

# **Shift Into a Higher Gear**

# **What's in it for me? Learn how to shift your life into a higher gear.**

Delatorro McNeal II isn't your typical motivational speaker. When he gives a talk, he doesn't just walk out onto the stage. He brings his motorcycle with him. But it's more than just an unusual prop. It's a powerful symbol. Motorcycling has changed his outlook on life, and it's provided him with a lucid metaphor for understanding how to navigate challenges, achieve personal and professional growth, and accomplish goals and dreams. Do you feel like you've stalled out, gone into reverse, or gotten stuck in a low-speed gear? Do you wish you were moving faster, going farther, and getting more out of the ride of your life? Then climb on board, hang on tight, and get ready to shift into a higher gear! In these blinks, you'll learn

the difference between shifting and leaping; which riding partners you need to add to your posse; and how to steer your life in the direction you want to go.

## **Make sure you're facing life in the right direction - with the past behind you and the future in front of you.**

Imagine you've got a motorcycle and you want to take it for a ride. You put on your helmet, zip up your jacket, and mount your bike. You're ready to hit the road - except for one little problem: you're sitting backward! The rear wheel is in front of you, and the handlebar is behind you. Of course, you wouldn't actually do that. Even if you've never ridden a motorcycle, you know the right way to sit on one. Your body should be facing the front of the bike. Pretty obvious, right? But obvious as it might be, many of us are, in fact, sitting on the motorcycle of life backward, metaphorically speaking. And that brings us to one of the first things you've got to do to shift into a higher gear. The key message here is: Make sure you're facing life in the right direction - with the past behind you and the future in front of you. Most motorcycles are rear-wheel drive. The engine's power goes to the back wheel - spinning it to make the bike go forward. Meanwhile, the front wheel rotates freely and can be turned in different directions, allowing you to steer the bike. If you think of a motorcycle as a metaphorical representation of your life, the rear wheel is your past: the skills, knowledge, and lessons you've learned from previous experiences. By leveraging the gifts you've gained from the past, you can move forward in the present. But where are you going? That brings us to the other end of the bike: the front wheel, which is your vision for the future - the goals and dreams that give you direction in life. Unfortunately, many of us lose sight of our vision for the future and become preoccupied with the past. We idealize the "good ol' days" and tell ourselves our best times are behind us. Or we dwell on our mistakes, failures, and perceived shortcomings, like not having the "right" credentials to succeed. Either way, we end up trapping ourselves in backward-looking, self-limiting mindsets, attitudes, and beliefs. Fixating on the past, we see it as something that disqualifies us from achieving our desired future. The solution? Turn around. Look ahead. Focus on the vision of the future in front of you, and let that be the wheel that steers you. Keep your past where it belongs: behind you, propelling you forward.

# **Overcome your excuses and fears through cognitive reframing and faith.**

Of course, letting go of backward-looking, self-limiting beliefs and adopting a more forward-looking, self-empowering mindset is easier said than done. How do you actually do it? One simple but powerful technique is to practice cognitive reframing. That means taking a negative belief and recasting it in a positive way. Let's say you think you're too old to start a new career. You could reframe that belief by reminding yourself that you've got a wealth of life experience, which will enable you to start a new career more wisely than younger folks. The truth is that beliefs like "I'm too old" are really just excuses. They're ways of justifying why we don't pursue our dreams. But why are we so keen to hold ourselves back in the first place? The answer comes down to a single word: fear. The antidote? Another word: faith. Here's the key message: Overcome your excuses and fears through cognitive reframing and faith. Pursuing a personal or professional goal is an inherently risky endeavor. If you try to start a romantic relationship, you might be rejected. If you try to start a business, it might fail. Of course, many of us fear things like failure and rejection deeply. That makes us want to avoid them – and what better way to do that than to avoid the things that might lead us to experience them? Giving up before we've even tried feels like the safer option, so we start looking for excuses to give in to our fear. It's all too easy to fall into this trap, but here's the good news: Only two fears are biologically hardwired into us – the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises. The rest have been programmed into us by life experiences and the society around us. And that means they can be resisted by counter-programming. This is another place where cognitive reframing can be useful. Afraid you can't succeed because you have only \$500 in your bank account? Remind yourself you've got a million-dollar business idea in your head! But for this to work, you can't just say it to yourself. You need to believe it. In other words, you have to have faith in your idea, just like you do in your talents, mentors, and all the other people and things on which your success depends.

## **Shift your life by making small, steady changes.**

Let's go back to our motorcycle of life metaphor. We've looked at the front and rear wheels. Now we can add another component: the kickstand. On a motorcycle, the kickstand not only keeps the vehicle upright when it's parked; when the kickstand is down, it also prevents the engine from starting – a safety feature meant to avert accidental ignitions. To turn on a motorcycle, you've got to show the bike you're ready to ride by putting up the kickstand. So what's the kickstand on your metaphorical motorcycle of life? It's your fears and excuses. They keep you safe – but they also keep you from going anywhere. With the power of cognitive reframing and faith, you know how to put up your metaphorical motorcycle's kickstand. Now it's time to rev up your engine and move forward – which brings us to our next topic: shifting. The key message is this: Shift your life by making small, steady changes. Assuming you're an ambitious person, you probably have some pretty big goals you want to achieve – projects, promotions, business ventures, fitness targets, or whatever the case may be. You also probably want to accomplish those big goals as quickly as possible. As a result, it might seem like you have to make equally big and rapid changes in your life to be successful.

But think of all those people who try to lose weight by making a sudden, drastic change in their diet. It usually doesn't work out. And that's because massive, drastic changes are rarely sustainable. People might keep them up for a few days or weeks, but then they get worn out, give up, and go back to their old ways. Then they're right back where they started. You can avoid this common mistake by trying to shift your habits, behaviors, and performance, rather than trying to leap to whole new levels in one bound. That means making small but steady changes. Instead of trying to become 100 percent better at something overnight, try to get one percent better at it every day. Imagine getting just one percent better at managing your money, working with your colleagues, taking care of your body, understanding your target audience, or parenting your kids. Pretty manageable, right? And now imagine doing that consistently, day after day. At first, it won't seem like much, but over time, it will add up to a major transformation.

## **Don't live your life in park, neutral, or reverse.**

Even if you've never ridden a motorcycle, you're probably familiar with the basic idea of shifting gears on a vehicle. In cars with automatic transmissions, there are four gears you can shift among: park, neutral, reverse, and drive. Metaphorically speaking, many of us live our lives in one of the first three gears. Some of us are coasting along the road in neutral – just going through the motions and doing the same old things in the same old ways through sheer inertia. Some of us have pulled over to the side of the road and shifted into park – completely giving up and coming to a standstill. And some of us are stuck in reverse – endlessly replaying the past, repeating patterns of behavior we developed years ago, and still feeling pain from old wounds that never healed. Each of these gears is unhealthy and unproductive. It's time to shift out of them. The key message here is: Don't live your life in park, neutral, or reverse. When you're living in neutral, you're disengaged from one or more areas of life, like your career, business, finances, family, health, or overall well-being. As a result, you only accomplish and enjoy things to a fraction of the degree you're capable of. That's hardly a recipe for happiness or success. When you're living in park, you're essentially letting yourself atrophy. If you leave a car, motorcycle, or any other vehicle parked in the same place for too long, the parts start to get damaged from lack of use. The battery drains, the tires lose pressure, and so on. A similar thing happens to your body and mind. They also start to fall apart if you don't use them enough. Finally, when you're living in reverse, you're doing something that's just plain pointless. The past is past; you cannot change it, so there's no use dwelling on it. Sure, you can and should learn and grow from it, but ultimately, you've also got to move on from it. If you're dealing with personal issues that go back many years, that may require a lot of healing. Often, that entails forgiving someone – either another person, for hurting you in some way, or yourself, for making some sort of mistake. In any case, seek out and practice the self-care, forgiveness, or therapy you need to shift out of reverse and shift into drive – the gear we'll look at next.

## **Shift into drive, and harness the power of your emotions.**

Have you ever seen a motorcycle driving backward? Probably not – and that's because

most motorcycles don't even have a reverse gear. If you want to back up, you've got to do it manually, with your feet. A motorcycle only "knows" how to move forward. You put up the kickstand, turn on the engine, and shift into first gear. From that point on, you're always in some form of "drive" - shifting into higher and higher gears as you speed up. Ready to stop living like a car stuck in park, reverse, or neutral? Ready to start living like a motorcycle that's always in drive? Ready to roll the throttle on your life and rev up your engine to the max? Then get ready for another metaphor, because now it's time to look at your engine - the thing that gets you moving. Here's the key message: Shift into drive, and harness the power of your emotions. When you're living in drive, you're moving forward with your goals, nurturing your relationships, growing as a person, and putting in the effort to improve in all these areas. This state of being comes with a slew of positive emotions. You feel energized, focused, productive, strong, and confident. But these emotions aren't just a nice side effect; they power you forward. And that's because on the motorcycle of life, your emotions are the metaphorical engine. To put that into more scientific language, your emotions are electrochemical signals in your brain that are trying to tell you something - not just for the heck of it, but so you'll do something about it. For example, if you're feeling upset, that's a signal that something is wrong in your life. To overcome the emotion, you've got to fix the problem that's causing it. If you look at it this way, any emotion - even a negative one - is a potentially useful piece of information that can provide you with guidance, as long as you interpret it and respond to it wisely. Negative emotions are inevitable, and feeling them can be healthy. But some of us feel them far too often. They become our default emotional states. No matter what happens in our lives, we find a way of feeling angry, resentful, fearful, or some other negative emotion about it. If that sounds like you, ask yourself to name the top five emotions to which you usually gravitate. What five emotions would you prefer to be drawn to? And what sort of shifts can you make to start feeling more of them? Keep seeking them out, keep returning to them, and they'll eventually become your new default.

## **See things both as they are and as they could be - and then work to shift potential to reality.**

Imagine you're on a motorcycle once again. This time, you're sitting on it the right way, and you know all about putting up the kickstand and shifting into drive. Now you're really ready to hit the road, right? Well, there's one more little problem: the weather is cold and rainy. It's not going to be the idyllic ride you might have been envisioning. Now, in a car, that's no big deal. The cabin shields you from the environment. But on a motorcycle, you're exposed to the elements - rain, snow, dust, wind, heat, cold, or whatever there might be. To ride a motorcycle, you've got to take your environment into account and drive accordingly. The same is true of life: You've got to accept things the way they are and roll with them, even when they leave a lot to be desired. But that doesn't mean doing nothing about them - it's just the opposite! The key message is this: See things both as they are and as they could be - and then work to shift potential to reality. There's a lot of value in positive thinking and optimism, but it can also be self-limiting if you're always seeing everything through rose-colored glasses. You can't solve your problems if you don't acknowledge you have them. For example, if you want to do something about your credit card debt, you've got to take a cold, hard look at your finances - breaking down the numbers and seeing where your money is going, rather



than pretending everything is fine. But there's more to a problem than meets the eye. Everything has two sides: the way it is, and the way it could be. You've got to see the hidden potential in things. On the outside, you might see a lousy rental property you wish you hadn't purchased – but beneath the surface, there's also a house just waiting to be renovated into a winning real estate investment. Don't just see the problem. See the better house, better relationship, better grades, finances, mental health, career, or whatever it is you want to improve. And then improve it. Don't just visualize the change and hope it magically materializes. And don't just complain about how you wish things were better. Do something about it – whether that's making a budget, joining a gym, or taking some other meaningful and manageable step toward shifting your situation in the direction you want to go.

## **Make sure you're leaning in the right direction, with a “posse” supporting you.**

To get where you want to go, you've got to make sure you're heading in the right direction. If you're driving a car, that's a pretty easy task. Want to head left? Just turn the steering wheel that way. But on a motorcycle, it's a much bigger effort. You've got to lean your whole body and shift your weight in the direction you want to turn. And if you're riding with someone sitting behind you, it's also a team effort. If you lean left, your riding partner has to lean left as well. Otherwise, you could end up crashing. The same lessons apply to achieving our goals and dreams. Steering your life in the direction you want to go is all about where you're putting your weight – and whether you've got a posse of riding partners who are leaning in sync with you. The key message here is: Make sure you're leaning in the right direction, with a “posse” supporting you. On the metaphorical motorcycle of life, your weight is your time and effort. Wherever you shift your weight is where you'll end up going. If you want to improve something in your life, you've got to invest more time and effort in it. Want a better family life? Schedule more outings together. Want to improve your health? Go to the gym more often. Want to build your business? Cultivate deeper relationships with your customers. Don't just let your ideas float around in your head. Write them down, find some mentors who can provide you with guidance on how to execute them, and then dive in. In addition to mentors, it can also help to find some mates. These are people who are at similar stages of the journey you're undertaking, and who can provide you with a sense of camaraderie and support. They can also be your accountability partners, checking in on your progress and keeping you on track with losing weight, writing a book, starting a business, or doing whatever it is you want to do. Finally, pay all that support forward by finding some mentees – people at an earlier stage of your journey, to whom you can be a mentor. In teaching them, you'll also be learning many valuable lessons yourself, as you review your past experiences and distill them into wisdom you can impart to others. Put all of these types of people together, and you've got a posse that can help you steer in the direction you want to go. Remember: You're the driver at the helm of the motorcycle that is your life – but you don't have to ride alone!

## **Final summary**

The key message in these blinks: Think of your life as a motorcycle, and make sure

you're sitting on it the right way - facing forward, with the past behind you and your vision of the future in front of you. Put up the kickstand of fear and excuses; get out of park, reverse, or neutral; and shift into a higher and higher gear by making small, steady changes in your life. Tap into the power of the emotions you want as your engine, lean into the direction you want to travel, and get a posse to join you on your journey. Actionable advice: Form a mastermind group. "Two heads are better than one," goes an old saying. Well, do you know what's even better than two heads? Three or more! Instead of just finding one accountability partner, put together a mastermind group of about four other people with common goals, like investing, losing weight, or parenting. Meet on a regular basis, and act as accountability partners, mentors, and mates to each other.