't a drug addict have a completely different system of evaluation—the states he consistently experiences, the questions he asks, the values that guide his actions, and the references he organizes into beliefs—than does someone who considers himself to be a leader, a lover, an athlete, or a contributor? While it's true that not all identity shifts are as complete as others, some are indeed so far-reaching that one Master System is literally replaced in a moment by another. If you've repeatedly attempted to make a particular change in your life, only to continually fall short, invariably the challenge is that you were trying to create a behavioral or emotional shift that was inconsistent with your belief about who you are. Shifting, changing, or expanding identity can produce the most profound and rapid improvements in the quality of your life.

## HOW YOUR IDENTITY IS FORMED

Why is it that during the Korean War more American POWs informed on their fellow prisoners than in any other war in modern history? The answer is that the Chinese Communists, unlike their allies, the North Koreans, understood **the power of identity to instantaneously change not only their long-held beliefs and values, but their actions, in an instant.** Rather than brutalize the prisoners, they doggedly pursued their own ingenious form of psychological warfare designed not merely to extract information or create compliance, but rather to convert the American fighting man to their political philosophy. They knew that if they could lead him into a new set of beliefs and values, then he would see his country's role in the war as futile and destructive, and therefore assist them in any way they requested. And they succeeded. Understanding what they did can help you understand how you've arrived at your current identity and how you can expand your identity, and therefore your entire life, in a matter of moments. The task before the Chinese Communists was formidable indeed. How can you change someone's entire identity without the threat of death or the promise of freedom? Especially knowing that the American soldier has been trained to give only his name, rank, and serial number? Their plan was very simple: start small, and build. The Chinese understood that the way we identify anyone is by their actions. For example, how do you know who your friend really is? Isn't it by the way he or she acts, the way he or she treats people? The Communists' real secret, though, was that they understood that we determine who we are—our own identities—by judging our own actions as well. **In other words, we look at what we do to determine who we are.** The Chinese realized that in order to achieve their broader objective of changing the prisoner's beliefs about his identity, all they had to do was get the prisoner to do things that a collaborator or a Communist would do.

Again, this is not a simple task, but they realized it could be done if they simply could wear the American POW down through conversation that lasted twelve to twenty hours, and then make a minor request: get him to say something like "The United States is not perfect" or "It's true in a Communist country that unemployment is not a problem." Having established this footing, the Chinese would simply start small and build. They understood our need for consistency. Once we make a statement that we say we believe, we have to be willing to back it up.

They would merely ask the POW to write down some of the ways in which America is not perfect. In his exhausted state, the GI was then asked, "What other social benefits are there to communism?" Within a short period of time, the GI would have sitting in front of him a document not only attacking his own nation, but also promoting Communism with all the reasons written in his own handwriting. He now had to justify to himself why he'd done this. He'd not been beaten, nor had he been offered special rewards. He'd simply made small statements in his need to stay consistent with the ones he'd already written, and now he'd even signed the document. How could he explain his "willingness" to do this? Later he would be asked to read his list in a discussion group with other prisoners or even to write an entire essay about it.

When the Chinese broadcast these essays, along with the names of the prisoners who had written them, suddenly the prisoner would find himself publicly identified as an enemy "collaborator." When fellow

prisoners asked him why he did it, he couldn't defend himself by saying he'd been tortured. He had to justify his acts to himself in order to maintain his own sense of integrity. In an instant, he would state that he wrote it because it was true! In that moment, his identity shifted. He now perceived himself as pro-Communist, and all those around him also labeled him as such. They would reinforce his new identity by treating him the same way they treated the Communist guards.

Soon his new identity would cause him to openly denounce his country and, in order to maintain consistency between his statements and his new label, he would often collaborate even more extensively with his captors. This was one of the most brilliant facets of the Chinese strategy: once a prisoner had written something down, he couldn't later pretend to himself that it had never happened. There it was in black and white, in his own handwriting, for anyone to see—something that drove him “to make his beliefs and his self-image consistent with what he had undeniably done.”

Before we judge our POWs harshly, however, we should take a good look at ourselves. Did you consciously choose your identity, or is it the result of what other people have told you, significant events in your life, and other factors that occurred without your awareness or approval? What consistent behaviors have you adopted that now help to form the basis of your identity?

Would you be willing to undergo a painful bone-marrow extraction to help a stranger? Most people's first response would be, “Absolutely not!” Yet in a study done in 1970, researchers found that if a person was led to believe that the consistency of their identity relied upon it, many would commit to just such a selfless act.

The study showed that when the subjects were asked to make small commitments first, and followed up with two simple acts that made not volunteering seem “out of character,” many began to develop a new identity. They began to see themselves as “donors,” as a person who unconditionally commits to help those in need through personal sacrifice. Once this occurred, when the request for the bone marrow was made, these people felt compelled by the force of their new identity to follow through regardless of the time, money, or physical pain involved. **Their view of themselves as donors became a reflection of who they were. There is no more potent leverage in shaping human behavior than identity.**

You might ask, “Isn't my identity limited by my experience?” **No, it's limited by your interpretation of your experience. Your identity is nothing but the decisions you've made about who you are, what you've decided to fuse yourself with. You become the labels you've given yourself. The way you define your identity defines your life.**

## *THE ULTIMATE PAIN—SEEDS OF AN IDENTITY CRISIS*

People who act inconsistently with who they believe they are set the stage for the societal cliché of an “identity crisis.” When the crisis hits, they are immediately disoriented, questioning their previous convictions. Their whole world is turned upside down, and they experience an intense fear of pain. This is what happens to so many people having a “midlife crisis.” Often these people identify themselves as being young, and some environmental stimulant—turning a certain age, comments from friends, graying

hair— causes them to dread their approaching years and the new, less desirable identity that they expect to experience with it. Thus, in a desperate effort to maintain their identity, they do things to prove they're still young: buy fast cars, change their hairstyles, divorce their spouses, change jobs.

If these people had a solid grasp of their true identities, would they experience this crisis at all? I suspect not. Having an identity that is specifically linked to your age or how you look would definitely set you up for pain because these things will change. If we have a broader sense of who we are, our identity never becomes threatened.

Even businesses can have identity crises. Years ago, photocopying giant Xerox Corporation underwent an interesting shift in its image. When personal computing emerged as “the wave of the future,” Xerox wanted to use their technological power to enter this exciting new market. They put their research and development staff on it and, after spending approximately \$2 billion, they came up with a number of innovative advances, including the precursor to what we now know as a mouse.

Why, then, isn't Xerox in the competitive computer race, running neck and neck with Apple and IBM? One reason surely is that in the beginning, its identity didn't really allow for the company to head in this direction. Even its “graphic” identity, which used to rely on ads with a roly-poly monk, confined its capacity to be identified as the epitome of cutting-edge computing technology. While the monk symbolized the exacting nature of manuscript copying, he was hardly appropriate for this new venture into high technology, where speed was one of the most highly valued criteria. On the consumer side, the identity Xerox had established as the world's leading copier company did not instill a high confidence in the company's efforts to market computers. Compound this with a graphic identity that had little to do with how to process information rapidly, and you begin to see where some of Xerox's problems originated.

Marketing and graphic-design experts alike will tell you that corporate image is a huge filter through which consumers process buying information—they must know who you are, what you stand for, and when they're investing large sums of money, they usually want to buy from a company that exemplifies their product. As Xerox grappled with incorporating this facet of computerization into its existing identity, other companies zoomed to the forefront, overtaking the marketplace. At this point, Xerox decided that, rather than try to change its identity, it would utilize it. It would computerize its photocopiers and concentrate its R&D dollars on improving what it already knew how to do best.

That's when Xerox began the process of transformation by producing new “Xerox images”—airing commercials featuring fast-paced imagery of plotters, hardware, software, communication networks—and completing the visual message with the words, “Xerox...the Document Company.” This expanded identity must be conditioned within the culture for Xerox to expand its market, and it is using every opportunity to do so.

It doesn't take a crisis for most of us to understand that we can change our behavior, but the prospect of changing our identity seems threatening or impossible to most. Breaking away from our core beliefs about who we are gives us the most intense pain, and some people would even go so far as to kill themselves to preserve those beliefs. This was dramatically illustrated in Victor Hugo's masterpiece

*Les Misérables*. When the hero Jean Valjean is released from his prison work crew, he is frustrated and alone. Although in the many years he's spent in the custody of the French police he has never accepted his label of "criminal" (he'd merely stolen a loaf of bread to feed his starving family and was sentenced to many years of hard labor), once released, he discovers that he can't get an honest day's work. He is scorned and rebuffed because of his status as an ex-convict.

Finally, in a state of helplessness, he begins to accept the identity that his societal label has imposed. He now is a criminal and begins to act as such. In fact, when a kind priest takes him in, feeds him, and gives him shelter for the night, he fulfills his criminal identity by stealing his benefactor's humble silver setting. When the police stop Valjean on a routine check, they discover not only that he is an ex-convict, but also that he is carrying the priest's most valuable possessions—a crime punishable by a life of hard labor. Valjean is brought back to face the priest, and upon presentation of the facts, the priest insists that the silver was a gift and reminds Valjean that he's forgotten the two remaining silver candlesticks. To Valjean's further surprise, the priest subsequently makes his generous falsehood a truth and sends him away with the silver to start a new life.

Valjean has to deal with the priest's actions. Why would he believe in him? Why didn't he send him away in chains? The priest told him that he was his brother, that Valjean no longer belonged to evil, that he was an honest man and a child of God. This massive pattern interrupt changes Valjean's identity. He tears up his prison papers, moves to another city, and assumes a new identity. As he does, all of his behaviors change. He becomes a leader and helps those in his community.

However, a policeman, Monsieur Javert, makes it his life's crusade to find Valjean and bring him to justice. He "knows" Valjean is evil and defines himself as one who brings evil to justice. When Javert finally catches up with him, Valjean has the opportunity to eliminate his nemesis—but he magnanimously spares his life. After a lifetime of pursuit, Javert discovers that Valjean is a good man—perhaps a better man than he—and he cannot deal with the potential of realizing that maybe he was the one who was cruel and evil. As a result, he throws himself into the rapids of the river Seine.

## WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAY?

What does all of this really mean? This can all seem very esoteric unless we start to actually define ourselves. **So take a moment to identify who you are. Who are you?** There are so many ways in which we define ourselves. We may describe ourselves as our emotions (I'm a lover, I'm peaceful, I'm intense), our professions (I'm an attorney, I'm a doctor, I'm a priest), our titles (I'm Executive Vice-President), our incomes (I'm a millionaire), our roles (I'm a mother, I'm the eldest of five girls), our behaviors (I'm a gambler), our possessions (I'm a BMW owner), our metaphors (I'm king of the hill, I'm the low man on the totem pole), our feedback (I'm worthless, I'm special), our spiritual beliefs (I'm Jewish), our looks (I'm beautiful, I'm ugly, I'm old), our accomplishments (I'm the 1960 Spring Valley High Homecoming Queen), our past (I'm a failure), and even what we're not (I'm not a quitter).

The identity that our friends and peers have tends to affect us as well. Take a good look at your friends. Who you believe they are is often a reflection of who you believe you are. If your friends are very loving and sensitive, there's a great chance that you see yourself in a similar vein. The timeframe you use to

define your identity is very powerful as well. Do you look to your past, your present, or the future to define who you truly are? Years ago my present and past weren't terribly exciting, so I consciously fused my identity with the vision I had of who I knew I would become. I didn't have to wait; I began to live as this man now.

It's very important, when you are answering this question, to be in the right state. You need to feel relaxed, safe, and curious. If you're just powering through this book, scanning and reading rapidly, or if you have many distractions, you're not going to get the answers you need.

Take a nice, deep breath in; relax the breath out. Let your mind be curious—not fearful, not concerned, not looking for perfection or for anything in particular. Just ask yourself, “Who am I?” Write down the answer, and then ask it again. Each time you ask it, write down whatever surfaces, and keep probing deeper and deeper. Continue to ask until you find the description of yourself that you have the strongest conviction about. How do you define yourself? What is the essence of who you are? What metaphors do you use to describe yourself? What roles do you play?

Often, if you don't create this safe and curious state, all of the fears and hesitations about identity will keep giving you inadequate answers. In fact, often if you just ask this question up front of somebody, blurting out, “Who are you?” without putting them in the right state, you'll get one of two responses:

1. **A blank stare.** This type of question throws many people into a tailspin because they have never been called upon to seriously ponder what their answer is.
2. **A surface-level answer.** This is a first-attempt evasion technique. This response can be defined as the “Popeye Principle,” where a person will simply insist, “I am what I am, and that's all that I am.” Often, what I find is that when you ask someone a question, especially an emotional one, they won't answer you until they've answered two questions of their own.

First they ask themselves, “Can I answer this question?” If a person's not sure who he is, often he'll say, “I don't know” or give you the first surface answer. Sometimes people are afraid to ask the question for fear of realizing that they lack clarity in this critical area of their lives. And the second question they ask themselves before answering is: “What's in it for me? If I answer this question, how will this benefit me personally?”

Let me offer you the answer to these two questions. First, you do know who you are. Yes, you can come up with the answer if you take a moment to brainstorm a bit right now. But you've got to trust yourself to let whatever answers come out of you just flow, and write them down. Second, the benefit to knowing who you are is the ability to instantaneously shape all of your behaviors.

# CHALLENGE: WHO AM I? THE POWER THAT SHAPES YOUR LIFE



If you take the time to get in the right state, you'll come up with . . . A thoughtful answer. I hope this is the kind of answer you're searching for right now! So take a moment right now to answer a question pondered by philosophers through the ages, from Socrates to Sartre. Put yourself in that safe, curious state. Take a deep breath and release it. Ask, "Who am I?"

"I AM..."

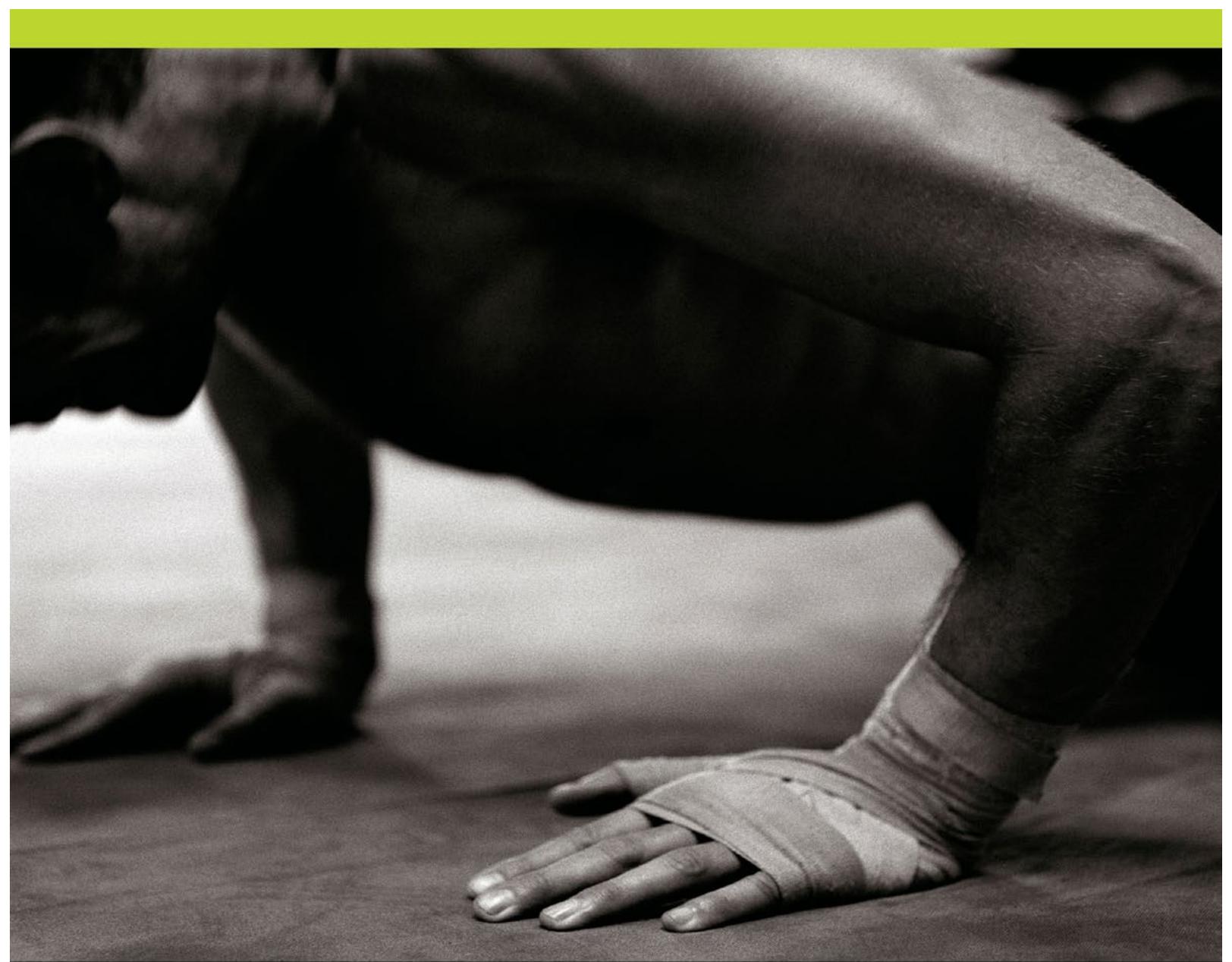
To assist you in defining yourself, remember that identity is simply what distinguishes you from everyone else. Here are a couple of exercises I think you will enjoy.

**1) If you were to look in the dictionary under your name, what would it say?** Would three words just about cover it, or would your epic narrative consume page after page, or demand a volume of its own? Right now, write down the definition you would find if you were to look up your name in a dictionary. Take a moment, and let your answers sink in. When you're ready, move to the next exercise.

**2) If you were to create an ID card that would represent who you truly are, what would be on it—and what would you leave off?** Would it include a picture or not? Would you list your vital statistics? Your physical description? Your accomplishments? Your emotions? Your beliefs? Your affiliations? Your aspirations? Your motto? Your abilities? Take a moment to describe what would be on this identity card and what would be left off in order to show someone who you really are.

Now, take a look at what you've written down, at the descriptions you have of your identity—in essence, the story of your life. How do you feel about it? I hope you're taking a moment right now to really appreciate who you are, to feel the deep emotion that comes with recognition. If you're noticing that your identity creates pain, know that whatever you call your identity is simply what you've decided to identify with, and that in a moment you could change it all. You have the power within you right now. In fact, after looking at how identities evolve, you'll have an opportunity to expand your identity, and therefore your entire life.

*Want one-on-one guidance with a certified Anthony Robbins life coach? [Click here](#) to learn more today! Your first session is absolutely free.*



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Tools from:

THE SEVEN DAYS TO  
SHAPE YOUR LIFE

(Part 3)

# EMOTIONAL DESTINY EXERCISE: THE ONLY TRUE SUCCESS



**Your Outcome:** *Take control of your consistent emotions and begin to consciously and deliberately reshape your daily experience of life.*

There is no true success without emotional success, yet, of the more than 3,000 emotions that we have words to describe, the average person experiences only about a dozen different ones in the course of an average week. We must remember that this does not reflect our emotional capacity, but rather the limitations of our present patterns of focus and physiology.

Throughout this book, we've continually studied the mastery of emotion, and you've developed a broad spectrum of tools to powerfully and rapidly change any emotion you desire. You now realize that changing how you feel is the motivation behind virtually all of your behaviors. Thus, it's time that you develop a proactive plan for dealing with the negative emotional patterns that you habitually experience. It's equally important to give yourself the gift of expanding the amount and quality of time that you spend in positive emotional states.

The arsenal of skills you have for changing your emotional states includes: • physiology • focus • questions • submodalities • Transformational Vocabulary • metaphors • Neuro-Associative Conditioning • beliefs • compelling future • values • rules • references • identity

The purpose of today's exercise is simply to make you aware of your present emotional patterns and get you to utilize as many of the above-listed skills as necessary to guarantee that you shape your own emotional destiny daily.

## **Today's Assignment:**

1. Write down all the emotions that you experience in an average week.
2. List the events or situations you use to trigger these emotions.
3. Come up with an antidote for each negative emotion, and employ one of the appropriate tools for responding to the Action Signal. Do you need to change the words you use to describe this experience? Do you need to change what you believe about this emotional state? Do you need to ask yourself a new question? Be sure to consistently focus on solutions instead of problems.

Commit throughout this day to replacing the old, limiting emotion with a new, empowering emotion, and condition this new pattern until it's consistent. With our emotions well in hand, we'll begin tomorrow to master our. . .

# RELATIONSHIP DESTINY EXERCISE: THE PLACE TO SHARE AND CARE



**Your Outcome:** *Measurably enhance the quality of your personal relationships, and deepen your emotional connection with the people you care about most by reviewing the six fundamentals of successful relationships.*

Success is worthless if we don't have someone to share it with; indeed, our most desired human emotion is that of connection with other souls. Throughout this book we've talked consistently about the impact of relationships on shaping character, values, beliefs, and the quality of our lives. Specifically, today's exercise is designed simply to remind you of six key points that are valuable to any relationship. Let's briefly review them before I give you your assignment for today:

- 1. If you don't know the values and rules of the people with whom you share a relationship, you should prepare for pain.** People can love each other, but if for whatever reason they consistently break the rules of someone they care about, there are going to be upsets and stress in this relationship. Remember, every upset you've ever had with another human being has been a rules upset, and when people become intimately involved, it's inevitable that some of their rules will clash. By knowing a person's rules, you can head off these challenges in advance.
- 2. Some of the biggest challenges in relationships come from the fact that most people enter a relationship in order to get something: they're trying to find someone who's going to make them feel good. In reality, the only way a relationship will last is if you see your relationship as a place that you go to give, and not a place that you go to take.**
- 3. Like anything else in life, in order for a relationship to be nurtured, there are certain things to look for—and to look out for.** There are certain warning signals within your relationship that can flag you that you need to tackle a problem immediately before it gets out of hand. In her book *How to Make Love All the Time*, my friend Dr. Barbara De Angelis identifies four pernicious phases that can kill a relationship. By identifying them, we can immediately intervene and eliminate problems before they balloon into destructive patterns that threaten the relationship itself.

**Stage One, Resistance:** The first phase of challenges in a relationship is when you begin to feel resistance. Virtually anyone who's ever been in a relationship has had times when they felt resistance toward something their partner said or did. Resistance occurs when you take exception or feel annoyed or a bit separate from this person. Maybe at a party they tell a joke that bothers you and you wish they hadn't. The challenge, of course, is that most people don't communicate when they're feeling a sense of resistance, and as a result, this emotion continues to grow until it becomes . . .

**Stage Two, Resentment:** If resistance is not handled, it grows into resentment. Now you're not just annoyed; you're angry with your partner. You begin to separate yourself from them and erect an emotional barrier. Resentment destroys the emotion of intimacy, and this is a destructive pattern within a relationship that, if unchecked, will only gain speed. If it is not transformed or communicated, it turns into...

**Stage Three, Rejection:** This is the point when you have so much resentment built up that you find yourself looking for ways to make your partner wrong, to verbally or nonverbally attack them. In this phase, you begin to see everything they do as irritating or annoying. It's here that not only emotional separation occurs, but also physical separation as well. If rejection is allowed to continue, to lessen our pain, we move to ...

**Stage Four, Repression:** When you are tired of coping with the anger that comes with the rejection phase, you try to reduce your pain by creating emotional numbness. You avoid feeling any pain, but you also avoid passion and excitement. This is the most dangerous phase of a relationship because this is the point at which lovers become roommates—no one else knows the couple has any problems because they never fight, but there's no relationship left.

What's the key to preventing these "Four R's"? The answer is simple: communicate clearly up front. Make sure your rules are known and can be met. To avoid blowing things out of proportion, use Transformational Vocabulary. Talk in terms of preferences: instead of saying, "I can't stand it when you do that!" say, "I'd prefer it if you did this instead." Develop pattern interrupts to prevent the type of argument where you can't even remember what it's about anymore, only that you've got to win.

4. **Make your relationships one of the highest priorities in your life;** otherwise they will take a back seat to any or all of the other things that are more urgent that happen during your day. Gradually, the level of emotional intensity and passion will drift away. We don't want to lose the power of our relationships simply because we got caught up in the law of familiarity, or we let neglect habituate us to the intense excitement and passion we have for a person.

5. **Focus each day on making it better,** rather than focusing on what might happen if it ended. We must remember that whatever we focus on we'll experience. If we constantly focus on our fear of a relationship being over, we'll begin to do things unconsciously to sabotage it so that we can extract ourselves before we get too entwined and true pain results.

A corollary to this principle is that **if you want your relationship to last, never, never, never, ever, ever threaten the relationship itself.** In other words, don't ever say, "If you do that, then I'm leaving." just making this statement alone creates the possibility. It also induces a destabilizing fear in both partners. Every couple that I've ever interviewed with a lasting relationship has made it their rule, no matter how angry or hurt they felt, never to question whether or not the relationship would last and never to threaten to leave it. Just remember the racing school metaphor of the skid car and the wall. You want to focus on where you want to go in a relationship, not on what you fear.

6. **Each day, reassociate to what you love about this person you're in a relationship with. Reinforce your feelings of connection and renew your feelings of intimacy and attraction** by consistently asking the question, "How did I get so lucky to have you in my life?" Become fully associated to the privilege of sharing your life with this person; feel the pleasure intensely, and continuously anchor it into your nervous system. Engage in a never-ending quest to find new ways to surprise each other. If you don't, habituation will set in, and you will take each other for granted. So find and create those special moments that can make your relationship a role model—one that's legendary!

### Today's Assignment:

1. Take the time today to talk with your significant other and **find out what's most important to each of you in your relationship. What are your highest values in a relationship together**, and what has to happen for you to feel like those values are being fulfilled?
2. **Decide that it's more important for you to be in love than to be right.** If you should ever find yourself in the position of insisting that you're right, break your own pattern. Stop immediately and come back to the discussion later when you're in a better state to resolve your conflicts.
3. Develop a pattern interrupt that you both agree to use when things become most heated. In this way, no matter how mad you are, for at least a moment you can smile and let go of the upset. To make it easier for both of you, **use the most bizarre or humorous pattern interrupt you can devise.** Make it a private joke that can serve as your personal anchor.
4. When you feel resistance, **communicate it with softeners** such as, "I know it's only my idiosyncrasy, but when you do that, it makes me a tad peevisish."
5. Plan regular date nights together, preferably once a week, or at the minimum, two times a month. **Take turns surprising your partner** and dreaming up the most romantic and fun things to do.
6. Make sure you get a good, **wet kiss every day!**

These are your only assignments for today! Act upon them and enjoy them. I can promise you, the rewards are immeasurable. To make sure that we commit to constant and never-ending improvement (CAN!!) on a daily basis, let's develop an enjoyable plan in your . . .

# MASTER YOUR TIME & LIFE EXERCISE



**Your Outcome:** *Learn how to use time to your advantage rather than allowing it to rule your levels of satisfaction and stress.*

If you've ever felt stress—and who hasn't?—chances are excellent that it's because you felt you just didn't have enough time to do what you wanted to at the level of quality to which you were committed. You could be feeling this frustration, for example, because you're focusing exclusively on the demands of the moment: present requests, present challenges, and present events. In this stressed and overloaded state, your effectiveness is rapidly diminished. The solution is simple: **Take control of the timeframe you're focusing upon.** If the present is stressful, and then become more resourceful in dealing with your challenges by focusing on the future and the successful completion or resolution of the tasks before you. This new focus will instantly change your state and give you the very resources you need to turn things around in the present.

Stress is so often the result of feeling “stuck” in a particular timeframe. One example of this is when a person keeps thinking of their future in disempowering ways. You can help this person or yourself by getting them to refocus on what they can control in the present. Or some people, when they're called upon to take on a challenge, begin to focus exclusively on their past poor performance. As they remain in the past, their stress increases. A shift to the present, or an anticipation of a positive future, could instantly change their emotional state. Our emotions, then, are powerfully impacted by the timeframe in which we're operating at the moment.

**So often we forget that time is a mental construct, that it is completely relative, and that our experience of time is almost exclusively the result of our mental focus.** How long is a long time, for example? It all depends upon the situation, doesn't it? Standing in line for more than 10 minutes can seem like an eternity, while an hour of making love can pass all too quickly. Our beliefs also filter our perception of time. For some people, regardless of the situation, twenty minutes is a lifetime. For others, a long time is a century. Can you imagine how these people walk differently, talk differently, look at their goals differently, and how stressed they might be if they were trying to deal with one another while operating out of completely different frames of reference? This is why time mastery is a life skill. The ability to flex your experience of time is the ability to shape your experience of life. For today's exercises, let's briefly review and apply three “time-saving” tips.

## *I. THE ABILITY TO DISTORT TIME*

After you've mastered the ability to change time frames by changing your focus, you're ready to move on to the first major skill of time mastery, and that is the ability to distort time so that a minute feels like an hour, or an hour like a minute. Haven't you noticed that when you become totally engrossed in something, you lose track of time? Why? Because you no longer focus upon it. You make fewer measurements of it. You're focused on something enjoyable and, therefore, time passes more rapidly. Remember that you're in control. Direct your focus and consciously choose how to measure your time. If you are constantly checking your watch, then time seems to crawl. Once again, your experience of time is controlled by your focus. How do you define your use of time? Are you spending it, wasting it, or killing it? It's been said that "killing time is not murder; it's suicide."

## *II. A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE*

The second, and perhaps the most critical distinction of all, is an understanding of how urgency and importance control your decisions about what to do with your time, and therefore your level of personal fulfillment. What do I mean? Let me ask you this: Have you ever worked your tail off, completed every single thing on your to-do list, but at the end of the day still felt unfulfilled? That's because you did everything that was urgent and demanded your attention in the moment, but you didn't do what was important—the things that would make a difference long-term. Conversely, have you ever had days when you got only a few things done but at the end felt that this was a day that had really mattered? These are the days when you've focused on what's important rather than what urgently needed your attention. Urgency seems to control our lives. The phone rings, and we're doing something important, but we "have to" pick it up. After all, what if we missed out on something? This is a classic example of handling what's urgent—after all, you might miss out on a high-powered phone conversation with a computerized surveyor! On the other hand, we buy a book that we know can make a difference in our lives, yet put off reading it time and again because we "just can't squeeze it in" between opening the mail, filling the gas tank, and watching the news on TV. The only way to truly master your time is to organize your schedule each day to spend the majority of it doing things that are important rather than urgent.

## *III. SAVE YOURSELF YEARS*

**The most powerful way I've learned to compress time is to learn through other people's experience.** We can never truly master time as long as our primary strategy for learning and mastering our world is based upon trial and error. Modeling those who've already succeeded can save you years of pain. This is why I'm a voracious reader and a committed student of audio programs and seminars. I've always seen these experiences as necessities, not accessories, and they have given me the wisdom of decades of experience and the success that results from it. I challenge you to learn from other people's experiences as often as you can, and to utilize whatever you learn.

## Today's Assignment:

1. Throughout this day, begin to **explore changing time frames**. Whenever you're feeling the pressures of the present, stop and think about the future in ways that are empowering. For example, think of goals that compel you, and become fully associated to them. Visualize the image, listen to it, step into it and notice how it feels. Put yourself back into the midst of a treasured memory: your first kiss, the birth of your child, a special moment with a friend. The more you develop your capability to quickly change time frames, the greater your level of freedom and the range of emotions you will be able to create within your at a moment's notice. Do this enough until you truly know you can this change in focus to instantly change your state.
2. **Learn to deliberately distort time**. For something that normally seems to take a long time to complete, add another component that will not only speed up your perception of time, but allow you to accomplish two things at once. For example, when I'm running, I'll don a pair of headphones and listen to my favorite music. Or I'll watch the news or make phone calls while I'm on my Stairmaster. This means I'll never have an excuse not to exercise, or not to do what's important—I can work out while I return my calls.
3. Write a to-do list that **prioritizes according to importance** instead of urgency. Instead of writing down zillions of things to do and feeling like a failure at the end of the day, focus on what's most important for you to accomplish. If you do this, I can promise you that you'll feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that few experience.

*Discover how to boost your productivity and organize your time with [this special offer](#) from Tony Robbins!*



Secrets from:

# A LESSON IN DESTINY

(Part 4)

# THE SECRET TO LIVING IS GIVING



He knew he had to stop them. With a mere \$800 in his pocket, Sam LaBudde drove across the Mexican border, stood on the fishing docks of Ensenada, and waited for his opportunity. Toting a video camera to get some “home movies” of his excursion, he posed as a naive American tourist and offered his services as a deckhand or engineer to each captain who docked his boat in the harbor.

He was hired on the Maria Luisa as a temporary crew member, and as the Panamanian tuna boat pulled away from the Mexican coast, LaBudde began to secretly film the activities of the crew. He knew that if he were discovered his life would be in jeopardy.

Finally it happened: they were surrounded. A whole school of dolphins, known to many as “water people,” began jumping and chattering near the Maria Luisa. Their friendly nature had drawn them to the boat; little did they know that they were also being drawn to their death. The fishermen trailed the dolphins because they knew that yellowfin tuna usually swim below the playful creatures. With coldblooded calculation, they lay their nets in the path of the dolphins, not noticing or even caring what happened to them.

Over the course of five hours, LaBudde’s video recorded the horror. One after another, dolphins became entangled in the nets, unable to free themselves and come to the surface for the oxygen they needed to stay alive.

At one point the captain bellowed, “How many in the net!?” As LaBudde swung to capture the slaughter on video, he heard a crew member yell, “About fifty!” The captain ordered the crew to haul in their catch. Numerous dolphins lay strangled and lifeless on the slippery deck as the crew separated them from the tuna and discarded their sleek, gray bodies. Eventually, the corpses of these magnificent animals were tossed overboard as casually as sacks of garbage.

LaBudde’s footage gave clear-cut evidence of what others had claimed for years: that hundreds of dolphins were regularly being killed in a single day’s fishing expedition. In the previous 10 years alone, an estimated six million dolphins had been killed. Edited down to an 11-minute format, LaBudde’s video stunned viewers with the heart-wrenching reality of what we were doing to these intelligent and affectionate beings with whom we share our planet. One by one, outraged consumers across the nation stopped buying tuna, launching a boycott that only gained speed as media attention became more pointed.

Just four years after LaBudde first captured the tragedy on film, in 1991 the world’s largest tuna canner, Starkist, announced that it would no longer pack tuna caught in purse seine nets. Chicken of the Sea and Bumble Bee Foods followed suit, issuing similar statements just hours later. LaBudde’s day on the Maria Luisa has served as a catalyst for major reform in the American tuna industry, saving countless dolphin lives and undoubtedly helping to restore some balance to the marine ecosystem.

So many people feel powerless and insignificant when it comes to social issues and world events, thinking that even if they did everything right in their own personal lives, their welfare would still be at the mercy of the actions of others. They feel beset by the proliferation of gang warfare and violent crime, perplexed by massive government deficits, massive unemployment, saddened by homelessness and illiteracy, and overwhelmed by global warming and the relentless extinction of the other species that live on this planet. Such people fall into the mindset of thinking, “Even if I get my own life and the lives of my family in order, what good will it do? Some nut in a position of power could accidentally push the button and blow us all up anyway!” This kind of belief system fosters the feeling of being out of control and impotent to create change at any significant level, and naturally leads to the learned helplessness typified by the phrase, “Why even try?”

**Nothing could be more crippling to a person’s ability to take action than learned helplessness; it is the primary obstacle that prevents us from changing our lives or taking action to help other people change theirs.** If you’ve come this far in the book, you know without a doubt my central message: **you have the power right now to control how you think, how you feel, and what you do.** Perhaps for the first time you are empowered to take control of the Master System that has unconsciously guided you until this point. With the strategies and distinctions you’ve gained from reading and doing the exercises in this book, you have awakened to the conviction that you are truly the master of your fate, the director of your destiny.

Together we’ve discovered the giant power that shapes destiny—**decision**—and that our decisions about what to focus on, what things mean, and what to do are the decisions that will determine the quality of our present and future.

Now it’s time to address the power of **joint decisions** to shape the destiny of our community, our country, and our world. What will determine the quality of life for generations to come will be the collective decisions we make today about how to deal with such current challenges as widespread drug abuse, the imbalance of trade, ineffective public education, and the shortcomings of our prison system.

By fixating on everything that’s not working, we limit our focus to effects, and we neglect the causes of these problems. **We fail to recognize that it is the small decisions you and I make every day that create our destinies.** Remember that all decisions are followed by consequences. If we make our decisions unconsciously—that is, let other people or other factors in our environment do the thinking for us—and act without at least anticipating the potential effects, then we may be unwittingly perpetuating the problems we dread most. By trying to avoid pain in the short term, we often end up making decisions that create pain in the long term, and when we arrive further down the river we tell ourselves that the problems are permanent and unchangeable, that they come with the territory.

Probably the most pervasive false belief most of us harbor is the fallacy that only some superhuman act would have the power to turn our problems around. Nothing could be further from the truth. Life is cumulative. Whatever results we’re experiencing in our lives are the accumulation of a host of small decisions we’ve made as individuals, as a family, as a community, as a society, and as a species. The success or failure of our lives is usually not the result of one cataclysmic event or earth-shaking decision,

although sometimes it may look that way. Rather, success or failure is determined by the decisions we make and the actions we take every day.

By the same token, then, it is the daily decisions and actions of each one of us, taking responsibility on an individual level, that will truly make the difference in such matters as whether we are able to take care of our disadvantaged and whether we can learn to live in harmony with our environment. In order to bring about massive and far-reaching changes, both in our individual and joint destinies, it is necessary to commit ourselves to constant and never-ending improvement, to the discipline of CANI! Only in that way can we truly make a difference that will last in the long term.

# CHALLENGE: CONTRIBUTION



Once you've mastered the elements of this book, your ability to deal with your own challenges becomes a minor focus. What used to be difficult becomes easy. At this point, you'll find yourself redirecting your energies from concentrating primarily on yourself to improving what's happening in your family, your community, and possibly the world around you. The only way to do so with a lasting sense of fulfillment is through unselfish contribution—**because the secret to living is giving. So don't look for heroes; be one!** Here are some of the ways you can help. A small amount of time can make a big difference. Consider the possibility of committing a few hours a week or a few hours a month in one of the following areas within your community:

- Programs for the mentally and physically disabled
- Voter registration
- Energy conservation
- Park maintenance
- Big Brother/Big Sister programs
- Emergency aid
- Volunteering at a local soup kitchen

Another exciting opportunity for you to contribute is to work with me through the Anthony Robbins Foundation. We are a nonprofit organization formed to create a coalition of caring professionals who have committed to consistently reach and assist people who are often forgotten by society. We are aggressively working to make a difference in the quality of life for children, the homeless, the hungry, the prison population, and the elderly.

If you'd like to join forces with us, consider joining our volunteer program, which has a variety of opportunities to choose from, including [Youth Leadership](#), fundraising, and the [Basket Brigade](#). Throughout the year, our Basket Brigade's volunteers deliver food, clothing, and hope to those who need it most—all based on a simple notion: that one small act of generosity can transform the lives of many. What began as my individual effort to feed families in need has now grown into a force for good that impacts the lives of two million people every year, in countries all over the world.

And remember, you don't have to take the weight of the world on your shoulders! **More people would contribute if they realized that they didn't have to give anything up to do so. So do a little, and know that it can mean a lot.**

*Do you want to create an immediate impact on the lives of Americans affected by hunger? For every person who attends [Unleash the Power Within](#) featuring Tony Robbins LIVE, we will donate 80 meals to Feeding America.*

*Create your next breakthrough. Transform the quality of your health, wealth, and relationships. Set the course for the life you desire and deserve. At our [Unleash the Power Within](#) event, one weekend can change everything! [Click here to learn more.](#)*