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Introduction "If you think you can you're right, if you think you can't you're right" Henry Ford Look around you. What do you see? Look at your surroundings, the atmosphere, and the people around you. Think of your current life conditions: work, health, friends, people surrounding you. What do they look like? Are you happy with what you see? Now look inside of you. How do you feel RIGHT NOW in this moment? Are you satisfied with your life? Are you longing for more? Do you believe that you can be happy and successful? What is missing from your life that you need to call your life happy and/or successful? Why do some people seem to have everything and other people nothing? Most people have no idea how they get what they get. Some of us just blame it on fate and chance. I'm sorry that I have to be the one to tell you: "Sorry friend! You have created the life you have! Everything that happens to you is created by YOU - either consciously by design or unconsciously by default; it's not a result of fate or circumstances. I decided to write this book because I'm seeing so many people that are dreaming of improving their life, being happier, becoming wealthier yet according to them, the only way that could happen would be due to some kind of miracle: winning the lottery, marrying rich, or some other stroke of luck. They are looking for outside influences to happen by chance and change everything. They think life happens to them. Most of them have no idea that they can be in total control of their life each and every moment and every day of their lives. So they continue daydreaming, doing those things that they've always done, and waiting for some miraculous outcome. Sometimes they actually don't even know what they want! The following is a conversation I actually had:

Q:"What would you do if you had enough time and money?" A:"Man! That would be great! I would be happy!"

Q:"And what would 'being happy' look like to you?" A:"I would do everything I want to do!" Q:"And what is 'everything you want to do'?" A:"Oh! Now you got me. I don't even know!"

The true tragedy is that if they would only stop for one moment, ask themselves what they really want in life, write down their goals and start working towards them, they could actually make those miracles happen. I see it day in and day out with my coaching clients: people that come to me because they want to change something in their lives, and instead of sitting around and waiting and dreaming of a better life, they actually take matters in their own hands and start taking action! And the results are fabulous! Remember: You are leading the life that you have chosen! How? This is because we create our life every moment through our thoughts, beliefs, and expectations and our mind is so powerful that it will give us what we ask for. The good thing is that you can train your mind to give you only the things you want, and not the things that you don't want! And it gets even better: you can learn how to deal with things that you can't control in a more efficient and less painful manner. I've been studying the principles of success and how to achieve happiness for nearly 25 years now. What I always subconsciously knew became a structured method using the tools and

exercises of coaching. More than ever, I'm convinced that success can be planned and created. For the skeptics who think that all this is metaphysical nonsense, just look at the enormous progress science has made and how it can now prove many things which only 25 years ago could only be believed without being proven. The most important message in this little book is: Your happiness depends of YOU, and nobody else! In this book, I want to introduce you to some proven tips, tricks and exercises that can improve your life beyond your imagination if you practice them constantly and persistently. More good news: You don't need to win the lottery to be happy! You can start by doing little things in your life differently in a constant and consistent manner, and over time results will show. This is how my coaching clients achieve incredible results: creating new habits and working towards their goals consistently, and doing things that bring them closer to their goals every single day. It is possible! You can do it! You deserve it! Simply reading the book won't help you a lot, though. You have to take ACTION! That's the most important part – (and it is also the part that I struggled with the most for many, many years). You have to start doing and practicing the exercises and introducing new habits into your life. If you are very curious - read the whole book once with a pen or pencil and a notebook in hand to make notes if you like. Then read the book a second time – this is when the rubber meets the road – and now start doing some of the exercises and introducing new habits into your life. If you do the exercises in this book regularly and consistently, your life will change for the better! Experts in the field of success teachings, coaching and Neurolinguistic Programming agree that it takes 21 to 30 days to implement a new habit. 30 days that can make a difference in your life. 30 days of working consistently on yourself and your habits can turn it all around – or at least put you in a better position. At least try it out! Stay with some of the exercises for at least 30 days. Do the ones that come easy to you. If it doesn't work out for you, write me an email with your complaint to marc@marcreklau.com I have also provided some WORK SHEETS on my homepage. Download them and HAVE FUN!

Chapter 1: Rewrite your story “Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change” Wayne W. Dyer The first time I came in contact with this idea was nearly 25 years ago while reading Jane Robert's book “Seth speaks”. Seth says you are the writer, director and main actor of your story. So if you don't like how the story is playing out...change it! At that time I thought it's kind of a comforting idea, gave it a try, and have lived by it ever since - in good times and bad times. It doesn't matter what happened in your past. Your future is a clean sheet! You can reinvent yourself! Every day brings with it the opportunity to start a new life! You get to choose your identity at each and every moment! So who are you going to be? It's up to you to decide who you are going to be from this day on. What are you going to do? If you DO some of the things suggested in this book, create new habits, and do just some of the many exercises that you will find here, things will start to shift. It's not going to be easy and you will need discipline, patience, and persistence. But the results will come. In 2008, when FC Barcelona's coach Josep “Pep” Guardiola took charge of the team that was in a desolate state, he told the 73000 people in attendance in the stadium and the millions of viewers on Catalan television, in his inauguration speech: “We can't promise you titles, what we can promise you is effort and that we will persist, persist, persist until the end. Fasten your seatbelts - we are going to have fun”. This speech started the most successful period in the 115 years history of the club and few people think it can ever be repeated. The team went on to win 3 national championships, 2 national cups, 3 Spanish Supercups, 2 European Supercups, 2 Champions Leagues, and 2 World Club Championships in their 4 years of domination of World football. (If you don't follow soccer: This is like a mediocre NFL team winning 4 Superbowls in a row). They rewrote their story. Now it's your turn. Make some effort and persist, persist, persist! Don't give up! Fasten your seatbelts and have some fun! Chapter 2: Self-Discipline and Commitment “It was character that got us out of bed, commitment that moved us into action and discipline that enabled us to follow through.” Zig Ziglar “If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.” Napoleon Hill This is one of the first chapters, because it will be the foundation of your future success! Your way to success and happiness is deeply connected to your willpower and commitment. These character traits will decide whether you do what you said you would do and go through with it. These will keep you going towards your goals even when everything seems to go against you. Self-

discipline is doing the things you need to do, even if you are not in the mood for it. If you train to be self-disciplined and have the will to succeed, you can do great things in your life. But even if you don't have the slightest bit of self-discipline within you right now - don't worry. You can start training your self-discipline and willpower from this moment on! Self-discipline is like a muscle. The more you train it, the better you get. If your self-discipline is weak right now, start training it by setting yourself small, reachable goals. Write down the success you have and keep in mind that you don't have limits - only the ones you set for yourself. Visualize the benefits you will have at the end of the road: For example if you want to go running at 6 a.m. in the morning and you just don't seem to make it out of bed - imagine how good you will feel when you are at the fitness level that you want to be at and how great you will look. Then jump out of bed, put on your running clothes, and go! Remember: This book will only work if you have the will and the discipline to make it work! What is your word worth? Take your commitments seriously! Because not keeping your commitments has a terrible consequence: you lose energy, you lose clarity, you get confused along the way to your goals, and even worse you lose self-confidence, and your self-esteem takes a hit! To avoid this, you have to become aware of what is really important to you and act in line with your values. A commitment is a choice! Only make commitments that you really want. That can mean fewer commitments and more "NOs". If you commit - keep your commitment whatever it takes. Give them the importance and value that they deserve and be aware of the consequences of not keeping them. Time to take action! Ask yourself the following questions: In what areas are you lacking self-discipline at the moment? Be completely honest. What benefits will you obtain if you had more self-discipline? What will be your first step towards reaching your goal? Write down your plan of action in small steps. Give yourself deadlines. How will you know you've reached your goal of having more selfdiscipline in _____?

Chapter 3: Take full responsibility for your life! "Peak performance begins with your taking complete responsibility for your life and everything that happens to you." Brian Tracy "Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility." Sigmund Freud There is only one person that's responsible for your life and that is YOU! Not your boss, not your spouse, not your parents, not your friends, not your clients, not the economy, not the weather. YOU! The day we stop blaming others for everything that happens in our life, everything changes! Taking responsibility for your life is taking charge of your life and becoming the protagonist of it. Instead of being a victim of circumstances, you obtain the power to create your own circumstances or at least the power to decide how you are going to act in the face of circumstances that life presents to you. It doesn't matter what happens to you in your life; it matters what attitude you adopt. And the attitude you adopt is your choice! If you blame your life situation on others, what has to happen to make your life better? All of the others have to change! And that my friend I tell you, is not going to happen. If you are the protagonist, YOU have the power to change the things that you don't like in your life! You are in control of your thoughts, actions, and feelings. You are in control of your words, the series you watch on TV, and the people you spend your time with. If you don't like your results, change your input - your thoughts, emotions, and expectations. Stop reacting to others and start responding. Reaction is automatic. Responding is consciously choosing your response. You take your life in your own hands, and what happens? A terrible thing: no one to blame - Erica Jong The victim says: Every bad thing in my life is others' fault, but if you are not part of the problem, then you also can't be a part of the solution or - in other words - if the problem is caused by the outside, the solution is also on the outside. If you're coming in late to work because of "traffic", what has to happen so that you can get to work on time? Traffic has to disappear magically! Because as long as there is traffic - you will always be late. Or you can act like a protagonist and leave home on time. Then it depends on you. So once again: even if you don't have control over the stimuli that environment sends you continuously, you have the liberty to choose your behavior in facing the situation. The person with a "victim mentality" only reacts, is always innocent, and constantly blames others for his or her life situation, while using the past as justification and putting their hopes on a future which will miraculously bring solutions to problems or a change in others who are causing the troubles. The protagonist knows

that he or she is responsible, chooses adequate behavior and holds himself accountable. He uses the past as a valuable experience from which to learn, lives in the present where he sees constant opportunities for change, and decides and goes after his future goals. The most important question is: "Who will you choose to be – by your actions – when life presents you with these circumstances?" Gandhi said it very nicely: "They can't take away our self-respect if we don't give it to them." Ask yourself the following questions: Who are you blaming for your life situation right now? (Your partner? Your boss? Your parents? Your friends?) What would happen if you stopped blaming the others for what happens to you in your life? What would happen if you would stop being a victim of the circumstances? Is it comfortable for you being the victim? What benefits does it have for you to be a victim? What would happen if you stopped suffering in your life and took the decision to change it? What would you change? Where could you start? How would you start? Action Step: Write down five things that you can do in the coming week to start changing the course and start taking charge of your life.

Chapter 4: Choices and Decisions "Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen." Ralph Waldo Emerson Maybe you have heard that your life is the result of the decisions you made. How do you feel about that? Is this true for you? It's important that from now on, you are aware of the power you have over your life by making decisions! Every decision, every choice has an important influence on your life. In fact, your life is a direct result of the choices and decisions you made in the past and every choice carries a consequence! Start making better choices. Remember that you choose your thoughts and even your feelings. The most important thing is to make decisions. Whether the decision is right or wrong is secondary. You will soon receive feedback that will help you to progress. Once you have made a decision, go with it and take the consequences. If it was wrong, learn from it and forgive yourself knowing that at that point in time and with the knowledge you had, it was the best and the right decision to take. YOUR ATTITUDE + YOUR DECISIONS = YOUR LIFE Victor Frankl was a Jewish psychologist imprisoned in Germany's concentration camps during the Second World War. He lost his entire family except his sister. Under these terrible circumstances, he became aware of what he named "the ultimate human freedom", which not even the Nazi prison wards could take away from him: they could control his external circumstances, but in the last instance it was him who CHOSE HOW these circumstances were going to affect him! He found out that between STIMULUS and RESPONSE there was a small space in time in which he had the freedom to CHOOSE his RESPONSE! This means that even if you may not be able to control the circumstances that life presents to you, you can always choose your response in facing those circumstances, and by doing so have a huge impact on your life. In other words, what hurts us is not what happens to us, but our response to what happens to us. The most important thing is how we RESPOND to what happens to us in our lives. And that is a CHOICE! Do you want to be healthier? Make better choices about food and exercise. Do you want to be more successful? Make better decisions about who you surround yourself with, what you read, and what you watch. There are no excuses! Forgive me if I make the assumption that your life situation is not worse than Victor Frankl's when he made this discovery: for me being a Jew in a German concentration camp in WW2 is as bad as it gets. Questions to ask yourself: What decisions could you make today to start change? Will you choose to be more flexible? More positive? Healthier? Happier? Action Steps: 1) Write down at least three changes that you want to make today: 1

_____ 2 _____
3 _____ 2) Read Viktor Frankl's book "Man in search of meaning".

Chapter 5: Choose your thoughts "The universe is change; our life is what our thoughts make it." Marcus Aurelius "You are today where your thoughts have brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you." James Allen If you want to improve your life, the first thing you have to do is improve your thoughts. Your thoughts create your reality so you better have them under control! By controlling your thoughts, ultimately you control your life and your destiny. So observe your thoughts every now and then. Peace Pilgrim's quote "If you realized how powerful your thoughts are, you would never think a negative thought." says it all: don't get stuck in negative thoughts. Replace them with positive thoughts such as "everything is going to be all right" every single time they

come up. Think positive! A positively thinking person is not a dreamer, who thinks there are no problems in life. Instead he or she recognizes that problems are opportunities to grow, and knows that they only have the meaning that they are given. Positive thinking is to see reality as it is, accept it, and make the best of it. Don't let your thoughts dominate you, instead dominate your thoughts and control their quality. Train your mind to concentrate only on positive, creative, and inspiring thoughts. If you train your mind like this for a while you will see that the circumstances of your life change too. You are the creator of your thoughts, but you are not your thoughts. Your thoughts are energy and the energy follows the thought. Thoughts create emotions, which create behavior, which create actions, and those actions have consequences in your daily life. **THOUGHT EMOTION BEHAVIOR ACTION** Your thoughts depend on your beliefs about life. If you don't like what you are receiving then have a look at what you are sending! Everything that is in your life has been created by your thoughts, expectations, and beliefs. So analyze them! If you change your beliefs, you will get new results! Practice a thought often enough so that it becomes a belief, and your behavior and actions will follow its lead. For instance, if you constantly worry about not having enough money, you'll create behaviors based on fear. You'll play smaller. You'll try to hang on to the money you have versus playing to win. Action Step: Try to have no negative thoughts for 48 hours. Block them from the first moment and substitute them with positive thoughts of love, peace, and compassion. Even if it seems difficult at the beginning, hang in there. It gets easier. Then try this for 5 days, and finally a week. What has changed in your life since you started thinking positively? Chapter 6: What do you believe? "These then are my last words to you. Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living and your belief will help create the fact." William James "The outer conditions of a person's life will always be found to reflect their inner beliefs" James Allen What do you believe? This is extremely important, because ultimately your beliefs create your reality! You create what you believe and your world is only your interpretation of the reality. In other words, we don't see the world how it is, but how we were conditioned to see it. Our perception is only an approximation of reality. Our maps of reality determine the way we act more than reality itself. Each one of us sees the world through the lenses of their own beliefs. Does this sound like hocus-pocus to you? It did to me too until I studied two semesters of Psychology at my High School and learned about the Placebo Effect, The Pygmalion Effect, and SelfFulfilling prophecies. Studies on these subjects out there show how powerful our thoughts and beliefs really are! But what is a belief? It's the conscious and unconscious information that we accept as true. Robert Dilts defines beliefs as judgments and assessments about ourselves, others, and the world around us. A belief is a habitual thought pattern. Once a person believes something is true (whether it's true or not) he or she acts as if it were - collecting facts to prove the belief even if it's false. Beliefs are like a self-fulfilling prophecy. They work like this: your beliefs influence your emotions, your emotions influence your actions and your actions influence your RESULTS! Depending on your belief-system you live your life one way or another. I want you to realize that life doesn't just happen to you! It's a reflection of your beliefs, thoughts, and expectations. If you want to change your life you have to first change your patterns of thinking. Even if beliefs come from early childhood programming for most of us, we are able to change them. Nobody can impose your beliefs on you. It's always you who in the last instance can permit a belief to be true for you or not! Believing in yourself is an attitude. It's a choice! Remember what Henry Ford said! If you think that you won't make it, if you think that it's impossible, then you will not achieve it even if your effort is huge. For many decades it was thought impossible that man could run a mile under four minutes. There were even scientific papers and studies on the subject. These studies could all be shredded on May 6th 1954, when Roger Bannister proved everybody wrong at a race in Oxford. From then on over a 1000 people have done it. I highly recommend that you let go of limiting beliefs such as: • One can't be totally happy as there is always something that goes wrong. • Life is tough. • Showing emotions is for weak people. • Opportunity only knocks once. • I'm helpless and have no control over my life. • I don't deserve it. • Nobody loves me. • I can't. • It's impossible. • And pick up some empowering beliefs such as: • I create my destiny. • Nobody can hurt me if I don't allow it. • Life is great! • Everything happens for a reason. • Everything is going to be all right. • I can do it! Ask yourself the following questions: What do I believe to be true about myself? What are my beliefs concerning money? What are my beliefs concerning my relationships? What are

my beliefs about my body? To change a belief follow this exercise and say to yourself: 1) This is only my belief about reality. That doesn't mean that it is the reality. 2) Although I believe this, it's not necessarily true. 3) Create emotions which are opposite to the belief. 4) Imagine the opposite. 5) Be aware that the belief is only an idea that you have about reality and not reality itself. 6) For just 10 minutes a day ignore what seems to be real and act as if your wish has come true. (See yourself spending money, being healthy, more successful, etc.) Alternative exercise: 1) Write down the limiting belief. 2) Remember the sequence: belief – emotion – action – result. 3) To get a different result – in what way do you need to act? 4) How do you need to feel in order to act differently and get a different result? 5) What do you need to believe in order to feel differently, act differently, and get a different result?

Chapter 7: The Importance of your Attitude “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances” Victor Frankl Your Attitude is crucial for your happiness! It can change your way of seeing things dramatically and also your way of facing them. You will suffer less in life if you accept the rules of the game. Life is made up of laughter and tears, light and shadow. You have to accept the bad moments by changing your way of looking at them. Everything that happens to you is a challenge and an opportunity at the same time. Look at the positive side of things in life even in the worst situations. There is something good hidden in every bad – although sometimes it might take some time to discover it. I'll tell you again: it's not what happens in your life that's important; it's how you respond to what happens to you that makes your life! Life is a chain of moments – some happy, some sad - and it depends on you to make the best of each and every one of those moments. Did your wife leave you? So will you be unhappy forever or will you go out and meet new people? Losing your job might open new doors. Many years ago all of the success teachers and positive thinkers described it this way: “If life gives you a lemon, add sugar to it, and make lemonade out of it”. Younger readers might say that “If life gives you a lemon, ask for some salt and Tequila”. You get the point, don't you? For example, some healthy attitudes are:

- Allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Admit that there are things you don't know.
- Dare asking for help and let other people help you.
- Differentiate between what you have done in your life until now and what you want to do or better still, will do from now on!

Action Step: Think of a negative situation and turn it around.

Chapter 8: Perspective is everything “The optimist sees the donut, the pessimist sees the hole.” Oscar Wilde “A pessimist is somebody who complains about the noise when opportunity knocks.” Oscar Wilde William Shakespeare said “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so”. Put things into perspective! The closer you are to the problem and the more in front of it, the less you see. Step back and get a more global view of it. Understand how you feel faced with the problem and evaluate the real importance of it. Even seeing the problem as a challenge will be helpful! Every negative experience in your life has something good in it - search for it! If you get into the habit of always searching for the good in every situation you will change the quality of your life drastically. Experiences themselves are neutral until we start to give them meaning. Your vision of the world and your perspective “decide” if something is “good” or “bad”. What may be a great tragedy to you could be a wakeup call for me to take my life into my hands and thrive. In coaching we use what is called “Reframing” to change the perspective that a client has of an event. One of my favorites is changing “Failure” to “Feedback” or “Learning experience”. How do you feel if you say “I failed terribly in my last relationship”? Now try saying “I learned so much from my last relationship, I'm sure I will not make the same mistakes again!” Can you feel the difference? Here are some more examples of reframing: Action Step: Write down at least five situations in your life that you thought were negative, however with time you clearly saw that you got something good out of it.

Chapter 9: Have patience and never ever give up! “Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time” Thomas Alva Edison “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” Winston Churchill Perseverance is more important than talent, intelligence, and strategy. There is great virtue in never giving up. When life doesn't go according to plan, keep moving forward, no matter how small your steps are. The top two habits that will decide between success and failure, between real change and staying in the same place are patience and perseverance. It's highly possible that before success comes, there may be some obstacles in your path. If your plans don't work out see it as a temporary defeat, and not as a

permanent failure. Come up with a new plan and try again. If the new plan doesn't work out either, change it, adapt it until it works. This is the point at which most people give up: They lack patience and persistence in working out new plans! But watch out. Don't confuse this with persistently pursuing a plan that doesn't work! If something doesn't work...change it! Persistence means persistence toward achieving your goal. When you encounter obstacles - have patience. When you experience setback - have patience. When things are not happening - have patience. Don't throw your goal away at the first sign of misfortune or opposition. Think of Thomas Edison and his ten thousand attempts to make the light bulb. Fail towards success like he did! Persistence is a state of mind. Cultivate it. If you fall down, get up, shake off the dust, and keep on moving towards your goal. The habit of persistence is built as follows: 1. Have a clear goal and the burning desire to achieve it. 2. Make a clear plan and act on it with daily action steps. 3. Be immune to all negative and discouraging influences. 4. Have a support system of one or more people who will encourage you to follow through with your actions and to pursue your goals.

Chapter 10: Learn the "Edison Mentality" "I failed myself to success" Thomas Alva Edison "It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed." Theodore Roosevelt Let's talk about failure! This subject is so important and yet so misunderstood! Paulo Coelho hits the spot when he says "There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure." The fear of failure is the number one dream killer, but why? Why are we so afraid of failure? Why can't we see it like Napoleon Hill who indicated that "Every adversity, every failure, every heartache carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit." Or in other words, how would our life change if we could see failure exactly like Napoleon Hill did? Why not see it as a learning experience that is necessary for growth and which provides us with information and motivation? What would happen if you could fully embrace the idea that in reality failure is a sign that points towards progress? Learn the "Edison Mentality". Edison himself said things like "I failed myself to success" or "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." This is what enabled him to bring many of his inventions to us. The man just didn't give up! Accept your mistakes as feedback and learn from them! Luckily, as kids we didn't have the mentality which many of us have adapted as adults – because if we did then many of us wouldn't know how to walk! How did you learn walking? By falling many times and always getting up again. Unfortunately, somewhere along the road you picked up the idea that failure is something terrible. And as a result of this nowadays we fail once and then stop doing things simply because it didn't work out the first time, because we got rejected, because our business venture didn't work out right away. NOW is the time to change your mentality towards failure! Why don't you look at it in this way from now on: Every failure is a great moment in our life, because it allows us to learn and grow from it! Even more and more companies nowadays are shifting to a new mentality by allowing their employees to make mistakes, because they noticed that if people are afraid to make mistakes, creativity and innovation die and the company's progress slows down. At the end of the day it comes down to this: Success is the result of right decisions. Right decisions are the result of experience, and experience is the result of wrong decisions. Here is a story of a famous "failure" that literally failed his way to success: • Lost job, 1832 • Defeated for legislature, 1832 • Failed in business, 1833 • Elected to legislature, 1834 • Sweetheart (Ann Rutledge) died, 1835 • Had nervous breakdown, 1836 • Defeated for Speaker, 1838 • Defeated for nomination for Congress, 1843 • Lost re-nomination, 1848 • Rejected for Land Officer, 1849 • Defeated for Senate, 1854 • Defeated for nomination for Vice-President, 1856 • Again defeated for Senate, 1858 • Elected President, 1860 This is the story of Abraham Lincoln, a man we would not exactly characterize as a failure, would we? And here are some other famous failures: Michael Jordan: cut from his high school basketball team. Steven Spielberg: rejected from film school three times. Walt Disney: fired by the editor of a newspaper for lacking ideas and imagination. Albert Einstein: He learned to speak at a late age and performed poorly in school. John Grisham: first novel was rejected by sixteen agents and twelve publishing houses. J.K. Rowling: was a divorced, single mother on welfare while writing Harry Potter. Stephen King: his first book "Carrie" was rejected 30 times. He threw it in the trash. His wife retrieved it from the trash and encouraged him to try again. Oprah Winfrey: fired from her television reporting job as "not suitable for television." The Beatles: told by a record company that they have

“no future in show business”. Answer the following questions: Have you had any failures in the last years? What did you learn from it? What was the positive you got out of it?

Chapter 11: Get comfortable with change and chaos! “Be willing to be uncomfortable. Be comfortable being uncomfortable. It may get tough, but it’s a small price to pay for living a dream.” Peter McWilliams The way to success goes through change and chaos. For personal growth you have to be in a constant state of feeling slightly uncomfortable. Get into the habit of doing things that others don’t want to do. You have to choose to do what needs to be done regardless of the inconvenience! That means: to forgive instead of holding a grudge, to go the extra mile instead of saying it can’t be done; to take 100% of the responsibility for your behavior instead of blaming others. Most of us think that to change our lives we have to make huge changes, and then we get overwhelmed by the hugeness of the task and end up not doing anything, and get stuck with our old habits. The answer is: baby steps! Start changing small things which don’t require a big effort and those small changes will eventually lead to bigger changes. Start changing your way to get to work, the restaurant you’re having lunch at, or meet new people. Action Steps: 1) Do something that makes you feel slightly uncomfortable every day. 2) What will you change tomorrow? Your daily routine? Exercise? Eat healthier? Chapter 12: Focus on what you want, not on what you lack! It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light. Aristotle Onassis The number one reason why people are not getting what they want is because they don’t even know what they want. The number two reason is that while they are telling themselves what they want, they are concentrating on what they don’t want, and what you are concentrating on...Expands! Remember to focus on what you want from now on! Where is your focus? On the positive or the negative? On the past or the present? Do you focus on problems or solutions? This is crucial! Here is where the law of attraction goes wrong for most people and they give up! They say “I’m attracting money”, “I’m prosperous”, but at the same time they focus most of their time on the bills they have to pay, on the money that goes out, on the fact that they are not earning too much. So what happens? They attract more of the things they don’t want! You will attract more of what you focus on! Your energy will flow into the direction of your focus and your focus determines your overall perception of the world. Focus on opportunities and you will see more opportunities! Focus on success and success will come to you. Use the following questions to change your focus: How can I improve this situation? What can I be thankful for? What is great in my life right now? What could I be happy about right now if I wanted to? Is this still important in ten years? What is great about this challenge? How can I use this to learn from it? What can I do to make things better? Chapter 13: Watch your words “But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” George Orwell, 1984 “The only thing that's keeping you from getting what you want is the story you keep telling yourself.” Tony Robbins Watch your words! Don’t underestimate them! They are very powerful! The words that we use to describe our experiences become our experiences! You probably encountered a situation or two in your life, when spoken words did a lot of damage. And this is true not only in talking to others, but also talking to yourself. Yes, this little voice in your head - the one that just asked “Voice, what voice?” You are what you tell yourself the whole day! Your inner dialogue is like the repeated suggestion of a hypnotist. Are you complaining a lot? What story are you telling yourself? If you say that you are bad, weak, and powerless then that’s what your world will look like! On the other hand, if you say you are healthy, feeling great, and unstoppable you will also reflect that. Your inner dialogue has a huge impact on your self-esteem. So be careful with how you describe yourself: such as “I’m lazy”, “I’m a disaster”, “I’ll never be able to do that”, or my personal favorite “I’m tired” because of course the more you tell yourself that you are tired, the more tired you will get! Watching your inner dialogue is very important! The way you communicate with yourself changes the way you think about yourself, which changes the way you feel about yourself, which changes the way you act and this ultimately influences your results and the perception that others have of you. Keep the conversation with yourself positive such as “I want to achieve success”, “I want to be slim”, “God, I am good”, because your subconscious mind doesn’t understand the little word “NO”. It sees your words as IMAGES. Don’t think of a pink elephant! See - I bet you just imagined a pink elephant. And - I will repeat myself – please focus on

what you want. Keep in mind that your words and especially the questions you ask yourself have a huge influence on your reality. I tell my coaching clients to never tell me or themselves that they can't do something, but instead always ask "How can it be done?" If you ask yourself "how", your brain will search for an answer and come up with it. The good thing is that you can really change your life by changing your language, talking to yourself in a positive way, and starting to ask yourself different questions. Why wait? Start asking yourself different questions now!

Chapter 14: New Habits, New Life! "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle It takes about 21 days to implement a new habit. About 2500 years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle said that you change your life by changing your habits. The coaching process is, in its essence a process of changing the client's habits over time by introducing new ways of doing things and substituting old behaviors. The most important step in the process of changing your habits is to become aware of them! Did you hear the saying that if you keep doing what you are doing you will keep getting the results you are getting? Einstein himself defined the purest form of insanity as "doing the same things over and over, expecting a different result". Is this you? Don't worry and go on reading! If you want different results in your life then you have to start doing things differently. You can change this and it's relatively easy if you put in some work and discipline. Develop habits that steer you towards your goals. If you do that- success in your live is guaranteed. Here are some examples of "bad" habits that might be good to get rid of: being constantly late, working late, eating junk food, procrastinating, interrupting while somebody else is talking, being a slave to your phone, etc. Our goal in this chapter is to introduce 10 new healthy daily habits into your life within the next three months. I don't want you to be overwhelmed, so why not introduce three habits each month? With time these habits will improve your life considerably and they will substitute ineffective habits which until now have drained your energy. Action Step: What 10 habits are you going to introduce? It's not necessary to introduce BIG changes. The usual habits my clients introduce are: • Exercise 3 times a week. • Focus on the positive. • Work on your goals. • Walk by the beach or in the woods. • Spend more time with your family. • Eat more vegetables. • Meet with friends. • Read 30 minutes a day. • Spend 15 minutes on "alone time" a day , etc. It helps to have a visual display! And don't forget to reward yourself for your successes! Start RIGHT NOW by making a list of 10 daily habits you will introduce into your life from today.

Chapter 15: Know yourself "Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom." Aristotle The first step before changing your life is becoming aware of where you are and what's missing. Please take some time to answer the following questions. What are your dreams in life?

_____ At the end of your life, what do you think you would most regret not having done for yourself?

_____ If time and money were not factors, what would you like to do, be, or have? _____

_____ What motivates you in life?

_____ What limits you in life?

_____ What have been your biggest wins in the last 12 months? _____

_____ What have been your biggest frustrations in the last 12 months? _____

_____ What do you do to please others?

_____ What do you do to please yourself?

_____ What do you pretend not to know?

_____ What has been the best work that you have done in your life until today? _____

_____ How exactly do you know that this was your best work? _____

_____ How do you see the work you do today in comparison to what you did 5 years ago? What's the relationship between the work you do now and the work you did then? _____

_____ What part of your work do you enjoy the most? _____

_____ What part of your work do you enjoy the least? _____

_____ What activity or thing do you usually postpone? _____

What are you really proud of?

How would you describe yourself?

What aspects of your behaviour do you think you should improve?

At this moment in time, how would you describe your commitment level to making your life a success?

At this moment in time, how would you describe your general state of wellbeing, energy, and self-care?

At this moment in time, how would you describe how much fun or pleasure you are experiencing in your life?

If you could put one fear behind you once and for all, what would it be?

In what area of your life do you most want to have a true breakthrough?

Evaluate yourself on a scale from 1-10 (10 = highest) in the following areas: Social _____ Work _____ Family _____ Interpersonal _____ Chapter 16: Know your Top 4 values! "Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction." John F. Kennedy Let's talk about values. Not in a moral or ethical way, but looking at what fuels you and what motivates you. Being clear about and knowing your values is one of the most important steps to getting to know yourself better. By knowing your values, you will be able to attract more of what you want in your life. If there is a big difference between the life you are living and your values, this might create suffering and tension. Once you find out what your values are, you will be able to understand yourself and your actions a lot better. When your goals are aligned with your values you will notice that you achieve them much quicker and hit a lot less resistance. Everything changed for me around

two years ago when I gained a clear knowledge of my values. I finally knew where the tension and stress at my work and in my life came from (not one of my core values was being applied!) and I could understand my reactions in various situations a lot better. So what is really important to you? Find out what your most important values are that bring you joy, peace, and fulfillment. From the list of values (you can download it on my webpage for free) choose 10. You may find that you can group values. Then narrow them down to your top four values. Also answer the following questions: What is very important in your life? What gives purpose to your life? What are you usually doing when you experience that feeling of inner peace? What are you doing that is so much fun that you usually lose track of time? Think of some people that you admire. Why do you admire them? What kind of qualities do you admire in them? What activities do you enjoy the most? What kind of moments bring you joy and fulfillment? What can't you put up with? Visualization: Take some time. Close your eyes and relax. Imagine that it is your 75th birthday. You're strolling around in your house. All your friends and family are present. What would you like the most important person in your life, your best friend, and a family member say to you? Write it down. 1) The most important person in your life says.... 2) Your best friend says.... 3) Your (family member) says... Chapter 17: Know your strengths "A winner is someone who recognizes his God-given talents, works his tail off to develop them into skills, and uses his skills to accomplish his goals." Larry Bird You don't have to be good at everything. Focus on your strengths. Remember that what you focus on tends to expand. What are you good at? Time to find out – isn't it? So let's get started: List your TOP FIVE Personal Qualities and Professional Strengths below: (What are your unique strengths? What are you most proud of? What do you do best?)

_____ List your Most Significant Personal and Professional Accomplishments: (What are you most pleased about and proud of having accomplished?)

_____ List your Personal and Professional Assets: (Who do you know? What do you know? What gifts do you have? What makes you unique and powerful?)

_____ Once you know your strengths it's time to strengthen them. Practice them and concentrate on them - the ones you have and the ones you want (see chapter 60: Fake it till you make it). Action Step: If you are up for it, send an email to 5 friends and/or colleagues and ask them what they consider your greatest strengths! This can be quite inspiring and a true self confidence booster! Chapter 18: Honor your past achievements "The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate" Oprah Winfrey This is a very important chapter. It's one of my favorite exercises to boost my clients' self-confidence (and my own). Its purpose is to empower you and make you aware of what you have already achieved in your life! We are always so centered in the things that don't work so well or what we haven't achieved that we forget what we have already achieved. I'm sure that you have fantastic achievements in your life and in this chapter you will become aware of those past successes and use them as rocket fuel to achieve your goals and future successes! So the big question is: What great things have you achieved in your life so far? You put yourself through college, traveled the world, have a great career, have lots of great friends. Maybe you lived abroad for a while all on your own. Or maybe you have overcome a tough childhood and major personal setbacks. Maybe you raised fantastic children. Whatever challenges you've overcome or successes you have achieved—now is the time to look back and celebrate them. Remember the chapter about focus? In this case, it means that the more you remember

and acknowledge your past successes, the more confident you'll become. And because you are concentrating on successes you will see more opportunities for success! Make your list! Remind yourself of your past successes! Give yourself a pat on the shoulder and say to yourself "Well done!" The important thing is the experience of success! Get into the same state that you were in, see the success once again in your mind, feel again how it felt then! Action Step: 1) Write down a list of the biggest successes you've achieved in your life! 2) Read them out loud and allow yourself to feel fantastic for what you have accomplished! Chapter 19: Write down your goals and achieve them! "People with clear, written goals accomplish far more in a shorter period of time than people without them can ever imagine." Brian Tracy "A goal is a dream with a deadline." Napoleon Hill The huge majority of us don't have even the slightest idea of where to start to make our dreams come true. Most people overestimate what they can do in a month and under-estimate what they can do in a year. If you go one step at a time and remain flexible, then over time you can achieve things that you couldn't even imagine before. And the funny thing is: It's not even about reaching the end goals; it's about the person you become in the process. The journey is more important than the destination – and also in goal setting! So why write down your goals? Because they will drive you to take action! Having clearly defined goals in your life is crucial to your way towards success and happiness. They are like a GPS system leading the way. But to be led, first of all you have to know where you want to go! This is so important that entire books are written on the subject of goal setting! I will make it as short as possible. The first step to achieving your dream goals is to put them in writing. I was very skeptical about this until I started writing down my goals and then I wish I had started two decades ago. I became so much more productive and focused that I could hardly believe it. As I said before, for many years I didn't care about goal setting. To be honest, I think it made me feel uncomfortable because committing to goals and writing them down suddenly meant that I could measure what I had achieved and what I did not achieve, and I didn't have the courage to do that. It's important to write down your goals for various reasons: 1) When you write them down, you declare to your mind, that out of the 50000 to 60000 thoughts you have a day, THIS ONE written down is the most important. 2) You start concentrating and focusing on the activities that bring you closer to your goal. You also start taking better decisions, while you are focused on where you want to go, always keeping in mind whether what you are doing in this moment is really the best use of your time. 3) Having a look at your written goals everyday forces you to act and helps you to prioritize your actions for the day by asking yourself questions such as "In this moment, is doing what I'm doing bringing me closer to my goals?" Before starting the change process, you have to be clear about your goals. Then break them down in small achievable action steps and make a list of all the steps that you will take to get there. Calculate how long it will take you. Don't forget to set a deadline for each action step and goal. Don't worry if you don't reach the goal by the exact date you set; it's just a way of focusing on the goal and creating a sense of urgency. One of my favorite quotes from my coaching training is "If you put a date on a dream it becomes a goal." So it's GO time for you now: In the following exercise I want you to write down what you want your life to look like in 10 years. When you write it down, I want you to write down what you want, not what you think is possible. So GO BIG! There are no limits to your imagination. The answers you write here are the direction in which your life is headed. Create a clear vision of your goals in your mind. See yourself as already having achieved the goal: How does it feel? How does it look? How does it sound? How does it smell? The goals have to be yours, specific, stated positively, and you have to commit to them. Another important point: When pursuing your goals, reward yourself for the effort put in, and not just for the results. Self-punishment is not allowed! Keep in mind that you are much further than you were a week or a month ago. Other useful tips that enhance your goal setting journey: • Put a little card with your goals written on it in your wallet and reconnect 4-5 times daily. • It's very beneficial to have a to-do list. Put your action steps on it, as well as the time it takes to do the task as and put the deadlines for each task. • Balance your goals (physical, economic, social, professional, family, spiritual). Exercise: 1) What do you want your life to look like in 10 years? There are no limits! Go big! 2) What do you have to have achieved in 5 years to get closer to your goal in 10 years? 3) What do you have to have achieved in 1 year to get closer to your goal in 5 years? 4) What do you have to have achieved in 3 months to get closer to your 1-year-goal? 5) What are the things that can you do NOW to reach your 3 month goal?

Action Step: Write down at least three things and TAKE ACTION! Chapter 20: Next! I take rejection as someone blowing a bugle in my ear to wake me up and get going, rather than retreat. Sylvester Stallone Another one of the biggest fears that we have is the fear of rejection! We don't ask the girl for a dance because we fear rejection, we don't send the CV because we fear rejection, we don't even ask for the upgrade to business class or the best table in the restaurant because we fear rejection! To reach your goals in life, you will have to learn how to handle rejection. It's a part of life and to overcome it you have to become aware that - same as failure - it's only a concept in your mind! The most successful people are not much different from you. They are just better at handling rejection! Now that's something, isn't it? On your way to your goals, you will probably have to face rejection many times. Just don't give up. And above all don't take rejection personally! Think about it. If you ask someone out and he or she doesn't want to go out with you, actually nothing has changed. He or she was not going out with you before and she is not going out with you now. Your situation is the same. Rejection is not the problem; it's the inner dialogue you start after being rejected that is the problem: "I knew I can't do it. I know I'm not good enough. Father was right. I will never achieve anything in life". The important thing is to go on! The most successful salesmen's goal is to hear 100 "No's" a day, because they know that if they hear 100 "No's", there will also be some "Yes's". It's a numbers game! The most successful "Don Juans" of my friends are the ones who dealt with the "No's" the best. They knew that if they talk to 25 girls a night, eventually there will be someone who will have a drink with them. Others gave up after hearing two or three "No's". Just be prepared to get rejected many times on your way to success. The secret is to not give up! When somebody tells you "No, thanks" you think "NEXT". Did you know that Sylvester Stallone's script for the movie "Rocky" was rejected over 70 times? Jack Canfield's and Mark Victor Hansen's "Chicken Soup for the Soul" was rejected a 130 times and that Canfield was actually laughed at when he said that he wanted to sell 1 million books. His editor told him he'd be lucky to sell 20,000. Well, the first book "Chicken Soup for the Soul" sold 8 million copies, the whole series about 500 million! Even J.K. Rowlings' "Harry Potter" was rejected 12 times! Answer the following questions: What are you taking away from this chapter? How will you deal with rejection from now on? Chapter 21: Avoid energy robbers "Energy and persistence conquer all things." Benjamin Franklin "The energy of the mind is the essence of life." Aristotle Your energy is crucial for boosting you towards your goals and happiness. There are some things in your life that drain your energy and then there are things that add energy. Don't underestimate the importance of energy and keep it up! In my coaching processes, we put a lot of emphasis on activities that bring energy and cut loose things that drain energy out of my clients' lives. When you operate on low energy you don't feel good, you are not happy, you send out low vibes, and chances are that you will attract what you are sending! Stop doing or exposing yourself to things that drain your energy like unhealthy eating habits, alcohol, drugs, caffeine, sugar, tobacco, lack of exercise, negativity, sarcasm, unfocused goals, the news, and tabloid newspapers among others. All these things drain your energy. And beware of the "energy vampires" amongst your colleagues, friends, and even family. Why would you spend time with people that only drain you? Become very selfish on how you manage your energy: • Eliminate all distractions. • Finish your unfinished business. • Work on your tolerations. (See Chapter 29) • Say good bye to all energy robbing people and relationships. Questions: What are the energy robbers in your life? _____

_____ What will you do about it?

_____ Chapter 22: Manage your time "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all." Peter F. Drucker Do you work lots of overtime and still don't have time for everything you need to do? Are you one of those people that would love to have 28 hours in a day? Well, unfortunately you also have only 24 hours like everybody else on this planet. Oh and I'm sorry, I forgot: There is no such thing as time management! You can't manage time. What you can do is use your time wisely and manage your

priorities. Everyone who comes to me and most of my friends say “I don’t have time to _____ (fill in the blank).” The fastest way to gain time is to watch one hour less of TV every day. That’s 365 hours a year, which equals 28 hours a month! What would you do with seven extra hours a week? Another trick to gain more time is getting up earlier (see Chapter 25). Set priorities and choose what activities to invest your time in. Set clear rules about when you are available and when you are not available and don’t let other people steal your time. The funny thing is, the more you value your time, the more you will have of it, because people will also value your time. If you allow people to interrupt you all the time, you’re essentially showing them that your time is not very valuable in which case you will not be able to work effectively, no matter how many hours you work. Recent studies have found out that each 5 minute interruption at work costs you 12 minutes, because your brain needs 7 minutes to refocus! How many interruptions do you have per day? 10? 12? Imagine how much time you can gain back when you decrease the number of interruptions. Every 3 minute interruption costs you 10 minutes. Let’s say you get interrupted 12 times in one working day: 2 hours gone! In a month that’s like having an extra week! Don’t let employees, friends, or clients interrupt you. Set those clear rules NOW. Another big time robber is social media and e-mail. Setting fixed times for your social media activity and checking emails is another means to gain a lot of time. I started gaining a lot of time at work when I learnt to say “NO”. (See Chapter 24) My personal number one time saving technique is taking 30 to 60 minutes on Sundays to plan my week ahead. I put my personal and professional goals for every week in my excel sheet. And don’t forget to schedule in some free time, relaxation time, like power naps, reading, meditation, etc. and some buffer time for emergencies too. I also take 15 minutes every day to plan my next day. In this way, I give my subconscious mind a chance to work on it already while I sleep. This works! When I start the next day I don’t have to think much: I just go to work. Some more time saving tips: • Make a to-do list with date and the time the task takes. • Limit your phone calls to 5 minutes per call. • Be aware of the result you want for each call that you make. • Work against time and you’ll get your work done faster (set an alarm clock and work against it). • Write 5 things you want for the next day each evening and list them in order of priority. • Create blocks of time (90 minutes blocks). • Track your time. Take a look at how you are currently using your time by tracking your daily activities. • Do the unpleasant things first. • Stop being busy and go for results. Be careful with the following time robbers: • Lack of information for completing a task. • You do everything yourself (Is delegating an option?). • You get distracted easily (Focus and set boundaries!). • Your phone calls are too long (Put a 5 minutes limit). • You spend a lot of time in searching for files (Get organized!) • You keep doing things the same way and don’t realize that there could be a more efficient way of doing it. • You think you have to be reachable all the time and everywhere (Really?). So what are you going to do next? Will you insist on the excuse that you have no time or will you start making time with one little thing at a time and experience the change for yourself? What are you going to do? Remember it’s all about decisions and habits! Action Step: Write down 5 things you will start doing NOW!

_____ Chapter 23: Start to get organized! “Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up.” A.A.Milne “For every minute spent organizing, an hour is earned.” Anonymous Are you too busy to get organized? You are surrounded by mountains of paper and have post-its all over your table. And you feel you are really busy but you just can’t breathe and you just can’t handle your work even if you do extra time? THEN READ CLOSELY NOW, because I’m especially talking to YOU! It’s not that you are too busy to get organized, it’s because you are not organized that you are so busy! And to make it worse: Being busy doesn’t mean that you are effective! Just because you have the messiest table in the office, doesn’t mean you are the one who works hardest. There are studies that today’s executives spend between 30%

and 50% of their time searching for paperwork! Can you believe that? So, my overwhelmed worker, go on reading and TRY OUT these little tips, as they can change your life! I have been there and I turned it around using the little tips below:

- Spend the first 15 minutes of your working day prioritizing what to do.
- Spend one hour a week for organizing and filing papers.
- Spend 15 minutes a day throwing away papers and clearing away your desk
- Spend the last 15 minutes of your working day to go through your tasks for tomorrow. What's important? What's urgent?
- Use your e-mail inbox as a to-do list. Tasks solved get archived and tasks unsolved stay in the inbox.
- If there are any e-mails and tasks that you can do in less than 5 minutes, always do them right away! ALWAYS!
- Don't accept any new tasks until you are in control.
- Do the job right the first time, so that it doesn't come back to haunt you and cost you more time later. Do you remember that typical colleague who always completed his work fast, but not thoroughly and then during every step of the process you had to go back to him for more information? Instead of doing it well one time with all of the correct documentation which takes 15 minutes, he rushed it in 5 minutes, and later you had to go back to him three more times thus losing another 30 minutes. So instead of 15 minutes he actually took 35 minutes to complete the task. Do it right the first time! Like everything else in this book, saying "That won't work for me" doesn't count as an excuse! Try it for at least two weeks and if it still doesn't work for you write me an email and complain to me! Action Step: Which of the tips will you try first?

Chapter 24: Say "NO" to them and "YES" to yourself "I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody."

Bill Cosby Here is another one of these small exercises that improved my life a lot: When I stopped wanting to please others and started being myself, a lot of it came with the word "No". Every time you say "No" when you mean "No", you are actually saying "Yes" to yourself! Before learning to say "No", I often went out with my friends although I didn't want to or went to events I didn't enjoy. The result was I was there physically but mentally I was in another place and honestly I was not the best company. When I decided that a "Yes" is a "Yes" and a "No" is a "No", I felt much better. I went out less with my friends and telling them "NO" was hard at the beginning, but the result was that when I was with my friends I was fully there. In my work life, the impact was even bigger. When I started working in Spain I wanted to be a good colleague and said yes to every favor I was asked for. Guess what happened? I ended up being totally overwhelmed at work, because I was asked for a lot of favors – usually work nobody else wanted to do. It took me a while to put my foot down, but finally I said "Enough!". From then on my first answer to all questions for favors was "NO! Sorry. Can't do it. Very busy at the moment!" By starting to say "No" often, I improved my work life a lot and actually freed up a lot of time. But make sure you say "NO" without feeling guilty! You can explain to the person in question that it's not anything personal against them, but for your own wellbeing. I could still do my colleagues a favor, but only if I had enough time and decided to. Suddenly I was in the driver's seat. If I was up for it I would mention to the colleague in question that I'm only doing a favor and in no case do I want to end up doing the job. Selfish? Yes! But keep in mind who the most important person in your life is. That's right! YOU are the most important person in your life! You have to be well! Only if you are well yourself, can you be well towards others and from this level you can contribute to others, but first be well yourself. You can always buy some time and say "maybe" at first, until you come to a definite decision. Life gets a lot easier if you start saying "No"!

Ask yourself the following questions: Whose life are you living? Are you living your own life or trying to please and fulfill the expectations of others? Who and what are you going to say NO to starting NOW? Action Step: Make a list of things that you will stop doing!

Chapter 25: Get up early! Sleep less! "It is well to be up before daybreak, for such habits contribute to health, wealth, and wisdom." Aristotle The first benefit of getting up an hour earlier is that you gain around 365 hours per year. 365! Who said "I don't have time!"? When clients come to me telling me that they don't have time, the first thing I ask them is how many hours of TV are they watching. This usually provides them with the time they need. To those who stopped watching TV and still don't have enough time I ask them to get up one hour earlier. There is a very special energy in the morning hours before sunrise. Ever since I started getting up around 5.30 or 6 o'clock, my life changed completely. I'm much more calm and relaxed and don't start the day already running around stressed. I usually go running half an hour before the sun rises so that on my way back I see the sun rising "out of" the Mediterranean Sea. This is absolutely mind boggling and already puts me in a state of

absolute happiness. And for those of you who don't live next to the sea: A sunrise "out of" fields, forests, or even a big city is just as exciting. Just go watch it and let me know! Starting your day like this is very beneficial for your happiness and peace of mind. Another great advantage of getting up earlier is that it reinforces selfdiscipline and you'll gain self-respect. Many successful leaders were and still are members of the early birds club, for example, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Barrack Obama, and many more. It's scientifically proven that 6 hours should be enough sleep per night paired with a 30 to 60 minutes power nap in the afternoon. Your freshness depends on the quality of your sleep, not on the quantity. You have to try and figure out for yourself how many hours of sleep you need to feel refreshed. But you should definitively give it a try. It will improve your quality of life a lot. Don't forget that getting up early is a new habit, so give it some time and don't give up after the first week if you still feel tired after getting up earlier. The habit needs at least 3 to 4 weeks to kick in. If you absolutely can't get up one hour earlier, try half an hour. And don't forget that your attitude, thoughts, and beliefs about getting up an hour earlier play a big role, too. To me it was always intriguing how it was so difficult for me to get up at 6.45ish to go to work after 7 or 8 hours of sleep, but before every vacation I usually slept 4 hours and woke up before the alarm clock went off and I was totally refreshed and energized. In the end, getting up or hitting the snooze button is a decision you make. It's up to you. How important is a better lifestyle and more time for you?

Chapter 26: Avoid the mass media "A democratic civilization will save itself only if it makes the language of the image into a stimulus for critical reflection — not an invitation for hypnosis." Umberto Eco "The news is glorified gossip." Mokokoma Mokhoana You want to make fast progress, don't you? Here is one tip that will set free a lot of energy and time! How many hours do you spend in front of the "box" every day? The average American spends 4 to 5 hours a day in front of the TV, and same goes for Europeans. That's between 28 and 35 hours a week! Boom! That's a lot of time you can gain right there! Apart from gaining time there is an even more beneficial side effect! TV is one of the biggest energy drainers, if not the number one! Do you ever feel renewed or reenergized after watching TV? Stop watching the news, or better still turn off your television! Why would you expose yourself to so much negativity? Don't expose yourself to too much of the garbage that out there is on TV. Substitute your habit of watching TV for a healthier habit like taking a walk, spending more time with your family, or reading a good book. I stopped watching the news many years ago when I became aware that while on the train to work I got upset over things heard and seen on the morning news and I thought to myself, "I can't go to my stressful workplace being already stressed, simply because of what politician A said or banker B did or because there is a war in C. Just one week after stopping watching the news I felt a lot better! Don't believe me? Just try it for yourself! Don't watch the news for a week and see how you feel. I'm not telling you to become ignorant — even though here in Spain they say "the ignorant is the happiest person in the village". You can still read the newspapers. I would recommend the headlines only. You will still be up to date with the important stuff, because your family, friends, and colleagues will keep you updated. Just choose and be selective how much garbage you expose your mind to. If you need more reasons to stop watching television read one of the great books that are out there about how the media manipulates us and how nearly everything is fake! Control the information that you are exposed to. Make sure it adds to your life. Instead of watching trash TV, watch a documentary or a comedy. Instead of listening to the news in your car listen to an audio-book or motivational CDs.

Chapter 27: Do you "have to" or do you "choose to"? "It's choice — not chance — that determines your destiny." Jean Nidetch Do you have many things in your life that you "should" or "have to" do, but never do? How many "shoulds" do you have in your life? Should you exercise more, go to the gym more, stop smoking, eat healthier, and spend more time with your family? Those "shoulds" don't help you to get anywhere; they only imply that you are not good enough and just drain your energy, because they come with a bad conscience and self-torture. "Why am I not going to the gym? I'm so bad! I will never lose weight" and so on and so forth. Make a list of all your "shoulds" and then forget it! What? Forget it? Yes! I'm not kidding, forget it! If you have had a goal since last year and haven't done anything about it, then you are better off forgetting about it. If your goal is going to the gym and you didn't go for a year, let it go. With the goal you also let go off the bad con-science and the self-punishment for not accomplishing it. Throw out all your "shoulds" and set some new goals! Stop doing things that

you “have to” do and instead choose your goals and - very important- substitute “I should” and “I have to” with “I choose to”, “I decide to”, “I will” and “I prefer to”. I choose to exercise more, I will eat healthier, I choose to read more. How does that feel? It’s important that you enjoy your activities – if not, don’t do them. Try out this little exercise: I have to ____ A _____. If I don’t do ____ A _____, then ____ B _____ will happen. And if ____ B _____ then ____ C _____ and then ____ D _____ and ____ E _____ and then ____ Z _____. I prefer ____ A _____ to ____ Z _____. That’s why I choose ____ A _____

Action Step: Make your list of “shoulds” and let go of them or rephrase them to “I choose to” or “I decide to”.

Chapter 28: Face your fears! “The fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself.” Paolo Coelho “You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do.” Eleanor Roosevelt Don’t let your fears frustrate you, limit you, or paralyze you! David Joseph Schwartz puts it this way: “Do what you fear and your fear disappears” and Mark Twain already knew over a hundred years ago that “20 years from now you will be more disappointed with the things you didn’t do than with the ones that you did.” Or as one of my favorite sayings goes: “Never regret the things you did; only those you never tried!” So face these fears! Ninety percent of them are pure imagination anyway. Illusions! Incredible stories of drama and disaster that will probably never happen and are made up by your mind - “the world’s greatest director of soap operas”, as T. Harv Eker says - to keep you in your comfort zone. The only problem is that great things like development, growth and success happen outside of the comfort zone. Fears are a survival mechanism of your mind. Your mind wants to keep you safe and anything that your mind doesn’t know, scares it. I had many fears in my life and still do but I learned to overcome them and behind my fears great opportunities waited for me. So I made it a habit to use my fear as a springboard. Just ask yourself, “What’s the worst thing that can happen to me if I do this?” Then evaluate if the risk is worth taking or not. Be careful! There is also a price for not taking a risk or stepping out of your comfort zone. Ask yourself “What price am I paying for staying the same or not doing this?” Is it an even higher one than the price of taking the risk? This also includes intangible things like inner peace, happiness, health etc. Change your relationship with fear. Let it warn you and consult you, but don’t let it paralyze you! For example, I used to be totally paralyzed by fear, and stayed stuck in my job for five years because of fear of change or the unknown. Nowadays when I’m invaded by fears and doubts I think to myself, “Hm, if there are so many doubts and fears I must be on a good track. I better take action.” Try new things and attempt the seemingly impossible! Ironically it’s the things that you most fear that will be the most positive for your development and growth once you overcome them. Do the things you fear: make that call you don’t want to make, send that email you don’t want to send, ask that person you’re afraid to ask and see what happens. When you notice fear have a look at it, observe it, analyze it, but don’t believe it. Instead ask it, “Fear, my old friend! What are you doing here again? Do you want to warn me or do you want to paralyze me? What’s your game?” What are you afraid of? Failure? Success? Making mistakes? Taking the wrong decisions? Do as Susan Jeffers says: “Feel the fear and do it anyway”! If you want to reach new territories you have to take some risks and continuously do things that you are afraid of. Mistakes don’t matter as long as you learn from them and don’t make the same mistakes over and over again. The same goes for decisions – by the way not taking a decision or procrastinating is also a decision! Answer the following questions in your workbook or journal: 1) What is stopping you from living the life you want to live? 2) What excuses are you making for justifying staying where you are? 3) What’s the worst thing that can happen if you do what you are afraid of doing?

Chapter 29: Eliminate everything that annoys you “Great things are done by a series of small things brought together” Vincent van Gogh “It isn’t the mountains ahead that wear you out. It’s the grain of sand in your shoe.” Robert Service This is usually one of the first exercises I do with my coaching clients. Everything that annoys you drains your energy. In coaching, we call it tolerations. For example, a missing button on your favorite shirt, the dirty shower curtain, a kitchen cupboard that doesn’t close, your boss micromanaging you, money owed to you, a disorganized guest room, broken tools, a messy and disorganized desk, clothes that don’t fit any more etc. are tolerations. For as long as you don’t fix them they keep draining your energy. As soon as you eliminate them you will have more energy to concentrate on the things that move you forward. So your exercise will be to make a list of all the things that annoy you: in your

private life, your job, your house, your friends, yourself, etc. Don't get scared if you write down 50 to 100 things. It's normal. Once you write them all down group them. Which ones are easy to handle? Which ones can YOU handle? For now, leave the ones that don't depend on you. Have a look at them after two or three weeks. The funny thing I've seen with my clients is that some of the tolerations that don't depend on you disappear on their own once you take care of the ones that you can handle. For example, my client Martina had huge problems with a colleague at work. He really drained her energy. She worked on the tolerations she could handle and the list got emptier. Three months later her colleague suddenly changed jobs and left the company! Now was that just a coincidence or was it a consequence of her working on her tolerations? I'll leave the choice to you. Fact is that she is a lot happier at work now! Try it out for yourself and keep me posted! Action Step: Make a list of all the things that annoy you. In your private life, your job, your house, your friends, yourself, etc. Start working on it as described above!

Chapter 30: Clean out your cupboard "Bottom line is, if you do not use it or need it, it's clutter, and it needs to go." Charisse Ward Do you want something new to come into your life? Do you ever notice that as soon as you get rid of some stuff and create space the universe doesn't take long to fill this space again? It's all about energy. If you have too much stuff that you don't use in your house, it drains your energy! Coaching is about improving your whole environment and that includes uncluttering. Start with your cupboard. Here are some tips: • If you haven't worn it for a year, you probably won't wear it any more. • When you think "This will be useful one day" or "This reminds me of good times" - out it goes. When I unclutter I usually give stuff away for free. It just makes me feel better and somehow I think life/God/the universe will reward me for it. Once you are done with the cupboard take on the whole bedroom. Later move on to the living room, clean out your garage and end up cleaning up your entire home & office. Get rid of everything that you don't use any more: clothes, journals, books, CDs, even furniture, and so on. One of my clients uncluttered his whole apartment in one weekend. He felt so much better and lighter and got an energy boost that helped him to finish a whole bunch of his short term goals. He never looked back. When will you start uncluttering? Action Step: Schedule a weekend and get rid of everything you don't need any more! SCHEDULE THE WEEKEND NOW!

Chapter 31: Uncluttering and Tolerations go hand in hand – A real life Example "Clutter is nothing more than postponed decisions." Barbara Hemphill Uncluttering and Tolerations go hand in hand. I have here a real life example of my client Lawrence, who describes what happened during the process: "When I went through the process of uncluttering my life, it was like I was creating a new sense of freedom for myself. Before I understood what cluttering is, I had been going through life picking up so many bad habits and discouraging thoughts along the way... They weren't the type of habits like a vice, for example, smoking or drinking. They were more like small tolerations that were seemingly insignificant to begin with, but as I gained more and more of them in my life and just accepted them as something I couldn't change, they grew heavier until I was very weighed down. These tolerations made me feel like I was moving like a sloth. Things like procrastination, lack of sleep, not gaining fulfillment from my work, getting used to take-out food too often, beating myself up for not achieving more success...Somewhere along the way I lost sight of my goals in life and I just allowed these tolerations to clutter things up to the point that I felt stuck. When my coach Marc introduced the idea of uncluttering to me, it was truly a revelation. I understood what it meant immediately, but I just didn't know why I was this way or how to fix it and climb out of the hole. With the tools that Marc helped to equip me with, I can now recognize my tolerations and work on unloading them. I've identified the ones that I could quickly fix and have gotten rid of them: fixing the window sill that wouldn't open, hanging up the paintings that I left in storage when I moved, replacing my old mattress that was not so comfortable. I also recognize the tolerations that will take more time to resolve, and I work on them all the time, like challenging myself more at work and getting gratification from that productivity. I've written down all of them to keep track of and to hold myself accountable, and I write down new tolerations as I identify them along the way. Uncluttering the tolerations in my life, that were jumbled together in my mind and slowing me down, has made me feel like I am 10x lighter now. I have more energy, more spirit, and more enthusiasm. And as I uncluttered the tolerations, I found that my physical surroundings became uncluttered as well. My apartment is cleaner and more open, so I feel like I'm in a clutter-free environment at home."

Chapter 32: The

most important hour... “Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.” Ralph Waldo Emerson The most important hour of your day is composed of the thirty minutes after you wake up and the thirty minutes before you fall asleep. This is when your subconscious is very receptive so it’s of big importance what you do in this time. The way you start your day will have a huge impact on how the rest of your day develops. I’m sure you have had days which have started off on the wrong foot and from then on it got worse and worse – or the opposite where you woke up with that feeling that everything will go your way and then it did. That’s why it’s very important to begin your day well. Most of us just get into a rush from minute one after waking up and that’s how our days unfold. No wonder most people run around stressed nowadays. What would getting up half an hour or an hour earlier every morning do for you? What if instead of hurrying and swallowing down your breakfast or even having it on the way to work, you get up and take half an hour for yourself? Maybe you even create a little morning ritual with a 10 or 15-minute meditation. Do you see what this could do for your life if you made it a habit? Here are some activities for the morning ritual. Give it a shot!

- Think positive: Today is going to be a great day!
- Remember for 5 minutes what you are grateful for.
- 15 minutes of quiet time.
- Imagine the day that is about to start going very well.
- Watch a sunrise.
- Go running or take a walk.
- Write in your journal.

The last half an hour of your day has the same importance! The things you do in the last half an hour before sleeping will remain in your subconscious during your sleep. So then it’s time to do the following:

- Write into your journal again.
- Now is the time for reflecting on your day. What did you do great? What could you have done even better?
- Plan your day ahead. What are the most important things you want to get done tomorrow?
- Make a to do list for the next day.
- Visualize your ideal day.
- Read some inspirational blogs, articles, or chapters of a book.
- Listen to music that inspires you.

I highly recommend that you NOT WATCH THE NEWS or MOVIES that agitate you before you are about to go to sleep. This is because when you are falling asleep you are highly receptive to suggestions. That’s why it’s a lot more beneficial to listen or watch positive material. The planning ahead of your day and the list of things to do can bring you immense advantages and time saving. The things you have to do will already be in your subconscious plus you will get to work very focused the next day if you already know what your priorities are. Questions: How will your mornings and evenings look from now on? Will you get up 30 minutes earlier and develop a little ritual? What will your last activities be before you go to sleep?

Chapter 33: Find your purpose and do what you love “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” Ralph Waldo Emerson “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” Mark Twain One of the most important things along your life’s journey is the discovery of your purpose. So what exactly does that mean? It means doing what you love to do. Your answers to the questions “What would you do if success was guaranteed?” or “What would you do if you had ten million dollars, seven houses, and have traveled to all of your favorite destinations?” will lead you to your purpose. You spend more time at your job than with your loved ones, so you better enjoy what you are doing! The 2013 Gallup “The state of the American Workplace report” states that up to 70% of people are not happy at their work! 50% are not engaged, not inspired, and just kind of present and around 20% have resigned internally and are actively disengaged! I was part of the 50% for five years and it was horrible. The worst thing was that I didn’t even notice it! We all have great ideas or dreams about what we could be, have, and do. What happened to your dreams? This is where the value exercise from Chapter 16 comes into the picture. The ideal picture is to build your goals around those values and have a job which allows you to live according to your values. You don’t have to rush into something new, but you can start doing more of the things you love. It sounds like jargon, but when you have found your purpose, things will start to fall into place. You will start to attract people, opportunities, and resources naturally and incredible things will start to happen! Nothing attracts success more than somebody who is doing what they love to do! My friend Yvonne followed her hunch, dropped out of Law School, and started selling shoes at a big department store. She loves to help people and she loves shoes so for her the choice was obvious. She went with her gut even though people made fun of her. She was even called the “female Al Bundy”. Not a great compliment. But she didn’t care about the jokes and went on to become the number one Sales Woman in the

department store, selling hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of shoes each year, taking home Employee of the Year awards one year after another and earning a decent salary. In fact she does so well that the VIP clients only want to be served by her. She enjoys every minute of her work. If you feel like you are driving without a roadmap or a GPS and don't really know where to go or if you never quite know what you are doing here and why, and you feel kind of lost and empty, then that's a sign that you have not found your purpose. But don't worry, that can be fixed in no time. You can find clues to your purpose by examining your values, skills, passions, and ambitions and by taking a look at what you are good at. Here are some more questions that should help you. Have the courage to answer them to yourself and write them down. Nobody else but you can see the answers. (Don't skip them, like I did for 15 years! When I finally answered them, everything changed!) Answer yourself the following questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Why do I exist? What do I really want to do with my life? When do I feel fully alive? What were the highlights of my life? What am I doing when time flies by? What inspires me? What are my greatest strengths? What would I do if success was guaranteed? What would I do if I had ten million Dollars, seven houses, and had traveled all around the world? Action Step: Watch the video "What if money was no object?" (3:04) on YouTube. Chapter 34: Take a walk every day "An early-morning walk is a blessing for the whole day." Henry David Thoreau Whenever possible, go out and spend time around nature. Take a walk and connect with it. Watch a sunset or a sunrise. If you are going for a run or a walk in the mornings you'll surely say that Henry David Thoreau is right! Our rhythm of life has become so fast and so stressful that taking some time and walking through the woods can bring you down to earth and provide you with deep relaxation. Listen to the silence and enjoy it. Taking a walk is a great way to reenergize your body and your mind. A new Stanford study that just came out concludes that walking improves your creative thinking. When my wife had a hard time at work and was on the edge of burning out we started taking long walks for an hour and a half each day. That helped her to disconnect from her stressful workday, forget her anger of the day, and talk about and analyze her emotions. Due to this activity she also fell asleep easier and had a better and more refreshing sleep at night. After only a week she felt a lot better! Another advantage of the long walks was that she got tired, lowered her guard, and even started listening to what her husband had to say ... When will you start walking one hour per day? Do it for 30 days and let me know how it feels! Chapter 35: What are your standards? "I teach people how to treat me by what I will allow." Stephen Covey Expect and demand more from yourself and from those around you. If you really want to make a change in your life you have to raise your standards. Have a zero tolerance policy for mediocrity, procrastination, and behavior that impedes your best performance! Your standards could be, for example, to always tell the truth, to always be punctual, to really listen to people until they are finished, and so on. Hold yourself to high standards and - what is of the same or even more importance - set boundaries for those around you! Boundaries are things that people simply can't do to you like yelling at you, make stupid jokes around you, or disrespect you. Communicate clearly and make it a habit to address anything that bothers you on the spot. Remember what the proverb says: "In the right tone you can say everything, in the wrong tone nothing, the art is to find the right tone". Practice saying things in a neutral tone of voice like you'd say "the sun is shining". If somebody is overstepping your boundaries inform them: "I didn't like that comment" or "I don't like you talking to me in that tone". If they go on, request them to stop: "I ask you to stop talking to me like this". By now most people should get it, but there are always one or two that continue. If that happens - insist: "I insist that you stop talking to me in that way." If all three steps don't help - leave! Walk away neutrally stating "I can't have this conversation, while you are _____. Let's talk later." Action Steps: Write down the following things: Things you will no longer accept in your life. All the behaviors you will no longer tolerate from others. All the things you want to become. Chapter 36: Adapt an Attitude of Gratitude! "Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough." Oprah Winfrey Listen to Oprah! Be grateful for what you have every day and you will attract more things to be grateful for. Gratitude recharges you with energy and boosts your self-worth. It's directly linked to physical and mental wellbeing. The "attitude of gratitude" leads you directly to happiness and is the best antidote to anger, envy, and resentment! Let it become part of your nature! Be grateful for what you have, for all the small things around

you, and even for the things you don't have yet! Don't say: "I'll be grateful when..." like I did for many years. Take the shortcut: Be grateful NOW - no matter what - and make gratitude a daily habit: Start the day by saying thank you for what you have (instead of complaining about what you don't have). This will have an immediate effect on your life. Focus on the good things that you can find every day. The following exercises are part of every one of my coaching processes. Do them and observe what happens. Action Steps: 1) Make a list of everything you have in your life that you are grateful for. Write down everything you can think of. (This should be a long list) 2) For 21 days every day write 3 to 5 things that you are grateful for, that day in your journal. Before going to sleep relive the moments. Relive the happiness.

Chapter 37: The Magic of Visualization "The best way to predict the future is to create it." Peter Drucker Visualization is a fundamental resource in building experiences. The subconscious part of your brain cannot distinguish between a well done visualization and reality. This means that if you visualize your goals with a lot of emotion and in great detail, your subconscious mind will be convinced that it's really happening. You will then be provided with motivation, opportunities, and ideas that will help you to transform your life into that desired state. What am I saying? Can you practice sports by pure visualization? Well actually you can. There are various studies that confirm the power of visualization. As early as in the 80's, Tony Robbins worked with the U.S. Army and used visualization techniques to dramatically increase pistol shooting performance. There have also been other studies done for improving free throw shooting percentages of Basketball players using the same techniques. The results were amazing! If you look closely at athletes they all visualize their races and matches. Look at how skiers, formula 1 drivers, golfers, tennis players, and even soccer players visualize in-game situations, days and hours before the actual match. Jack Nicklaus, Wayne Gretzky, and Greg Louganis - to name a few - are known to have achieved their goals with visualization. In coaching we use visualization techniques with goals. See yourself as already having achieved the goal. See it through your own eyes and put all your senses in it: smell it, hear it, feel it, taste it. The more emotions you put into it, the more of an impact it will have. If you do this for 15 minutes every day over time you will see enormous results. Make time for your daily visualization either in your morning ritual or in the evening before going to bed. It can be helpful to make a collage of images that represent your goal on a A3 sheet of cardboard and put it up in your bedroom or somewhere where you can see it. Buy some journals and cut out the photos that represent your goals. You could also create a screensaver of various photos on your computer or desktop. If your goal is wealth, put a photo of your dream house, a photo of dollar bills, or whatever wealth means to you. If you search for "vision board" on Google, you will surely find lots of examples. Look at your collage every day 5 minutes after getting up and 5 minutes before going to bed and imagine yourself vividly with your goal already accomplished.

Chapter 38: What if? "Our expectancies not only affect how we see reality but also affect the reality itself." Dr. Edward E. Jones Always expect the best! Life doesn't always give you what you want, but it sure gives you what you expect! Do you expect success? Or do you spend most of your time worrying about failure? Our expectations about ourselves and others come from our subconscious beliefs and they have an enormous impact on our achievements. Your expectations influence your attitude and your attitude has a lot to do with your success. Your expectations also affect your willingness to take action and all your interactions with others. Many of us know all this and yet most of us expect negative outcomes when asking one of the favorite questions of the mind: the question "What if". By asking it, we are often focused on what doesn't work: "What if it doesn't work out?", "What if she doesn't go out with me?", "What if I don't get the job?", "What if I don't get the raise?", "What if I lose my job?" However neither does that feel good, nor is it good to focus on what we fear. Why not turn this around and ask yourself for every limiting or negative thought, "What if the opposite is true?", "What if it worked out great?", "What if she says yes?", "What if I get a raise?", "What if I become a millionaire with this idea?", "What if I found resources?", "What if I can make it happen?", "What if now is the time?", "What if this little book helps me change my life for real?" The single adjustment in how you ask a question transforms you, your energy, and the answer you get. It changes your thinking and your inner dialogue. Suddenly you start asking what if up questions in your head, rather than what if down questions. The benefits of shifting your thinking will be:

- Less stress, fear, and anxiety.
- You will feel more peaceful.
- Your energy level will go up.
- It allows you to be the inventor of your own

experience. Try it out! How did you feel just now reading it? Write a list of all your fears and negative “What ifs” and then turn it around. Chapter 39: Let go of the past “We must be willing to let go of the life we’ve planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.” Joseph Campbell “When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be. When I let go of what I have, I receive what I need.” Tao Te Ching Every moment you spend in your past is a moment you steal from your present and future. Stop reliving your drama– Don’t hang onto it. LET GO OF IT! Only if you have the courage to let go of the old, can you be open to new things entering your life. Don’t waste your time thinking of things that could or should have happened or that didn’t work out as you wanted in the past. It doesn’t make sense! You can’t change it! Remember to focus on what you want, not what you don’t want. If you focus on situations that didn’t work out in the past, you might attract more of these situations. Learn from your past experiences and move on. That’s all you have to do from now on. Easy, isn’t it? Concentrate on what you want to do well in the future and not what went wrong in the past. You need to let go of the past so that you are free and new things can come into your life! Let go of old baggage, finish unfinished business, and get closure with people. Deepak Chopra is right when he says “I use memories, but I will not allow memories to use me.” Complete the past so that you can be free to enjoy the present. From now on, adopt the mindset that you will always finish your business. Don’t leave anything incomplete in your relationships, work, and all other areas. Keep moving forward. Action Step: What is incomplete in your life? Make a list and work on it! Chapter 40: Celebrate your wins! “Celebrate what you want to see more of.” Thomas Peters On your way forward to changing your life and reaching your goals it’s also important to be aware of your progress! Stop every now and then and celebrate your wins! Celebrate that you are better than you were last week! Don’t let your small victories go unnoticed! During the work with my clients, one of their consistent tasks is to celebrate their small wins. Every action step completed is worth celebrating. For every exercise in this book that you complete, reward yourself: buy yourself something you always wanted, go to the movies, do whatever feels good for you. If you learnt new habits and see great improvement, go on a short trip! You earned it! What will you reward yourself with for your progress so far? Will you have a spa day or a nice dinner? Will you go for a walk? 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____ Chapter 41: Be

happy NOW! “Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life” Aristotle Happiness is a journey, not a destination! Happiness is also a choice! It is an inner state, not an external state. Happiness is a habit, a state of mind. Happiness is so many things! But the decisive and most important thing is: What is happiness to YOU? You can be happy right now! You don’t believe me? Okay. Close your eyes for a moment. Think of a situation that made you really, really happy. Relive this situation in your mind. Feel it, smell it, hear it! Remember the excitement and joy! And? How did it feel? Did it work? How are you feeling now? Happiness doesn’t depend on your car, your house, or anything in the outside world. You can be happy right here, right now! Don’t miss out on the small pleasures of life, while you go after the big ones. Enjoy the beauty around you! Enjoy the small things! Don’t postpone life until you win the lottery or retire. Do the fun things now with what you have. Live each day fully as if it were your last! Start by being happy now. Smile as much as you can - even if you are not in the mood, because by smiling you’re sending positive signals to your brain. Fun and humor are essential for a good, long life, job satisfaction, personal fulfillment, personal relationships, and life balance. So laugh lots and have lots of fun! Which of these reasons do YOU have right now for being happy? • You have a great job. • You love my work. • You have great kids. • You have a great partner. • You have great parents. • You are free. • ... Questions What is happiness for you? (Be specific.) How many smiles have you gifted last week? How many smiles have you received? Action Steps: Remember the moments that made you the most happy in your life. Write down at least five moments that made you feel exceptionally great:

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ Re-live these moments with all their emotions and happiness. How does it feel? Chapter 42: Multitasking is a lie! “Most of the time multitasking is an illusion. You think you are multitasking, but in -reality you're actually wasting time switching from one task to another.” Bosco Tjan DO one thing at a time! The newest studies show that multitasking is actually less productive than doing one thing at a time with a concentrated effort. Some studies even imply that it makes you slower and – careful now – dumber! Even if you think you are multitasking you are actually doing one thing at a time, aren't you? You might have five tasks on your hands, but I'm sure you don't do all five things at the same time. You are writing an e-mail. You stop writing it and take a phone call. You hang up and continue writing the e-mail. A colleague comes to you with a question. You stop writing your email and answer the question and so on. So forget about multitasking. Focus on doing one thing at a time and do it with concentration! Chapter 43: Simplify your life “Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.” Confucius “The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.” Stephen Covey If you started applying some of the things that you have learnt until now in this book your life should already be a little simpler. Did you unclutter? Clean out your cupboard? Get rid of some toleration? Did you get rid of some of the people that drag you down? It was Stephen Covey who said that “most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important.” Do you know your priorities or are you just floating around handling whatever comes up, extinguishing fires all the time? Maybe it's time to make some time for the really important stuff in your life. A huge step towards simplifying your life is to concentrate on the important, on the activities that make sense for you, and find a way to eliminate or downsize the other activities. This can be done by automating, delegating, eliminating, or hiring help. If you want to do everything, in the end you'll get nothing done. Is your schedule too busy? Do you have too many commitments? Simplifying is about downsizing your life and learning to live with less. What can you downsize? Do you own too many clothes and items? Are you spending too much time cooking? Why not get help or just prepare simpler meals? Which of the family can support you? Can you simplify your financial life by online banking? Why not pay everything in cash and buy only things you really need? What about your online life? Do you spend too much time on social media or instant messaging? Then it might be time to get a little bit more disciplined. Set fixed times for when you are online and stick to them! Put a timer if necessary. Unclutter the desktop on your PC and your e-mail inbox. My client Marc did this and virtual uncluttering had the same effect on him as physical uncluttering. He let go of a big weight that he was carrying around and hence got a lot more energy. Check your e-mails only at certain times during the day and turn off the tone of e-mail and text delivery so that you are not distracted all the time. Now is also a good time to unsubscribe from journals that are just piling up and that you never read, and to ask yourself if you really need to read three different newspapers every day. Are you commuting to work? Maybe you can ask your boss to work from home once or twice a week. Are you working too many hours? See if the chapters on time management and getting organized in this book can help you to reduce your working time and find more time to do the things you love. And do yourself a favor: Don't bring your work home – not physically and not even mentally. If you didn't get it done at work, examine your working habits and change them if possible. This is extremely important. Stop thinking about work when you are home. Worrying about something that can't be changed at the moment is wasted energy. Think about what you can do about it tomorrow at work and forget about it for now. Questions: • Where do you see the excess in your life? • Do you have too many things you don't need or use? • Is your schedule always booked? • Do you have time in your schedule for yourself and the things you enjoy doing? • What are the most important tasks in your day-to-day life (home and/or work)? • Which of these tasks can be easily delegated, automated, or eliminated? Chapter 44: Smile more! “Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.” Thích Nhất Hạnh Smile! Even if you don't feel like it! Smiling improves the quality of your life, health, and relationships. If you don't do it already, start to smile consciously today. Although I can't confirm the study that is cited in many self-help books and blogs that 4 to 6-years old children laugh 300-400 times a day and adults only 15, it might well be true. Just take our personal experiences with kids and honestly it fits very well with the results of the study. What is confirmed is that laughing and smiling is extremely good for your health!

Science has demonstrated that laughing or smiling a lot daily improves your mental state and your creativity. So laugh more!! My wife and I make it a point to watch at least 1 hour of comedy or fun stuff a day and laugh until tears roll down our cheeks. We feel a lot better and full of energy since we started this habit! You try it out too! A study by Tara Kraft and Sarah Pressman at the University of Kansas demonstrated that smiling can alter your stress response in difficult situations. The study showed that it can slow your heart rate down and decrease stress levels – even if you are not feeling happy. Smiling sends a signal to your brain that things are all right. See also Chapter 60 “Fake it till you make it” and Chapter 61 “Change your Posture”. Just try it next time you feel stressed or overwhelmed, and let me know if it works. If you think you have no reason at all to smile, hold a pen or a chopstick with your teeth. It simulates a smile and might produce the same effects. If you need even more incentives for smiling, search for the study by Wayne University on smiling which has found a link between smiling and longevity! When you smile your entire body sends out the message “Life is great” to the world. Studies show that smiling people are perceived as more confident and more likely to be trusted. People just feel good around them. Further benefits of smiling are: • Releases serotonin (makes us feel good). • Releases endorphins (lowers pain). • Lowers blood pressure. • Increases clarity. • Boosts the functioning of your immune system. • Provides a more positive outlook on life (Try being a pessimist while you smile...). Exercise: For the next seven days stand in front of a mirror and smile to yourself for one minute. Do this at least three times a day and observe how you feel.

Chapter 45: Start power napping “When you can't figure out what to do, it's time for a nap.” Mason Cooley One of my absolute favorites. And at the same time, it's scientifically proven that a power nap at midday reenergizes, refreshes, and increases productivity. For me it was an absolute eye opener. During my most stressful period at work - when I was close to burning out, because the stress, and client threats and complaints were getting unbearable (sometimes I thought we were doing emergency surgery, yet we were just producing books.) - I started taking a power nap and the change was extraordinary. I was far less stressed and a lot calmer while hearing complaints and finding solutions. For a while, I slept for 25 to 30 minutes on a bench in a park close by, and later I just put two chairs together in the office and slept there. It felt as if my working day suddenly had two halves and midday was halftime. I started the “second half” always fresh and I also performed a lot more productively because the typical tiredness after lunch between 2 and 5 p.m. was gone. Are you going to try power napping? When will you start?

Chapter 46: Read for half an hour each day “The man who doesn't read has no advantage over the man that can't read.” Mark Twain “The man who doesn't read has no advantage over the man that can't read” says Mark Twain. If you read for half an hour a day that's three and a half hours a week and 182 hours a year! That's a lot of knowledge at your disposal. One of my first written goals during my coaching training was “to read more”. That was at a time that I hadn't read a book for years. Now I'm devouring an average of two books a week. I studied more in the last 6 months than in the whole 15 years before - including my International Business studies. So always have a book with you. If you substitute the habit of watching TV - or even worse - the news by reading a good book just before going to bed, you will derive the additional benefit of peace of mind. Another side effect is that you increase your creativity. So what are you waiting for? Make a list of 6 books that you will read in the next three months! If you don't know what to read check out my webpage for recommendations. But make that list NOW!

Chapter 47: Start saving “Personally, I tend to worry about what I save, not what I spend.” Paul Clitheroe This one is taught by all the wealth gurus. I read it the first time many years ago while reading Talane Miedaner's book “Coach yourself to success”. This single advice changed really everything for me and was the basis for leaving my job and following my dream many years later. Once you have saved enough living expenses for nine months to one year, things start changing. This is a huge advantage. For example, you stop depending on your boss's mood. You can stand up for yourself and say: “If you have problems with my work just tell me”. If at your current job people are not respecting your boundaries or even harassing you, in the worst case you can even quit your job and find another one. Or take a sabbatical. Furthermore you are not desperate when you're going to job interviews because you don't need the new job that badly. As a coach, for me it was and still is important to always have a reserve, so that I have the freedom to work only with my ideal clients and can afford to say “No” to clients that aren't a fit (which a coach

should do anyway, because coaching only works if the “chemistry” is right). Working out of a need for money surely wouldn’t bring as good results. Having a reserve of 9, 12, or even 18 months salaries (the more the better!) saved up just takes a lot of stress off and makes you feel a lot more secure and gives you peace of mind. To start saving you have to spend less or earn more. Most of the time it’s easier to cut down your spending and take a look at where your money is going. The best way is to automatically deduct the sum from your account at the beginning of the month and put it into a savings account. Questions: Will you give it a shot? When will you start saving?

Chapter 48: Forgive everybody who has wronged you (...and most of all yourself) “The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.” Mahatma Gandhi “People can be more forgiving than you can imagine. But you have to forgive yourself. Let go of what’s bitter and move on.” Bill Cosby Forgiveness is crucial along your way towards success, fulfillment and happiness! Personally I needed a long, long time to learn this! Why forgive someone if the person did me wrong and it's only their fault? The short answer: It's a selfish act! You're doing it for yourself, not for the other person! This is not about being right or wrong! This is about you being well and not losing a lot of energy! Anger and resentment and - even worse - reliving hate over and over again are huge energy drains! Who has sleepless nights? Who is full of anger and doesn't enjoy the present moment? You or the person you're not forgiving? Do yourself a favor and let go! When a journalist asked the Dalai Lama whether he is angry at the Chinese for occupying his country, he answered: “Not at all. I send them love and forgiveness. It's of no benefit at all to be angry at them. It will not change them, but I could get an ulcer from my anger and that would actually benefit THEM.” Adapt the attitude of the Dalai Lama toward the people who have done you wrong and see what happens. Let go, forgive the people that hurt you, forget them and move on. But be careful. If you say “I forgive them, but I don’t forget” you are not forgiving! This doesn't mean you can't put limits on others’ behavior or call them out on the spot. But afterwards understand the consequences and let go. Call up people that you have wronged or hurt, and apologize, and if that’s too uncomfortable write them a letter. Above all: forgive yourself! When you learn to forgive yourself it will be easier to forgive others. Just do it! The changes you will see when you manage to forgive others and above all yourself are amazing!

Action Steps: 1. Make a list of everybody that you haven’t forgiven. 2. Make a list of everything that you haven’t forgiven yourself for. 3. Work on the list. Questions: What would your life be like if you accepted yourself just as you are without self-criticism? What would your life be like if you forgave yourself and others?

Chapter 49: Arrive ten minutes early "The while we keep a man waiting, he reflects on our shortcomings." French Proverb Punctuality is a sign of discipline and respect for others. Without it, you might come across as slightly offensive, even if you are the nicest person in the world. Of course there are cultural differences. For example, while in Mexico and Spain people are very relaxed about punctuality, in Germany not being punctual is seen as highly unprofessional and might ruin your chances in any endeavor. Here is another great tip from Talane Miedaner’s book, “Coach yourself to success” which I have made into a habit: be punctual not to be especially polite, but instead for myself. This is because when I started being punctual I noticed that those ten minutes made me feel a lot better and gave me a lot of peace of mind. When I arrived at a place, it wasn’t in a rush and I actually had ten minutes to compose my thoughts and get used to the environment, and instead of feeling rushed I felt very relaxed. I also feel very comfortable, professional, and polite when I arrive 10 minutes early. In fact I now feel uncomfortable when I arrive just on time. Try it and see for yourself if it adds to your life or not!

Chapter 50: Speak less, Listen more! “When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.” Ernest Hemingway One of the most important tools of a coach and also one of the most important lesson from my coaching training is the ability and skill of "active listening" or listening profoundly. Listening profoundly means to listen to the person in front of you while giving your full attention. It means to quiet down the little voice in your head that comes up with advice and a solution thirty seconds after the person starts speaking. Many people are not listening to understand, but to answer! They are just waiting for their counterpart to pause so that they can begin to speak. If you are rehearsing what you are going to say next you are not listening! Don't interrupt. Listen until the person is finished. If you want to give advice, ask for permission. Most of the time the person who is speaking will come up with the solution - if you let her or him finish. Try it! You might take your conversations and relationships to a completely new level

when, people feel that they are listened to by you. Be a good listener! Chapter 51: Be the change you want to see in the world! “Be the change you want to see in the world” Mahatma Gandhi Are you trying to change other people? I’ve got news for you: You can stop right NOW. It’s impossible! You can’t help people who don’t want to get help and you just can’t change other people. So stop wasting precious energy and start concentrating on what you can do. And that is being an example! Be the change you want to see in the world! Have you heard about the idea that other people are like mirrors of us? That means that things we don’t like about them, are often things we have to work on ourselves and/or balance them out. When I was “stuck” I always got mad at the lack of manners in young people who didn’t offer their seats to elderly people on the train. Whenever I observed this, I used to start a negative inner dialogue about “where the world is going, this can’t be, young people have no manners, why should I get up, I’m 40 years old, blah blah.” Until one day I stopped complaining about the young people and offered my seat. Man, that felt good! I’m not responsible for other people’s behavior. I’m only responsible for my own behavior. So by being an example I win twice: Once by not having this inner nagging dialogue and secondly, because I feel like I did something right and that feels so good! And maybe I even served as an example to somebody else to offer his or her seat the next time. One of the greatest insights that my clients have is when they shift from “others have to change” to “what if I change, maybe then the other also changes”. You can literally see the light bulb going on over their heads. You cannot change others. The only thing you can do is accept them as they are and be the best example and person that you can be. Are you complaining about your partner, colleagues, or spouse? Be the best colleague or spouse possible! Are you complaining about your employees? Be the best boss possible! Do you want to be loved just as you are? Start with loving other people just the way they are. Questions: What do you want to change? Why not start with yourself? What will you do differently? Chapter 52: Stop trying and start doing! “Try not. Do or do not. There is no try.” Master Yoda, Star Wars You can do yourself a huge favor if you stop using the word “try”. Throw it out of your vocabulary! Trying implies failure. What would you rather have a person say to you if you put them in charge of a task: “I’ll try to get it done” or “I’ll get right on it”? Do or do not! When I was at the beginning of my coaching career I found out quick that those of my clients, who tried to do their homework, usually didn’t do it. Those who tried to find more time, didn’t find it. Those who tried to exercise three times a week didn’t do it. From then on when someone said to me “I’ll try”, I asked them “Will you do it or won’t you?” There is no try! It’s as Nike says, “Just do it!” If you do it and it works...great! Well done! If you do it and it doesn’t work. Ok. Let’s have a look at it. What went wrong? Did you learn something from the experience? What can you change to get the result you want? Go again! Just trying doesn’t take you anywhere. I’m in line with Master Yoda: Do or do not! Chapter 53: The Power of Affirmations “Here is a most significant fact—the subconscious mind takes any orders given it in a spirit of absolute FAITH, and acts upon those orders, although the orders often have to be presented over and over again, through repetition, before they are interpreted by the subconscious mind.” Napoleon Hill, Think and Grow Rich We already talked about the importance of positive self-talk. One very good technique is using Affirmations. By repeating positive statements many times a day you convince your subconscious mind to believe them. And once your subconscious mind is convinced, you start acting accordingly and “attract” circumstances into your life and see opportunities everywhere. It’s important to state them positively and in the present so that your subconscious mind can’t differentiate between if it’s already true or “only” imagined. Affirmations do have to be personal, positively stated, specific, emotionally charged, and in the present tense. Here are some examples: • Money comes to me easily and effortlessly. • Opportunities come into my life right now. • Speaking in front of a large audience is easy for me. • I am successful in my business. • I am healthy and fit. Use affirmations to attract the things you want in your life. The more you practice, the better you get. The first time you say, “Money comes to me easily and effortlessly”, your inner voice will still say, “Yeah right! No way!”. However after repeating it 200 times every day for a week you should have silenced your inner critical voice. Make your affirmations your permanent company. Repeat them as often as you like and have a look at what happens in your life. Nevertheless, there are some studies that claim that affirmations actually have negative effects, when your inner critic just doesn’t get convinced. If you can see no benefit at all, try other techniques like subliminal tapes or ask yourself other questions

such as, "Why am I so happy? Why is everything working out?" Noah St. John has written a whole book on the power of asking yourself the right questions. His "Book of Affirmations" might be able to help you! Chapter 54: Write it down 25 times a day "It's the repetition of affirmations that lead to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen." Muhammad Ali The purpose of this exercise is to help you to "hammer" your desires into your subconscious mind until you actually believe it's true! Remember how your subconscious mind works. To create a new belief in your belief-system you have to repeat over and over again. Even if this exercise gets boring, go on writing! So how does it work? 1) Pick your statement. 2) Make it personal, start with "I am". 3) Make the statement positive. 4) Use present tense. For example, "I am earning X thousand Euros a year." 5) Do this exercise first thing in the morning. It's good to get a small booklet for it. You can enhance your results by doing the exercise twice a day: in the morning and just before going to sleep. Chapter 55: Stop making excuses. "The only thing standing between you and your goal is the bullshit story you keep telling yourself as to why you can't achieve it." Jordan Belfort What happens when you start stepping out of your comfort zone? Due to fears and doubts, your mind comes up with the greatest excuses: it's not the right moment, I'm too young, I'm too old, it's impossible, I can't, and my favorite one, I have no money. Guess what people with money say: I have no time. "Yes, but my case is different", you might say. No, it's not! Believe me. The right moment never comes, so you might as well start here and now or wait forever. A crisis is always an opportunity. You're neither too young nor too old. Do a search on the Internet. It's full of stories of people who fulfill their dreams at an older age or start an enterprise at a young age. No money? Or just spending it in the wrong places by buying a new TV or video game console instead of investing it in your training? The funny thing is people who work with a serious financial advisor or financial coach suddenly find money! In the same way as all of my clients who thought they didn't have time found time. "Yes, but my case is different!" Well, you can keep telling that to yourself for some more time or you get rid of the excuses once and for all and start taking action, because one thing is for sure: If you keep doing what you are doing you will keep getting what you are getting! So what is it going to be? Questions: What are you going to choose from now on? Excuses or focused action? What are the excuses you are using to not change and stay in the same place? Chapter 56: Keep expectations low and then shine "Always deliver more than expected." Larry Page This is another biggie and probably the best time management trick I ever learnt. It changed my professional and private life in an extraordinary manner and reduced stress at work to virtually zero! Most of my stress at work came from deadlines and I or we as an enterprise were always struggling, which made days when our products were shipped to the clients - which was every day in high season - horrible and very stressful. We were always just in time or sometimes maybe a couple of hours late and I had to calm down angry and sometimes hysterical clients...until I started to underpromise: I figured out that over 90% of our late deliveries were just a question of a couple of hours, so I got the permission of my boss and started my own delivery schedule that only I received access to. If production gave me a delivery date of April 5th, I told the client April 10th. So if we delivered on April 7th, instead of an angry client threatening to fine or sue us, I suddenly had extremely grateful clients that thanked me for delivering three days early. Within a short time we reduced late deliveries from nearly 50% to virtually 0% over the next three years. As it worked out so well I started applying it to my whole life. When my boss gave me a project that took me 3 days, I told her I was going to need 5 days. If I had it completed after four days I looked great and if I took a little longer I was still on time - and without weekends at the office. If I knew I had to stay at work longer I told my wife I'll be home at 9 p.m. Coming home at 8:30 p.m. I looked like a hero. Careful here! This worked for me. My colleagues who knew the trick always warned me that one day I could encounter an unpleasant surprise in the cupboard...Well these are things we see in movies... Chapter 57: Design your ideal day "I'll see it when I believe it!" Dr. Wayne W. Dyer This is the favorite exercise of many coaches and the starting point for many coaching processes. Design your ideal day! What would you like your ideal life to be? What would you do if you had all the time and money in the world? Where would you live? Would you have a house or an apartment? What's your job? Who are you with? What are you doing? It's time to dream big again! Don't limit yourself. Imagine your ideal life vividly! How does it feel? Write it down in detail! By now you have learnt about the power of writing things down! Write down exactly

how you would like your ideal life to be. Have a special notebook or scrapbook for your ideal day/life creation. Many people even make a collage with photos that represent their dreams or ideals and put it up somewhere where they can see it daily. Very important: Make it FUN! It's very important to create this vision and have it in mind. So let's start: 1) No distractions. Sit down for an hour. Turn off everything. No cell phone, no radio, no TV. 2) Make it come alive! Describe everything. What time do you wake up? What kind of home do you live in? How's your health? Who is surrounding you? What's your job? Remember there are NO LIMITS! 3) Once a week, read your ideal day out with enthusiasm. Put a lot of emotion in it! Optional: You can also tape record yourself reading out your ideal day with emotion and listen to it every night before going to bed. Are you ready? Start writing out your ideal day right now!

Chapter 58: Accept your emotions "Your intellect may be confused, but your emotions will never lie to you." Roger Ebert Who is responsible of how you feel? YOU! Do you remember what we said about responsibility and choices? Do you remember that you are in control of your thoughts? Well, your emotions come from your thoughts. How? An emotion is energy in motion, a physical reaction to a thought. If you can control your thoughts, you are also capable of controlling your emotions. Don't be scared by them! Your emotions are part of you but they are not YOU. Accept them. Every emotion has its function. Fear protects you. Anger allows you to defend yourself, put limits on, and show others what bothers you. Sadness allows you to mourn and identify a lack. Happiness allows you to feel great, etc. It's very important to be connected to your emotions and know how to express them and not to neglect them. Don't fool yourself and say "I'm happy" if you're not. Instead analyze where the emotion comes from. Don't identify yourself with the emotion. I repeat, you are not your emotions! Become an observer and watch where your emotions lead you. Observe them and watch them pass by like the clouds on a blue sky. Accept them like you accept rainy days. When you look out of the window and it rains you don't think that it will rain all the time now, do you? You accept the rain as part of the meteorological climate – that doesn't mean that it rains all the time. You can do the same thing with anger, sadness, fear, etc. Just because they show up at one moment in time doesn't mean that they will be there forever. It helps to know that emotions are not bad or good. They just are. If you want to write something to get them out of your system – do it. They will pass. Emotions are messengers that we feel in our body. Listen to them! If you are hooked to an emotion, you are hooked to the past and you are losing the present moment. What is it you really need? Stop searching outside and start searching inside of you.

MANAGING EMOTIONS It's the skill to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions. You can use this on yourself or on others: 1) Perceive and express emotions (Permit yourself to feel it). 2) Facilitation of feelings (How can I feel a different emotion). 3) Understanding (Why is this emotion coming up). 4) Emotional adjustment (Now I know why the emotion was felt...). Once again, everything is a question of attitude (acceptance or refusal). YOU CHOOSE!

Advantages of managing of emotions:

- You recover better and faster from problems and setbacks.
- You achieve better and consistent professional performance.
- You are able to prevent those tensions from building up that destroy your relationships.
- You govern your impulses and conflicting emotions.
- You stay balanced and serene even in critical moments.

The first step towards get there is to identify your emotions and to explore them, which means to permit their expression and then analyze the problem that provoked them. Connect and talk to the emotion: breathe, relax, and relive the situation. Questions: Can you spot a "negative" emotion? What symptoms do you feel and in what part of your body? How do you feel? Be precise!

Chapter 59: Do it now! "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." Abraham Lincoln "Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone." Pablo Picasso Listen to Dr. Wayne W. Dyer when he says "Go for it now. The future is promised to no one." That unwritten e-mail, the old friend you want to reconnect with, the time you want to spend with your family: don't put it off any more. Do yourself a favor and stop the procrastination. It only causes anxiety! And most of the time you will find that things that you procrastinated for days causing you anxiety and a bad conscience are actually done in an hour or so and afterwards you feel so much lighter because you can forget about it. Procrastinating is avoiding something that should be done. It's putting things off hoping that they magically get better without actually doing anything about them. But things don't get better on their own. Most of the time, the cause of procrastination is some kind of fear. Fear of rejection, fear of failure, even fear of success. Another

cause is feeling overwhelmed. We procrastinate in three different ways: 1) Doing nothing instead of what we are supposed to do. 2) Doing something less important than what we should be doing. 3) Doing something more important than what we are supposed to do. As a freelancer and owner of his time, my client Marc struggled with procrastination a lot. It caused him a lot of anxiety and even cost him some sleepless nights. It was always the same pattern. He procrastinated and felt burdened and anxious. In our coaching sessions he admitted that some of the stuff that causes this anxiety, he could actually finish in one hour! He became aware that he was paying a high price for procrastinating, and in the future when tempted to procrastinate he decided to ask himself: what price will I be paying for procrastinating this task? Is it worth it to be burdened by and lose my sleep over a task that I could have finished in one or two hours? So do whatever it is that you have on your mind right now. Don't start tomorrow or next week! Start NOW! Questions: What are you procrastinating? Are you productive or are you just being busy? What is really important right now?

Chapter 60: Fake it till you make it "If you want a quality, act as if you already have it." William James Act as if! Act as if you have already achieved your goal. Act as if you already have the quality of life, the lifestyle, the job etc. If you want to have more self-confidence act as if you already have it. Speak like a self-confident person, walk like a self-confident person, have the body posture of a self-confident person. (See Chapter 61). Your subconscious can't differentiate between reality and imagination. Use this to your advantage by acting "as if" you already have a strength, a character trait, etc. In Neuro Linguistic Programming and coaching, this is called modeling. A good way to become successful is to observe and copy already successful people. Use this for any character trait you want. Start acting "as if" and see what happens. Fake it till you make it! Questions: Which quality do you want? How would you act if you already had that quality? How would you speak, walk, behave, etc.?

Chapter 61: Change your posture "Act the way you'd like to be and soon you'll be the way you'd like to act." Bob Dylan This is an exercise taken from Neuro-linguistic Programming which proclaims that changing your posture also changes your mind. People I tell this to usually think that I'm joking. But before writing this off as nonsense... try it out! When you feel sad and depressed you usually look at the floor, keep your shoulders down, and adopt the posture of a sad person, right? Now try the following just for a moment: stand upright, shoulders up, chest out, and hold your head up high - you can even exaggerate it by looking up. How does it feel? If you smile, laugh and walk with your head held high, you will realize that you feel a lot better. It's impossible to feel sad walking around like that, isn't it? And there has been more research conducted on this subject. A study by Brion, Petty, and Wagner in 2009 found that people who were sitting straight had higher self-confidence than people sitting slumped over! There is also an amazing TED Talk by Amy Cuddy called "Your body language shapes who you are" about the research she did together with Dana Carney at Harvard University. The study has shown that holding "power postures" for 2 minutes creates a 20 percent increase in testosterone (which boosts confidence) and a 25 percent decrease in cortisol (which reduces stress). Imagine this. If you have an important presentation, reunion, or competition, just take on the posture of a confident person for two minutes. Put your hands on your hips and spread your feet (think Wonder Woman) or lean back in a chair and spread your arms. Hold the posture for at least two minutes...and see what happens! Watch Amy Cuddy's TED-Talk !

Chapter 62: Ask for what you really want "Ask and you shall receive" Matthew, 7, 7 Just ask! It's far better to ask and get rejected than to not ask and go along with the thought "if I had only asked". Ask for a better table in the restaurant, ask for the upgrade at the airport, and ask for the salary raise you have been waiting for. ASK! You already have the "No" for an answer, but maybe you will see some surprises. If you ask you at least have the opportunity to get what you want. Ask your loved one for what you want. Your boss, your friends. Don't expect them to read your mind! Think about it! Aren't many things that hurt us based on the too high expectations that we had? This happened to me mostly in my romantic relationships. I was disappointed many times because my loved one just wasn't able to read my mind. That is, until I said, "That's it" and finally started asking for what I wanted. Another example is our boss! We are putting in so much work and are waiting for this raise or promotion to come, but it doesn't come! Ask for it! What's the worst thing that could happen? You already don't have it. You already haven't gotten the raise or the promotion! If you don't ask it will surely stay like this. If you ask you will at least get an answer and know where you are at. When you

ask keep the following things in mind: 1) Ask with the expectation to receive. 2) Know that you can receive it. 3) Remember to keep your thoughts, feelings, and inner dialogue positive. 4) Ask the person who is in charge. 5) Be specific. 6) Ask repeatedly like you did when you were a kid. Action Steps: 1) Write a list of all of the things that you want and don't ask for. 2) Start asking. Work on it.

Chapter 63: Listen to your inner voice "The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift." Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein already knew about the great gift our intuition can become for us! Listen to your inner voice, go with your hunches. It's not easy to distinguish your intuition from the "other" little voice in your head – the one that comes from rationality and often tells you what you should do or can't do. You will need to practice a little. Start with little things. For example, which road to take to work each morning, or whether to take your sunglasses with you although it's a totally cloudy day. I remember practicing my intuition when I went to high school. There were two ways to get to school and both had a train crossing with trains coming from different directions (both train crossings were very rarely closed at the same time). I made it a game to consult with my inner voice which way to go - sometimes following the intuition, and sometimes going against it - just to get to stop in front of the closed train crossing. Some weeks ago I was driving on the German Autobahn and I had two options to get to my destination. I wanted to take one road, but I had a very strong hunch to take the other one, even though it looked very crowded. Thirty minutes later I heard on the radio that there was a 25 km traffic jam on the other autobahn! We would have been stuck right there! I thanked my inner voice right away...! You probably already have experienced intuition. Did it ever happen to you that you thought of a person and just a second later the phone rings and it's that person? Or you think of somebody and a minute later you run into them at the shopping center? The more you practice and trust in this inner voice, the stronger it gets, the more results you are going to see, and the easier it will be to distinguish from the other little rational voice in your head. It's amazing! Meditation has been proven to be a great tool to get closer to your intuition. Just sit still for five or ten minutes and listen to what's coming up. Once you've learned to listen to your intuition act on it immediately! It can be a hunch to write an e-mail, or to talk to somebody. If it comes in the form of an idea, act on the idea.

Chapter 64: Write in your journal "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself." Leo Tolstoy

I wouldn't miss this exercise for the world! An important exercise that I recommend to all of my clients: have a journal and reflect on your days. This is about taking a couple of minutes at the end of your day and to take a look at what you did well, get some perspective, relive the happy moments, and write everything down in your journal. By doing this, you will receive an extra boost of happiness, motivation, and self-esteem every morning and evening! It has the positive side effect that just before sleeping, you will be concentrating your mind on positive things, which has a beneficial effect on your sleep and your subconscious mind. Your focus is on the positive things of the day and gratitude instead of the things that didn't work well which probably would keep you awake, and by now you know how crucial that is! For my clients and also for myself this little exercise has led to enormous changes in our wellbeing. Make an effort to answer the following questions each night before sleeping and write them in your journal:

- What am I grateful for? (Write 3 -5 points)
- What 3 things have made me happy today?
- What 3 things did I do particularly well today?
- How could I have made today even better?
- What is my most important goal for tomorrow?

Don't worry if the words don't flow right away when you start his exercise. Like all other things your journaling will get better with practice. If you are blocked and can't think of anything, just hold on for five minutes longer. Write what comes to mind without thinking and don't judge it. Don't worry about your style or mistakes. Just write! Do this every day for a month and observe the changes that take place! A regular notebook or calendar should do. I'm using a lovely little book called THE FIVE MINUTE JOURNAL. Have a look at it here.

Chapter 65: Stop whining! "Never tell your problems to anyone... 20% don't care and the other 80% are glad you have them." Lou Holtz "It is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness." Confucius

Complaining is poison in your desire to become happier. It's an absolutely useless behavior that encourages self-pity and doesn't accomplish anything. Complainers are not attractive at all. It's the mentality of a victim and that isn't you any more, is it? Stop cursing the darkness and light a candle. Stop complaining about not having time and get up an hour earlier (Chapter 25). Stop complaining about

your weight and start exercising (Chapter 75). Stop blaming your parents, your teachers, your boss, the government, or the economy, and take responsibility for your life (Chapter 3). It's nobody's fault that you go on smoking, that you eat unhealthy food, or that you gave up on your dream, but your own. It's you who pushes the snooze button instead of getting up half an hour earlier and who chooses fear over risk. Don't blame others for not living a satisfying life. You own your life! You can do anything you want with it. The sooner you get this, the sooner you can move on in the direction of your dreams. Remember where to keep your focus! Complaining about your present circumstances will put your focus on them and attract more of what you don't like. You have to get out of this vicious circle and concentrate on what you want instead (Chapter 12). Look inside yourself, encourage your positive ambitions and your will to succeed. Now go and create the circumstances you want. Start taking decisions and start living. Action Steps: 1) Make a list of all your complaints. 2) What have your complaints achieved? 3) Transform your complaints into requests. Chapter 66: Become a receiver! "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Mark Twain Do you find it difficult to accept a gift or a compliment? Well, this stops NOW! You have to become a receiver! It's very important to accept gifts and things with joy and it's also the secret to getting more of what you want. If you get a present and you're saying "Oh. That's not necessary", you are taking away the joy of giving a gift from the other person, and the same thing goes for compliments. Take a closer look at this behavior! Is there a hidden feeling of "I don't deserve this", or "I'm not worth it" behind the "That's not necessary?". There is no need for justification. Don't diminish the pleasure of giving for the other person. Just say "Thank you!" From today on I dare you to practice your "receiving skills". If somebody gives you a compliment, accept it graciously with a "Thank you". Own it. Don't return it. You may say: "Thank you! I'm happy you feel that way!" and let the other person enjoy the experience. It will help you a lot and take your self-esteem to a whole new level if you manage to eradicate the following behaviors: • Rejecting compliments. • Making yourself small. • Giving credit to others although you have earned it. • Not buying something nice because you think you don't deserve it. • Looking for the negative if someone does something good for you. Action Steps: 1) From now on just say "Thank you!" for every gift and compliment you receive! (Don't explain or justify) 2) Analyze if you have any of the five behaviors mentioned above. If yes, work on it/them. Chapter 67: Stop spending time with the wrong people! "Whatever you do you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there will always be someone to tell you that you are wrong." Ralph Waldo Emerson "The person who says it can't be done shouldn't interrupt the person who is doing it!" Chinese proverb WATCH WHO YOU ARE SPENDING YOUR TIME WITH! Jim Rohn said that "You are the average of the five persons you spend the most time with", so you better take this seriously! Choose to spend more time with people who bring out the best in you, who motivate you, who believe in you. Be around people who empower you. Remember that emotions and attitudes are contagious. People around you can be the springboard to motivate yourself, gain courage, and help you take the right actions, but on the other hand can also drag you down, drain your energy, and act as brakes in the achieving of your life goals. If you are around negative people all the time, they can convert you into a negative and cynical person over time. They might want to convince you to stay where you are and keep you stuck, because they value security and don't like risk and uncertainty. So stay away from the naysayers, the blamers, the complainers. The people who are always judging or gossiping and talking bad about everything. And as Steve Jobs said at the famous Stanford address "Don't let the noise of the opinions of others drown your own inner voice." It will be difficult for you to grow and thrive, if people around you want to convince you of the contrary. And what do you do if it's people close to you? The only thing you can work on is becoming a better person yourself. If you grow and develop, soon negative people will turn away from you because you don't serve their purposes any more. They need somebody who shares their negativity and if you don't do that they will look for somebody else. If that doesn't work you seriously have to ask yourself the question if you should start to spend less time with them or stop seeing them at all. But that's a decision you have to make. In my whole life I automatically separated people from my life that didn't support me and I never regretted it, although it wasn't easy! After my own coaching training - when I reinforced all the principles that you are learning in this book and changed myself - some of my colleagues had no other explanation than actually thinking that I had joined a sect!

Action Steps: 1. Make a list of all the people you have in your life and are spending time with. (Members of your family, friends, colleagues). 2. Analyze who is positive for you and who drags you down. 3. Spend more time with the positive people and stop seeing the toxic people (blamers, complainers) in your life, or at least spend less time with them. 4. Choose to be around positive people who support you. 5. Watch Steve Jobs' Stanford commencement address [here](#). Chapter 68: Live your own life "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary." Steve Jobs Actually the Steve Jobs quote already says everything! It's difficult to add something to his wise words. Live the life you want and not the life other people expect of you. Don't worry about what your neighbors or other people think of you, because if you care too much about what they say, there will be a moment when you don't live your own life any more, but the life of other people. Listen to your heart. Do the things you want to do, and not necessarily those things that everybody else does. Have the courage to be different! Paulo Coelho reminds us, "If someone isn't what others want them to be, the others become angry. Everyone seems to have a clear idea of how other people should lead their lives, but none about his or her own. " Action Step: In what aspect are you not living your life right now? Make a list! Chapter 69: Who is number one? "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." Eleanor Roosevelt Love yourself like your neighbor! Many times you see the good in others and fail to see it in yourself! The most important relationship that you have in this life is the one you have with yourself! If you don't like yourself, how can you expect others to like you? How can you expect to love others, if you don't love yourself first? We are going to work on your most important relationship. Most of the problems my clients come to me for depend directly or indirectly on self-confidence. The salary raise they don't get, the appreciation they don't get, the relationship they don't find. So I usually work with them on their self-confidence while working towards their goal. How do you gain more self-confidence? First of all accept yourself as you are. You don't have to be perfect to be great! Learn to spend time with the most important person in your life – YOU. Enjoy going to the movies with the best company you can imagine: YOU! French writer and philosopher Blaise Pascal says "All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone." Dr. Wayne Dyer adds "You cannot be lonely if you like the person you're alone with." Get comfortable with spending some alone time. Find a place where you can disconnect from the speedy everyday life. It can't be mentioned often enough: Accepting yourself is a key element of your wellbeing. Recognize your value as a person. Know that you earn respect. If you make a mistake, don't beat yourself up over it, accept it, and promise yourself to do your best to not repeat it. That's it. There is absolutely no use in beating yourself up about something that you can't change. Be selfish! What? What am I saying? Yes you read right: Be selfish! I don't mean in an egocentric way, but by being well within yourself so that you can transmit this wellness to your whole environment. If you are not well within yourself you can't be a good husband, wife, son, daughter, or friend. But if you feel great you can transmit these feelings to your whole environment and everybody benefits. Exercises to boost your self-confidence: 1) The Journaling Exercise from Chapter 64 2) Make a list of your successes and achievements. 3) Make a list of all of the things you are doing great. 4) Mirror exercise (Tell yourself how great you are in front of a mirror! It may feel strange at first, but you'll get used to it). 5) Increase somebody else's self esteem. Chapter 70: Your best investment "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." Benjamin Franklin "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." Derek Bok The best thing you can do for your further personal and professional growth is to invest in yourself. Commit yourself to becoming the best person you can be. Invest around 5-10% of your income in training, books, CDs, and other ways of personal development. Stay curious and eager to learn new things and better yourself. A nice side effect of investing in your personal growth is that while you become a wiser person, you might also become more valuable for your company. There are so many possibilities: you could learn training that improves your negotiating skills, time management, financial planning, and much more. In a two or four-hour workshop you can learn powerful strategies or tools that transform your life. Or you can decide to go all in and get a life coach and really start working on yourself. One of my best investments

in myself ever was hiring a coach. He helped me to get unstuck, get clear about what I really want from my life, and change my relationship with fear completely. You can also start in a less expensive way by reading more or listening to a learning CD or a course. I made it a habit to read at least one book a week, buy a new course every two months, and sign up for at least two seminars or trainings a year. What are you going to do? Remember that baby steps count, too! Action Step: Write down what you will commit to in the next 12 months: I, _____ will read _____ book(s) a month, listen to _____ learning CDs or audiobooks per month, sign up for _____ training(s) in the next six months. Date: _____ Signature: _____

Chapter 71: Stop being so hard on yourself “Because one believes in oneself, one doesn't try to convince others. Because one is content with oneself, one doesn't need others' approval. Because one accepts oneself, the whole world accepts him or her.” Lao Tse It's easy to fall into the habit of self-criticism because of past mistakes or because things didn't work out as we wanted them to. But does it serve you? No, NADA, zip! It's time you accept something here: You are not perfect! You never will be, and - the best thing is - YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE! So once and for all stop being so hard on yourself! This is one of the top reasons that prevents people from living a happy and fulfilled life. Did you know that a lot of the misery we have in our life is because we subconsciously think we have to punish ourselves for something? I'm glad I left the habit of exaggerated self-criticism and self-punishment behind a long time ago. I'm just conscious that I'm doing the best that I can at any time. That doesn't mean I don't analyze the many mistakes I made. If I can correct them I do; if I can't correct them - I accept them, let go, and promise myself not to repeat them, because I know it's only a problem if I keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again. Is that too difficult? Do you want to know the magic recipe? It's not for sale in any pharmacy and it's free! Ready? 1) Accept yourself as you are! 2) Forgive yourself! Love yourself! 3) Take extremely good care of yourself! (Chapter 73) That's it! Easy, isn't it? Start NOW! Ask yourself the following questions: In what areas of your life are you being too hard on yourself? What benefits do you get from being too hard on yourself? Chapter 72: Be your authentic self “We have to dare to be ourselves, however frightening or strange that self may prove to be.” May Sarton “To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” Ralph Waldo Emerson The most successful people are the ones who are authentic. They are not playing any roles. They are who they are. What you see is what you get! They know their strengths and their weaknesses. They have no problem in being vulnerable and taking responsibility for their mistakes. Neither do they fear judgment of others. Don't let the world tell you who you are supposed to be. Your fake self is who you are when you want to please everyone else. That's when you have a mask on and are keen to get feedback from the people who surround you such as colleagues, friends, neighbors, etc. Don't play any roles! Stop thinking about what others want of you, or might think of you, and give yourself permission to be your authentic self. The rewards are awesome! Funnily enough, you will notice that the more you are yourself, the more people will be attracted to you! Try it out! Questions: 1) On a scale of 0-10 how would you quantify your level of authenticity? An eight? Congratulations! You are quite close. Keep on improving! A four? Well there is some work to do, but going through the exercises in this book you will help you get closer! 2) How many roles do you play? 3) Who are you when you are alone? 4) When was the last time you felt authentic? Chapter 73: Pamper yourself “You can change the way people treat you by changing the way you treat yourself.” Unknown. This is one of my favorite exercises for my clients! Write down a list of 15 things that you can do to pamper yourself and then do one of them every other day for the next two weeks. This exercise is truly miraculous! (Examples: read a good book, go to the movies, get a massage, watch a sunrise, sit by the water, etc.) Once you start treating yourself well, it will do miracles for your self-confidence and self-esteem! Start doing it NOW!

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15 _____ Chapter 74: Treat your body like the temple it is! "To keep the body in good health is a duty, otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear." Buddha Isn't it ironic? If you listen to people most of us say that health is the most important thing in our lives; nevertheless many people drink, smoke, eat junk food, or even take drugs, and spend most of their free time on the couch without any physical activity. Remember – it's easy! A healthier life is only a decision away. Decide NOW to live healthier. Follow a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and stay or get in physical shape so that your brain has all the nutrition it needs to produce a positive lifestyle. Take care of your body, because if the body is not well the mind doesn't work well either. Here are some examples: • Eat more fruit and vegetables. • Reduce your intake of red meat. • Drink at least 2 liters of water each day. • Eat less! • Stop eating junk food. • Get up early. • Action Steps: What will you do now for a healthier lifestyle? Write down at least 3 things:

Chapter 75: Exercise at least 3 times a week

"Those who do not find time for exercise will have to find time for illness." Edward Smith Stanley I think I'm not coming to you with breaking news here if I tell you how important exercise is for you. And even if we all know about the importance of exercise, there are many of us who just don't do it. The best excuse is always: "I have no time". But what if somebody were to tell you that your life depends on it? And if you don't start exercising right now you will be dead in a month? You will surely find time, wouldn't you? So time is not the problem. I also won't put a lot of work into convincing you how important exercise is and how you can find time, because you already know that. I will just list the benefits that exercising three to five times a week will bring you. And then - if you want - you will find the time. 1. Exercising will keep you healthy. 2. Exercising will help you lose weight, which will improve your health and also make you look better. 3. Exercising will make you feel better and you will have a lot of energy. 4. Once the kilos start dropping there is a big chance that your self-esteem will go up. I can confirm that. 5. Problems with falling asleep? Exercise for 30 minutes a couple of hours before you go to sleep and see what it does for you. 6. Have you ever noticed that exercise significantly reduces stress? First of all there are the endorphins, but the other thing is that you just might get your mind off the things that were stressing you out. Furthermore, studies show that regular exercise makes you happier, can reduce the symptoms of depression, reduces the risk of disease (heart, diabetes, osteoporosis, high cholesterol, etc.), lowers the risk of a premature death, and improves your memory, and many more. Are you in? One last thing: Don't force yourself to exercise. Enjoy it. Look for a recreational activity that fits you and that you enjoy doing such as swimming, for example. Even walking an hour a day can make a difference. (Chapter 34) Action steps: 1) Find some studies about the amazing benefits of exercise on the Internet. 2) When will YOU start exercising? 3) If you think you don't have time, go back to the Chapters about finding time.

Chapter 76: Take action. Make things happen "Whatever you do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius and power and magic in it." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do." Edward Everett Hale One of the secrets to success and happiness in life is to make things happen. Just talking about it is not enough. It's the results that count or as Henry Ford said, "You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do." Without action, there are no results. Without results, there is no feedback. Without feedback, there is no learning. Without Learning, we can't improve. Without improving, we can't develop our full potential. C.G. Jung said it correctly, "You are what you do, not what you say you'll do." There are too many people who want to change the world yet never picked up a pen to start writing a book or an article or did anything about it. It's a lot easier to complain about our politicians, than to start pursuing a political career or become more active in politics. Your life is in your hands so start acting on your ideas. You don't have to go for the big challenges at once. By now you have learned that doing small things consistently on a daily basis can get you great results. Dare to do the things you want and you will find the power to

do them. But by all means **START NOW!** The biggest difference between people who reach their goals and people who stay stuck is **ACTION**. People who reach their goals are doers who are taking action consistently. If they make a mistake they learn from it and go on; if they are rejected they try again. People who stay stuck just talk about what they are going to do and don't walk their talk. Don't wait any longer! The right moment never comes! Just start with what you have and go one step at a time. Do as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." Action Step: What will you start **TODAY**? Chapter 77: Enjoy more The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it." Thích Nhất Hạnh "Real generosity towards the future lies in giving all to the present." Albert Camus It's very important to enjoy the present moment! If you don't then life goes by and you don't even notice it, because you are never right here, in the moment! When you're working you think of the weekend, on the weekend you think of all the things you have to do on Monday, when you're eating the appetizer you think of dessert, and when you eating dessert you think of the appetizer - with the result that you don't fully enjoy neither the one nor the other. And living like this you never get to enjoy your point of power, the only moment that counts - the present moment. Eckart Tolle wrote an entire book about "The power of NOW" which I highly recommend to you. Think about it: Do you have any problem **RIGHT NOW** just being in the moment? Do you constantly live with guilt for your past actions and with fear of an unknown future? Many people are constantly worrying about things in the past that they can't change or things in the future that – even funnier - mostly never happen, and meanwhile they miss out on the **NOW** or as Bill Cosby puts it, "The past is a ghost, the future a dream. All we ever have is now." Just be present and enjoy the journey. Action Step: Remind yourself to be more in the present moment! (My friend David wears his wristwatch on his right arm. This reminds him to be in the present moment whenever he watches his left arm for the time and notices it's not there.) Chapter 78: Stop judging! "Before you accuse me, take a look at yourself." Eric Clapton "Before you start pointing fingers, make sure your hands are clean." Bob Marley Judging goes hand in hand with the vices of blaming and complaining! On your way to a happier, more fulfilling life that's another bad habit you have to leave behind! Accept others without judging them, and without expectations. I know that's easier said than done, but there is no way around it! Think of it this way: each time you're judging somebody you are actually judging yourself. Isn't it true that the things that bother us the most about others are actually the things that bother us the most about ourselves? Action Step: Make a list of what bothers you the most about others. Chapter 79: A random act of kindness every day "One of the most difficult things to give away is kindness; usually it comes back to you." Anonymous "The smallest good deed is better than the grandest intention." Anonymous How can you make the world a little bit better today and every day? Why not be nice to a stranger every day? Be creative! Every now and then I pay for two coffees instead of the only one that I drank and tell the server to save it, in case somebody needs it and can't pay for it entirely. In the supermarket if I get a 10% discount voucher for my next shopping trip I usually give it to the person behind me in line. You can offer your seat in the train or subway to somebody or even just gift somebody with a smile. Acknowledge people sincerely, treat people great, say thank you genuinely, hold the door open for somebody, help somebody whose hands are full to carry something, or store away somebody's heavy hand luggage on your next flight. Be creative! Start today! The great thing is: "What goes around comes around." So when you start doing random acts of kindness, more kindness is coming back to you! Doing good begins to become the same thing as feeling good. The good that we do for others really does have the power to change us. If you want to improve the world start with yourself! Be the change you want to see in the world! Do at least **ONE** random act of kindness every day. Positively and significantly impact the lives of other people. **PAY IT FORWARD!** Action Step: Commit yourself to doing one random act of kindness a day for the next 2 weeks. Observe what happens, but don't expect anything in return! Chapter 80: Solve your problems, all of them "Most people spend more time and energy going around problems than in trying to solve them." Henry Ford Solve your problems. Face them. Because if you are running away from them they will come after you. If you don't solve them they will repeat themselves over and over again until you learn something and are ready to move on. For example, if you change jobs because of problems with a colleague that you didn't face, in another job you may face the same challenge with another

person. This will go on until you learn something out of the situation and solve the problem once and for all. Did you notice that you may continue to encounter the same set of problems in multiple romantic relationships until you stop and solve the recurring problems? Another giant waste of energy is to dance around problems and responsibilities instead of somebody taking ownership and starting to solving problems. I hear this over and over again from my clients: they procrastinate, they dance around the problem, and end up with a high level of anxiety and feeling really bad. Once they decide to go against all their fears and confront and solve the problem, they feel much better and find out that it was a lot less painful to face the problem and solve it, than the whole process of dancing around it. Stop searching for the solution to your problems “out there”, and start looking for it within you. Questions: How can you be different? What can you do differently? What can YOU do to solve the problem? Action step: 1) Make a list of all your problems and start working on their solutions. 2) Examine your problems and 3) Look for patterns (Do the same things happen to you over and over again?) Chapter 81: The Power of Meditation “All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” Blaise Pascal The benefits of meditation are widely known by now. More and more people have started practicing it. Its practitioners highlight its usefulness in calming the mind after a stressful day, and in warding off anxiety, anger, insecurity, and even depression. Other studies point out that meditation can reduce blood pressure and pain response. It’s an easy way of stress combat and quieting our information-overloaded mind. Just sitting still for 15 to 20 minutes once a day can already make a difference and help you to recharge. If you do it twice a day...even better! Here is how to begin your habit of daily meditation: 1. Look for a space, where you won’t be disturbed and just be in silence for 15 to 20 minutes. Make it a ritual. It’s beneficial to practice in the same spot and at the same time every day. Do you remember the magic of the early morning hours? Maybe that’s also a good time for your meditation. 2. Before you start use the power of affirmations to get yourself in a relaxed state by saying for example, “I’m now focused and calm.” 3. Set your alarm clock for twenty minutes so that you are not worried about when to stop your meditation, and are fully able to concentrate. 4. Sit or lie down and shut your eyes. You can also leave your eyes open and focus on one point in the room or on nature if you are sitting facing a window. 5. While focusing, concentrate on your breath and start relaxing. 6. When your mind wanders let it wander. Don’t resist. See your thoughts passing by like clouds in the blue sky and just empty your mind. See your mind still like a lake without the smallest ripple.

Meditating for 20 minutes a day will surely provide you with great results once you have made it a habit. The six steps mentioned above are only a suggestion. Meditation can’t be done wrong and only you will know what works best for you. There is also a lot of information on the Internet, as well as classes and seminars that may be available close to where you live. The most important thing is – as everything in this book –TO TAKE ACTION! Try it out!

Chapter 82: Listen to great music – daily! “Life is one grand, sweet song, so start the music.” Ronald Reagan An easy way to feel happy instantly is to listen to your favorite music! Make a soundtrack of your all-time favorites and listen to them, dance, sing! It might feel stupid at first, but doing this every day will be very beneficial! What are your top 5 favorite songs of all time? 1. _____

2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____ Why not make a

playlist on your iPod, phone, or PC and listen to them right now! Do it NOW! Come on! How did you feel after listening to your favorite song? Any changes in your mood? What would happen if you made this a daily habit?

Chapter 83: No worries “If a problem is fixable, if a situation is such that you can do something about it, Then there is no need to worry. If it's not fixable, then there is no help in worrying. There is no benefit in worrying whatsoever.” Dalai Lama XIV Many people are constantly worrying. They worry about things that happened in the past that they can’t change, things in the future that they have no influence over, or about economy, wars, and politics which they have no control over. Even funnier is that most of the catastrophes that you are worrying about turn out to be a lot less horrible in reality or just never happen. Mark Twain was right when he said, “I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened.” Keep in mind: it doesn’t matter how much you worry, it will change neither the past nor the future! Also, worrying usually doesn’t make things any better, does it? Instead, it will drag you down

and you will lose the present moment. Can you already grasp what a waste of time and energy worrying is or shall I give you another example? This example is from Robin Sharma's book "Who Will Cry When You Die?" A Manager who did one of the exercises Robin suggests at his seminars identified the following: 54% of his worries were about things that would probably never happen. 26% were related to past actions that couldn't be changed. 8% were related to other people's opinions which he didn't even care about. 4% were personal health questions that he had already resolved. Only 6% referred to questions that needed his attention. Identifying his problems and dropping the ones he couldn't do anything about or which were just draining energy, the man eliminated 94% of the worries that had tortured him so much. Action step: Make a list of your worries: Which ones are related to the past? Which ones are related to the future? Which ones are outside your control? Which ones can you actually do something about? Chapter 84: Use your travel time wisely "Time is what we want most, but what we use worst." William Penn How much time are you spending every day in the car or public transport on your way to work? Statistics say it's between 60 and 90 minutes per working day! That means in a month we are talking between 20 to 30 hours. Who said, "I don't have enough time."? We just found you another 20 to 30 hours to read (when on a bus or train), or listen to audio books in your car. What if you really spent that time listening to empowering CDs, mp3s, or reading inspirational books instead of listening to the negative news from the radio or reading about it in the newspaper? Questions: Are you ready to try it out? When will you start? Do it for two weeks and let me know how your life changed. Chapter 85: Spend more time with your family "Family is not an important thing, it's everything." Michael J. Fox Walt Disney once said, "A man should never neglect his family for business." Yet I have to dedicate an extra chapter to this one. Just to make sure that you don't skip it! It's kind of sad that I have to mention it, but when I interview leaders and executives most of the time what comes up is that they just cannot (?) spend a lot of time with their families! In Bronnie Ware's book (See also Chapter 94), one of the top regrets of the dying is to not have spent more time with their families and having spent too much time at the office! Don't become one of them and start making time for your family NOW! And if you are with the family...do everybody a favor and BE FULLY with the family. During our vacation in the Florida Keys last year I saw an absurd situation. A family was on a sightseeing walk with the father running ahead in the front making a business phone call, while the wife and daughter were following looking kind of sad which is understandable. It was even a Sunday! It seemed like something taken out of a comic book, and yet it was very real and sad to see. WAKE UP! Value your family and friends. They are your constant source of love and mutual support, which increases your self-esteem and boosts your self-confidence. Questions: How are you going to find more time for your family? (Tip: Use the Time Management tips in this book) What will you stop doing to find more time? Chapter 86: Don't be the slave of your phone "Men have become the tools of their tool." Henry David Thoreau Going back to the busy father mentioned in the last chapter, this tip comes in handy. Don't always pick up your phone each time it rings; your phone is supposed to be for YOUR convenience, not for those who call you. Give yourself the freedom to continue what you are doing and let the call go to voice mail. Some time ago I always got very anxious when I didn't take a call. I thought I had missed something. My roommate Pol was much cooler about it. He only answered the phone when he wanted to, when he felt like it, and if not - he just went on doing what he was doing without bothering. I started liking the idea and worked on adapting this "Zen-like" mentality telling myself that "They will call again." I also learnt that if it's a really important call the caller will not give up and probably call five times within 3 minutes. Action Step: Try it out! Don't be a slave of your phone and leverage voicemail. Chapter 87: How to deal with problems "Every problem has in it the seeds of its own solution. If you don't have any problems, you don't get any seeds." Norman Vincent Peale Do you have many problems? Congratulations!!! And I'm not kidding! You have many opportunities to grow, because a problem is always an opportunity to grow by learning from it! So let's have a better look at this. Over 20 years ago, when I started working at Disneyworld in Orlando, we – the newbies – were taught that the word "problem" doesn't exist in the vocabulary of a Disney Cast Member: "We don't have problems, we only have challenges here". Dr. Lair Ribeiro writes that "Your problems are your best friends" and Leadership Guru Robin Sharma asks us to see our problems as blessings! So what are problems now? Challenges, blessings, friends? Or all three of them? Isn't life just facing one

problem after another? What makes all the difference is how you face it and how you learn from it! When you start learning from your problems life gets much better. Look back at the problems you had in your life. Didn't each one of it have something positive? Maybe a loss in business saved you from an even bigger loss, because you learnt from it. In hard times it can be very beneficial for you to adapt the belief that life/God/the universe only puts a problem in your way if you are able to solve it! Questions: 1) What problems do you have in your life right now that you haven't found a solution for yet? 2) Make a list of your problems. 3) What would change if you see these problems as challenges or even opportunities? How would it make you feel? Chapter 88: Take Time off "There is more to life than increasing its speed." Mahatma Gandhi With the stressful, fast paced life that we are living it becomes even more important to slow down your pace of life and take a break! Take some time off. Recharge your batteries by being around nature. You can start by scheduling some relaxation time into your weekly schedule which by now you are hopefully making time for (see Chapter "Manage your time"). If you dare - start with weekends in which you are completely disconnected from the Internet, TV, and your electronic games. One of my best vacations ever - if not the best - was being on a houseboat in the Midi Channel in the south of France. No mobile phone, no Internet, no TV. Only ducks. The boat's top speed was 8 km/hr (= 5 miles/hr) so we were literally "forced" to slow down. It is also due to the fact that when you are floating on the channel, children on their bikes overtake you on one side of the channel. The villages you pass through are sometimes so small, that they don't even have a supermarket. So the whole trip comes down to the question, "Where will we get food?" No worries! There is always a restaurant close by, but the charming thing is to cook your own meals on the boat and have dinner at the harbor watching the sunset or just being around nature. Once time, we had dinner in the middle of a vineyard! Priceless! So is to walk into a tiny French village in the morning and get your baguette for breakfast from the only bakery in town. We got up at sunrise and went to bed two chess matches after sunset. Or as my wife described it afterwards "We got up with the ducks and went to sleep with the ducks." Take time off and connect with nature! It doesn't have to be a long trip. Walk in the woods, on the beach, or in a park whenever you get the chance and observe how you feel afterwards. Or just lie down on a bench or in the grass and contemplate the blue sky. When was the last time you walked barefoot on grass or on a beach? Did you get the idea of how important, relaxing, and reenergizing taking some time off is for you? I hope so! What will you do? Action Step: Schedule some relaxation time in your calendar right now! Chapter 89: Have a highlight every day "I believe the key to happiness is someone to love, something to do, and something to look forward to." Elvis Presley Don't let routine and boredom crawl into your life. Create things you look forward to after a hard day at work instead of just ending up in front of the TV every evening. Here are some examples: • Take some "alone time". • Go for a walk in the nature with your spouse. • Take a bubble bath or have a spa day. • Celebrate something: a good job, family, life! • Call a friend. • Take somebody for lunch. • Get a massage. • Go for a drink. • Go to the movies/theater/a concert. • Get a manicure/pedicure. • Movie night at home. • Watch a sunrise, etc. Remember to reserve some time for your special moments in your schedule! Chapter 90: Step out of your "comfort zone" "As you move outside of your comfort zone, what was once the unknown and frightening becomes you new normal." Robin Sharma One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again." Abraham Maslow Have you ever heard of the saying, "The magic happens outside of your comfort zone?" But...what the heck is the comfort zone? The following metaphor describes it very well: if you put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it jumps out! But if you put it into a pot and start heating up the water gradually, it doesn't react and dies by being boiled! And that's what happens to many people who are trapped in their comfort zone without even knowing it. Your comfort zone is the limit of your current experience. It's what you are used to doing, thinking or feeling based on your current level of knowledge. It's where it's nice and cozy and where we know most of the time exactly what is going to happen. It's where you live life on autopilot. It's also where change doesn't happen. Personal growth and development happen outside of your comfort zone. So if you want to change jobs, start an enterprise, be creative, get out of a relationship that has stopped working, you have to step out of your comfort zone. Unfortunately it's more comfortable to stay where you are and your mind is doing

everything to keep you there! When I was trapped in a job that I didn't like any more I caught myself saying the entire time, "Well it's not that bad, it could be worse. Who knows, maybe in another job I would be even worse off." And so I continued in a job that no more made sense to me day in day out. On Monday I was already looking forward to Friday, and when I came back from my vacation I was already looking to the next one. Can you imagine that? I should have watched Steve Jobs' commencement Address at Stanford some years earlier. (Did you watch it yet?) Jobs had a great technique: each day he looked at himself in the mirror and asked himself, "If this was my last day on earth, would I do what I'm about to do today?" and if he answered "No" to himself for too many days in a row, he changed! Be careful if you use that technique, because once you start asking yourself this question everything changes. When you step out of your comfort zone and start to venture towards the unknown, you start to grow. You will start feeling uncomfortable and awkward. That's a great sign! That's actually a sign that you are growing and moving ahead. Act in spite of fear and doubt! Questions: 1) How can you challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone? (Remember, small steps!) 2) Is there anything that makes you uncomfortable that you can do NOW? Chapter 91: What price are you paying for NOT changing? "The price of doing the same old thing is far higher than the price of change." Bill Clinton Another question that forced me out of my comfort zone when I was evaluating my situation was, "What is the price you are paying for not taking action?" I was on the worst possible way to being seriously burnt out. Of course it was very risky to just walk away from my secure job without putting up a fight in the worst economic crisis the world had seen, but what was the price I was paying to stay? Serious health problems? No thanks, buddy! I'm out of here. Since then I never looked back. Many years ago my boss at Volkswagen in Mexico came to me - the intern - and said, "Marc, I don't know what to do any more. I'm close to a breakdown due to stress, but I'm on a three years Expat-contract and if I break it, I will be looked at as a failure at the headquarters in Germany. What would you do?" I told him, "Look, your health is the most important thing you have. If this job affects your health any more, leave. Because if you get a heart attack and die, the people that are now giving you the worst time will say what a great guy you were at your funeral in front of your wife and kid. I'm talking from my own personal experience: the people that harassed my father the most at his work, actually wanted to speak at his funeral! Unbelievable! For now, I would hang in there and see what happens, because I really believe that life is a miracle, everything happens for a reason and in the end everything is always going to work out!" Two months later he contacted me from Germany. He was still on his Expat-contract, however he had returned to Germany and was working on a new project with far better work conditions! Life is a miracle - it always works out in the end! But there is always a price you are paying and it's your decision if you want to pay it and live with the consequences. The price you pay if you want to get in shape is that you have to exercise. The price you pay for not exercising is getting overweight. If you want more time the price is getting up an hour earlier or watching less TV. The price you pay for procrastination is anxiety and feeling bad. Choose your suffering wisely! Question: 1) Are you paying a price for doing the same old thing? Chapter 92: Things are only temporary "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future." Steve Jobs "It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop." Confucius Everything is temporary. All triumphs, defeat, joy, sadness that happen in our life go by. What seems to be very important today is not important anymore in a month or three months. And what seems to be a disaster today can be a great learning experience three months from now. When I was jobless for over nine months right after finishing college and was rejected by, I don't even remember how many companies, each one of my friends was pitying me and most of all I pitied myself, but somehow deep down inside me I knew that all of the rejection is because something better is waiting for me. In the end, I started working in Barcelona, one of the most beautiful cities in the world with lots of culture, beaches, a fantastic climate, a great football team, and about 300 days of sun a year (very important for me at that time). My friends went directly from pity to envy and from "poor Marc" to "lucky bastard!" Look at life with a little more ease and sobriety knowing that misfortunes pass. Or as Rudyard Kipling in his fantastic poem "IF" says "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two impostors just the same; [...] yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!" Keep

your attention on what you want and keep moving forward. Do you remember the saying, “In 6 months we are going to laugh about it!”? Why not laugh already now? This phrase actually got me through my International Business studies. I remember many nights before the exams at 3 a.m. – a few hours before the exam – when I was totally totally stressed out in the dorm room of my friend Jorge and on the verge of a breakdown (failing those exams would have meant dropping out of college or worse still... be thrown out..) and he always just laughed and said, “Marc, in 6 months we are going to laugh about tonight!” We actually even now - 20 years later - still laugh about those stories. Try this technique! I hope it helps you as it helped me! Action Steps: 1. Think back on other hard times in your life and how you got out of it and maybe even found something positive in it after some time. MAPPING LIFE: 1. Make a timeline of your life. From birth until now. Mark every key event in your life on the line. All and any moments that changed your life. 2. Write the great moments, the successes above the timeline. 3. Write the challenges, the tragedies, the failures below the timeline. 4. Examine the events below the line and write the positive effects of them above the line. (For example, somebody close to you died. A positive could be that you value your life more. Or perhaps you got fired from a job. This opened doors to an even better job that you have now.) Chapter 93: Get a coach! “Make the most of yourself....for that is all there is of you.” Ralph Waldo Emerson After having a huge impact in business life, coaching is also becoming more and more available for private persons in the form of life coaching. Many people have the wrong concept that you only take on a coach when something is wrong, but people like Eric Schmidt actually take on coaches to get even better, or to have a neutral, objective partner with whom they can bounce back and forth their ideas and who keeps them grounded. A coach can help you to achieve clarity on what you really want in life, encourage you to keep on going when you would normally stop, help set better and more rewarding goals for yourself, get results more easily and quickly, overcome fear, communicate much more effectively, experience a faster personal development, overcome self-sabotaging habits, find your true purpose, and to live aligned with your true values. During the coaching process you will learn to take responsibility for everything in your life and take better decisions. Coaching achieves extraordinary results because you and your coach become a team, focusing on your goals and accomplishing more than you would do alone. You take more action, think bigger, and get the job done, because of the accountability the coach provides. A coach knows how to help you to make better decisions, set the best goals, and restructure your professional and personal life for maximum productivity. Coaching works because it brings out the best in you. A coach is trained to help you find your own best answers and will support you in the course of that process. Coaching is usually done during regular, weekly sessions by telephone, skype, or in person which last between 30 and 60 minutes. In every session coach and coachee work on the coachee's goals, creating options and setting a plan of action for the coachee's next steps. While working towards the coachee's goal, the coach also works on the coachee's personal development. You can find coaches, for example, in online directories of Coach U or the International Coach Federation (ICF). Most coaches offer complementary strategy sessions. That's how you and your coach get to know each other and find out if you are comfortable working together. Chemistry is crucial in a coaching relationship. There is no guarantee that coaching works. Your success depends on you! From my experience I can say that the coachees that attend their sessions, are committed to their coaching process, and do their work, end up being successful in their endeavors. That's why I even offer a 30 days money back guarantee (based on some ground rules). Chapter 94: Live your life fully. Do it NOW! “Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment” Buddha Most of us live like we have all the time in the world! We are so busy going after the big pleasures of life that we forget about the small ones. When will you start to take better care of yourself, start exercising, learn something new, do the things you always wanted to do, spend more time with your family? Tomorrow? Next week? Next Monday? Next month? When you win the lottery? When you have another job? When the next project is finished? Yes I know. There are so many other things you have to do right now. You just don't have time right now! A lot of people never discover the meaning of life until it's too late and they are just about to die. Bronnie Ware, an Australian nurse who accompanied the dying wrote down their top five regrets: 1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me. 2. I wish I didn't work so hard. 3. I wish I'd had the courage

to express my feelings. 4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends. 5. I wish that I had let myself be happier. Don't wait any longer. Live your life fully. NOW! Remember that failure is only feedback, that problems are opportunities to grow. Do the things you always wanted to do. Don't postpone them any longer. Don't fight life! Let it flow, because as Paulo Coelho says "One day you will wake up and there won't be any more time to do the things you've always wanted to do. Do it now." Steve Jobs put it this way: "Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Almost everything--all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure--these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart. No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet, death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it, and that is how it should be, because death is very likely the single best invention of life. It's life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new." Every day brings with it opportunities to move closer to what you want, every day contributes to the end result. Don't let these opportunities pass. It doesn't take months or years to change your life; you change it step by step, day by day – starting NOW! The results however, you will see for months and years. Do yourself a favor and START LIVING NOW: not after the kids are out of the house, after you have finished the next project, after you have got the new car, after you have moved to the new house, or after you have got a better job. Don't be one of those people who say they don't have time, but spend 30 hours a week in front of the TV, playing video games, or going out drinking. Do the things you always wanted to do NOW. Make plans NOW! List 5 things you always wanted to do and set a date:

1. _____ Date: _____ 2. _____ Date: _____ 3. _____
 Date: _____ 4. _____ Date: _____ 5. _____ Date: _____

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Tristia's eyes on him. From his peripheral vision, he watched as she and her friends stared at him. Yeah, right back atcha. Your name was supposed to be Sydney. You were supposed to be some cute girl, not an assignment. Well to be fair, that was the problem. Life would be infinitely better if she wasn't so damn cute. But whatever. This was the job. And he needed the gig. Needed the fresh start, so he was going to do his job and forget all about how Tristia Munroe tasted. He dragged his attention and focus to the crowd at large. "So, during the course of the year, I'll be around to help you with any questions you may have, anything you need. Even condoms." Some of the guys hooted and hollered at that, so he made a mental note to keep an eye on them. "Anytime you need to talk to someone, I'm around." His brain gave his eyes the command to focus and not look at her, but they were in a 'fuck you' kind of mood, so they strayed right to Tristia and her friends. Even seated crosslegged on the floor, she had that on-the-edge-ofher-seat, ready-to-bolt kind of tension to her. Just what he needed. If she ran, or asked for a transfer, they'd have to get someone else to watch her, and he'd fail his assignment. And that wasn't an option. "There's one more thing they make me say. This is a co-ed dorm. So let me remind you there will be no inappropriate conduct tolerated between students and members of the student life staff on their floor." Several girls and a couple of the guys groaned. Oh, perfect. Maybe he was the wrong guy for this assignment. Tristia didn't respond, but she lost some of that "ready-to-flee" look on her face. "I'm here for you, but not in that way," he continued. "And if at any point you feel uncomfortable, report it to the student life office." That little speech had been part of his RA training packet. Tomorrow, he also had a meeting with a counselor for how to handle some of the more sensitive topics that might come up while he was busy watching the girl. Thankfully, he'd had his own bout with therapy and knew some basics. But the school had told him it would mostly be alcoholrelated shit and kids flunking out. He consulted his clipboard and addressed the other points they'd given him, reminding the kids about orientation booths, where they could experience the activities offered on campus, as well as the rules for fraternity and sorority rush. And then, finally, the university's drinking policy. Everyone groaned about that one. He studied their faces. For the most part, he could be one of them. He blended. He looked young enough they had no idea he wasn't a student. He had to wonder if this was what it would have been like if he'd been able to go to college properly. Sitting around making lewd jokes about condoms and checking out the hot girls, inviting them to the University Center for coffee. These guys seemed normal. They had no idea how lucky they were. When he dismissed the meeting, Tristia and her friends bolted. Good thing he'd already scouted the floor layout. Basically, the whole building was like a giant number eight. All paths led to the common lounge in the center. He and Tristia's rooms were at the top point of the eight. They went one way, and he went the other. She didn't look too thrilled to see him. Her friends, on the other hand, looked anticipatory. Like they'd been waiting for this moment. "Hey, do you mind if I talk to you for a minute?" He was careful not to use her name, because as far as he could tell, she'd given him her roommate's name. Her eyes were wide as she slid a glance to her friends for help. But they quickly made themselves scarce. The tiny one, Xia, said, "You go ahead, Tris. Sydney and I were just, erm, going to go eavesdrop from the room." Shane's lips twitched, but he somehow managed to keep from laughing. Tris tried to grab Sydney's arm, but the statuesque one deftly slipped her grasp. "Xia's right. Busy busy." When they were left in the hallway together, he cocked his head. "So wait, there are two of you named Sydney. Must make for confusion in the room. Oh wait, your other roommate, she just called you Tris. Pretty name. On my roster it says Tristia." She flushed and screwed her eyes shut. "In all fairness, I didn't think I'd be seeing you again. It's complicated." "Apparently, so is this. You want to do this in my room, so your friends don't eavesdrop?" She sighed, but nodded, looking like she would rather have a root canal. He didn't need the other students listening either. "It'll only take five minutes." His stupid body pumped adrenaline into his veins as he led her into his room. Stupid mistake. He should have suggested coffee in the University Center or something. At least that way, the scent of her shampoo wouldn't permeate the room. Good thing he wouldn't actually ever be attempting sleep in here. For several long moments, they stood and stared at each other, neither daring to speak. She wrapped her arms around herself and looked everywhere but at him. Finally, she said, "Most awkward morning after ever." His lips twitched. "Tell me about it." Scrubbing a hand down his face, he added, "Of all the college dorms in all the world." A hint of a smile lit her lips. He sighed and thought

back to what Caleb had said. Put her at ease, make her comfortable. "Look, Tris. This doesn't have to be awkward." Her brows shot up. "What, and totally forget you've had your mouth on my—" She cut herself off abruptly, covering her face with her hands. Shit. Just what he needed, the mental image of her perfect, mochatipped tits on offer for him. He rubbed at the back of his neck. "I'm not saying it's not awkward." "Did you know the other night? That I was one of your students?" Establish the boundary. "If I'd have known, I couldn't have touched you. This job matters to me." At least he could answer that honestly. "I had no idea until I ran into you this morning. You were just a pretty girl who could dance. And I'm actually the replacement RA. The other guy got a huge internship last minute, so I was slotted in this morning." "Oh." Her voice was softer now. "Look, I'm sorry about running out on you the other night. I realize I probably looked crazy. It was just intense, and I..." Her voice trailed. "It's okay. In hindsight, it's probably for the best." The fuck it was. "But it's going to be okay. This doesn't have to be weird. It's not like we slept together." Or like he still wanted to, so much that his hands shook. "Right." She spread her hands. "Zero weirdness. Totally fine." "Maybe we'll even be friends, if that's possible. I'm going to see you every day." Her furrowed brow spoke of disbelief, but she said, "Sure. Friends. Friends who've seen each other..." She shook her head. "Totally. Friends. Done." He sighed, unsure of exactly what he'd expected. Then he tried for a dose of honesty. "Look. I think you're super sexy. And right now, your fucking shampoo is driving me insane. But I need this job, and there are rules I have to follow, so I'm going to have to pretend I don't know how you feel under my fingertips. It's better for everyone that way." She sighed. "I'm sorry. I just freaked out when I saw you." "I know. I had an inkling, this morning, when I ran into you. But I thought it might just be a coincidence." He shuffled a foot. "Look, I need to get ready to TA my class. Maybe we can talk about this later?" "Sure. What class are you TAing?" "Gifford's Human Sexuality, section A." He let that information sink in a little. She dropped her head into her hands and laughed. "You know that thing, where when you buy a new car, and all you notice after that is the same kind of car on the road?" He nodded. "I know you're in that section. I didn't know your name till this afternoon. If you want to switch out..." She shook her head. "I'm a big girl. I don't need to switch out. Besides, it's not like it's your fault. This is just my luck." He shoved his hands into his pockets. "Does it help that I wish things were different?" One side of her lip tipped up in a small smile. "Not really." D CHAPTER 2 ude, Tris, how could you please the shoe gods but anger the serendipity "gods?" Sydney whispered as they took their seats in the classroom. This was one of the smaller sections just ten of them. Xia had a photo lab, so her section was in the morning. "Are you asking me? I called one of my aunties last night just to see if she believed in juju magic," Tris said. Syd sighed sympathetically. "Well, maybe it won't be so bad. I mean, you said he was cool right?" "Yeah, he's cool. Doesn't really help though, because now in addition to being the first guy that...doesn't freak me out"—she slid a gaze around—"he's also my RA and my TA. So double whammy. If I switched sections, that wouldn't even solve it. I'd have to move too." Syd nodded. "I guess that is overkill just so you can get some." "It's fine. I'm here to learn anyway. And I'm taking up running, so I'll be busy." Syd grimaced. "Are you still serious about that? I mean, I'm behind you if you really want to do a run, but maybe you should start small, you know, with a 5k or something. No need to sign up for a marathon." "Come on, Syd. Have a little faith. I mean, sure, I've never been super athletic." At her friend's raised brow, she sighed. "Okay, so I'm not athletic at all, but it's something Mom always wanted to try, so I'm going to do so in her memory. I think I saw there were student discounts on Rock 'n' Roll marathon registrations." "You're insane." Tris shrugged off the fear of future aches and pains. "Yes, but the way I figure it, between school and training, and a future job that I need to get, I'll be too busy to think about Shane." "Yeah, but you're also here to have some fun. You didn't fight your father for your freedom just to bury your face in a book. Remember, say yes. It's okay. Between Xia dragging us to various activities and my total lack of shyness about anything, we'll find you someone else even hotter and better." Tris raised an eyebrow. Syd had to concede. "Yeah, okay, maybe not hotter." Tris's body overheated just thinking about Shane. With his strong jaw, his dusting of stubble, and all that inky black hair paired with his piercing blue gaze, they'd be hard pressed to find someone hotter. When Shane walked in, the class went dead silent, and he grinned. "Relax, you guys, I'm not going to bite." "Pity." Came a voice from the back. Everyone, including Shane, laughed, breaking some of the tension. "I'm Shane Atkinson, and I'll be your TA. Some of

what you'll be asked to do by Dr. Gifford will be uncomfortable. Some of it will be fun. Some of it will be emotional. Some of it will challenge your beliefs about sex and sexuality." As he talked, he didn't look at her once, and that worked perfectly fine for Tris. The last thing she needed was him looking directly at her as he talked about sex. Because if he did, she might spontaneously combust. He continued. "So, I know this morning's lecture talked about the theories of attraction. Why don't we start first with some of the globally accepted things that we see in the media as attractive in a potential mate." They all called out answers. "Tall." "Good body." "Intelligence." "Symmetrical face." And so they went until he stopped them. He pointed to a red-headed girl blinking up at him with doe eyes. "Okay, Amber, if you were to describe your perfect-ten guy, what would he be?" She fluttered her lashes. "Six feet, at least." She eyed him more carefully. "Actually, more like six two. Athletic. A six-pack is a must. Stubble is so super sexy, a cleft chin, strong jaw line." Next to Tris, Syd made a gagging noise, and Tris bit back a giggle. Not like she could blame the girl. Amber continued. "Bow-shaped mouth, white teeth." Shane smirked and held up a hand. "Thank you for your thorough description. Now, can I have a show of hands? How many of the rest of the women and men in the class recognize her description of Ted Bundy?" There was silence, then laughter erupted. "Now, while I don't know about Bundy's sixpack, and I think his eyes were brown, I do know he was a very good-looking dude. People found him attractive. So knowing what you know about Ted Bundy, how many of you still find him attractive or physically appealing?" No one raised their hands. "Sydney, why don't you tell me why not." "Because serial killers make my skin crawl." Tris smirked. Gotta love Sydney. "And I'm sure you're not alone. No, this isn't a class in criminology, though that would be an interesting mash up, but it does pose questions as to how much physical attractiveness matters in mate selection and what factors can cancel that out." Tris offered up, "But that's because different things matter to different people. The attractiveness is just the packaging. It's like a pretty present; when you unwrap it, then you figure out if you like what's inside." His gaze met hers directly for the first time, and she had to hold her breath. You cannot have him. You cannot have him. But it didn't mean she didn't want him. Before he moved on to the next part of the day's syllabus he added, "The key thing to remember about true attraction is that it's about the honesty of how you feel. How many of you have dated somebody because someone else thought it was a good idea?" Several hands shot up. "How did that work out for you?" There were several sheepish glances around. He continued, "So I have a take-home exercise for you." Everyone groaned. He laughed. "I get it. But look, like today's lesson, enjoy it. Don't take it too seriously." "SO WHAT ARE you going to do? Are you considering dropping?" Xia asked Tris as they left the student center. Tris shrugged. "I don't know. I mean, I told Syd the same thing, he was cool about the whole thing. And according to him, he wishes it didn't have to be this way." Xia chewed her croissant thoughtfully. "I mean, maybe there's some way around this. Giving up cannot be our only option. What if you guys were discreet?" Tris slanted her friend a look. "First, I think that ship has sailed. He didn't look interested at all. More like he looked interested in keeping his freaking job. Second, not only is he my RA, he's also my TA, strictly verboten. And third, it's not like I can walk up to him and be all, 'hey, I'd like to lose my virginity before everything down there mummifies. Care to do the honors?' I can't do that. Besides, this is his job, and he seems to want to keep doing it. I'm not that girl. I'm not ballsy enough to just stroll into his room and be all, 'I know you want me.' Who does that?" They both glanced at each other and laughed as they said in unison, "Sydney." "All right. Bullshit situation aside, how are you feeling? Are you okay? You know, you and your dad?" She shrugged. "Yeah. I mean, I'm fine. I can't believe he actually let me get away with no security. I don't want it, but I never actually thought he'd give it to me. But even if I do have security, I've never seen them. It sort of feels like freedom." "Awesome, then you need to take better advantage of it. There's a party tonight at the Kappa Theta house, you interested?" It was on the tip of her tongue to say no, but then she remembered her promise to Ricca. "Sure. And maybe I'll even wear my shoes, though I really don't want to get them all dirty in the basement of some fraternity house." "Honey, you haven't seen this house. All the alumni brothers are investment banker types. They have this great rooftop, where they have their parties. Think frat party 2.0. And since Shane is awakening a part of you again, you can see if the warm and tinglies happen with anyone else." Someone else? She doubted it. But he was off limits, so maybe it was time to try out her newly awakened libido. X

CHAPTER 3

ia hadn't been kidding about

the party. Tris glanced around, feeling a bit intimidated. What ever happened to a good, oldfashioned kegger? Judging by the Mont Blanc pen she and her friends had used to sign in, she had a feeling these guys didn't know what a keg was. Syd whistled low. "This ain't your mama's frat party." Xia grinned. "I told you those shoes were perfect for the night." And they were. Tris grinned as she blinked down at them. Paired with rolled-up boyfriend jeans and a one-shoulder top, she felt fashionable and fun. "You know what? I could get used to wearing these." Syd raised her hand. "Please don't forget we're the same size, and I'm going to need to wear them at least once." She shifted on her feet. "Done deal." Fun. She was here for fun. She could do fun. "Who wants a drink?" The DJ spun mashups of popular pop songs, mixing Eminem and Rihanna with John Legend and Iggy Azalea. So they danced and drank the fruity concoctions the bartenders handed out. Though, after two of them, Tris immediately recognized she needed to slow down. She stared at the bottom of her empty glass. What the hell was in that thing? It tasted too smooth going down but also made her tongue feel fuzzy. One of the brothers with strawberry blond hair and sparkling blue eyes came over and took her hand. "Come on, girl, I get the feeling you can dance." Under normal circumstances, she would have retorted with some snide comment about why he assumed she could dance. But she swallowed the irritation. And ignored the chill that chased over her skin as he took her hand. It was just dancing. She could handle it. Besides, she did like to dance, and he probably didn't mean anything by it. Though she noted she and her friends were the only specks of brown at the lilywhite party. Oh wait, there was one more. Her partner might not have been able to find the beat, but he sure was...enthusiastic. At some point, she even started to have a little fun as she fell into some tried and true goofy moves. Who didn't love a little cabbage patch. She felt loose and open, like anything could happen. At some point, he told her his name was Kasey, and he was from San Francisco. It was surprisingly easy to engage in small talk and move. She just forced her mind to go blank. The music changed to something slower, and Kasey pulled her against his body. He might have looked thin and scrawny, but he was all wiry muscle and surprisingly solid. She stiffened automatically but forced herself to take a deep breath. It was just dancing. And surprisingly, Kasey could dance better like this. That chill seeped in a level deeper, and she forced her mind to focus on something else. If she didn't pay attention, it would go away. This guy wasn't going to hurt her. She could handle it. But it didn't matter what she told herself, she couldn't fend off the chill. KASEY LEANED IN. "You want another drink?" "Uh, yeah sure." Why not, right? This was part of the whole college experience. Maybe drink too much. Maybe party too much. Not be so selfcontained. It was like Shane had said in section. Enjoy it. Don't take it too seriously. Kasey was back in no time with a drink for them both. She drank hers quickly, and he blinked at her, a little alarmed. "You might want to take it easy on those. They have 151 in them." She did feel a fuzzy. But whatever. "You want to dance with me, or what?" He shrugged and pulled her close. "You won't catch me arguing. You feel so fucking good. The second you walked in, I couldn't take my eyes off you." That was sweet, but the way he said it didn't feel sincere. And she tried hard to muster any feelings about the sentiment. But she couldn't. She could try to pretend all she wanted, but this guy wasn't Shane. Mind spinning, she swayed into him, and he secured her with his hand on her lower back. He slid his thigh between her legs and turned her around on the crowded floor. But still nothing. No butterflies, no pooling heat in her core, no wanting. Over Kasey's shoulder, she watched as Syd showed up some guy dance-battle style. Her friend was laughing and teasing and clearly having a good time. But every once in a while, she'd search the crowd until her gaze met Tris's. Then she'd mouth, "Are you okay?" Tris nodded, and Syd went back to it. But Tris understood. She was the girl they all worried about. Poor Tris, who that awful thing happened to that one time. She didn't want to be that any more. She didn't want the kidnapping and stalking to define her. She wanted a boyfriend. Wanted to go to parties. Wanted to kiss boys. She could feel Kasey's hand dipping lower and lower until he cupped her ass and tucked her against his erection. A pinpoint of ice pierced her chest, and she tried to shake off the rising panic. It was only a hand on her ass. She knew how to deal with that. Her friends were here. Nothing bad would happen to her. But when Kasey squeezed gently, another spear of ice hit her chest, and she froze. This time it felt like it was spreading from her center. No. Not again. She lifted her head to foggily peer at him. "What are you doing?" He flashed a grin that was all teeth. "Just showing you how much I want you." He nuzzled her neck. "Do you want to get out of here, go back to my room?" Tris kept trying to blink him into

focus to process the question properly. But no matter what she tried, it was like her tongue was covered in peanut butter, then sawdust, and like someone had given her a kettle bell hat. Her head was so heavy. Made lifting it a herculean effort. "What?" He smiled at her indulgently. "My room. You know for a little privacy." Piracy? She tried to shake her head, but the room spun. Why was he talking about pirates? "I don't understand." He nuzzled her neck and planted a kiss in the hollow just beneath her ear. The ice spread fast now, and she dragged in several shallow breaths. The good news about the ice was it helped clear the fog from the alcohol, and his words finally filtered through. His room...and privacy. He wanted to be alone with her. Presumably, so he could keep fondling her ass and...other things. Except, she didn't want him. She wanted Shane. You can't have Shane. The ice spread faster now, to her belly, and panic rose. Oh, God. "No, I need to—" Kasey frowned, but he said, "Okay, we don't have to go upstairs, we can just keep—" There was a voice behind her, mellow, and gravelly with a hint of flint. "That's enough. Time to let her go, man." Tris tried to turn, but Kasey still held her tight with a hand on her ass. His affable smile morphed into a belligerent smirk. "Who the fuck are you, her father?" "Hardly. Now, you have a couple of choices: you can let her go so I can take her home, or I can make you let her go." The voice was familiar. She'd been replaying it in her head for days. Shane. "You snooze, you lose. She might have come here with you, but we're having a good time. She likes me, and we're dancing." Shane's voice was low, and there was a hint of menace in it. "Listen up, pretty boy. If you know what's good for you, you'll let her go. I don't have time to school you on how to treat a lady with respect, but for starters, you don't manhandle a girl who's clearly wasted." "Hey, she asked for the drink." Tris's stomach roiled, and she tried to push Kasey away from her. But he didn't let her go. She tried again, and her stomach clenched. His cologne suddenly smelled too sweet. "I don't feel good." Apparently, that did the trick. Kasey hopped away in haste. "Shit, are you going to be sick?" "Real gentleman, aren't you?" Shane wrapped his arm around Tris, and his body heat chased the chill away. She listed to the side a bit, and he caught her. Syd reached them quickly, Xia on her heels. "How much has she had to drink?" he asked them. Loyal to the end, they glanced at each other. "She had one, as far as I saw," Xia said anxiously. "She's not really a drinker, so we told her to take it easy." Her friend looked worried, and Tris wanted to comfort her, but she couldn't form the words to tell her it was going to be okay. At least she hoped it would be and one day her tongue would stop feeling like an elephant foot in her mouth. Syd moved closer. "I saw that guy leave her alone for a minute. He might have given her a second drink." Shane's voice was tight, and Tris wished she could lift her head to see his beautiful face. If she could move her arms, she could touch him and tell him she was okay. She'd work on that—just as soon as she threw up and slept for about a month. "Have either of you had the punch?" His voice was flat with little affect. "Yeah," said Xia. "But we're okay. We'll grab the coats and take her home." "No." Shane's voice was firm, but gentle. "You guys stay. I'll take her home. I haven't been drinking, and I have my car." "Shit. I feel like we let her down. She said she wanted to have some fun. I thought it was good for her to let loose." Syd sounded concerned. Tris didn't want them worried about her. She forced her head up and rolled it onto Shane's shoulder. "You guys. I'm fine. Not your fault. I don't think I supposed to drink." Her words were slurred, and only every third one made sense to her ears, but that seemed enough to make them smile. However, there was no humor in Shane's voice when he said, "Come on, Betty Ford. Let's get you home." He helped her outside where the cool air of the night chilled her skin. It felt good and helped clear the dizzy feeling. He assisted her to the car then tucked her in the passenger side. When he fastened her seatbelt for her, she took the opportunity to drink in his scent. He was so close she could feel the heat radiating off him. He still smelled of ocean, and she thought it was heaven. "If I could smell you every day, I'll be happy." Oh no. Why the hell couldn't she control her damn mouth? He stilled just before he secured her buckle. Heat singed her body as sparks crackled and popped around them. They stayed like that for several long beats, and she thought he might kiss her again. She wanted him to kiss her. Wanted to feel his hands on her again. Wanted to give in to the wild abandon. He cleared his throat. "You smell pretty good yourself." But he didn't kiss her. Instead, he backed away slowly and closed her into the car. She watched as he dragged in several deep breaths before sliding into the driver's seat. The car ride to the dorm was blissfully short. But he didn't take her out right away. "Are you feeling okay? You're not nauseous, are you?" She shook her head. "I think the fresh air helps." "How much did

you have to drink tonight?" "Just three." "Jesus, Tris. It's a wonder you're standing." "Well, I was supposed to be having fun. Enjoying my freedom." "You call that fun? I can pretty much guess what he was talking to you about with his hands all over your ass. You have to be careful. You don't know him." It became more and more difficult to blink. "I don't know you very well either." "Well, I'm looking out for you. It's my job." Tris was in no mood to listen to what his job was. It wasn't fair. "What's the matter, you jealous?" He scrubbed a hand over his face. "Maybe a little." She tipped her head back to peer at him. "You're not supposed to say that." "Yeah, well, it's the truth." He unbuckled his seatbelt and hers before opening the driver's side door. "Wait, " she whispered. The barely functioning part of her brain tried to warn her of her folly. But she couldn't hear it over the loud roaring of the blood in her head. "You're the only guy that it seems to work with. Why is that? It's not even fair." He cleared his throat. "That what seems to work with?" "Me. That I seem to work with. With everyone else, I'm dead inside, but with you, I just want to crawl onto your lap naked and rub myself all over you." His brows spiked as his nostrils flared. Shit, what did she say? Another alarm sounded. Stop talking. Now. Right the fuck now. Stop talking. But it was too late. The words were flowing. "I was pretending it was you holding me and kissing my neck...your hand on my ass. Like you did in your room that night." "Fuck, Tris, stop." "I'm tired of keeping things to myself. I'm always doing that. Not saying what I really feel or think. I hold back because I'm afraid of what people will say, how they'll judge me. But with you, I can say these things. At least it feels that way." He swallowed hard, and his gaze dipped to her mouth again. "Tristia, I'm going to get you upstairs, then I'm going to put you in bed, okay?" She frowned. This was not going the way it did in her head. In her head, she was seductive, commanding, more like Syd. She knew what she wanted and was going after it, like Xia. "And what if I said I wanted you to hold me, instead? To touch me. Would you?" Xia had told her to see how it worked with other guys. Kasey she'd gotten some warmth from, but mostly ice in her chest. She turned in her seat and leaned into Shane. "I want to remember what it feels like when you kiss me." "Tris." His voice was pained as he shook his head. "I want to. You have no idea how much I want to. But I can't. I'm sorry. Stay there, I'll come get you out." She was losing him. She could tell. She needed to put it all out there if she was going to get what she wanted. "I want you to make love to me." With a curse, Shane dropped his head onto the steering wheel. "Tristia, I need you to stop talking." Her damn tongue still felt too thick, too slow. "No, hear me out. I'm pretty sure it's apparent I don't have much experience. And since you seem to be able to make me feel like this, you could be the one to teach me. No strings. I just like how you make me feel, and I want to feel it again. I want to know about all the stuff I've missed out on. Shane —" But he didn't let her finish. Instead, he scrambled from the car like the damn thing was on fire. It took a little while for him to come to her side and open it to let her out. When she was out, he wrapped an arm around her waist and led her to the elevators. Once they were inside, she braced herself against him to steady herself, and he groaned. "Tristia." His voice was low. "Let's get you inside. Keys?" She shrugged. "I think Xia has them. She's designated key-bitch today. So the rest of us don't have to carry everything around." Shane tossed his head back and stared up at the ceiling for several moments. "I am going to regret this." He sighed heavily before adding, "Come lie down in my room until your roommates come home." TEACH ME THINGS. Shane's hands shook as he set Tris on his bed. God, this girl was twisting him up. She wanted experience. With him. A simple babysitting job. Caleb had said. Not too taxing. Yeah, right. Had she really just said those things to him in the car? Shit, as much as he wanted her, it could all have very well been his imagination. Maybe he'd heard what he wanted to hear. He sat her on his bed, and she immediately flopped backward. Jesus, she was so out of it. First things first, he needed to get her into something she could sleep in. Tonight, at the party, he'd almost lost his mind. He'd seen her enter with her friends, and she'd looked happy so he'd mostly kept out of sight. But then he'd seen that moron, Kasey, moving in for the kill. Seeing that guy with his hands all over her ass did nothing for his mood. Over in his fake dresser, he pulled out a pair of boxers and a running T-shirt from years ago. He turned back toward her prone form and frowned. There was no way she was going to be able to dress herself, not in her current state. Sighing, he glanced up at his ceiling. Someone upstairs really hated him. This was what he got for trying to be the good guy. Gently, he shook her shoulder. "Tris, can you sit up? I have some clothes for you to change into so you'll be comfortable." She rolled over and picked her head up just off the bed, before collapsing

back in a fit of giggles. "Trying to get me naked? Didn't I already suggest this and you turned me down?" Shane ground his teeth together. If he wasn't so keyed up, he'd probably find drunken Tris kind of cute. But right now his nerves were rubbed raw. Okay, fine, let's get this over with. He gave his dick a stern warning. No funny business. He squatted in front of her and pulled her into a sitting position. She smiled at him drunkenly, just before he dragged her upper body to him and held her in a semi hug. Starting from the bottom, he made quick work of the tiny buttons on the back of her shirt before tugging the silky fabric off her shoulders. He tried to keep his eyes averted. He really did. His brain gave the command several times, but his damn eyes kept straying, taking in the curve of her smooth back, the top rise of her breasts as they swelled over her bra. She was beautiful. And he knew exactly how soft her skin was. How she tasted, but he hadn't nearly had his fill of her. Never going to happen. He slammed his eyes shut. He considered removing her bra to make her more comfortable, but thought better of it. He yanked his old T-shirt down over her thick hair and helped her loop her arms through the right holes. When she was covered, he certainly breathed easier, but sweat popped on his brow as he glared at her logic-defying skinny jeans. Jesus, they were tight, hugging each curve like second skin. He laid her back on the bed and tried to steady his hands as he unsnapped the denim. Tris tried to be helpful and raise her hips, but all her actions did was bring her sex directly toward his mouth. Fuck. He could smell her. Hell, he was close enough to taste her. He swallowed around the lump in his throat and tugged the jeans the rest of the way down then sat back on his heels to get them off her ankles. From that position, he averted his gaze and slipped her feet into the boxers before tugging them up her slim thighs. Once she was dressed, he lay down next to her and called the campus locksmith. He felt a little ridiculous since he had a key, but then she'd ask questions, and he still had a cover to maintain. While they waited, he watched her. Her eyes were closed, but her breathing wasn't deep enough to indicate she was asleep or passed out. Her dark, thick lashes brushed her cheeks, and her hair fanned out around her on his bed. Thanks to the mic he had in her room, he knew that she'd taken the time to straighten it for the party. A task that had apparently taken three hours. It was the first time he'd seen her with her hair like this. And no wonder it took that long to straighten it. Usually, she wore it in wild curls. He actually preferred it that way. He liked the way the light danced off each of her curls. She looked great like this too, just not as carefree. Finally, her eyelids fluttered open, and wide brown eyes blinked up at him. "I'm so embarrassed." He tucked her hair behind her ear. Don't be. "Easy for you to say," she frowned. "I'm the one who tried to molest you in your car." A smile tugged at his lips. "Best offer I've had in a week, but you know I can't, and you know why." Not that he didn't want to. God, he wanted to. "Yeah, yeah, I know. You wish it was different." He did. But he had a job to do, and he'd given Caleb his word that nothing was going to happen to her. That included him laying his hands on her. She rolled into him and laid her head on his shoulder as she threw a leg over him. Shane didn't dare move. If he did, he'd be tempted to put his arms around her and never let go. Her breathing finally evened, telling him she'd fallen asleep. He wasn't sure how long they stayed like that, but by the time the locksmith knocked on his door, he wasn't sure if he was relieved or disappointed.

A CHAPTER 4 n icepick to the skull. That's what was going on inside Tris's head. Someone was taking an icepick to it, hammering away. She didn't dare attempt to open her eyes. Something told her there'd be hell to pay when she did. Just taking mental stock of her body told her that most, if not all of her limbs, were attached. They only felt like they weighed a million tons each. She'd tried, with folly, to move her toes inside her blanket because it was chilly, but no matter how many times her brain gave the command, she couldn't do it. It was too heavy. Too hard, impossible. But she had to pee. So that was going to require movement at some point. It horrified her that she tried to determine if it was worse to pee on herself or to fall flat on her face and chip a tooth because she couldn't move her limbs to take herself to the bathroom. That was it— she was officially never drinking again. Yes, many a college student before her had uttered the same words, but she was serious about it. She'd make a blood oath to Syd and Xia to make sure. Her stomach rumbled, and bile circulated. She had a light cramp in her upper abdomen, and she swallowed hard in an effort to keep the bile where it belonged, down the esophagus and not up all over her bedspread. She made her decision. Far more humiliating to pee and barf on herself than to chip her tooth. She had to get up. After several failed attempts, she was finally able to shift off the blankets. Unfortunately, that also left her body wracked with chills. God damn it.

Had someone opened a window last night? Careful not to make any sudden movements, she peered over to Syd's and Xia's beds. Syd was laid out flat over hers, face down with both feet dangling off the edge. Xia of course was far less sloppy. Even drunk, Xia did what she was supposed to do. She was under the covers with her sleep mask on. Tris noted the half-drunk liter of water by her roommate's bed. Lucky heifer probably would only have a mild hangover this morning. Tris squinted at the blinds, trying to determine the time. It was just barely light out, so maybe it was still early. Luckily, she was able to sit up without either the peeing or vomiting happening. She glanced down at herself. She wore a T-shirt that said Runners do it Better. Because we like marathons. This wasn't hers. Maybe Syd's. But the thing was huge. Screw it. She'd figure that out later. First things first—bathroom. Then, she had to do something about her stomach. Once she was able to plant her feet on the floor, she managed to make it to the bathroom and take care of business without incident. She was even able to wash her face and run a toothbrush over her teeth. Which went miles to making her feel more human again. Because she was pretty sure her mouth smelled like the monkey exhibit at the zoo. What the hell had she been drinking last night? Rocket fuel was the only feasible answer. Freaking rocket fuel. It was a wonder she wasn't dead. A memory flashed of some guy with a hand on her ass, and she groaned. Fuck, had she brought him back here? Was this his T-shirt? She glanced around, but there was no sign of anyone else here. Picking up the collar of the tee, she took a whiff. It smelled delicious. Ocean and musk. A spike of longing rolled through her body. Stupid shirt smelled just like Shane. She'd have to burn it immediately. Shane. Oh, God. It seemed as if the mere thought of him was all her mind needed to unlock the memories of last night. Everything came back to her in startling clarity. Including her recreation of dirty dancing with that Kappa Theta guy. Kasey. "Oh. My. God." New rule. No more frat parties. Okay, that was probably a lie. But definitely no more drinking at frat parties to make questionable choices in dance partners. She lay back on her bed, trying to piece everything together. What the hell had she been thinking? Kasey? Of all guys, Kasey with his ginger hair and his meaty hands. And his slanging. She silently admonished herself. That was bad enough, but it was the bit about Shane that had her wanting to crawl under her desk and hide. The things she'd said to him in his car. Tris lifted her T-shirt and covered her face. Mentally, she forced her mind to calm and walk through the rest of the night, post mortification in the car. Shane had brought her back to the dorm. But she hadn't had a key. Right. That had been Xia's job last night. And good thing, too, because if it had been hers, all three of them would have been sleeping in the hallway. So Shane had brought her back, then what? She had a very vague memory of him unbuttoning her blouse and tugging it off. Her body flushed at the thought of his hands on her. But then her memories started to clear, and she remembered him tugging a T-shirt over her head. That would also explain why she was still wearing a bra. Another hot flush crept over her body as she remembered how her skinny jeans had come off. But he'd been a perfect gentleman, averting his eyes the whole time. Relief with a chase of disappointment washed through her. She owed him a huge thank you. But something else came back to her. What had they talked about in the car? No matter what she tried, she couldn't see the full picture. Or rather, she could see it, but the sound was off. On second thought, it was probably better that way. He had really gone above and beyond last night. Sure, he was her RA, but that was chivalry to the next level. She. Was. An idiot. One who shouldn't be allowed to be in charge of her own life. She had to do something to say thank you. And also, say she was sorry for coming on so strong. But she was pretty sure there wasn't a Hallmark for that. Buy him breakfast. No. That wouldn't work because she was too humiliated to ever speak to him again. Maybe she would leave him an anonymous breakfast at his door. Yep, because nothing said I'm not a creepy stalker like her leaving him breakfast. No. Avoidance was probably for the best. With a groan and a protest from her head, she sat up again. It didn't matter how she felt. She still had to get a run in today. And the earlier the better. She had a better chance of avoiding Shane. She'd have to spend the rest of the semester hiding from him. Or maybe the world would be kind and the ground would just swallow her up already. She grabbed a quick shower to chase away what she could of the hangover and memories of what happened last night. She also smelled like him in his shirt and it made it difficult to think. Once she was showered and changed, she felt marginally better. Except for the fact her head was going to explode and she might still throw up. Suck it up. You said you wanted to do this. It'll require some work. But it didn't

matter how silent she was, because the second she tried to close her door, Shane yanked his open. And just her luck, he was shirtless, and his hair was damp with still-wet strands dripping water onto that holy-shit-he-waschiseled chest. He had on jeans, but they were unbuttoned, and her eyes homed in on the happy trail. Wow. When she blinked back to consciousness, she realized she was staring. "I-uh, hi." He grinned at her. "Hey, Tris." Her stupid eyes wouldn't cooperate, and she continued to stare at the dark path of hair just under those insane abs. "I'm just headed out for a run." His brows shot up. "A run? Your head should feel like it's on fire right now. How can you run?" She shrugged. He was right. Death was preferable. "I'm the moron who wants to do a marathon." "Wow, that's great. You ever run one before?" "No. I know I'm insane. Shit, I don't even like to run. Hate it actually. But I said I was going to do it, so, I need to train." "Before you go"—he handed her a mug—"drink this." She stared at it dubiously. "I—what's in it?" "It's hair of the dog. It'll help with your stomach." "How did you know?" He shrugged. "This is college, after all. I've been there before." She took a sip of the almost too-sweet liquid. The moment it hit her stomach, it warmed her from the inside then spread to her extremities. With a sigh of relief, she drained the mug. "Shit, I feel better already." "Good. You have a headache?" "Yeah. I took some aspirin though, so it should subside eventually. Either that, or I'll just pop it off and hang it in my closet for a while to give it a rest." He grinned. "Been there too. Tell you what. If you keep your head where it is and give me three minutes to find a shirt, I'll take you to breakfast. And you can do your run a little later when you feel more human." Hell yes. No. There was no way she'd make it through an entire breakfast without openly gawking at him. "You don't have to do that. Your Prince Charming reputation is well intact." "No. I want to. Besides, I want to make sure you eat something. And I like to eat with company." "It's really not necessary. You've seriously done enough." He ignored her protests. "How about we discuss this over some eggs and pancakes?" She frowned. "That shouldn't sound good, but it does." "You need something to soak up everything that's still floating around in you." She probably did, but that meant sitting across a table from him. Reliving every single thing her alcohol-loosened tongue had said. "I—" "It's just breakfast, Tris." She wavered. But he was right. And honestly, she was starving. Not to mention avoiding him was going to be next to impossible. She might as well take her medicine now. "Yeah, okay. But can I get a quick run in first? Syd and Xia think I'm insane and can't do this marathon. I don't want them to be right, so maybe we can go to breakfast when I get back?" He grinned at her. "I'll do you one better. We'll run to breakfast." Once he ruined her morning by tossing a shirt on, they ran down to the diner on the corner of First Ave. He must have been taking it easy on her, because when they arrived, she was the only one out of breath. He looked perfectly fine, like he'd just gotten out of bed. Meanwhile, she thought her lungs were going to collapse. At breakfast, he asked her about her classes and kept her talking until their food arrived. All the while, he covered every safe topic from how she liked San Diego, to her classes, to her friends, deliberately avoiding last night. When the waiter brought the food, there were heaping piles of scrambled eggs and toppling stacks of pancakes along with enough bacon and sausage to keep a football team happy. He piled something onto a plate and shoved it in her direction. "Eat." Her stomach growled. The syrup and fresh eggs smelled divine. But there was no way she could eat with last night hanging over her head. "Thanks, but can I just say, I'm so sorry about last night. The last thing I wanted to do was embarrass myself like that, and you were a perfect gentleman. You didn't need to be so nice about it all. I—I appreciate it." "It's fine, Tristia. It happens to all of us. I've been sloppy drunk before. I get it." "Tris. Call me Tris. It's just never happened to me. So, I'm mortified." She winced. "And can we just forget those things I said, you know, in the car? I was wasted. I didn't mean any of it." He cocked his head and grinned. "What things you said?" Relief chased away the embarrassment. "Thanks." He shrugged. "I know things are a little awkward and slightly complicated, but if you'd let me, I'd like to be your friend." "I can always use a friend. As you can see, I really only have the two." "Why is that?" He scooped a forkful of eggs into his mouth and groaned like it was an orgasmic experience. Do not picture him shirtless. But it was too late for that. It was on constant replay. She cleared her throat to try to get some clarity. She then took a bite of her pancakes and completely understood about the orgasmic moaning. "Oh, my God, that's delicious." He nodded. "Right?" He encouraged her to drink some of her juice by pushing it in her direction. "You were telling me why you only have the two friends." "Oh, yeah. Got distracted by pancakes." She took a sip. "Uh, part of it is habit.

I'm used to not really being allowed to have too many friends. I had a really weird high school experience." He seemed to ponder that for a minute before asking, "Weird how?" He was easy to talk to. She felt like she could tell him anything. "Well, I had a little trouble with an overzealous guy when I was fourteen. He followed me around and wouldn't leave me alone." He frowned, and when he spoke, there was a hint of menace in his voice. "Did he hurt you?" How to explain this exactly? "I was walking home from school one day, and he grabbed me from the street." "Holy shit." She only nibbled on her eggs, appetite gone now. Shane speared a melon and handed it to her. She ate obediently without tasting it. "I—he-ah. I was fine physically. After that, my dad became a little security crazy. And now that he's running for President in Trinidad, it's gotten extra crazy. That's why I was running out of the club the night we met. He'd promised I wouldn't have a security detail here at school, but he went back on his word." "Well, is there still a threat from whoever took you?" She shook her head. "He, uh, he killed himself. Back then, I used to have nightmares. I was blindfolded all the time, and I would hear him talking to someone, but I never heard the other person's voice. I used to have nightmares that there were two of them. But eventually, I had to let that go and realize he was just very sick." She sniffed deep to keep herself from tearing up. "As you've experienced, Dad is still pretty overprotective. He still gets threats, you know, against me. What happened is public record. Some more zealous members of opposition parties have threatened me." "Jesus." "Yeah. It's crazy, I know. Right after, Dad changed my school and sent me to a boarding school in Maine. It's where I met Syd and Xia." "I'd have done the same thing to keep you safe." "I understand, I guess. But now it's overkill. I just want to be normal. At any rate, Xia was my roommate, and Syd lived down the hall." "What did your mother say about the protection?" It had been almost two years since her mother died, but her stomach still knotted, and her eyes pricked when she talked about her. "At first, it made sense, but she saw how isolated I was and tried to convince Dad to back off." "I'm sure she gets it though." She shrugged. "I don't know. Before she died, she told me to make sure I really lived. That I really enjoyed life and didn't let the past define me. She wrote me this letter. I still carry it around. It's like totally worn and flimsy by now, but I keep it. In it, she told me to be brave and be bold. I couldn't really do that when I was still in high school, but I can now. It's become my mantra. Or at least I'm trying. It sucks being afraid of things all the time." His piercing blue eyes were grave. "I'm sorry, so sorry, Tris. You said she wrote you a letter—was she sick?" She dragged her gaze from his as she nodded. "Breast cancer," she replied softly. "But she was fighting. She was in remission when she died in a car crash." And because she couldn't stand to see that pitying look on his face, she changed the subject. "What about you? What's your story?" He sat back, his look saying he understood what she'd just done. But he let it go. "No big story. Grew up in Vegas. Now I'm here." Tris laughed. "Okay, I know guys are taciturn, but come on, you have to give me something more than that. Hopes, dreams? I know you must have some." His grin was slow, quirking up on one side first before going fullblown. Tris could only stare. It was probably good that he didn't smile all the time. No woman anywhere would get anything done. "Okay, a little deeper then. I get the difficult dad thing. Mine made Tiger Mom look like the Easter Bunny. He had a very specific life carved out for me. He was career military, and since I was a kid, it was drilled into me that I was going to be a Marine. Except, when I hit eighteen, the last thing I wanted to do was take orders from someone. Especially someone like him. I wanted to serve, just not like that. I wanted the Foreign Service. You know, get to travel." "That's great. And you have to be super smart for the Foreign Service. It's really prestigious." Shane nodded. "He didn't see it like that. He didn't like my choice so much, so he cut me out of his life. Six months ago, I heard he'd had a massive heart attack, so I went home to see him." "Oh, my God. Shane, I'm so sorry." He shrugged. "Don't be sorry. He sure wasn't. He had a secondary event when I was with him. He was so busy screaming about how much he hated me that he didn't give any thought to his heart. Let's just say he hadn't had any sort of epiphany with his heart attack. Still the same son of a bitch he was when I was a kid." "What happened?" He hung his head. "He died. Doctors said his heart couldn't withstand the strain of the second heart attack." She knew that look. Guilt. She saw it on her father's face every time he looked at her. "Shane, you can't possibly blame yourself for what happened." He shrugged again. "Funny how that is. I certainly didn't like him. Must have wished him dead in that way that kids do, thousands of times. But the moment he was gone, I felt guilty, and somehow heavy, like I should have done something to prevent

it all." He shook his head as if to clear the memory. "Anyway, I came back to San Diego for a fresh start. For a chance to follow my own dreams. To let go of some of that shit." So softly she almost didn't hear him, he added. "Let go of some of the fear." "How's that working out for you?" He glanced at her from under sooty lashes. "The outlook has drastically improved in the last week or so." She flushed. Was it possible he meant meeting her? "Wonder why that is?" "Wonder why? Must be new friends. So, did your dad ever ease up on you? I don't see the men in black right now." "Well, a little. I'm still surprised he lets me walk around by myself. But it's for the best. Imagine trying to make friends when you have a three-hundredpound armed man behind you. It's sort of difficult. But I've gotten used to keeping to myself." "Well, now you have me as a friend." She scrunched her nose. "I'm not sure you count." "What? 'Cause I'm a guy? I can be a friend. Or are you one of those people who thinks guys and girls can't be friends because someone always wants more?" Yeah, in this case that person was her. "I know the saying in theory, but I don't have any guy friends, so I wouldn't really know." He popped a piece of melon into his mouth. "Well, now you are up one male friend." Yes, if by "friend" he meant she wanted to strip him naked and lick chocolate off his abs. "Cool." "And as your friend, can I just ask what you were doing with that loser last night?" She covered her face. "Oh, God, please don't remind me. I'm mortified. Syd will never let me live it down once she wakes up. But I was determined to be normal for once. Meet someone nice and more appropriate to date." She gave him a sheepish smile. "Well, if you want to do some normal stuff, how about we try something a little tamer, like movies and hanging out? We'll work our way up to dealing with fraternity boys." "Oh, sober, I know how to deal with some handsy guy. Dad made sure I learned self-defense." His brows rose. "Wow, then what do you need me around for?" She popped a piece of sausage into her mouth. "Arm candy." There was that grin again, and Tris was suddenly blinded. He was too good-looking. And seemingly completely unaware of his effect on her. Or their waitress, for that matter, or half the patrons that had the bad luck of being up at this hour. Every now and again, some googley-eyed woman would slide him a furtive glance. He appeared not to notice. "Can you give me your phone for a sec?" She frowned but pulled it out and gave it to him. "Sure, why?" "I'm just programming myself in there. My reasoning is twofold. First, since we're friends, I should be able to text you at any time the mood strikes." She laughed. "Okay, friend, what's the other reason?" He shrugged. "You know. If for any reason that fancy self-defense stuff doesn't work or you need to talk to someone." As he handed it back to her, their fingertips brushed. She would have sworn his pupils dilated, but he ducked his head too quickly for her to be sure. "Sure, I can do that, but just so you know, now that we're friends or whatever, that means you inherit Xia and Syd, too. We're sort of a package deal." "Three hot girls? Far be it from me to complain." H CHAPTER 5 ow's it going, lover boy?" Shane tried to shut the " door to his condo in War's face, but his friend just shoved on past him as if he'd been invited with open arms. "Why don't you come on in, War?" "Don't mind if I do." Shane was far too tired to deal with War right now. "What do you want?" "Testy, aren't you? Is that what happens when you're not getting some regularly? Or is there a reason that you're especially crabby today? Like your new assignment?" Shane crossed his arms over his chest. "You know, I'm beginning to regret asking Caleb to bring you onto the team too." His friend only grinned and helped himself to a Coke in the kitchen. "You know, that hurts my feelings." "Shut up, War. What do you want?" War took a sip, and then put the can down and scanned him over. "Seriously, you look like shit, man." "Yeah, well, I'm supposed to be sleeping right now, if some idiot I know would leave and let me." "I saw the girl, Shane." Fuck. "What about her?" "Were you planning on telling Caleb that you know her?" "Nope." "Any special reason?" "Not really, besides it doesn't matter. The fact that I met her once isn't going to get in the way of doing my job." "So we're not going to talk about the fact that she's the first girl I've seen you actually interested in since you got back from your last assignment." "It's not gonna happen, so it's not a problem." War shook his head. "Still the same stubborn ass, I see. She's cute though. And now that I've read the report on how she slipped her detail that night at the club and how you got to meet her, I think she's fun." "You would think she's fun." "Nothing wrong with throwing off the shackles a little." Shane cocked his head. "Is that why you came over? To tell me to spread my wings? I'm good, thanks." War sighed and shook his head. "I'm just checking on you. I saw you with her last night, man. And this morning. It looks like something. Maybe just this once, you forget all the rules and you enjoy your post a little." Oh, hell no. He knew

what happened when he let himself want anything. "It's called friendship. You should try it with a woman sometime. You know you can actually talk to them instead of just having sex." War's eyes went wide. "You mean they can talk? I think you're missing out on the whole point of women." Despite himself, Shane chuckled. "Dude, you're such an asshole." His friend shrugged. "I've been called worse." "Why did you really come over?" War leaned against the counter, hung his head, and cleared his throat. "I wasn't listening in on purpose, man, but I was in the back of the diner, and once you tagged her phone, I was listening in to the signal. Oh, shit. What had he heard? "I don't know what you're talking about." He leveled a gaze on him. "At some point you're going to need to deal with the shit with your dad." "There's nothing to deal with." "You keep telling yourself that, but I see it on your face. Maybe it's time to call the Doc again?" "I'm fine. As much as I appreciate the talk show host routine, I'm good. I don't have anything to talk about." "If you say so. But just in case you're not fine, I'm around." "Yeah, I hear you. That it?" He rolled his shoulders. "No. Actually. The guy we have in the student mail room picked this up." He slid a piece of paper across the counter. Shane scowled as he stared down at what he assumed was a photocopied version of the note. Be a good girl and try to stay out of trouble while you're at school. Good girls don't act like sluts and let other men grope them. I'm watching you. "What the fuck? When did this come in?" he asked. "Yesterday," War answered. "There was no return address and no postmark." If there was no postmark it meant someone had dropped it into the student mail system. Just like all university correspondence. Anybody could have dropped it in and it would be delivered to the desired recipient. "Did Caleb share this with Roland and his men?" War nodded. "Yeah. Already done." "I guess this changes everything. We need to be looking at active threats to Tris." "Yeah. Caleb is already analyzing for prints, but we're not particularly hopeful." It hit him square in the chest as panic and pain took hold. This wasn't just babysitting and keeping her out of trouble. There was someone watching her. Now, she had a legitimate threat against her. And the idea of anything happening to her made him queasy. "Okay. Thanks for the heads up." He swallowed before adding, "And for the backup." "It's like I said when we were kids—I'm pretty hard to get rid of." Wasn't that the truth? SHANE PACED the length of his classroom. Protecting Tris was supposed to be easy. Watch the girl, they said. Make sure nothing too crazy happens to her, they said. Easy. Or so he'd thought. He'd completely underestimated how he'd feel about her. He wanted to annihilate whoever wrote her that note. The person clearly knew she'd be spooked, so they wanted to scare her. Asshole. But more than the active outside threat against her, Shane worried about the threat she posed to him. That shit she'd said to him in the car made him want to forget all about his good intentions. He'd already been having a hard time keeping his fantasies at bay when she'd hit him with that "teach me" bullshit. In that moment, he'd wished to God he was the kind of man his old man said he was. Selfish. Cruel. Self-absorbed. Son of a bitch. Because then, he could have been able to teach her anything and everything she wanted to know without a second thought. But that's not who he was. I am not my father. What made it worse was that he could talk to her. He'd spilled his guts over breakfast. He'd never intended to tell her anything real about himself. But she'd been sitting there, and out it all came. He liked her. She was more than some hot piece of ass he'd met at a club. Don't be an idiot. She is not your girlfriend. He needed this job. It was the only real purpose he'd had since his father died. He needed this chance. So fuck what his cock said. But in retrospect, there were a million things he could have done differently. For starters, coming clean with Caleb as soon as he knew Tris was his charge. Caleb could have found someone else. Maybe War, with him as support. Now, he was lying to his boss and the girl. He could just see where this shit storm was headed a few weeks or months down the road, and there wasn't too much he could do about it except hope he could get over this shit with Tris fast. Focus on the job. He'd only kissed her once. It wasn't that big of a deal. He'd kissed plenty of girls. Most of whom he didn't remember now. He could forget that he'd kissed her. Or opened up to her. This was all about the assignment. It was his job to get her to trust him. If she thought they were besties, then so be it. That was good. Thankfully, she wanted to bury the fact she'd asked him to show her things. Maybe they could actually be friends. As a bonus, he not only had her phone number, but he'd also placed a tracker on her phone. All he had to do now was not think about all the things he wanted to teach her. She wanted freedom. And while she didn't know who he really was or what he was really doing, he might be able to help her

find some of that freedom. In a way that didn't involve him touching her—naked. Easy... When she walked into the classroom with her friend, Sydney, they were giggling over something. Their heads bowed together, dark hair covering their faces. The taller, lanky one, glanced up first and smirked when she saw him and alerted Tris with a tug on her sleeve. When Tris looked up, her eyes flared wide for a moment. Yeah, go ahead and forget everything he'd just said about being her friend. He'd thought he was mentally prepared to see her again, but no. Apparently that zing of electricity that went straight to his dick every time he saw her wasn't going to let up. Tris blinked twice than offered a small smile before taking a seat in the back with Sydney. Fine by him. He didn't need to be any closer to her. When the rest of his students were seated, he smiled and went over his script. When he'd been given this cover ID, he couldn't believe he was supposed to essentially give pimping points to a bunch of college kids. Granted, it was a lot more than that, but he was pretty sure it was a hell of a cruel joke someone somewhere was playing on him.

"So, for today 's session, we're going to talk about chemistry and why some people have it and some don't. Can some people give some factors that play in?" He kept his gaze off Tris as much as he could. But hell, he couldn't exactly help it when his gaze drifted over her; there were only ten students in the class. Some people called out the answers he expected. "Proximity." "Scent." "Attractiveness." And finally, Tris's friend called out, "Game." "Game," he repeated. "Can you clarify, Sydney?" For a second, she looked confused, but then she cleared her throat. "Well, yeah, some of it is physical, but for girls anyway, we can talk ourselves into almost anything. I mean, someone says the right thing to us, and we start looking at them in a different way. If we think other women want him, he's also more desirable. And his ability to charm is his ticket." He smiled at her, and her mouth dropped open a little. He shifted on his feet at the scrutiny. "Can anyone tell me if charm is going to work for every pick-up artist?" One of the guys in the front row muttered under his breath, "I wish." Shane bit back a grin. "Elaborate for us, Colin." "Well, I mean, with some girls you think you're being charming, and they hate it. Or they think you're doofy or a dumbass, or worse, annoying. So what is the trick to getting an in?" Tris called out from the back. "Adaptability and sincerity. If you can gauge your target's response then shift accordingly, you'll have better luck. It's good if a guy is a chameleon in a way, but still himself." Shane nodded. "Tris is right. Adaptability is key. So partner up. We're going to practice. And for the purposes of this activity, make the pairings male and female." For the next half hour, they used their best pickup lines on each other. The women having better results than the guys. Shane shook his head. "All right. All right. Where do the ladies think the guys are going wrong?" Sydney rolled her eyes. "For starters, they 're using lines. Like tired, dumbass, pick-up lines." "What else?" Tris said, "The main problem is they 're not sincere, they 're acting." Colin spoke up. "Okay, Shane, the TA, why don't you show us how it's done?" Fantastic. The only girl in the front row now was Tris, thanks to the little exercise. Be cool. You can do this. "Fine, watch. And Tris, don't make it easy on me." She blinked wide, dark eyes up at him as a slight smile played on those pretty lips. "Oh, I won't." His dick, determined to get him into trouble, twitched. What was it about this girl? Maybe because you know how she tastes. He slid into the seat next to her and dropped his voice low. "Excuse me." She slid him a glance and ignored him, but he wasn't going to be deterred. "I know you probably already know this, but you're stunning." On cue, her lips twitched into a tiny smile, and she muttered an automatic thank you. "You're even more beautiful when you smile." Tris tucked hair behind her ear, and a full, wide smile broke onto her lips. "Thank you. But you probably say that to all the girls." He cocked his head. "Only the pretty ones." Tris's laugh broke, and the sound of it warmed his insides. "At least you're honest." He put out his hand. "I'm Shane." Their gazes met as she slipped her hand into his. "My friends call me Tris." It was too easy to do this with her. The electricity hummed along his skin. "Well, we're practically friends now, so may I call you Tris?" She narrowed her eyes. "I'm not sure we're friends exactly." "Well, we could be. I could be your long-lost best friend. Why don't you tell me what prompted you to take a human sexuality class, and we'll find out." She inclined her head toward Sydney. "The devil made me do it." This time he laughed as he stood. His eyes on Tris, he addressed the class. The idea is to disarm. Appear harmless. No one wants to be hit on by a creeper." Colin, scoffed. "Well, not all of us are all chiseled and shit." Sydney rolled her eyes. "You're not listening. Women don't care. If you'd used that on me and made me smile and feel pretty, you would have had a shot." Colin waggled his eyebrows. "You're fucking hot." She sat back. "Yes, I know. And you're

missing the point." As much as Shane was enjoying the exchange, he redirected the conversation. "It's all about how you create the chemistry. It's more than just the physical. It's how you vibe and flow off each other. It's the dance as you try to figure out if you find the other person attractive. If you want to spend time in this person's company or not. The rest of the class passed without incident, but he found it increasingly difficult to keep his eyes off of Tris. When it was over, everyone packed up and filed out. But she hung back. He swallowed hard. "What's up, Tris?" "Uh, just I had a question about the assignment, go out and hit on someone and document it." The idea of her out with her friends hitting on some random dude irritated him. But it was none of his damn business. "Yeah?" "I was wondering if I could use an instance from the past?" The mental image of her sucking on his bottom lip planted itself firmly at the forefront of his mind, and he cleared his throat. "Yeah, that's fine. As long as it demonstrates the first step of attraction through to sealing the deal, then yeah. Feel free." "Great. Good class." Yeah, perfect. Just perfect.

CHAPTER 6

Tris tried to calm her thundering heart rate as she and Sydney walked to their room. It didn't matter how many times she told herself Shane was off limits. Her body refused to listen. And she was afraid that after that little display in class, everyone knew there was something going on. When they shuffled into the dorm, Xia bounced out of the bathroom, hair half dry. "Sup, party people? Tris, why do you look sick, and why does it look like Sydney's laughing about it?" Sydney grinned even as Tris groaned. "Dude, you missed it. Mr. Lover Lover put the moves on Tris to demonstrate a point in section today." Xia's eyes bugged. "Please tell me you recorded that shit." Tris glowered at the both of them. "You guys are not funny. It was bad enough I practically drooled all over him." Syd shook her head. "It wasn't that bad. Besides, I was drooling over him. And let me just say, he so wants to get on that!" Tris groaned and plopped onto her bed. "Syd, you realize that he's still our RA, right, and our TA?" Xia rolled her eyes and agreed with Sydney. "Forbidden fruit just makes it all the hotter. Besides, we saw how he looked at you at the party. He looked like he wanted to kill someone when Kasey was all over you. I mean, he was all Thor protector and shit. It was hot." Yes hot but also embarrassing for her. Syd shook her head. "You thought that was hot? I got to watch him hit on her in class. All smooth and shit. I was ready to toss my panties at him." Through a laugh, Tris said, "He was demonstrating a point, Syd." "Whatever. It wasn't about what he said, it was about how he looked at you from the moment you walked in. That man was all about you. Even when he tried to keep his eyes off you, it didn't work out too great for him. He's so totally into you." "Doesn't matter. Please see earlier comment about forbidden. He'll get fired or something, and that would be wrong." Syd grinned. "Only if he gets caught." Lord help her from Syd's machinations. "I'm not that girl, you guys. I can't just jump him. Besides, I tried that already." "Yes, you can," said Syd. Then, she narrowed her eyes. "And what do you mean you tried that already?" So totally busted. She hadn't told them about her failed attempt at seduction in the car yet. Grabbing a pillow, she hugged it to herself. "I, uh sort of asked him to teach me all about sex." Syd wasn't letting it go. "You mean all theoretical, like in class?" She swallowed hard and winced. "More like practical application." Xia's mouth dropped open. "When. Was. This?" "And why didn't we get a 911 to deconstruct immediately?" Syd added. "It was the night of the frat party. He drove me home, and I just sort of blurted it out like a moron. But to be fair, I was so drunk. I knew what I was saying, but it was like I couldn't control any of it just pouring out of my mouth." Even Syd covered her eyes in embarrassment solidarity. "You didn't." "I did. I practically begged the man to take me through the A to Z of sex. He, of course, politely declined." Her best friends stared at her for a long moment. Finally, Xia tried to make her feel better. "I think it's important to focus on the positive. Which is, you want him. That's not something to ignore. It's a pretty big deal for you to be attracted to anyone. That's progress, right?" "Big deal or not. Not going to happen. Can we just drop it, guys? The more I think about him, the crazier it makes me. Right now, I'm blaming it all on the alcohol." "Okay, T-Pain," chortled Syd. Tris wasn't in the mood to be teased. "I blame it on the shoes too. I put those things on and thought I was invincible. Turns out they're evil shoes, convincing me I could be Syd for a night." Syd sighed. "Okay fine. We'll drop it if you want. We just want to see you happy and laid, that's all. You should be experiencing every part of college. And if you don't want those shoes, I'm taking them." Tris didn't even consider it. They were too pretty to give up. "Speaking of experiences, I officially signed up for the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon." Neither one of her friends spoke for a long moment. Then they reminded her why they were friends in the first

place. Xia started talking training plans and nutrition. Syd started talking about gear, from shoes to camelbacks to running outfits. Tris just stared at them. Xia shook her head. "Honey, you don't get it, do you? We're ride or die. Even if we don't agree with what crazy idea you have, if it's what you think you need, then it's what you need. We'll do everything we can to get you there." Tris sniffed in an attempt to ward off tears. "Thank you. Oh, and as far as college experiences go, thanks for the hangover the other day, guys, it was really fun. I appreciated it." Her friends just grinned at her. "All part of the ride," Xia said. Tris threw a pillow at her then jogged to answer her ringing cell phone. "Hello?" There was silence on the line, but she could hear someone breathing or maybe faint static. And icy chill ran over her skin. Maybe it was someone from Trinidad? The connections were never great. "Hello? Anyone there?" More silence. The hairs stood up on the back of her neck. Tris hung up and stared at her phone. She'd been programmed to trust her instincts and not dismiss them. She knew what to do at this point. She was supposed to call her father and let him overreact. But that was the last thing she wanted to do. It would mean the beginning of her new free life would be cut short. And she didn't know if it was anything yet. Maybe a wrong number. Maybe a bad connection. No, she wasn't calling her father. Not when she had another avenue to approach. "Who is it?" Xia asked. "Wrong number." She shoved her phone into her back pocket. I'm going to head down to the cut for a minute—I am in desperate need of a smoothie. You guys want anything?" Sydney headed into the shower and shook her head. Xia was plugging in for a Skype session with her parents. "No thanks." Tris slipped on flip flops then headed the three feet next door and knocked on Shane's door. He opened it on the first knock, almost like he'd been expecting her. "Hey, Tris." What was she doing here again? She licked her lips nervously. "Uh, hi." His dark brows snapped down over those beautiful clear blue eyes. "What's up?" She shook her head. "It's not—it's probably nothing, but you said to call if I felt hinky or anything." Shane stepped aside. "Come in and tell me what happened." She followed him in. Like the other night, his room was immaculate, nothing out of place, not even the books. On his bed sat a book, and she could make out the outline of where he'd been lying. "I— it was just a phone call." "When?" "A couple of minutes ago." She sighed. "I feel stupid now that I'm saying it out loud." "This isn't stupid. It's my job to listen to your concerns." His voice was firm and commanding, and she blinked up at him in surprise. He shook his head. "I'm your RA. If something is bothering you, big or small, I'm your guy. What was said on the call?" "That's just it—nothing. Not even heavy breathing really. It could have been a bad connection from Trinidad, I guess, but it felt like someone was there." "Okay." He nodded. "First thing in the morning, we get you a new number." "Oh, no. My dad will freak if I change my number or my phone. I think he's bugging the thing." Shane ran a hand through his hair. "Okay, uh, we'll get you a new phone with a new number, one you only give to your friends. A prepaid burner. That's the one you carry around with you. Leave the one your dad gave you here in your room most of the time. If it's anyone other than home or your parents, don't answer. Do you mind leaving it with me for the night? I have a friend in engineering; maybe he can trace the call." "Is all that necessary? I'm going to feel really dumb that you went to all this trouble." He stepped directly in front of her, forcing her head back so their gazes met. "You came here for a reason right?" And that reason didn't involve hopefully catching a glimpse of him half naked. Right? "Yeah." "What was it?" She squared her shoulders. "Because it felt like something." "And you didn't want your dad to go ballistic. So let me look into it. If it extends past my RA abilities, we'll call the police and your father, deal?" She could live with that. For now. But what she didn't tell him was the real reason that she'd come over. That because, like an addict, she wanted to feel the buzz of electricity in her veins. S CHAPTER 7 hane knew the proper protocol for this situation. What he should do was get Tris safely ensconced in her room, and then call Caleb. What he needed to do was start that trace on her phone, right the hell now. What he was supposed to do was keep his hands off her. Except none of those things made sense to him right now. In his conscious mind he knew there were orders to follow, but he didn't really give a shit. Tris sucked in her bottom lip and traced her teeth over it. Oh, hell. She was so beautiful. To make matters worse, he cared about her. There was something strong, but a little bit sad, about her. "I'll be fine. I promise." Now was the part where he was supposed to step aside and let her go back to her room. Or, perhaps, when he made an excuse and made himself scarce. His assignment was clear, and it didn't include touching her. If he touched her, he would jeopardize the only thing that was keeping him even right

now, keeping him sane. He needed this job, needed Caleb. You need her too. When was the last time he'd done anything for himself? Instead of the smart thing, he did the very stupid thing. He ran a thumb over her cheek, and she sighed. Don't do it. Follow the rules. But following the rules his whole life had only made him miserable. Fuck it. When he dipped his head, her lips parted. He paused right before sliding his lips to hers, giving her an out, giving her time to run, to walk away. To help him be a good guy. Instead, the sound of her rapid panting filled his head, and the mix of her perfume mixed with the smell of her strawberry lipgloss muddled his brain. Thinking wasn't on the agenda. He slid his hands into her hair at the nape and pulled her forward into the kiss. Like an addict going through the worst part of withdrawal and finally getting a hit, he moaned at the contact. It was like his first taste of summer after being in an arctic wasteland for years. Tris's arms looped around his neck, and she stepped into him, melding their bodies together. His free hand snapped around her lower back, and he encouraged her to press herself against his body. The booming pulse of his heartbeat made him throb all over, like his skin was alive with the thrum of electricity. Tris made a soft mewling sound at the back of her throat, and he couldn't think, couldn't block out the need, desire, and lust he'd been fighting since he met her two weeks ago. Frustrated with the height difference, he bent his legs slightly to give him enough leverage to pick her up. She gasped in surprise, but then wound her legs around his waist. He took that opportunity to angle his head and kiss her deeper. Licking into her mouth, he left no part of the warm depths unexplored in the desperate need to consume her. Hands on her ass, he held her tight against his hips. With her strong thighs, she clamped her legs around him and lifted slightly, rocking against him. Any working brain cells he had shorted with the roll of her hips and her fingers in his hair. Gently, he laid her on the bed and followed her down, careful not to put his full weight on her. When he rolled them to their side and wedged his leg between hers, she lifted her hips into him, and a shudder wracked her body. Shane gritted his teeth against the spike of need. The ever-growing devil on his shoulder screamed at him to take, plunder, taste, sink into her. From her hips, he slid his hands up under her T-shirt, over the smooth expanse of her back. The contact made her arch into his caress, all while her tongue responding to his. Matching him, exploring all on her own. When she sucked on his tongue, he growled, desperate for more. He wanted everything she had to offer. She slid one hand between them, and alarms bells rang in his skull. He wanted to ignore them, but he couldn't. With a herculean effort, he pulled back, his lips tingling. "Do you want me to stop?" Tris shook her head, and her tongue peeked out to lick her lips. "You have to look at me when you say that. So I'm sure." She dragged her eyelids open and met his gaze with dilated pupils. "Please don't stop. I just—" Shane cut her off when he nipped at her bottom lip. She rocked into him again, and he clenched his teeth against the onslaught of need. Through gritted teeth he asked, "You just what?" She ducked her head. "Come on, tell me, I want to know." "I wanted to touch you..." With his blood on fire, it took him a moment to register what she'd said. Touch. She wanted to touch him. Oh. Yeah, he was so down with that. Shifting slightly, he reached behind and dragged his T-shirt off, tossing it somewhere on the floor. "Touch me all you want." Her eyes flared a little, and then she tentatively ran her fingertips over his pecs. Oh, hell yes. Just the promise of her hands on him made his skin tight and itchy. To keep himself from pushing too hard, too quickly, he rolled onto his back and tucked a hand under his head. He kept his other one free and played with her hair, the thick heavy strands falling over her shoulder. She smiled a little as her fingers traced over his abs. She was like satin, and he could die just like this and be happy. With her teasing him and driving him so crazy he might explode with need. She shifted her touch lower, and his hips rose involuntarily as he squeezed his eyes shut. Immediately, her touch was gone, and he felt too cold. He forced his eyes open again. "What's the matter?" "The look on your face. It's like I'm hurting you." Reaching out for her hand, he placed it back on his chest. "No, I'm just fighting to keep myself under control." "So you don't mind?" "I mind if you stop." She traced a thumb over his nipple, and his cock went rock hard. Fuck. His body felt like one giant hormone with her touching him like this. She repeated the action, and he cursed low. A slow smile spread over her lips, and she bent over his chest. The feel of her lips to his pec made him freeze. But it wasn't until her pink, satin tongue peeked out to tease his nipple that his control snapped. He flipped them easily and settled himself between her thighs before rolling against her. He knew there were only two possible outcomes: come in his jeans, or end up with the worst case of blue balls known to

mankind. He wanted her like he'd never wanted anything in his life. But he wasn't going to rush. Her touch was too tentative. She didn't have a lot of experience, and he wasn't going to push and take more than she was ready to give. "Do you mind if I get a turn?" She shook her head. He lifted her T-shirt and hovered over her belly button. He softly blew on the expanse of soft brown skin. She raised her hips, and he tried to focus on what he was doing, not what she was presenting for the taking. Leaning close, he kissed her softly, and she moaned. Sliding his hands up her torso, he slid her T-shirt with them, exposing more of her to his view. He wanted to see in the light. Not the muted darkness of his room. He wanted her in his apartment, splayed on his bed. He wanted to take his time, exploring her body, making her need him. When his thumbs grazed the underside of her breasts, she arched her back into his caress, and he kissed his way up her stomach. His hands trembled as he slid them up her torso, cupping her breasts. Full and ripe, they filled his hands. With his thumb, he traced over her nipples. Through the lace, her tight nipple peaked. Mouth dry, he wanted to taste her. He wanted to make her nearly as crazy as she was making him. "Shane..." Her voice was thready and panted as she arched into his caress. Fuck, she was beautiful. What he was doing was way over the line. But he wanted her more than he'd ever wanted anything in his life. The need blurred everything, and he couldn't even see the line anymore. All he could see was her. "Tris, " he whispered. Gently, he plucked at her nipples, and she moaned low, sliding her hands into his hair. She tried to guide him up, and he knew what she wanted. Knew the tension that was coiling inside her. Because it was also threatening to break him apart. His mouth dry, he leaned over her and lifted her T-shirt over her breasts. Dipping his head, he closed his lips around one of her nipples and tugged. With a low, deep moan, he held her to him arching into his tongue. She was sweet and spicy. Intoxicating. Making him crave more. He suckled gently, plumping her breast. Tris scored her nails on his scalp, and Shane's vision blurred. He repaid the favor by grazing his teeth over her distended nipple, and she nearly bucked him off the bed. "Oh, my God, " she whispered. He shifted his attention to the other breast even as she rocked her hips into him in a steady motion. Rolling into him, making his cock painful, desperate to slide into her. All the while, his heart beat a steady booming thump against his ribs. Beneath him, she was bliss in his arms. So responsive like she was made for him, crafted exactly for him. He pressed his hips into hers, and she widened her legs to accommodate him. The thumping continued over and over again, and he tried to keep his focus on making her hot...making her his. It wouldn't stop, growing louder and louder. Finally, he realized it wasn't his heart. Someone was at the fucking door. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. When he released her nipple it made a soft suction sound, and Tris lifted her head. Her eyes were wide with a mixture of lust and confusion. "Stay here. Get under the covers. I'll be right back." Even though his cock threatened revolt, he pushed himself up and drew the covers over her before snagging his T-shirt up and dragging it on. Roland or Caleb would have called if something was wrong. So this was something else. Dragging the door open only inches, he all but growled at the gangly teenager in front of him. "What's up?" He must have looked as pissed and frustrated as he felt because the kid back up a step. "Shit, sorry if I woke you, but it's my roommate, Ryan, he was totally faded and fell out of his bunk. I think he broke his arm. And I don't want to call campus EMT because they 'll pop us for drinking and..." Shane hung his head. He wouldn't be going back to Tris tonight. He had to maintain his cover. TRIS WOKE ALONE, wrapped in unfamiliar sheets. Panic welled before her brain clicked on and she remembered where she was. Shane's bed. While his scent clung to her, he wasn't in bed with her. A quick glance at the bedside clock told her it had been several hours since he'd told her to get under the covers. Reaching over to the bedside lamp, she switched it on and winced as bright light bathed the room. She picked her discarded bra and T-shirt off the floor and snapped and tugged them back on. Her skin was raw and sensitive from where he'd brushed over it with his stubble. Just thinking about it made her nipple peak. And the dull throb between her thighs only intensified. Once she was dressed, she checked her phone for messages, but there was nothing from Shane. Unease settled in her gut. She told herself to relax. He was probably still at the hospital with her drunken floormates. But what if he was also staying away, avoiding her. They'd crossed a very definitive line. And damn, it had felt good. But he was risking his job. She wanted him. And for more reasons than he knew how to make her feel good. Yeah, she wanted to explore the need, the wanting, but was it worth his job? She knew how important it was to him. She recognized the sense of spinning out and dragged

in a deep breath. Before she freaked out, she'd talk to him. Just as soon as he came back. They'd have a nice, adult, non-naked conversation. Easy. Before she left, she wrote out a quick note on the pad next to his bed. Went back to my room before my roommates call in the National Guard. Talk tomorrow? With the unease winding itself around her spine, she turned off his light and let herself out. To be continued... If you enjoyed this book and would like to be notified when I release a new book, please sign up for my newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/2PeXb> If you are passionate about my books and would like to be a member of my Sassy Street Team, then please join us here: <http://on.fb.me/1iNwMzB> THANK YOU Thank you for reading SEDUCTIVE IN STILETTOS 2! I hope you enjoyed this installment from the In Stilettos Series. Would you like to know when my next book is available? 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He hesitated on the threshold for a minute, not sure if he wanted Tris to be on the other side of the door. When he let himself inside and found his room empty, his disappointment was palpable in the squeeze of his heart. Idiot. You can't have her. Caleb had been clear with his hands-off Tris directive. So what the fuck was he doing? Was being with her really worth losing the first real sense of family he'd ever had? He saw her note on the desk, and a pang of guilt pierced him dead center in the chest. Shit. How long had she waited before going back to her room? How had she felt? Then, the more unhelpful thought—had she been aching for him? He needed a much better plan because staying away from her was becoming a problem. First mistake, letting Tris into his room. Second mistake, kissing her. Third mistake, putting his mouth on those pert, full, breasts of hers. His hands itched with the need to touch her again. He was an idiot. Last night, he'd been all kinds of ragey at the dumb-fucks who'd gotten wasted in their room and needed a ride to the hospital. Luckily, he'd been able to get War to take his place and keep an eye on Tris for the duration of his little hospital trip, but once his blood cooled and he started thinking with the head on top of his shoulders, not the one in his shorts, he knew he'd fucked up. It didn't matter how much he wanted her, she had no business in his bed. He knew from experience that bad things happened when he let himself want something. They were taken away. At sixteen, he'd had his first girlfriend, Christa Cummings. She'd been a freshman at UNLV with him and a couple of years older than he was. He'd managed to keep it a secret from the old man for months, using the classes excuse and War to explain his absences. But somehow, his father had known. Once, the two of them had snuck off to a motel so they could be alone. He'd worked several extra shifts just to be able to afford to take her there. They'd been so excited and hot for each other that he'd missed seeing his father's red Audi in the parking lot. When they'd checked into their room, they'd been so desperate and in a hurry to get each other's clothes off that they paid little attention to the shadow in the corner. His father had known all about their plan. He'd followed Shane more than once, hacked his email. Done his research. Needless to say, it had freaked Christa out. Shane was at least grateful that his father had saved the beating until Christa had left. Having her see him humiliated like that would have broken him in ways his father never could. He'd taken the beating. Taken the words. Loser. Failure. Bastard. As long as she didn't see it. The old man had been livid that he'd jeopardized his future. Went on and on about how women could trap him. But Christa hadn't escaped his father's wrath unscathed. Daddy Dearest had pulled information about Christa's family and her parents. He'd threatened to have her father fired from his casino job if she ever went anywhere near Shane again. She'd never spoken to Shane again. He had been desperate to apologize, but she'd avoided him, never giving him a chance to explain or to say how sorry he was to drag her into his fucked up world. It was a lesson he hadn't forgotten. Things were different now; the asshole was dead. But girls like Tris were still off limits. Not only was he

the hired help, but he was also lying to her. It didn't matter how much he wanted her; she couldn't be his. OTHER BOOKS BY NANA MALONE SEDUCTIVE IN STILETTOS PART 3 Blurb: Was one taste worth her freedom... Shane knows he never should have touched her. Held her. But it's too late for regrets now. He knows what he should do, walk away before she gets hurt. But he can't stand to see her with anyone else. Will he dare to grasp his chance at happiness or will he give it all up for the mission. Available here! ABOUT NANA MALONE USA Today Bestselling Author, Nana Malone's love of all things romance and adventure started with a tattered romantic suspense she borrowed from her cousin on a sultry summer afternoon in Ghana at a precocious thirteen. She's been in love with kick butt heroines ever since. With her overactive imagination, and channeling her inner Buffy, it was only a matter of time before she started creating her own characters. Waiting for her chance at a job as a ninja assassin, Nana, meantime works out her drama, passion and sass with fictional characters every bit as sassy and kick butt as she thinks she is. Nana is the author of four series. The Love Match Series includes sassy contemporary romances: Game, Set, Match and Mismatch. The In Stilettos Series includes ultra-sexy and fun multicultural romantic comedies, Sexy in Stilettos, Sultry in Stilettos and Sassy in Stilettos. The Protectors series includes dark and sexy superhero romances, Betrayed (A Reluctant Protector Prequel), Reluctant Protector, Forsaken Protector, and Wounded Protector (Coming June 2014.) The Chase Brothers Series includes sexy, Interracial New Adult Romances, London Bound (Coming April 2014) and London Calling (Expected release October 2014). She also writes sizzling erotic novellas as Q. Malone, Corporate Affairs, Exposed, and The Flirtation. The books in her series have been on multiple Amazon Kindle and Barnes & Noble bestseller lists as well as the iTunes Breakout Books list and most notably the USA Today Bestseller list. Until that ninja job comes through, you'll find Nana working hard on additional books for her series as well as other fun, sassy romances for characters that won't leave her alone. And if she's not working or hiding in the closet reading, she's acting out scenes for her husband, daughter and puppy in sunny San Diego.

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mercy of ruthless people who would take advantage of them or try to deceive them, people like Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler, who once boasted, “What luck for rulers that men do not think.” Those who develop the process of good thinking can rule themselves—even while under an oppressive ruler or in other difficult circumstances. In short, good thinkers are successful. I’ve studied successful people for forty years, and though the diversity you find among them is astounding, I’ve found that they are all alike in one way: how they think! That is the one thing that separates successful people from unsuccessful ones. And here’s the good news. How successful people think can be learned. If you change your thinking, you can change your life!

WHY YOU SHOULD CHANGE YOUR THINKING It’s hard to overstate the value of changing your thinking. Good thinking can do many things for you: generate revenue, solve problems, and create opportunities. It can take you to a whole new level—personally and professionally. It really can change your life. Consider some things you need to know about changing your thinking:

1. **Changed Thinking Is Not Automatic** Sadly, a change in thinking doesn’t happen on its own. Good ideas rarely go out and find someone. If you want to find a good idea, you must search for it. If you want to become a better thinker, you need to work at it—and once you begin to become a better thinker, the good ideas keep coming. In fact, the amount of good thinking you can do at any time depends primarily on the amount of good thinking you are already doing.
2. **Changed Thinking Is Difficult** When you hear someone say, “Now this is just off the top of my head,” expect dandruff. The only people who believe thinking is easy are those who don’t habitually engage in it. Nobel Prize-winning physicist Albert Einstein, one of the best thinkers who ever lived, asserted, “Thinking is hard work; that’s why so few do it.” Because thinking is so difficult, you want to use anything you can to help you improve the process.
3. **Changed Thinking Is Worth the Investment** Author Napoleon Hill observed, “More gold has been mined from the thoughts of man than has ever been taken from the earth.” When you take the time to learn how to change your thinking and become a better thinker, you are investing in yourself. Gold mines tap out. Stock markets crash. Real estate investments can go sour. But a human mind with the ability to think well is like a diamond mine that never runs out. It’s priceless.

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER THINKER Do you want to master the process of good thinking? Do you want to be a better thinker tomorrow than you are today? Then you need to engage in an ongoing process that improves your thinking. I recommend you do the following:

1. **Expose Yourself to Good Input** Good thinkers always prime the pump of ideas. They always look for things to get the thinking process started, because what you put in always impacts what comes out. Read books, review trade magazines, listen to tapes, and spend time with good thinkers. And when something intrigues you—whether it’s someone else’s idea or the seed of an idea that you’ve come up with yourself—keep it in front of you. Put it in writing and keep it somewhere in your favorite thinking place to stimulate your thinking.
2. **Expose Yourself to Good Thinkers** Spend time with the right people. As I worked on this section and bounced my ideas off of some key people (so that my thoughts would be stretched), I realized something about myself. All of the people in my life whom I consider to be close friends or colleagues are thinkers. Now, I love all people. I try to be kind to everyone I meet, and I desire to add value to as many people as I can through conferences, books, audio lessons, etc. But the people I seek out and choose to spend time with all challenge me with their thinking and their actions. They are constantly trying to grow and learn. That’s true of my wife, Margaret, my close friends, and the executives who run my companies. Every one of them is a good thinker! The writer of Proverbs observed that sharp people sharpen one another, just as iron sharpens iron. If you want to be a sharp thinker, be around sharp people.
3. **Choose to Think Good Thoughts** To become a good thinker, you must become intentional about the thinking process. Regularly put yourself in the right place to think, shape, stretch, and land your thoughts. Make it a priority. Remember, thinking is a discipline. Recently I had breakfast with Dan Cathy, the president of Chick-fil-A, a fast food chain headquartered in the Atlanta area. I told him that I was working on this book and I asked him if he made thinking time a high priority. Not only did he say yes, but he told me about what he calls his “thinking schedule.” It helps him to fight the hectic pace of life that discourages intentional thinking. Dan says he sets aside time just to think for half a day every two weeks, for one whole day every month, and for two or three full days every year. Dan explains, “This helps me ‘keep the main thing, the main thing,’ since I am so easily distracted.” You may want to do something similar, or you can develop a schedule and

method of your own. No matter what you choose to do, go to your thinking place, take paper and pen, and make sure you capture your ideas in writing.

4. Act on Your Good Thoughts Ideas have a short shelf life. You must act on them before the expiration date. World War I flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker said it all when he remarked, “I can give you a six-word formula for success: Think things through—then follow through.”

5. Allow Your Emotions to Create Another Good Thought To start the thinking process, you cannot rely on your feelings. In *Failing Forward*, I wrote that you can act your way into feeling long before you can feel your way into action. If you wait until you feel like doing something, you will likely never accomplish it. The same is true for thinking. You cannot wait until you feel like thinking to do it. However, I’ve found that once you engage in the process of good thinking, you can use your emotions to feed the process and create mental momentum. Try it for yourself. After you go through the disciplined process of thinking and enjoy some success, allow yourself to savor the moment and try riding the mental energy of that success. If you’re like me, it’s likely to spur additional thoughts and productive ideas.

6. Repeat the Process One good thought does not make a good life. The people who have one good thought and try to ride it for an entire career often end up unhappy or destitute. They are the one-hit wonders, the one-book authors, the one-message speakers, the one-time inventors who spend their life struggling to protect or promote their single idea. Success comes to those who have an entire mountain of gold that they continually mine, not those who find one nugget and try to live on it for fifty years. To become someone who can mine a lot of gold, you need to keep repeating the process of good thinking.

PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE RIGHT PLACE TO THINK Becoming a good thinker isn’t overly complicated. It’s a discipline. If you do the six things I have outlined, you will set yourself up for a lifestyle of better thinking. But what do you do to come up with specific ideas on a day-to-day basis? I want to teach you the process that I’ve used to discover and develop good thoughts. It’s certainly not the only one that works, but it has worked well for me.

1. Find a Place to Think Your Thoughts If you go to your designated place to think expecting to generate good thoughts, then eventually you will come up with some. Where is the best place to think? Everybody’s different. Some people think best in the shower. Others, like my friend Dick Biggs, like to go to a park. For me, the best places to think are in my car, on planes, and in the spa. Ideas come to me in other places as well, such as when I’m in bed. (I keep a special lighted writing pad on my nightstand for such times.) I believe I often get thoughts because I make it a habit to frequently go to my thinking places. If you want to consistently generate ideas, you need to do the same thing. Find a place where you can think, and plan to capture your thoughts on paper so that you don’t lose them. When I found a place to think my thoughts, my thoughts found a place in me.

2. Find a Place to Shape Your Thoughts Rarely do ideas come fully formed and completely worked out. Most of the time, they need to be shaped until they have substance. As my friend Dan Reiland says, they have to “stand the test of clarity and questioning.” During the shaping time, you want to hold an idea up to strong scrutiny. Many times a thought that seemed outstanding late at night looks pretty silly in the light of day. Ask questions about your ideas. Fine tune them. One of the best ways to do that is to put your thoughts in writing. Professor, college president, and U.S. senator S. I. Hayakawa wrote, “Learning to write is learning to think. You don’t know anything clearly unless you can state it in writing.” As you shape your thoughts, you find out whether an idea has potential. You learn what you have. You also learn some things about yourself. The shaping time thrills me because it embodies:

- Humor: The thoughts that don’t work often provide comic relief.
- Humility: The moments when I connect with God awe me.
- Excitement: I love to play out an idea mentally. (I call it “futuring” it.)
- Creativity: In these moments I am unhampered by reality.
- Fulfillment: God made me for this process; it uses my greatest gifts and gives me joy.
- Honesty: As I turn over an idea in my mind, I discover my true motives.
- Passion: When you shape a thought, you find out what you believe and what really counts.
- Change: Most of the changes I have made in my life resulted from thorough thinking on a subject. You can shape your thoughts almost anywhere. Just find a place that works for you, where you will be able to write things down, focus your attention without interruptions, and ask questions about your ideas.

3. Find a Place to Stretch Your Thoughts If you come upon great thoughts and spend time mentally shaping them, don’t think you’re done and can stop there. If you do, you will miss some of the most valuable aspects of the thinking process. You miss bringing others in and expanding ideas to their greatest potential. Earlier

in my life, I have to admit, I was often guilty of this error. I wanted to take an idea from seed thought to solution before sharing it with anyone, even the people it would most impact. I did this both at work and at home. But over the years, I have learned that you can go much farther with a team than you can go alone. I've found a kind of formula that can help you stretch your thoughts. It says, The Right Thought plus the Right People in the Right Environment at the Right Time for the Right Reason = the Right Result This combination is hard to beat. Like every person, every thought has the potential to become something great. When you find a place to stretch your thoughts, you find that potential.

4. Find a Place to Land Your Thoughts Author C. D. Jackson observes that "great ideas need landing gear as well as wings." Any idea that remains only an idea doesn't make a great impact. The real power of an idea comes when it goes from abstraction to application. Think about Einstein's theory of relativity. When he published his theories in 1905 and 1916, they were merely profound ideas. Their real power came with the development of the nuclear reactor in 1942 and the nuclear bomb in 1945. When scientists developed and implemented Einstein's ideas, the whole world changed. Likewise, if you want your thoughts to make an impact, you need to land them with others so that they can someday be implemented. As you plan for the application phase of the thinking process, land your ideas first with... Yourself: Landing an idea with yourself will give you integrity. People will buy into an idea only after they buy into the leader who communicates it. Before teaching any lesson, I ask myself three questions: "Do I believe it? Do I live it? Do I believe others should live it?" If I can't answer yes to all three questions, then I haven't landed it. Key Players: Let's face it, no idea will fly if the influencers don't embrace it. After all, they are the people who carry thoughts from idea to implementation. Those Most Affected: Landing thoughts with the people on the firing line will give you great insight. Those closest to changes that occur as a result of a new idea can give you a "reality read." And that's important, because sometimes even when you've diligently completed the process of creating a thought, shaping it, and stretching it with other good thinkers, you can still miss the mark.

5. Find a Place to Fly Your Thoughts French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson, who won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1927, asserted that a person should "think like a man of action—act like a man of thought." What good is thinking if it has no application in real life? Thinking divorced from actions cannot be productive. Learning how to master the process of thinking well leads you to productive thinking. If you can develop the discipline of good thinking and turn it into a lifetime habit, then you will be successful and productive all of your life. Once you've created, shaped, stretched, and landed your thoughts, then flying them can be fun and easy.

PORTRAIT OF A GOOD THINKER You often hear someone say that a colleague or friend is a "good thinker," but that phrase means something different to everyone. To one person it may mean having a high IQ, while to another it could mean knowing a bunch of trivia or being able to figure out whodunit when reading a mystery novel. I believe that good thinking isn't just one thing. It consists of several specific thinking skills. Becoming a good thinker means developing those skills to the best of your ability. It doesn't matter whether you were born rich or poor. It doesn't matter if you have a third grade education or possess a Ph.D. It doesn't matter if you suffer from multiple disabilities or you're the picture of health. No matter what your circumstances, you can learn to be a good thinker. All you must do is be willing to engage in the process every day. In Built to Last, Jim Collins and Jerry Porras describe what it means to be a visionary company, the kind of company that epitomizes the pinnacle of American business. They describe those companies this way: 1 A visionary company is like a great work of art. Think of Michelangelo's scenes from Genesis on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel or his statue of David. Think of a great and enduring novel like Huckleberry Finn or Crime and Punishment. Think of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or Shakespeare's Henry V. Think of a beautifully designed building, like the masterpieces of Frank Lloyd Wright or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. You can't point to any one single item that makes the whole thing work; it's the entire work—all the pieces working together to create an overall effect—that leads to enduring greatness. Good thinking is similar. You need all the thinking "pieces" to become the kind of person who can achieve great things. Those pieces include the following eleven skills: Seeing the Wisdom of Big-Picture Thinking Unleashing the Potential of Focused Thinking Discovering the Joy of Creative Thinking Recognizing the Importance of Realistic Thinking Releasing the Power of Strategic Thinking Feeling the Energy of Possibility Thinking Embracing the Lessons of Reflective Thinking Questioning the Acceptance of Popular

Thinking Encouraging the Participation of Shared Thinking Experiencing the Satisfaction of Unselfish Thinking
Enjoying the Return of Bottom-Line Thinking As you read the chapters dedicated to each kind of thinking, you will discover that they do not try to tell you what to think; they attempt to teach you how to think. As you become acquainted with each skill, you will find that some you do well, others you don't. Learn to develop each of those kinds of thinking, and you will become a better thinker. Master all that you can—including the process of shared thinking which helps you compensate for your weak areas—and your life will change.

1 Cultivate Big-Picture Thinking

"Where success is concerned, people are not measured in inches, or pounds, or college degrees, or family background; they are measured by the size of their thinking." —DAVID SCHWARTZ Big-picture thinking can benefit any person in any profession. When somebody like Jack Welch tells a GE employee that the ongoing relationship with the customer is more important than the sale of an individual product, he's reminding them of the big picture. When two parents are fed up with potty training, poor grades, or fender-benders, and one reminds the other that the current difficult time is only a temporary season, then they benefit from thinking big picture. Real estate developer Donald Trump quipped, "You have to think anyway, so why not think big?" Bigpicture thinking brings wholeness and maturity to a person's thinking. It brings perspective. It's like making the frame of a picture bigger, in the process expanding not only what you can see, but what you are able to do. Spend time with big-picture thinkers, and you will find that they: Learn Continually Big-picture thinkers are never satisfied with what they already know. They are always visiting new places, reading new books, meeting new people, learning new skills. And because of that practice, they often are able to connect the unconnected. They are lifelong learners. To help me maintain a learner's attitude, I spend a few moments every morning thinking about my learning opportunities for the day. As I review my calendar and to-do list—knowing whom I will meet that day, what I will read, which meetings I will attend—I note where I am most likely to learn something. Then I mentally cue myself to look attentively for something that will improve me in that situation. If you desire to keep learning, I want to encourage you to examine your day and look for opportunities to learn.

Listen Intentionally

An excellent way to broaden your experience is to listen to someone who has expertise in an area where you don't. I search for such opportunities. One year I spoke to about 900 coaches and scouts at the Senior Bowl, where graduating football players participate in their last college game. I had the opportunity, along with my son-in-law, Steve Miller, to have dinner with NFL head coaches Dave Wannstedt and Butch Davis. It's not often that you get such an opportunity, so I asked them questions about teamwork and spent a lot of time listening to them. At the end of the evening, as Steve and I were walking to our car, he said to me, "John, I bet you asked those coaches a hundred questions tonight." "If I'm going to learn and grow," I replied, "I must know what questions to ask and know how to apply the answers to my life. Listening has taught me a lot more than talking." When you meet with people, it's good to have an agenda so that you can learn. It's a great way to partner with people who can do things you can't. Big-picture thinkers recognize that they don't know lots of things. They frequently ask penetrating questions to enlarge their understanding and thinking. If you want to become a better big-picture thinker, then become a good listener. Look Expansively

Writer Henry David Thoreau wrote,

"Many an object is not seen, though it falls within the range of our visual ray, because it does not come within the range of our intellectual ray." Human beings habitually see their own world first. For example, when people arrive at a leadership conference put on by my company, they want to know where they're going to park, whether they will be able to get a good (and comfortable) seat, whether the speaker will be "on," and if the breaks will be spaced right. When I arrive to speak at the same conference, I want to know that the lighting is good, the sound equipment is operating effectively, whether the speaker's platform will be close enough to the people, etc. Who you are determines what you see—and how you think. Big-picture thinkers realize there is a world out there besides their own, and they make an effort to get outside of themselves and see other people's worlds through their eyes. It's hard to see the picture while inside the frame. To see how others see, you must first find out how they think. Becoming a good listener certainly helps with that. So does getting over your personal agenda and trying to take the other person's perspective.

Live Completely

French essayist Michel Eyquem de Montaigne wrote, "The value of life lies not in the length of days, but in the use we make of them; a man may live long yet live very

little.” The truth is that you can spend your life any way you want, but you can spend it only once. Becoming a big-picture thinker can help you to live with wholeness, to live a very fulfilling life. People who see the big picture expand their experience because they expand their world. As a result, they accomplish more than narrow-minded people. And they experience fewer unwanted surprises, too, because they are more likely to see the many components involved in any given situation: issues, people, relationships, timing, and values. They are also, therefore, usually more tolerant of other people and their thinking.

WHY YOU SHOULD RECEIVE THE WISDOM OF BIGPICTURE THINKING

Intuitively, you probably recognize big-picture thinking as beneficial. Few people want to be closed-minded. No one sets out to be that way. But just in case you’re not completely convinced, consider several specific reasons why you should make the effort to become a better big-picture thinker:

- 1. Big-Picture Thinking Allows You to Lead** You can find many big-picture thinkers who aren’t leaders, but you will find few leaders who are not big-picture thinkers. Leaders must be able to do many important things for their people: See the vision before their people do. They also see more of it. This allows them to... Size up situations, taking into account many variables. Leaders who see the big picture discern possibilities as well as problems to form a foundation to build the vision. Once leaders have done that, they can... Sketch a picture of where the team is going, including any potential challenges or obstacles. The goal of leaders shouldn’t be merely to make their people feel good, but to help them be good and accomplish the dream. The vision, shown accurately, will allow leaders to... Show how the future connects with the past to make the journey more meaningful. When leaders recognize this need for connection and bridge it, then they can... Seize the moment when the timing is right. In leadership, when to move is as important as what you do. As Winston Churchill said, “There comes a special moment in everyone’s life, a moment for which that person was born.... When he seizes it... it is his finest hour.” Whether building roads, planning a trip, or moving in leadership, big-picture thinking allows you to enjoy more success. People who are constantly looking at the whole picture have the best chance of succeeding in any endeavor.
- 2. Big-Picture Thinking Keeps You on Target** Thomas Fuller, chaplain to Charles II of England, observed, “He that is everywhere is nowhere.” To get things done, you need focus. However, to get the right things done, you also need to consider the big picture. Only by putting your daily activities in the context of the big picture will you be able to stay on target. As Alvin Toffler says, “You’ve got to think about ‘big things’ while you’re doing small things, so that all the small things go in the right direction.”
- 3. Big-Picture Thinking Allows You to See What Others See** One of the most important skills you can develop in human relations is the ability to see things from the other person’s point of view. It’s one of the keys to working with clients, satisfying customers, maintaining a marriage, rearing children, helping those who are less fortunate, etc. All human interactions are enhanced by the ability to put yourself in another person’s shoes. How? Look beyond yourself, your own interests, and your own world. When you work to consider an issue from every possible angle, examine it in the light of another’s history, discover the interests and concerns of others, and try to set aside your own agenda, you begin to see what others see. And that is a powerful thing.
- 4. Big-Picture Thinking Promotes Teamwork** If you participate in any kind of team activity, then you know how important it is that team members see the whole picture, not just their own part. Anytime a person doesn’t know how his work fits with that of his teammates, then the whole team is in trouble. The better the grasp team members have of the big picture, the greater their potential to work together as a team.
- 5. Big-Picture Thinking Keeps You from Being Caught Up in the Mundane** Let’s face it: some aspects of everyday life are absolutely necessary but thoroughly uninteresting. Big-picture thinkers don’t let the grind get to them, because they don’t lose sight of the all-important overview. They know that the person who forgets the ultimate is a slave to the immediate.
- 6. Big-Picture Thinking Helps You to Chart Uncharted Territory** Have you ever heard the expression, “We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it”? That phrase undoubtedly was coined by someone who had trouble seeing the big picture. The world was built by people who “crossed bridges” in their minds long before anyone else did. The only way to break new ground or move into uncharted territory is to look beyond the immediate and see the big picture.

HOW TO ACQUIRE THE WISDOM OF BIG-PICTURE THINKING

If you desire to seize new opportunities and open new horizons, then you need to add big-picture thinking to your abilities. To become a good thinker better able to see the big picture, keep in mind the

following suggestions:

1. Don't Strive for Certainty Big-picture thinkers are comfortable with ambiguity. They don't try to force every observation or piece of data into pre-formulated mental cubby holes. They think broadly and can juggle many seemingly contradictory thoughts in their minds. If you want to cultivate the ability to think big picture, then you must get used to embracing and dealing with complex and diverse ideas.
2. Learn from Every Experience Big-picture thinkers broaden their outlook by striving to learn from every experience. They don't rest on their successes, they learn from them. More importantly, they learn from their failures. They can do that because they remain teachable. Varied experiences—both positive and negative—help you see the big picture. The greater the variety of experience and success, the more potential to learn you have. If you desire to be a big-picture thinker, then get out there and try a lot of things, take a lot of chances, and take time to learn after every victory or defeat.
3. Gain Insight from a Variety of People Big-picture thinkers learn from their experiences. But they also learn from experiences they don't have. That is, they learn by receiving insight from others—from customers, employees, colleagues, and leaders. If you desire to broaden your thinking and see more of the big picture, then seek out counselors to help you. But be wise in whom you ask for advice. Gaining insight from a variety of people doesn't mean stopping anyone and everyone in hallways and grocery store lines and asking what they think about a given subject. Be selective. Talk to people who know and care about you, who know their field, and who bring experience deeper and broader than your own.
4. Give Yourself Permission to Expand Your World If you want to be a big-picture thinker, you will have to go against the flow of the world. Society wants to keep people in boxes. Most people are married mentally to the status quo. They want what was, not what can be. They seek safety and simple answers. To think big-picture, you need to give yourself permission to go a different way, to break new ground, to find new worlds to conquer. And when your world does get bigger, you need to celebrate. Never forget there is more out there in the world than what you've experienced. Keep learning, keep growing, and keep looking at the big picture! If you desire to be a good thinker, that's what you need to do.

Thinking Question Am I thinking beyond myself and my world so that I process ideas with a holistic perspective?

2 Engage in Focused Thinking "He did each thing as if he did nothing else." —SPOKEN OF NOVELIST CHARLES DICKENS

Philosopher Bertrand Russell once asserted, "To be able to concentrate for a considerable time is essential to difficult achievement." Sociologist Robert Lynd observed that "knowledge is power only if a man knows what facts are not to bother about." Focused thinking removes distractions and mental clutter so that you can concentrate on an issue and think with clarity. Focused thinking can do several things for you:

1. Focused Thinking Harnesses Energy Toward a Desired Goal Focus can bring energy and power to almost anything, whether physical or mental. If you're learning how to pitch a baseball and you want to develop a good curveball, then focused thinking while practicing will improve your technique. If you need to refine the manufacturing process of your product, focused thinking will help you develop the best method. If you want to solve a difficult mathematics problem, focused thinking helps you break through to the solution. The greater the difficulty of a problem or issue, the more focused thinking time is necessary to solve it.
2. Focused Thinking Gives Ideas Time to Develop I love to discover and develop ideas. I often bring my creative team together for brainstorming and creative thinking. When we first get together, we try to be exhaustive in our thinking in order to generate as many ideas as possible. The birthing of a potential breakthrough often results from sharing many good ideas. But to take ideas to the next level, you must shift from being expansive in your thinking to being selective. I have discovered that a good idea can become a great idea when it is given focus time. It's true that focusing on a single idea for a long time can be very frustrating. I've often spent days focusing on a thought and trying to develop it, only to find that I could not improve the idea. But sometimes my perseverance in focused thinking pays off. That brings me great joy. And when focused thinking is at its best, not only does the idea grow, but so do I!
3. Focused Thinking Brings Clarity to the Target I consider golf one of my favorite hobbies. It's a wonderfully challenging game. I like it because the objectives are so clear. Professor William Mobley of the University of South Carolina made the following observation about golf: One of the most important things about golf is the presence of clear goals. You see the pins, you know the par—it's neither too easy nor unattainable, you know your average score, and there are competitive goals— competitive with par, with yourself and others. These

goals give you something to shoot at. In work, as in golf, goals motivate. One time on the golf course, I followed a golfer who neglected to put the pin back in the hole after he putted. Because I could not see my target, I couldn't focus properly. My focus quickly turned to frustration—and to poor play. To be a good golfer, a person needs to focus on a clear target. The same is true in thinking. Focus helps you to know the goal—and to achieve it.

4. Focused Thinking Will Take You to the Next Level

No one achieves greatness by becoming a generalist. You don't hone a skill by diluting your attention to its development. The only way to get to the next level is to focus. No matter whether your goal is to increase your level of play, sharpen your business plan, improve your bottom line, develop your subordinates, or solve personal problems, you need to focus. Author Harry A. Overstreet observed, "The immature mind hops from one thing to another; the mature mind seeks to follow through."

WHERE SHOULD YOU FOCUS YOUR THINKING?

Does every area of your life deserve dedicated, focused thinking time? Of course, the answer is no. Be selective, not exhaustive, in your focused thinking. For me, that means dedicating in-depth thinking time to four areas: leadership, creativity, communication, and intentional networking. Your choices will probably differ from mine. Here are a few suggestions to help you figure them out:

Identify Your Priorities

First, take into account your priorities—for yourself, your family, and your team. Author, consultant, and award-winning thinker Edward DeBono quipped, "A conclusion is the place where you get tired of thinking." Unfortunately, many people land on priorities based on where they run out of steam. You certainly don't want to do that. Nor do you want to let others set your agenda. There are many ways to determine priorities. If you know yourself well, begin by focusing on your strengths, the things that make best use of your skills and God-given talents. You might also focus on what brings the highest return and reward. Do what you enjoy most and do best. You could use the 80/20 rule. Give 80 percent of your effort to the top 20 percent (most important) activities. Another way is to focus on exceptional opportunities that promise a huge return. It comes down to this: give your attention to the areas that bear fruit.

Discover Your Gifts

Not all people are self-aware and have a good handle on their own skills, gifts, and talents. They are a little like the comic strip character Charlie Brown. One day after striking out in a baseball game, he says, "Rats! I'll never be a big league player. I just don't have it! All my life I've dreamed of playing in the big leagues, but I'll never make it." To which Lucy replies, "Charlie Brown, you're thinking too far ahead. What you need to do is set more immediate goals for yourself." For a moment, Charlie Brown sees a ray of hope. "Immediate goals?" he says. "Yes," answers Lucy. "Start with the next inning. When you go out to pitch, see if you can walk out to the mound without falling down!" I've met many individuals who grew up in a household full of Lucys. They received little encouragement or affirmation, and as a result seem at a loss for direction. If you have that kind of background, you need to work extra hard to figure out what your gifts are. Take a personality profile such as DISC or Myers-Briggs. Interview positive friends and family members to see where they think you shine. Spend some time reflecting on past successes. If you're going to focus your thinking in your areas of strength, you need to know what they are.

Develop Your Dream

If you want to achieve great things, you need to have a great dream. If you're not sure of your dream, use your focused thinking time to help you discover it. If your thinking has returned to a particular area time after time, you may be able to discover your dream there. Give it more focused time and see what happens. Once you find your dream, move forward without second-guessing. Take the advice of Satchel Paige: "Don't look back—something might be gaining on you." The younger you are, the more likely you will give your attention to many things. That's good because if you're young you're still getting to know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses. If you focus your thinking on only one thing and your aspirations change, then you've wasted your best mental energy. As you get older and more experienced, the need to focus becomes more critical. The farther and higher you go, the more focused you can be—and need to be.

HOW CAN YOU STAY FOCUSED?

Once you have a handle on what you should think about, you must decide how to better focus on it. Here are five suggestions to help you with the process:

1. Remove Distractions

Removing distractions is no small matter in our current culture, but it's critical. How do you do it? First, by maintaining the discipline of practicing your priorities. Don't do easy things first or hard things first or urgent things first. Do first things first—the activities that give you the highest return. In that way, you keep the distractions to a minimum. Second, insulate yourself from distractions. I've found that I need blocks of

time to think without interruptions. I've mastered the art of making myself unavailable when necessary and going off to my "thinking place" so that I can work without interruptions. Because of my responsibilities as founder of three companies, however, I am always aware of the tension between my need to remain accessible to others as a leader and my need to withdraw from them to think. The best way to resolve the tension is to understand the value of both activities. Walking slowly through the crowd allows me to connect with people and know their needs. Withdrawing from the crowd allows me to think of ways to add value to them. My advice to you is to place value on and give attention to both. If you naturally withdraw, then make sure to get out among people more often. If you're always on the go and rarely withdraw for thinking time, then remove yourself periodically so that you can unleash the potential of focused thinking. And wherever you are... be there!

2. Make Time for Focused Thinking Once you have a place to think, you need the time to think. Because of the fast pace of our culture, people tend to multi-task. But that's not always a good idea. Switching from task to task can cost you up to 40 percent efficiency. According to researchers, "If you're trying to accomplish many things at the same time, you'll get more done by focusing on one task at a time, not by switching constantly from one task to another." 2 Years ago I realized that my best thinking time occurs in the morning. Whenever possible, I reserve my mornings for thinking and writing. One way to gain time for focused thinking is to impose upon yourself a rule that one company implemented. Don't allow yourself to look at e-mail until after 10 A.M. Instead, focus your energies on your number one priority. Put non-productive time wasters on hold so that you can create thinking time for yourself.

3. Keep Items of Focus Before You Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great transcendental thinker, believed, "Concentration is the secret of strength in politics, in war, in trade, in short in all management of human affairs." To help me concentrate on the things that matter, I work to keep important items before me. One way is to ask my assistant, Linda Eggers, to keep bringing it up, asking me about it, giving me additional information in reference to it. I'll also keep a file or a page on my desk so that I see it every day as I work. That strategy has successfully helped me for thirty years to stimulate and sharpen ideas. If you've never done it, I recommend that you try it. (I'll tell you more about it in the section on reflective thinking.)

4. Set Goals I believe goals are important. The mind will not focus until it has clear objectives. But the purpose of goals is to focus your attention and give you direction, not to identify a final destination. As you think about your goals, note that they should be Clear enough to be kept in focus Close enough to be achieved Helpful enough to change lives Those guidelines will get you going. And be sure to write down your goals. If they're not written, I can almost guarantee that they're not focused enough. And if you really want to make sure they're focused, take the advice of David Belasco, who says, "If you can't write your idea on the back of my business card, you don't have a clear idea." Even if you look back years from now and think your goals were too small, they will have served their purpose—if they provide you with direction.

5. Question Your Progress Take a good look at yourself from time to time to see whether you are actually making progress. That is the most accurate measure of whether you are making the best use of focused thinking. Ask yourself, "Am I seeing a return for my investment of focused thinking time? Is what I am doing getting me closer to my goals? Am I headed in a direction that helps me to fulfill my commitments, maintain my priorities, and realize my dreams?"

WHAT ARE YOU GIVING UP TO GO UP? No one can go to the highest level and remain a generalist. My dad used to say, "Find the one thing you do well and don't do anything else." I've found that to do well at a few things, I have had to give up many things. As I worked on this chapter, I spent some time reflecting on the kinds of things I've given up. Here are the main ones: I Can't Know Everyone I love people, and I'm outgoing. Put me into a room full of people, and I feel energized. So it goes against my grain to restrict myself from spending time with lots of people. To compensate for that, I've done a couple of things. First, I've chosen a strong inner circle of people. They not only provide tremendous professional help, but they also make life's journey much more pleasant. Second, I ask certain friends to catch me up on what's happening in the lives of other friends. I usually do that when I'm traveling and can't block out the time I would need for focused thinking.

I Can't Do Everything There are only a few exceptional opportunities in any person's lifetime. That's why I strive for excellence in a few things rather than a good performance in many. That's cost me. Because of my workload, I also have to skip doing many things that I would love to do. For example, every week I hand off projects that I think

would be fun to do myself. I practice the 10-80-10 principle with the people to whom I'm delegating a task. I help with the first 10 percent by casting vision, laying down parameters, providing resources, and giving encouragement. Then once they've done the middle 80 percent, I come alongside them again and help them take whatever it is the rest of the way, if I can. I call it putting the cherry on top. I Can't Go Everywhere Every conference speaker and author has to travel a lot. Before I began doing much speaking, that seemed like a glamorous life. But after logging several million miles, I know what kind of a toll it can take. Ironically, I still love traveling for pleasure with my wife, Margaret. It's one of our great joys. She and I could take ten vacations a year and enjoy every one of them. Yet we can't, because so much of my time is consumed doing what I was called to do: help people to grow personally and to develop as leaders. I Can't Be Well-Rounded Being focused also keeps me from being well-rounded. I tell people, "Ninety-nine percent of everything in life I don't need to know about." I try to focus on the one percent that gives the highest return. And of the remaining ninety-nine, Margaret keeps me aware of whatever I need to know. It's one of the ways I keep from getting totally out of balance in my life. Being willing to give up some of the things you love in order to focus on what has the greatest impact isn't an easy lesson to learn. But the earlier you embrace it, the sooner you can dedicate yourself to excellence in what matters most. Thinking Question Am I dedicated to removing distractions and mental clutter so that I can concentrate with clarity on the real issue? 3 Harness Creative Thinking "The joy is in creating, not maintaining." —VINCE LOMBARDI, NFL HALL OF FAME COACH Creativity is pure gold, no matter what you do for a living. Annette Moser-Wellman, author of *The Five Faces of Genius*, asserts, "The most valuable resource you bring to your work and to your firm is your creativity. More than what you get done, more than the role you play, more than your title, more than your 'output'—it's your ideas that matter." 3 Despite the importance of a person's ability to think with creativity, few people seem to possess the skill in abundance. If you're not as creative as you would like to be, you can change your way of thinking. Creative thinking isn't necessarily original thinking. In fact, I think people mythologize original thought. Most often, creative thinking is a composite of other thoughts discovered along the way. Even the great artists, whom we consider highly original, learned from their masters, modeled their work on that of others, and brought together a host of ideas and styles to create their own work. Study art, and you will see threads that run through the work of all artists and artistic movements, connecting them to other artists who went before them. CHARACTERISTICS OF CREATIVE THINKERS Perhaps you're not even sure what I mean when I ask whether you are a creative thinker. Consider some characteristics that creative thinkers have in common: Creative Thinkers Value Ideas Annette Moser-Wellman observes, "Highly creative people are dedicated to ideas. They don't rely on their talent alone; they rely on their discipline. Their imagination is like a second skin. They know how to manipulate it to its fullest." 4 Creativity is about having ideas—lots of them. You will have ideas only if you value ideas. Creative Thinkers Explore Options I've yet to meet a creative thinker who didn't love options. Exploring a multitude of possibilities helps to stimulate the imagination, and imagination is crucial to creativity. As Albert Einstein put it, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." People who know me well will tell you that I place a very high value on options. Why? Because they provide the key to finding the best answer—not the only answer. Good thinkers come up with the best answers. They create backup plans that provide them with alternatives. They enjoy freedom that others do not possess. And they will influence and lead others. Creative Thinkers Embrace Ambiguity Writer H. L. Mencken said, "It is the dull man who is always sure, and the sure man who is always dull." Creative people don't feel the need to stamp out uncertainty. They see all kinds of inconsistencies and gaps in life, and they often take delight in exploring those gaps—or in using their imagination to fill them in. Creative Thinkers Celebrate the Offbeat Creativity, by its very nature, often explores off of the beaten path and goes against the grain. Diplomat and longtime president of Yale University Kingman Brewster said, "There is a correlation between the creative and the screwball. So we must suffer the screwball gladly." To foster creativity in yourself or others, be willing to tolerate a little oddness. Creative Thinkers Connect the Unconnected Because creativity utilizes the ideas of others, there's great value in being able to connect one idea to another— especially to seemingly unrelated ideas. Graphic designer Tim Hansen says, "Creativity is especially expressed in the ability to make connections, to make associations, to turn things around

and express them in a new way.” Creating additional thoughts is like taking a trip in your car. You may know where you are going, but only as you move toward your destination can you see and experience things in a way not possible before you started. Creative thinking works something like this: THINK _ COLLECT _ CREATE _ CORRECT _ CONNECT Once you begin to think, you are free to collect. You ask yourself, What material relates to this thought? Once you have the material, you ask, What ideas can make the thought better? That can start to take an idea to the next level. After that, you can correct or refine it by asking, What changes can make these ideas better? Finally, you connect the ideas by positioning them in the right context to make the thought complete and powerful. Creative Thinkers Don’t Fear Failure Creativity demands the ability to be unafraid of failure because creativity equals failure. You may be surprised to hear such a statement, but it’s true. Charles Frankel asserts that “anxiety is the essential condition of intellectual and artistic creation.” Creativity requires a willingness to look stupid. It means getting out on a limb—knowing that the limb often breaks! Creative people know these things and still keep searching for new ideas. They just don’t let the ideas that don’t work prevent them from coming up with more ideas that do work.

WHY YOU SHOULD DISCOVER THE JOY OF CREATIVE THINKING Creativity can improve a person’s quality of life. Here are five specific things creative thinking has the potential to do for you:

1. **Creative Thinking Adds Value to Everything** Wouldn’t you enjoy a limitless reservoir of ideas that you could draw upon at any time? That’s what creative thinking gives you. For that reason, no matter what you are currently able to do, creativity can increase your capabilities. Creativity is being able to see what everybody else has seen and think what nobody else has thought so that you can do what nobody else has done. Sometimes creative thinking lies along the lines of invention, where you break new ground. Other times it moves along the lines of innovation, which helps you to do old things in a new way. But either way, it’s seeing the world through sufficiently new eyes so that new solutions appear. That always adds value.
2. **Creative Thinking Compounds Over the years**, I’ve found that Creative Thinking Is Hard Work but Creative Thinking Compounds Given Enough Time and Focus Perhaps more than any other kind of thinking, creative thinking builds on itself and increases the creativity of the thinker. Poet Maya Angelou observed, “You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have. Sadly, too often creativity is smothered rather than nurtured. There has to be a climate in which new ways of thinking, perceiving, questioning are encouraged.” If you cultivate creative thinking in an environment that nurtures creativity, there’s no telling what kind of ideas you can come up with. (I’ll talk more on that later.)
3. **Creative Thinking Draws People to You and Your Ideas** Creativity is intelligence having fun. People admire intelligence, and they are always attracted to fun—so the combination is fantastic. If anyone could be said to have fun with his intelligence, it was Leonardo da Vinci. The diversity of his ideas and expertise staggers the mind. He was a painter, architect, sculptor, anatomist, musician, inventor, and engineer. The term Renaissance man was coined because of him. Just as people were drawn to Da Vinci and his ideas during the Renaissance, they are drawn to creative people today. If you cultivate creativity, you will become more attractive to other people, and they will be drawn to you.
4. **Creative Thinking Helps You Learn More** Author and creativity expert Ernie Zelinski says, “Creativity is the joy of not knowing it all. The joy of not knowing it all refers to the realization that we seldom if ever have all the answers; we always have the ability to generate more solutions to just about any problem. Being creative is being able to see or imagine a great deal of opportunity to life’s problems. Creativity is having options.”
5. **It almost seems too obvious to say**, but if you are always actively seeking new ideas, you will learn. Creativity is teachability. It’s seeing more solutions than problems. And the greater the quantity of thoughts, the greater the chance for learning something new.

5. **Creative Thinking Challenges the Status Quo** If you desire to improve your world—or even your own situation—then creativity will help you. The status quo and creativity are incompatible. Creativity and innovation always walk hand in hand.

HOW TO DISCOVER THE JOY OF CREATIVE THINKING At this point you may be saying, “Okay, I’m convinced that creative thinking is important. But how do I find the creativity within me? How do I discover the joy of creative thought?” Here are five ways to do it:

1. **Remove Creativity Killers** Economics professor and humor author Stephen Leacock said, “Personally, I would sooner have written Alice in Wonderland than the whole Encyclopedia Britannica.” He valued the warmth of creativity over cold facts. If you do too, then you need to eliminate attitudes that devalue creative thinking. Take a look at the

following phrases. They are almost guaranteed to kill creative thinking any time you hear (or think) them: I'm Not a Creative Person Follow the Rules Don't Ask Questions Don't Be Different Stay Within the Lines There Is Only One Way Don't Be Foolish Be Practical Be Serious Think of Your Image That's Not Logical It's Not Practical It's Never Been Done It Can't Be Done It Didn't Work for Them We Tried That Before It's Too Much Work We Can't Afford to Make a Mistake It Will Be Too Hard to Administer We Don't Have the Time We Don't Have the Money Yes, But... Play Is Frivolous Failure Is Final If you think you have a great idea, don't let anyone talk you out of it even if it sounds foolish. Don't let yourself or anyone else subject you to creativity killers. After all, you can't do something new and exciting if you force yourself to stay in the same old rut. Don't just work harder at the same old thing. Make a change.

2. Think Creatively by Asking the Right Questions Creativity is largely a matter of asking the right questions. Management trainer Sir Antony Jay said, "The uncreative mind can spot wrong answers, but it takes a creative mind to spot wrong questions." Wrong questions shut down the process of creative thinking. They direct thinkers down the same old path, or they chide them into believing that thinking isn't necessary at all. To stimulate creative thinking, ask yourself questions such as... Why must it be done this way? What is the root problem? What are the underlying issues? What does this remind me of? What is the opposite? What metaphor or symbol helps to explain it? Why is it important? What's the hardest or most expensive way to do it? Who has a different perspective on this? What happens if we don't do it at all? You get the idea—and you can probably come up with better questions yourself. Physicist Tom Hirschfield observed, "If you don't ask, 'Why this?' often enough, somebody will ask, 'Why you?'" If you want to think creatively, you must ask good questions. You must challenge the process.

3. Develop a Creative Environment Charlie Brower said, "A new idea is delicate. It can be killed by a sneer or a yawn; it can be stabbed to death by a quip and worried to death by a frown on the right man's brow." Negative environments kill thousands of great ideas every minute. A creative environment, on the other hand, becomes like a greenhouse where ideas get seeded, sprout up, and flourish.

A creative environment:

- Encourages Creativity: David Hills says, "Studies of creativity suggest that the biggest single variable of whether or not employees will be creative is whether they perceive they have permission." When innovation and good thinking are openly encouraged and rewarded, then people see that they have permission to be creative.
- Places a High Value on Trust among Team Members and Individuality: Creativity always risks failure. That's why trust is so important to creative people. In the creative process, trust comes from people working together, from knowing that people on the team have experience launching successful, creative ideas, and from the assurance that creative ideas won't go to waste, because they will be implemented.
- Embraces Those Who Are Creative: Creative people celebrate the offbeat. How should creative people be treated? I take the advice of Tom Peters: "Weed out the dullards—nurture the nuts!" I do that by spending time with them, which I enjoy anyway. I especially like to pull people into brainstorming sessions. People look forward to an invitation to such meetings because the time will be filled with energy, ideas, and laughter. And the odds are high that a new project, seminar, or business strategy will result. When that happens, they also know a party's coming!
- Focuses on Innovation, Not Just Invention: Sam Weston, creator of the popular action figure GI Joe, said, "Truly groundbreaking ideas are rare, but you don't necessarily need one to make a career out of creativity. My definition of creativity is the logical combination of two or more existing elements that result in a new concept. The best way to make a living with your imagination is to develop innovative applications, not imagine completely new concepts." Creative people say, "Give me a good idea and I'll give you a better idea!"
- Is Willing to Let People Go Outside the Lines: Most people automatically stay within lines, even if those lines have been arbitrarily drawn or are terribly out of date. Remember, most limitations we face are not imposed on us by others; we place them on ourselves. Lack of creativity often falls into that category. If you want to be more creative, challenge boundaries. Inventor Charles Kettering said, "All human development, no matter what form it takes, must be outside the rules; otherwise, we would never have anything new." A creative environment takes that into account.
- Appreciates the Power of a Dream: A creative environment promotes the freedom of a dream. A creative environment encourages the use of a blank sheet of paper and the question, "If we could draw a picture of what we want to accomplish, what would that look like?" A creative environment allowed Martin Luther King, Jr., to speak

with passion and declare to millions, “I have a dream,” not “I have a goal.” Goals may give focus, but dreams give power. Dreams expand the world. That is why James Allen suggested that “dreamers are the saviors of the world.” The more creativity-friendly you can make your environment, the more potential it has to become creative. 4.

Spend Time with Other Creative People What if the place you work has an environment hostile to creativity, and you possess little ability to change it? One possibility is to change jobs. But what if you desire to keep working there despite the negative environment? Your best option is to find a way to spend time with other creative people. Creativity is contagious. Have you ever noticed what happens during a good brainstorming session? One person throws out an idea. Another person uses it as a springboard to discover another idea. Someone else takes it in yet another, even better direction. Then somebody grabs hold of it and takes it to a whole new level. The interplay of ideas can be electric. I have a strong group of creative individuals in my life. I make sure to spend regular time with them. When I leave them, I always feel energized, I’m full of ideas, and I see things differently. They truly are indispensable to my life. It’s a fact that you begin to think like the people you spend a lot of time with. The more time you can spend with creative people engaging in creative activities, the more creative you will become. 5.

Get Out of Your Box Actress Katharine Hepburn remarked, “If you obey all the rules... you will miss all the fun.” While I don’t think it’s necessary to break all the rules (many are in place to protect us), I do think it’s unwise to allow self-imposed limitations to hinder us. Creative thinkers know that they must repeatedly break out of the “box” of their own history and personal limitations in order to experience creative breakthroughs. The most effective way to help yourself get out of the box is to expose yourself to new paradigms. One way you can do that is by traveling to new places. Explore other cultures, countries, and traditions. Find out how people very different from you live and think. Another is to read on new subjects. I’m naturally curious and love to learn, but I still have a tendency to read books only on my favorite subjects, such as leadership. I sometimes have to force myself to read books that broaden my thinking, because I know it’s worth it. If you want to break out of your own box, get into somebody’s else’s. Read broadly. Many people mistakenly believe that if individuals aren’t born with creativity, they will never be creative. But you can see from the many strategies and examples I’ve given that creativity can be cultivated in the right supportive environment.

Thinking Question Am I working to break out of my “box” of limitations so that I explore ideas and options to experience creative breakthroughs? 4

Employ Realistic Thinking “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.” —MAX DEPREE, CHAIRMAN EMERITUS OF HERMAN MILLER, INC. As anyone knows who’s been out of school for a few years, there’s usually a huge gap between a college education and the reality of the working world. Honestly, early in my career, I went out of my way to avoid too much realistic thinking because I thought it would interfere with my creative thinking. But as I’ve grown, I’ve come to realize that realistic thinking adds to my life.

REALITY CHECK Reality is the difference between what we wish for and what is. It took some time for me to evolve into a realistic thinker. The process went in phases. First, I did not engage in realistic thinking at all. After a while, I realized that it was necessary, so I began to engage in it occasionally. (But I didn’t like it because I thought it was too negative. And any time I could delegate it, I did.) Eventually, I found that I had to engage in realistic thinking if I was going to solve problems and learn from my mistakes. And in time, I became willing to think realistically before I got in trouble and make it a continual part of my life. Today, I encourage my key leaders to think realistically. We make realistic thinking the foundation of our business because we derive certainty and security from it.

Why You Should Recognize the Importance of Realistic Thinking If you’re a naturally optimistic person, as I am, you may not possess great desire to become a more realistic thinker. But cultivating the ability to be realistic in your thinking will not undermine your faith in people, nor will it lessen your ability to see and seize opportunities. Instead, it will add value to you in other ways:

1. **Realistic Thinking Minimizes Downside Risk** Actions always have consequences; realistic thinking helps you to determine what those consequences could be. And that’s crucial, because only by recognizing and considering consequences can you plan for them. If you plan for the worst-case scenario, you can minimize the downside risk.
2. **Realistic Thinking Gives You a Target and Game Plan** I’ve known businesspeople who were not realistic thinkers. Here’s the good news: they were very positive and had a high degree of hope for their business. Here’s the bad news: hope is not a strategy. Realistic thinking leads to

excellence in leadership and management because it requires people to face reality. They begin to define their target and develop a game plan to hit it. When people engage in realistic thinking, they also begin to simplify practices and procedures, which results in better efficiency. Truthfully, in business only a few decisions are important. Realistic thinkers understand the difference between the important decisions and those that are merely necessary in the normal course of business. The decisions that matter relate directly to your purpose. James Allen was right when he wrote, "Until thought is linked with purpose there is no intelligent accomplishment." 6 3.

Realistic Thinking Is a Catalyst for Change People who rely on hope for their success rarely make change a high priority. If you have only hope, you imply that achievement and success are out of your hands. It's a matter of luck or chance. Why bother changing? Realistic thinking can dispel that kind of wrong attitude. There's nothing like staring reality in the face to make a person recognize the need for change. Change alone doesn't bring growth but you cannot have growth without change.

4. Realistic Thinking Provides Security Any time you have thought through the worst that can happen and you have developed contingency plans to meet it, you become more confident and secure. It's reassuring to know that you are unlikely to be surprised. Disappointment is the difference between expectations and reality. Realistic thinking minimizes the difference between the two.

5. Realistic Thinking Gives You Credibility Realistic thinking helps people to buy in to the leader and his or her vision. Leaders continually surprised by the unexpected soon lose credibility with their followers. On the other hand, leaders who think realistically and plan accordingly position their organizations to win. That gives their people confidence in them. The best leaders ask realistic questions before casting vision. They ask themselves things like... Is it possible? Does this dream include everyone or just a few? Have I identified and articulated the areas that will make this dream difficult to achieve?

6. Realistic Thinking Provides a Foundation to Build On Thomas Edison observed, "The value of a good idea is in using it." The bottom line on realistic thinking is that it helps you to make an idea usable by taking away the "wish" factor. Most ideas and efforts don't accomplish their intended results because they rely too much on what we wish rather than what is. You can't build a house in midair; it needs a solid foundation. Ideas and plans are the same. They need something concrete on which to build. Realistic thinking provides that solid foundation.

7. Realistic Thinking Is a Friend to Those in Trouble If creativity is what you would do if you were unafraid of the possibility of failure, then reality is dealing with failure if it does happen. Realistic thinking gives you something concrete to fall back on during times of trouble, which can be very reassuring. Certainty in the midst of uncertainty brings stability.

8. Realistic Thinking Brings the Dream to Fruition British novelist John Galsworthy wrote, "Idealism increases in direct proportion to one's distance from the problem." If you don't get close enough to a problem, you can't tackle it. If you don't take a realistic look at your dream—and what it will take to accomplish it—you will never achieve it. Realistic thinking helps to pave the way for bringing any dream to fruition.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF REALISTIC THINKING Because I'm naturally optimistic rather than realistic, I've had to take concrete steps to improve my thinking in this area. Here are five things I do to improve my realistic thinking:

1. Develop an Appreciation for Truth I could not develop as a realistic thinker until I gained an appreciation for realistic thinking. And that means learning to look at and enjoy truth. President Harry S. Truman said, "I never give 'em hell. I just tell the truth and they think it is hell." That's the way many people react to truth. People tend to exaggerate their success and minimize their failures or deficiencies. They live according to Ruckert's Law, believing there is nothing so small that it can't be blown out of proportion. Unfortunately, many people today could be described by a quote from Winston Churchill: "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing has happened." More recently, television journalist Ted Koppel observed, "Our society finds truth too strong a medicine to digest undiluted. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It is a howling reproach." In other words, the truth will set you free—but first it will make you angry! If you want to become a realistic thinker, however, you need to get comfortable dealing with the truth and face up to it.

2. Do Your Homework The process of realistic thinking begins with doing your homework. You must first get the facts. Former governor, congressman, and ambassador Chester Bowles said, "When you approach a problem, strip yourself of preconceived opinions and prejudice, assemble and learn the facts of the situation, make the decision which seems

to you to be the most honest, and then stick to it.” It doesn’t matter how sound your thinking is if it’s based on faulty data or assumptions. You can’t think well in the absence of facts (or in the presence of poor information). You can also find out what others have done in similar circumstances. Remember, your thinking doesn’t necessarily have to be original; it just has to be solid. Why not learn all that you can from good thinkers who have faced similar situations in the past? Some of my best thinking has been done by others!

3. Think Through the Pros and Cons There’s nothing like taking the time to really examine the pros and cons of an issue to give you a strong dose of reality. It rarely comes down to simply choosing the course of action with the greatest number of pros, because all pros and cons do not carry equal weight. But that’s not the value of the exercise, anyway. Rather, it helps you to dig into the facts, examine an issue from many angles, and really count the cost of a possible course of action.

4. Picture the Worst-Case Scenario The essence of realistic thinking is discovering, picturing, and examining the worst-case scenario. Ask yourself questions such as: What if sales fall short of projections? What if revenue hits rock bottom? (Not an optimist’s rock bottom, but real rock bottom!) What if we don’t win the account? What if the client doesn’t pay us? What if we have to do the job short-handed? What if our best player gets sick? What if all the colleges reject my application? What if the market goes belly up? What if the volunteers quit? What if nobody shows up? You get the idea. The point is that you need to think about worst-case possibilities whether you are running a business, leading a department, pastoring a church, coaching a team, or planning your personal finances. Your goal isn’t to be negative or to expect the worst, just to be ready for it in case it happens. That way, you give yourself the best chance for a positive result—no matter what. If you picture the worst case and examine it honestly, then you really have experienced a reality check. You’re ready for anything. As you do that, take the advice of Charles Hole, who advised, “Deliberate with caution, but act with decision; and yield with graciousness or oppose with firmness.”

5. Align Your Thinking with Your Resources One of the keys to maximizing realistic thinking is aligning your resources with your objectives. Looking at pros and cons and examining worst-case scenarios will make you aware of any gaps between what you desire and what really is. Once you know what those gaps are, you can use your resources to fill them. After all, that’s what resources are for.

SUPER BOWL, SUPER DOME, SUPER SECURITY Our country received lessons in realistic thinking following the tragedy of September 11, 2001. The destruction of the World Trade Center buildings in New York City far surpassed any worst-case scenarios that anyone might have envisioned. In the wake of that event, we now find that we don’t have the luxury of avoiding or neglecting realistic thinking. I was reminded of that on Sunday, February 3, 2002, when I attended the Super Bowl in New Orleans, Louisiana. I had been to the big game twice before, to root for the home team—first San Diego and later Atlanta—and had seen both teams lose! But I had never been to a game like this. The occasion had been designated a National Security Special Event. That meant that the U.S. Secret Service would be overseeing it; military personnel would work with local law enforcement; and security would be of the highest caliber. The Secret Service brought in several hundred agents and secured the area. In preparation for the game, access to the Super Dome was highly restricted, with intensified screening. Officials blocked off roads, closed the nearby interstate, and designated the area a no-fly zone. We arrived early at the dome—officials suggested fans arrive up to five hours ahead of game time—and we immediately saw evidence of the precautionary measures. Eight-foot fences surrounded the whole area, and concrete barriers prevented unauthorized vehicles from getting close to the building. We could see sharpshooters positioned at various locations, including on the roof of some adjacent buildings. When we reached a gate, police officers and security personnel patted us down and examined everyone’s belongings. After that they directed us to go through metal detectors. Only then did they allow us into the stadium. “That’s all well and good,” you may be saying, “but what would have happened had there been a terrorist attack?” The Secret Service had that covered too, because they had prepared for the worst-case scenario. Evacuation plans had been put into place, and personnel at the Super Dome had been drilled to make sure everyone knew what to do in case of an emergency. New Orleans mayor Marc Morial said the day before the Super Bowl, “We want to send a message to all visitors that New Orleans is going to be the safest place in America.”

7 We got the message. We didn’t feel the least bit worried. That’s what happens when leaders recognize the importance of realistic thinking. Thinking Question Am I

building a solid mental foundation on facts so that I can think with certainty? 5 Utilize Strategic Thinking “Most people spend more time planning their summer vacation than planning their lives.” —SOURCE UNKNOWN When you hear the words “strategic thinking,” what comes to mind? Do visions of business plans dance in your head? Do you conjure up marketing plans, the kind that can turn a company around? Perhaps you contemplate global politics. Or you recall some of history’s greatest military campaigns: Hannibal crossing the Alps to surprise the Roman army, Charlemagne’s conquest of Western Europe, or the Allies’ DDay invasion of Normandy. Perhaps, but strategy doesn’t have to be restricted to military action—or even to business. Strategic thinking can make a positive impact on any area of life. PLAN YOUR LIFE, LIVE YOUR PLAN I’ve observed that most people try to plan their lives one day at a time. They wake up, make up their to-do list, and dive into action (although some people aren’t even that strategic). Fewer individuals plan their lives one week at a time. They review their calendar for the week, check their appointments, review their goals, and then get to work. They generally outachieve most of their daily-planning colleagues. I try to take planning one step further. At the beginning of every month, I spend half a day working on my calendar for the next forty days. Forty days works for me rather than just thirty. That way, I get a jump on the next month and don’t get surprised. I begin by reviewing my travel schedule and planning activities with my family. Then I review what projects, lessons, and other objectives I want to accomplish during those five to six weeks. Then I start blocking out days and times for thinking, writing, working, meeting with people, etc. I set times to do fun things, such as seeing a show, watching a ball game, or playing golf. I also set aside small blocks of time to compensate for the unexpected. By the time I’m done, I can tell you nearly everything I’ll be doing, almost hour by hour, during the coming weeks. This strategy is one of the reasons I have been able to accomplish much. WHY YOU SHOULD RELEASE THE POWER OF STRATEGIC THINKING Strategic thinking helps me to plan, to become more efficient, to maximize my strengths, and to find the most direct path toward achieving any objective. The benefits of strategic thinking are numerous. Here are a few of the reasons you should adopt it as one of your thinking tools: 1. Strategic Thinking Simplifies the Difficult Strategic thinking is really nothing more than planning on steroids. Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes said, “The man who is prepared has his battle half fought.” Strategic thinking takes complex issues and long-term objectives, which can be very difficult to address, and breaks them down into manageable sizes. Anything becomes simpler when it has a plan! Strategic thinking can also help you simplify the management of everyday life. I do that by using systems, which are nothing more than good strategies repeated. I am well known among pastors and other speakers for my filing system. Writing a lesson or speech can be difficult. But because I use my system to file quotes, stories, and articles, when I need something to flesh out or illustrate a point, I simply go to one of my 1,200 files and find a good piece of material that works. Just about any difficult task can be made simpler with strategic thinking. 2. Strategic Thinking Prompts You to Ask the Right Questions Do you want to break down complex or difficult issues? Then ask questions. Strategic thinking forces you through this process. Take a look at the following questions developed by my friend Bobb Biehl, the author of Masterplanning. 8 Direction: What should we do next? Why? Organization: Who is responsible for what? Who is responsible for whom? Do we have the right people in the right places? Cash: What is our projected income, expense, net? Can we afford it? How can we afford it? Tracking: Are we on target? Overall Evaluation: Are we achieving the quality we expect and demand of ourselves? Refinement: How can we be more effective and more efficient (move toward the ideal)? These may not be the only questions you need to ask to begin formulating a strategic plan, but they are certainly a good start. 3. Strategic Thinking Prompts Customization General George S. Patton observed, “Successful generals make plans to fit circumstances, but do not try to create circumstances to fit plans.” All good strategic thinkers are precise in their thinking. They try to match the strategy to the problem, because strategy isn’t a one-size-fits-all proposition. Sloppy or generalized thinking is an enemy of achievement. The intention to customize in strategic thinking forces a person to go beyond vague ideas and engage in specific ways to go after a task or problem. It sharpens the mind. 4. Strategic Thinking Prepares You Today for an Uncertain Tomorrow Strategic thinking is the bridge that links where you are to where you want to be. It gives direction and credibility today and increases your potential for success tomorrow. It is, as Mary Webb suggests, like saddling your dreams before you

ride them. 5. Strategic Thinking Reduces the Margin of Error Any time you shoot from the hip or go into a totally reactive mode, you increase your margin for error. It's like a golfer stepping up to a golf ball and hitting it before lining up the shot. Misaligning a shot by just a few degrees can send the ball a hundred yards off target. Strategic thinking, however, greatly reduces that margin for error. It lines up your actions with your objectives, just as lining up a shot in golf helps you to put the ball closer to the pin. The better aligned you are with your target, the better the odds that you will be going in the right direction. 6. Strategic Thinking Gives You Influence with Others One executive confided in another: "Our company has a short range plan and a long range plan. Our short range plan is to stay afloat long enough to make it to our long range plan." That's hardly a strategy, yet that's the position where some business leaders put themselves. There's more than one problem with neglecting strategic thinking in that way. Not only does it fail to build the business, but it also loses the respect of everyone involved with the business. The one with the plan is the one with the power. It doesn't matter in what kind of activity you're involved. Employees want to follow the business leader with a good business plan. Volunteers want to join the pastor with a good ministry plan. Children want to be with the adult who has the wellthought-out vacation plan. If you practice strategic thinking, others will listen to you and they will want to follow you. If you possess a position of leadership in an organization, strategic thinking is essential.

HOW TO RELEASE THE POWER OF STRATEGIC THINKING

To become a better strategic thinker able to formulate and implement plans that will achieve the desired objective, take the following guidelines to heart:

1. Break Down the Issue The first step in strategic thinking is to break down an issue into smaller, more manageable parts so that you can focus on them more effectively. How you do it is not as important as just doing it. You might break an issue down by function. That's what automotive innovator Henry Ford did when he created the assembly line, and that's why he said, "Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs." How you break down an issue is up to you, whether it's by function, timetable, responsibility, purpose, or some other method. The point is that you need to break it down. Only one person in a million can juggle the whole thing in his head and think strategically to create solid, viable plans.
2. Ask Why Before How When most people begin using strategic thinking to solve a problem or plan a way to meet an objective, they often make the mistake of jumping the gun and trying immediately to figure out how to accomplish it. Instead of asking how, they should first ask why. If you jump right into problem solving mode, how are you going to know all the issues? Eugene G. Grace says, "Thousands of engineers can design bridges, calculate strains and stresses, and draw up specifications for machines, but the great engineer is the man who can tell whether the bridge or the machine should be built at all, where it should be built, and when." Asking why helps you to think about all the reasons for decisions. It helps you to open your mind to possibilities and opportunities. The size of an opportunity often determines the level of resources and effort that you must invest. Big opportunities allow for big decisions. If you jump to how too quickly, you might miss that.
3. Identify the Real Issues and Objectives William Feather, author of *The Business of Life*, said, "Before it can be solved, a problem must be clearly defined." Too many people rush to solutions, and as a result they end up solving the wrong problem. To avoid that, ask probing questions to expose the real issues. Challenge all of your assumptions. Collect information even after you think you've identified the issue. (You may still have to act with incomplete data, but you don't want to jump to a conclusion before you gather enough information to begin identifying the real issue.) Begin by asking, What else could be the real issue? You should also remove any personal agenda. More than almost anything else, that can cloud your judgment. Discovering your real situation and objectives is a major part of the battle. Once the real issues are identified, the solutions are often simple.
4. Review Your Resources I already mentioned how important it is to be aware of your resources, but it bears repeating. A strategy that doesn't take into account resources is doomed to failure. Take an inventory. How much time do you have? How much money? What kinds of materials, supplies, or inventory do you have? What are your other assets? What liabilities or obligations will come into play? Which people on the team can make an impact? You know your own organization and profession. Figure out what resources you have at your disposal.
5. Develop Your Plan How you approach the planning process depends greatly on your profession and the size of the challenge that you're planning to tackle, so it's difficult to recommend many specifics. However, no

matter how you go about planning, take this advice: start with the obvious. When you tackle an issue or plan that way, it brings unity and consensus to the team, because everyone sees those things. Obvious elements build mental momentum and initiate creativity and intensity. The best way to create a road to the complex is to build on the fundamentals.

6. Put the Right People in the Right Place It's critical that you include your team as part of your strategic thinking. Before you can implement your plan, you must make sure that you have the right people in place. Even the best strategic thinking won't help if you don't take into account the people part of the equation. Look at what happens if you miscalculate: Wrong Person: Problems instead of Potential Wrong Place: Frustration instead of Fulfillment Wrong Plan: Grief instead of Growth Everything comes together, however, when you put together all three elements: the right person, the right place, and the right plan.

7. Keep Repeating the Process My friend Olan Hendrix remarked, "Strategic thinking is like showering, you have to keep doing it." If you expect to solve any major problem once, you're in for disappointment. Little things can be won easily through systems and personal discipline. But major issues need major strategic thinking time. What Thane Yost said is really true: "The will to win is worthless if you do not have the will to prepare." If you want to be an effective strategic thinker, then you need to become a continuous strategic thinker. As I was working on this chapter, I came across an article in my local paper on the celebration of the Jewish Passover and how millions of American Jews read the order of service for their Seder, or Passover meal, from a small booklet produced by Maxwell House Coffee. For more than seventy years, the coffee company has produced the booklet, called a Haggada, and during those years it has distributed more than 40 million copies of it. "I remember using them all my life," said Regina Witt, who is in her fifties. So does her mother, who is almost ninety. "It's our tradition. I think it would be very strange not to use them."

9 So how did Maxwell House come to supply the booklets? It was the result of strategic thinking. Eighty years ago, marketing man Joseph Jacobs advised that the company could sell coffee during Passover if the product were certified Kosher by a rabbi. (Since 1923, Maxwell House coffee has been certified Kosher for Passover.) And then Jacobs suggested that if they gave away the Haggada booklets, they could increase sales.

10 They've been creating the booklets—and selling coffee during Passover—ever since. That's what can happen when you unleash the power of strategic thinking.

Thinking Question Am I implementing strategic plans that give me direction for today and increase my potential for tomorrow?

6 Explore Possibility Thinking "Nothing is so embarrassing as watching someone do something that you said could not be done." —SAM EWING People who embrace possibility thinking are capable of accomplishing tasks that seem impossible because they believe in solutions. Here are several reasons why you should become a possibility thinker:

1. Possibility Thinking Increases Your Possibilities When you believe you can do something difficult—and you succeed—many doors open for you. When George Lucas succeeded in making Star Wars, despite those who said the special effects he wanted hadn't ever been done and couldn't be done, many other possibilities opened up to him. Industrial Light and Magic (ILM), the company he created to produce those "impossible" special effects, became a source of revenue to help underwrite his other projects. He was able to produce merchandising tie-ins to his movies, thus bringing in another revenue stream to fund his movie making. But his confidence in doing the difficult has also made a huge impact on other movie makers and a whole new generation of movie goers. Popular culture writer Chris Sale-wicz asserts, "At first directly through his own work and then via the unparalleled influence of ILM, George Lucas has dictated for two decades the essential broad notion of what is cinema."

11 If you open yourself up to possibility thinking, you open yourself up to many other possibilities.
2. Possibility Thinking Draws Opportunities and People to You The case of George Lucas helps you to see how being a possibility thinker can create new opportunities and attract people. People who think big attract big people to them. If you want to achieve big things, you need to become a possibility thinker.
3. Possibility Thinking Increases Others' Possibilities Big thinkers who make things happen also create possibilities for others. That happens, in part, because it's contagious. You can't help but become more confident and think bigger when you're around possibility thinkers.
4. Possibility Thinking Allows You to Dream Big Dreams No matter what your profession, possibility thinking can help you to broaden your horizons and dream bigger dreams. Professor David J. Schwartz believes, "Big thinkers are specialists in creating positive forward-looking, optimistic pictures in their own minds and in the minds of others." If you

embrace possibility thinking, your dreams will go from molehill to mountain size, and because you believe in possibilities, you put yourself in position to achieve them.

5. Possibility Thinking Makes It Possible to Rise Above Average During the 1970s, when oil prices went through the roof, automobile makers were ordered to make their cars more fuel efficient. One manufacturer asked a group of senior engineers to drastically reduce the weight of cars they were designing. They worked on the problem and searched for solutions, but they finally concluded that making lighter cars couldn't be done, would be too expensive, and would present too many safety concerns. They couldn't get out of the rut of their average thinking. What was the auto maker's solution? They gave the problem to a group of less-experienced engineers. The new group found ways to reduce the weight of the company's automobiles by hundreds of pounds. Because they thought that solving the problem was possible, it was. Every time you remove the label of impossible from a task, you raise your potential from average to off the charts.

6. Possibility Thinking Gives You Energy A direct correlation exists between possibility thinking and the level of a person's energy. Who gets energized by the prospect of losing? If you know something can't succeed, how much time and energy are you willing to give it? Nobody goes looking for a lost cause. You invest yourself in what you believe can succeed. When you embrace possibility thinking, you believe in what you're doing, and that gives you energy.

7. Possibility Thinking Keeps You from Giving Up Above all, possibility thinkers believe they can succeed. Denis Waitley, author of *The Psychology of Winning*, says, "The winners in life think constantly in terms of 'I can, I will and I am.' Losers, on the other hand, concentrate their waking thoughts on what they should have done, or what they don't do." If you believe you can't do something, then it doesn't matter how hard you try, because you've already lost. If you believe you can do something, you have already won much of the battle. One of the people who showed himself to be a great possibility thinker in 2001 was New York mayor Rudy Giuliani. In the hours following the World Trade Center tragedy, Giuliani not only led the city through the chaos of the disaster, but he instilled confidence in everyone he touched. Afterward, he gave some insight and perspective on his experience: I was so proud of the people I saw on the street. No chaos, but they were frightened and confused, and it seemed to me that they needed to hear from my heart where I thought we were going. I was trying to think, Where can I go for some comparison to this, some lessons about how to handle it? So I started thinking about Churchill, started thinking that we're going to have to rebuild the spirit of the city, and what better example than Churchill and the people of London during the Blitz in 1940, who had to keep up their spirit during this sustained bombing? It was a comforting thought.

12 Sixteen hours after the planes struck the buildings in New York City, when Giuliani finally returned at 2:30 A.M. to his apartment for a rest, instead of sleeping, he read the World War II chapters of *Churchill: A Biography* by Roy Jenkins. He learned how Winston Churchill helped his people to see the possibilities and kept his people going. Inspired, Giuliani did the same for his own people six decades later.

HOW TO FEEL THE ENERGY OF POSSIBILITY THINKING If you are a naturally positive person who already embraces possibility thinking, then you're already tracking with me. However, some people, rather than being optimistic, are naturally negative or cynical. They believe that possibility thinkers are naïve or foolish. If your thinking runs toward pessimism, let me ask you a question: how many highly successful people do you know who are continually negative? How many impossibility thinkers are you acquainted with who achieve big things? None! People with an it-can't-be-done mindset have two choices. They can expect the worst and continually experience it; or they can change their thinking. That's what George Lucas did. Believe it or not, even though he is a possibility thinker, he is not a naturally positive person. He says, "I'm very cynical, and as a result, I think the defense I have against it is to be optimistic."

13 In other words, he chooses to think positively. He sums it up this way: "As corny as it sounds, the power of positive thinking goes a long way. So determination and positive thinking combined with talent combined with knowing your craft... that may sound like a naïve point of view, but at the same time it's worked for me and it's worked for all my friends—so I have come to believe it."

14 If you want possibility thinking to work for you, then begin by following these suggestions:

1. Stop Focusing on the Impossibilities The first step in becoming a possibility thinker is to stop yourself from searching for and dwelling on what's wrong with any given situation. Sports psychologist Bob Rotella recounts, "I tell people: If you don't want to get into positive thinking, that's OK. Just eliminate all the negative thoughts from your mind, and whatever's left will

be fine.” If possibility thinking is new to you, you’re going to have to give yourself a lot of coaching to eliminate some of the negative self-talk you may hear in your head. When you automatically start listing all the things that can go wrong or all the reasons something can’t be done, stop yourself and say, “Don’t go there.” Then ask, “What’s right about this?” That will help to get you started. And if negativity is a really big problem for you and pessimistic things come out of your mouth before you’ve even thought them through, you may need to enlist the aid of a friend or family member to alert you every time you utter negative ideas.

2. Stay Away from the “Experts” So-called experts do more to shoot down people’s dreams than just about anybody else. Possibility thinkers are very reluctant to dismiss anything as impossible. Rocket pioneer Wernher von Braun said, “I have learned to use the word impossible with the greatest of caution.” And Napoleon Bonaparte declared, “The word impossible is not in my dictionary.” If you feel you must take the advice of an expert, however, then heed the words of John Andrew Holmes, who asserted, “Never tell a young person that something cannot be done. God may have been waiting centuries for somebody ignorant enough of the impossible to do that thing.” If you want to achieve something, give yourself permission to believe it is possible —no matter what experts might say.

3. Look for Possibilities in Every Situation Becoming a possibility thinker is more than just refusing to let yourself be negative. It’s something more. It’s looking for positive possibilities despite the circumstances. I recently heard Don Soderquist, former president of Wal-Mart, tell a wonderful story that illustrates how a person can find positive possibilities in any situation. Soderquist had gone with Sam Walton to Huntsville, Alabama, to open several new stores. While there, Walton suggested they visit the competition. Here’s what Soderquist said happened: 15 We went into one [store], and I have to tell you that it was the worst store I’ve ever seen in my life. It was terrible. There were no customers. There was no help on the floor. The aisles were cluttered with merchandise, empty shelves, dirty, it was absolutely terrible. He [Walton] walked one way and I’d walk the other way and we’d kind of meet out on the sidewalk. He said, “What’d you think, Don?” I said, “Sam, that is the absolutely worst store I’ve ever seen in my life. I mean, did you see the aisles?” He said, “Don, did you see the pantyhose rack?” I said, “No, I didn’t, Sam. I must have gone on a different aisle than you. I didn’t see that.” He said, “That was the best pantyhose rack I’ve ever seen, Don.” And he said, “I pulled the fixture out and on the back was the name of the manufacturer. When we get back, I want you to call that manufacturer and have him come in and visit with our fixture people. I want to put that rack in our stores. It’s absolutely the best I’ve ever seen.” And he said next, “Did you see the ethnic cosmetics?” I said, “Sam, that must have been right next to the pantyhose rack, because I absolutely missed that.” He said, “Don, do you realize that in our stores we have four feet of ethnic cosmetics. These people had 12 feet of it. We are absolutely missing the boat. I wrote down the distributor of some of those products. When we get back, I want you to get a hold of our cosmetic buyer and get these people in. We absolutely need to expand our ethnic cosmetics.” Now, Sam Walton didn’t hit me on the head and say, “Don, now what lesson did you learn from this?” He had already hit me on the head by looking for the good, looking how to improve, striving for excellence. It’s so easy to go and look at what other people do badly. But one of the leadership characteristics of vision that he showed me, and I’ll never forget it, is look for the good in what other people are doing and apply it. It doesn’t take a genius IQ or twenty years of experience to find the possibility in every situation. All it takes is the right attitude, and anybody can cultivate that.

4. Dream One Size Bigger One of the best ways to cultivate a possibility mind-set is to prompt yourself to dream one size bigger than you normally do. Let’s face it: most people dream too small. They don’t think big enough. Henry Curtis advises, “Make your plans as fantastic as you like, because twenty-five years from now, they will seem mediocre. Make your plans ten times as great as you first planned, and twenty-five years from now you will wonder why you did not make them fifty times as great.” If you push yourself to dream more expansively, to imagine your organization one size bigger, to make your goals at least a step beyond what makes you comfortable, you will be forced to grow. And it will set you up to believe in greater possibilities.

5. Question the Status Quo Most people want their lives to keep improving, yet they value peace and stability at the same time. People often forget that you can’t improve and still stay the same. Growth means change. Change requires challenging the status quo. If you want greater possibilities, you can’t settle for what you have now. When you become a possibility thinker, you will

face many people who will want you to give up your dreams and embrace the status quo. Achievers refuse to accept the status quo. As you begin to explore greater possibilities for yourself, your organization, or your family—and others challenge you for it—take comfort in knowing that right now as you read this, other possibility thinkers across the country and around the world are thinking about curing cancer, developing new energy sources, feeding hungry people, and improving quality of life. They are challenging the status quo against the odds—and you should, too.

6. Find Inspiration from Great Achievers You can learn a lot about possibility thinking by studying great achievers. I mentioned George Lucas in this chapter. Perhaps he doesn't appeal to you, or you don't like the movie industry. (Personally, I'm not a big science fiction fan, but I admire Lucas as a thinker, creative visionary, and businessperson.) Find some achievers you admire and study them. Look for people with the attitude of Robert F. Kennedy, who popularized George Bernard Shaw's stirring statement: "Some men see things as they are and say, 'Why?' I dream of things that never were and say, 'Why not?'" I know possibility thinking isn't in style with many people. So call it what you like: the will to succeed, belief in yourself, confidence in your ability, faith. It's really true: people who believe they can't, don't. But if you believe you can, you can! That's the power of possibility thinking.

Thinking Question Am I unleashing the enthusiasm of possibility thinking to find solutions for even seemingly impossible situations?

7 Learn from Reflective Thinking "To doubt everything or to believe everything are two equally convenient solutions; both dispense with the necessity of reflection." —JULES HENRI POINCAR © The pace of our society does not encourage reflective thinking. Most people would rather act than think. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm a person of action. I have very high energy and I like to see things accomplished. But I'm also a reflective thinker. Reflective thinking is like the Crock-Pot of the mind. It encourages your thoughts to simmer until they're done. As I go through this process, my goal is to reflect so that I might learn from my successes and mistakes, discover what I should try to repeat, and determine what I should change. It is always a valuable exercise. By mentally visiting past situations, you can think with greater understanding.

1. Reflective Thinking Gives You True Perspective When our children were young and still lived at home, we used to take them on wonderful vacations every year. When we got home, they always knew that I was going to ask them two questions: "What did you like best?" and "What did you learn?" It didn't matter whether we went to Walt Disney World or Washington, D.C. I always asked those questions. Why? Because I wanted them to reflect on their experiences. Children don't naturally grasp the value (or cost) of an experience unless prompted. They take things for granted. I wanted my children to appreciate our trips and to learn from them. When you reflect, you are able to put an experience into perspective. You are able to evaluate its timing. And you are able to gain a new appreciation for things that before went unnoticed. Most people are able to recognize the sacrifices of their parents or other people only when they become parents themselves. That's the kind of perspective that comes with reflection.

2. Reflective Thinking Gives Emotional Integrity to Your Thought Life Few people have good perspective in the heat of an emotional moment. Most individuals who enjoy the thrill of an experience try to go back and recapture it without first trying to evaluate it. (It's one of the reasons our culture produces so many thrill seekers.) Likewise, those who survive a traumatic experience usually avoid similar situations at all costs, which sometimes ties them into emotional knots. Reflective thinking enables you to distance yourself from the intense emotions of particularly good or bad experiences and see them with fresh eyes. You can see the thrills of the past in the light of emotional maturity and examine tragedies in the light of truth and logic. That process can help a person to stop carrying around a bunch of negative emotional baggage. President George Washington observed, "We ought not to look back unless it is to derive useful lessons from past errors, and for the purpose of profiting by dearly bought experience." Any feeling that can stand up to the light of truth and can be sustained over time has emotional integrity and is therefore worthy of your mind and heart.

3. Reflective Thinking Increases Your Confidence in Decision-making Have you ever made a snap judgment and later wondered if you did the right thing? Everybody has. Reflective thinking can help to diffuse that doubt. It also gives you confidence for the next decision. Once you've reflected on an issue, you don't have to repeat every step of the thinking process when you're faced with it again. You've got mental road markers from having been there before. That compresses and speeds up thinking time—and it gives you confidence. And over time, it can also

strengthen your intuition. 4. Reflective Thinking Clarifies the Big Picture When you engage in reflective thinking, you can put ideas and experiences into a more accurate context. Reflective thinking encourages us to go back and spend time pondering what we have done and what we have seen. If a person who loses his job reflects on what happened, he may see a pattern of events that led to his dismissal. He will better understand what happened, why it happened, and what things were his responsibility. If he also looks at the incidents that occurred afterward, he may realize that in the larger scheme of things, he's better off in his new position because it better fits his skills and desires. Without reflection, it can be very difficult to see that big picture. 5. Reflective Thinking Takes a Good Experience and Makes It a Valuable Experience When you were just starting out in your career, did it seem that few people were willing to give someone without experience an opportunity? At the same time, could you see people who had been on their jobs twenty years who yet did their work poorly? If so, that probably frustrated you. Playwright William Shakespeare wrote, "Experience is a jewel, and it had need be so, for it is often purchased at an infinite rate." Yet, experience alone does not add value to a life. It's not necessarily experience that is valuable; it's the insight people gain because of their experience. Reflective thinking turns experience into insight. Mark Twain said, "We should be careful to get out of an experience all the wisdom that is in it—not like the cat that sits down on a hot stove lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove lid again—and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one anymore." 16 An experience becomes valuable when it informs or equips us to meet new experiences. Reflective thinking helps to do that.

HOW TO EMBRACE THE LESSONS OF REFLECTIVE THINKING

If you are like most people in our culture today, you probably do very little reflective thinking. If that's the case, it may be holding you back more than you think. Take to heart the following suggestions to increase your ability to think reflectively:

1. Set Aside Time for Reflection Greek philosopher Socrates observed, "The unexamined life is not worth living." For most people, however, reflection and self-examination doesn't come naturally. It can be a fairly uncomfortable activity for a variety of reasons: they have a hard time staying focused; they find the process dull; or they don't like spending a lot of time thinking about emotionally difficult issues. But if you don't carve out the time for it, you are unlikely to do any reflective thinking.
2. Remove Yourself from Distractions As much as any other kind of thinking, reflection requires solitude. Distraction and reflection simply don't mix. It's not the kind of thing you can do well near a television, in a cubicle, while the phone is ringing, or with children in the same room. One of the reasons I've been able to accomplish much and keep growing personally is that I've not only set aside time to reflect, but I've separated myself from distractions for short blocks of time: thirty minutes in the spa; an hour outside on a rock in my backyard; or a few hours in a comfortable chair in my office. The place doesn't matter—as long as you remove yourself from distractions and interruptions.
3. Regularly Review Your Calendar or Journal Most people use their calendar as a planning tool, which it is. But few people use it as a reflective thinking tool. What could be better, however, for helping you to review where you have been and what you have done—except maybe a journal? I'm not a journaler in the regular sense; I don't use writing to figure out what I'm thinking and feeling. Instead, I figure out what I'm thinking and feeling, and then I write down significant thoughts and action points. (I file the thoughts so that I can quickly put my hands on them again. I immediately execute the action points or delegate them to someone else.) Calendars and journals remind you of how you've spent your time, show you whether your activities match your priorities, and help you see whether you are making progress. They also offer you an opportunity to recall activities that you might not have had the time to reflect on previously. Some of the most valuable thoughts you've ever had may have been lost because you didn't give yourself the reflection time you needed.
4. Ask the Right Questions The value you receive from reflecting will depend on the kinds of questions you ask yourself. The better the questions, the more gold you will mine from your thinking. When I reflect, I think in terms of my values, relationships, and experiences. Here are some sample questions:
 - Personal Growth: What have I learned today that will help me grow? How can I apply it to my life? When should I apply it?
 - Adding Value: To whom did I add value today? How do I know I added value to that person? Can I follow up and compound the positive benefit he or she received?
 - Leadership: Did I lead by example today? Did I lift my people and organization to a higher level? What did I do and how did I do it?
 - Personal Faith: Did I represent God well today? Did I practice the

Golden Rule? Have I “walked the second mile” with someone? Marriage and Family: Did I communicate love to my family today? How did I show that love? Did they feel it? Did they return it? Inner Circle: Have I spent enough time with my key players? What can I do to help them be more successful? In what areas can I mentor them?

Discoveries: What did I encounter today to which I need to give more thinking time? Are there lessons to be learned? Are there things to be done? How you organize your reflection time is up to you. You may want to adapt my pattern to your own values. Or you can try a system that my friend Dick Biggs uses. He creates three columns on a sheet of paper: Year Turning Point Impact This system is good for reflecting on the bigger picture. Dick used it to see patterns in his life, such as when he moved to Atlanta and was encouraged by a new teacher to write. You could just as easily write “Event,” “Significance,” and “Action Point” on a page to help you benefit from reflective thinking. The main thing is to create questions that work for you, and write down any significant thoughts that come to you during the reflection time.

5. Cement Your Learning Through Action Writing down the good thoughts that come out of your reflective thinking has value, but nothing helps you to grow like putting your thoughts into action. To do that, you must be intentional. When you read a good book, for example, there are always good thoughts, quotes, or lessons that you can take away from it and use yourself. I always mark the takeaways in a book and then reread them when I’m done with the book. When I listen to a message, I record the takeaways so that I can file them for future use. When I go to a seminar, I take good notes, and I use a system of symbols to cue me to do certain things: An arrow like this → means to look at this material again. An asterisk like this * next to a marked section means to file it according to the subject noted. A bracket like this [means that I want to use what’s marked in a lecture or book. An arrow like this ← means this idea will take off if I work at it. When most people go to a conference or seminar, they enjoy the experience, listen to the speakers, and sometimes even take notes. But nothing happens after they go home. They like many of the concepts they hear, but when they close their notebooks, they don’t think about them again. When that happens, they receive little more than a temporary surge of motivation. When you go to a conference, revisit what you heard, reflect on it, and then put it into action; it can change your life. Ultimately, reflective thinking has three main values: it gives me perspective within context; it allows me to continually connect with my journey; and it provides counsel and direction concerning my future. It is an invaluable tool to my personal growth. Few things in life can help me learn and improve the way reflective thinking can.

Thinking Question Am I regularly revisiting the past to gain a true perspective and think with understanding? 8

Question Popular Thinking “I’m not an answering machine, I’m a questioning machine. If we have all the answers, how come we’re in such a mess?” —DOUGLAS CARDINAL Economist John Maynard Keynes, whose ideas profoundly influenced economic theory and practices in the twentieth century, asserted, “The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from the old ones.” Going against popular thinking can be difficult, whether you’re a businessperson bucking company tradition, a pastor introducing new types of music to his church, a new mother rejecting old wives’ tales handed down from her parents, or a teenager ignoring currently popular styles. Many of the ideas in this book go against popular thinking. If you value popularity over good thinking, then you will severely limit your potential to learn the types of thinking encouraged by this book. Popular thinking is... Too Average to Understand the Value of Good Thinking, Too Inflexible to Realize the Impact of Changed Thinking, Too Lazy to Master the Process of Intentional Thinking, Too Small to See the Wisdom of Big-picture Thinking, Too Satisfied to Unleash the Potential of Focused Thinking, Too Traditional to Discover the Joy of Creative Thinking, Too Naïve to Recognize the Importance of Realistic Thinking, Too Undisciplined to Release the Power of Strategic Thinking, Too Limiting to Feel the Energy of Possibility Thinking, Too Trendy to Embrace the Lessons of Reflective Thinking, Too Shallow to Question the Acceptance of Popular Thinking, Too Proud to Encourage the Participation of Shared Thinking, Too Self-absorbed to Experience the Satisfaction of Unselfish Thinking, and Too Uncommitted to Enjoy the Return of Bottom-Line Thinking. If you want to become a good thinker, then start preparing yourself for the possibility of becoming unpopular. WHY YOU SHOULD QUESTION THE ACCEPTANCE OF POPULAR THINKING I’ve given you some broad reasons for questioning the acceptance of popular thinking. Now allow me to be more specific: 1. Popular Thinking Sometimes Means Not Thinking My friend Kevin Myers sums up the idea of popular

thinking by saying, “The problem with popular thinking is that it doesn’t require you to think at all.” Good thinking is hard work. If it were easy, everybody would be a good thinker. Unfortunately, many people try to live life the easy way. They don’t want to do the hard work of thinking or pay the price of success. It’s easier to do what other people do and hope that they thought it out. Look at the stock market recommendations of some experts. By the time they publish their picks, most are following a trend, not creating one or even riding its crest. The people who are going to make money on the stocks they recommend have already done so by the time the general public hears about it. When people blindly follow a trend, they’re not doing their own thinking.

2. Popular Thinking Offers False Hope

Benno Muller-Hill, a professor in the University of Cologne genetics department, tells how one morning in high school he stood last in a line of forty students in the schoolyard. His physics teacher had set up a telescope so that his students could view a planet and its moons. The first student stepped up to the telescope. He looked through it, but when the teacher asked if he could see anything, the boy said no; his nearsightedness hampered his view. The teacher showed him how to adjust the focus, and the boy finally said he could see the planet and moons. One by one, the students stepped up to the telescope and saw what they were supposed to see. Finally, the second to last student looked into the telescope and announced that he could not see anything. “You idiot,” shouted the teacher, “you have to adjust the lenses.” The student tried, but he finally said, “I still can’t see anything. It is all black.” The teacher, disgusted, looked through the telescope himself, and then looked up with a strange expression. The lens cap still covered the telescope. None of the students had been able to see anything!

17 Many people look for safety and security in popular thinking.

They figure that if a lot of people are doing something, then it must be right. It must be a good idea. If most people accept it, then it probably represents fairness, equality, compassion, and sensitivity, right? Not necessarily. Popular thinking said the earth was the center of the universe, yet Copernicus studied the stars and planets and proved mathematically that the earth and the other planets in our solar system revolved around the sun. Popular thinking said surgery didn’t require clean instruments, yet Joseph Lister studied the high death rates in hospitals and introduced antiseptic practices that immediately saved lives. Popular thinking said that women shouldn’t have the right to vote, yet people like Emmeline Pankhurst and Susan B. Anthony fought for and won that right. Popular thinking put the Nazis into power in Germany, yet Hitler’s regime murdered millions and nearly destroyed Europe. We must always remember there is a huge difference between acceptance and intelligence. People may say that there’s safety in numbers, but that’s not always true. Sometimes it’s painfully obvious that popular thinking isn’t good and right. Other times it’s less evident. For example, consider the staggering number of people in the United States who have run up large amounts of debt on their credit cards. Anyone who is financially astute will tell you that’s a bad idea. Yet millions follow right along with the popular thinking of buy now, pay later. And so they pay, and pay, and pay. Many promises of popular thinking ring hollow. Don’t let them fool you.

3. Popular Thinking Is Slow to Embrace Change

Popular thinking loves the status quo. It puts its confidence in the idea of the moment, and holds on to it with all its might. As a result, it resists change and dampens innovation. Donald M. Nelson, former president of the Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers, criticized popular thinking when he asserted, “We must discard the idea that past routine, past ways of doing things, are probably the best ways. On the contrary, we must assume that there is probably a better way to do almost everything. We must stop assuming that a thing which has never been done before probably cannot be done at all.”

4. Popular Thinking Brings Only Average Results

The bottom line? Popular thinking brings mediocre results. Here is popular thinking in a nutshell: Popular = Normal = Average It’s the least of the best and the best of the least. We limit our success when we adopt popular thinking. It represents putting in the least energy to just get by. You must reject common thinking if you want to accomplish uncommon results.

HOW TO QUESTION THE ACCEPTANCE OF POPULAR THINKING

Popular thinking has often proved to be wrong and limiting. Questioning it isn’t necessarily hard, once you cultivate the habit of doing so. The difficulty is in getting started. Begin by doing the following things:

1. Think Before You Follow

Many individuals follow others almost automatically. Sometimes they do so because they desire to take the path of least resistance. Other times they fear rejection. Or they believe there’s wisdom in doing what everyone else does. But if you want to succeed, you need to think about what’s best, not what’s

popular. Challenging popular thinking requires a willingness to be unpopular and go outside of the norm. Following the tragedy of September 11, 2001, for example, few people willingly chose to travel by plane. But that was the best time to travel: crowds were down, security was up, and airlines were cutting prices. About a month after the tragedy, my wife, Margaret, and I heard that Broadway shows had lots of seats and many New York hotel rooms remained empty. Popular thinking said, stay away from New York. We used that as an opportunity. We got cheap plane tickets to the city, booked a room in a great hotel for about half price, and got tickets to the most sought-after show: The Producers. As we took our seats in the theater, we sat next to a woman beside herself with excitement. "I can't believe I'm finally here," she said to us. "I've waited so long. This is the best show on Broadway—and the hardest to get tickets to." Then she turned to look me in the eye and said, "I've had my tickets for a year and a half, waiting to see this show. How long ago did you get yours?" "You won't like my answer," I replied. "Oh, come on," she said. "How long?" "I got mine five days ago," I answered. She looked at us in horror. By the way, she was right. It's one of the best shows we've seen in a while. And we got to see it only because we were willing to go against popular thinking when everyone else was staying at home. As you begin to think against the grain of popular thinking, remind yourself that Unpopular thinking, even when resulting in success, is largely underrated, unrecognized, and misunderstood. Unpopular thinking contains the seeds of vision and opportunity. Unpopular thinking is required for all progress. The next time you feel ready to conform to popular thinking on an issue, stop and think. You may not want to create change for its own sake, but you certainly don't want to blindly follow just because you haven't thought about what's best.

2. Appreciate Thinking Different from Your Own One of the ways to embrace innovation and change is to learn to appreciate how others think. To do that, you must continually expose yourself to people different from yourself. My brother, Larry Maxwell—a good businessman and an innovative thinker—continually challenges popular thinking by thinking differently. He says: Most of our people in sales and middle management come from businesses with products and services different from ours. That constantly exposes us to new ways of thinking. We also discourage our people from active participation in formal business and trade associations and fraternities because their thinking is quite common. They don't need to spend lots of time thinking the way everyone else in the industry does. As you strive to challenge popular thinking, spend time with people with different backgrounds, education levels, professional experiences, personal interests, etc. You will think like the people with whom you spend the most time. If you spend time with people who think out of the box, you're more likely to challenge popular thinking and break new ground.

3. Continually Question Your Own Thinking Let's face it, any time we find a way of thinking that works, one of our greatest temptations is to go back to it repeatedly, even if it no longer works well. The greatest enemy to to-morrow's success is sometimes today's success. My friend Andy Stanley recently taught a leadership lesson at INJOY's Catalyst Conference called "Challenging the Process." He described how progress must be preceded by change, and he pointed out many of the dynamics involved in questioning popular thinking. In an organization, he said, we should remember that every tradition was originally a good idea—and perhaps even revolutionary. But every tradition may not be a good idea for the future. In your organization, if you were involved in putting into place what currently exists, then it's likely that you will resist change—even change for the better. That's why it's important to challenge your own thinking. If you're too attached to your own thinking and how everything is done now, then nothing will change for the better.

4. Try New Things in New Ways When was the last time you did something for the first time? Do you avoid taking risks or trying new things? One of the best ways to get out of the rut of your own thinking is to innovate. You can do that in little, everyday ways: drive to work a different way from normal. Order an unfamiliar dish at your favorite restaurant. Ask a different colleague to help you with a familiar project. Take yourself off of autopilot. Unpopular thinking asks questions and seeks options. In 1997, my three companies moved to Atlanta, Georgia. It's a great city, but traffic at peak times can get crazy. Immediately after moving here, I began looking for and testing alternative routes to desired destinations so that I would not be caught in traffic. From my house to the airport, for example, I have discovered and used nine routes within eight miles and twelve minutes from one another. Often I am amazed to see people sitting on the freeway when they could be moving forward on an alternative route. What is the

problem? Too many people have not tried new things in new ways. It is true: most people are more satisfied with old problems than committed to finding new solutions. How you go about doing new things in new ways is not as important as making sure you do it. (Besides, if you try to do new things in the same way that everyone else does, are you really going against popular thinking?) Get out there and do something different today.

5. Get Used to Being Uncomfortable When it comes right down to it, popular thinking is comfortable. It's like an old recliner adjusted to all the owner's idiosyncrasies. The problem with most old recliners is that no one has looked at them lately. If so, they'd agree that it's time to get a new one! If you want to reject popular thinking in order to embrace achievement, you'll have to get used to being uncomfortable. If you embrace unpopular thinking and make decisions based upon what works best and what is right rather than what is commonly accepted, know this: in your early years you won't be as wrong as people think you are. In your later years, you won't be as right as people think you are. And all through the years, you will be better than you thought you could be.

Thinking Question Am I consciously rejecting the limitations of common thinking in order to accomplish uncommon results?

9 Benefit from Shared Thinking "None of us is as smart as all of us." —KEN BLANCHARD Good thinkers, especially those who are also good leaders, understand the power of shared thinking. They know that when they value the thoughts and ideas of others, they receive the compounding results of shared thinking and accomplish more than they ever could on their own. Those who participate in shared thinking understand the following:

1. Shared Thinking Is Faster than Solo Thinking We live in a truly fast-paced world. To function at its current rate of speed, we can't go it alone. I think the generation of young men and women just entering the workforce sense that very strongly. Perhaps that is why they value community so highly and are more likely to work for a company they like than one that pays them well. Working with others is like giving yourself a shortcut. If you want to learn a new skill quickly, how do you do it? Do you go off by yourself and figure it out, or do you get someone to show you how? You can always learn more quickly from someone with experience—whether you're trying to learn how to use a new software package, develop your golf swing, or cook a new dish.
2. Shared Thinking Is More Innovative than Solo Thinking We tend to think of great thinkers and innovators as soloists, but the truth is that the greatest innovative thinking doesn't occur in a vacuum. Innovation results from collaboration. Albert Einstein once remarked, "Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received." Shared thinking leads to greater innovation, whether you look at the work of researchers Marie and Pierre Curie, surrealists Luis Brunel and Salvador Dali, or songwriters John Lennon and Paul McCartney. If you combine your thoughts with the thoughts of others, you will come up with thoughts you've never had!
3. Shared Thinking Brings More Maturity than Solo Thinking As much as we would like to think that we know it all, each of us is probably painfully aware of our blind spots and areas of inexperience. When I first started out as a pastor, I had dreams and energy, but little experience. To try to overcome that, I attempted to get several high-profile pastors of growing churches to share their thinking with me. In the early 1970s, I wrote letters to the ten most successful pastors in the country, offering them what was a huge amount of money to me at the time (\$100) to meet me for an hour, so that I could ask them questions. When one said yes, I'd visit him. I didn't talk much, except to ask a few questions. I wasn't there to impress anyone or satisfy my ego. I was there to learn. I listened to everything he said, took careful notes, and absorbed everything I could. Those experiences changed my life. You've had experiences I haven't, and I've had experiences you haven't. Put us together and we bring a broader range of personal history—and therefore maturity—to the table. If you don't have the experience you need, hook up with someone who does.
4. Shared Thinking Is Stronger than Solo Thinking Philosopher-poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "To accept good advice is but to increase one's own ability." Two heads are better than one—when they are thinking in the same direction. It's like harnessing two horses to pull a wagon. They are stronger pulling together than either is individually. But did you know that when they pull together, they can move more weight than the sum of what they can move individually? A synergy comes from working together. That same kind of energy comes into play when people think together.
5. Shared Thinking Returns Greater Value than Solo Thinking Because shared thinking is stronger than solo thinking, it's obvious that it

yields a higher return. That happens because of the compounding action of shared thinking. But it also offers other benefits. The personal return you receive from shared thinking and experiences can be great. Clarence Francis sums up the benefits in the following observation: “I sincerely believe that the word relationships is the key to the prospect of a decent world. It seems abundantly clear that every problem you will have—in your family, in your work, in our nation, or in this world—is essentially a matter of relationships, of interdependence.”

6. Shared Thinking Is the Only Way to Have Great Thinking

I believe that every great idea begins with three or four good ideas. And most good ideas come from shared thinking. Playwright Ben Jonson said, “He that is taught only by himself has a fool for a master.” When I was in school, teachers put the emphasis on being right and on doing better than the other students, rarely on working together to come up with good answers. Yet all the answers improve when they make the best use of everyone’s thinking. If we each have one thought, and together we have two thoughts, then we always have the potential for a great thought.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE THE PARTICIPATION OF SHARED THINKING

Some people naturally participate in shared thinking. Any time they see a problem, they think, Who do I know who can help with this? Leaders tend to be that way. So do extroverts. However, you don’t have to be either of those to benefit from shared thinking. Use the following steps to help you improve your ability to harness shared thinking:

1. **Value the Ideas of Others First**, believe that the ideas of other people have value. If you don’t, your hands will be tied. How do you know if you truly want input from others? Ask yourself these questions: Am I emotionally secure? People who lack confidence and worry about their status, position, or power tend to reject the ideas of others, protect their turf, and keep people at bay. It takes a secure person to consider others’ ideas. Years ago, an emotionally insecure person took a key position on my board of directors. After a couple of meetings, it became obvious to the other board members that this individual would not positively contribute to the organization. I asked a seasoned leader on the board, “Why does this person always do and say things that hinder our progress?” I’ll never forget his reply: “Hurting people hurt people.” Do I place value on people? You won’t value the ideas of a person if you don’t value and respect the person himself or herself. Have you ever considered your conduct around people you value, versus those you don’t? Look at the differences:

If I Value People	If I Don’t Value People
I want to spend time with them	I don’t want to be around them
I listen to them	I neglect to listen
I want to help them	I don’t offer them help
I am influenced by them	I ignore them
I respect them	I am indifferent

Do I value the interactive process? A wonderful synergy often occurs as the result of shared thinking. It can take you places you’ve never been. Publisher Malcolm Forbes asserted, “Listening to advice often accomplishes far more than heeding it.” I must say, I didn’t always value shared thinking. For many years, I tended to withdraw when I wanted to develop ideas. Only reluctantly did I work on ideas with others. When a colleague challenged me on this, I started to analyze my hesitancy. I realized that it went back to my college experience. Some days in the classroom I could tell that a teacher was unprepared to lecture and instead spent the class time asking us to give our uninformed opinions on a subject. Most of the time, the opinions seemed no better than mine. I had come to class so that the professor could teach me. I realized that the process of sharing ideas wasn’t the problem; it was who was doing the talking. Shared thinking is only as good as the people doing the sharing. Since learning that lesson, I have embraced the interactive process, and now I believe it is one of my strengths. Still, I always think about whom I bring around the table for a shared thinking session. (I’ll tell you my guidelines for whom I invite later in this chapter.) You must open yourself up to the idea of sharing ideas before you will engage in the process of shared thinking.
- 2. **Move from Competition to Cooperation** Jeffrey J. Fox, author of *How to Become CEO*, says, “Always be on the lookout for ideas. Be completely indiscriminate as to the source. Get ideas from customers, children, competitors, other industries, or cab drivers. It doesn’t matter who thought of an idea.”
- 18 A person who values cooperation desires to complete the ideas of others, not compete with them. If someone asks you to share ideas, focus on helping the team, not getting ahead personally. And if you are the one who brings people together to share their thoughts, praise the idea more than the source of the idea. If the best idea always wins (rather than the person who offered it), then all will share their thoughts with greater enthusiasm.
- 3. **Have an Agenda When You Meet** I enjoy spending time with certain people, whether we discuss ideas or not: my wife, Margaret; my children; my grandchildren; my parents. Though

we often do discuss ideas, it doesn't bother me if we don't; we are family. When I spend time with nearly anyone else in my life, however, I have an agenda. I know what I want to accomplish. The more I respect the wisdom of the person, the more I listen. For example, when I meet with someone I'm mentoring, I let the person ask the questions, but I expect to do most of the talking. When I meet with someone who mentors me, I mostly keep my mouth shut. In other relationships, the give and take is more even. But no matter with whom I meet, I have a reason for getting together and I have an expectation for what I'll give to it and get from it. That's true whether it's for business or pleasure.

4. Get the Right People Around the Table To get anything of value out of shared thinking, you need to have people around who bring something to the table. As you prepare to ask people to participate in shared thinking, use the following criteria for the selection process. Choose... People whose greatest desire is the success of the ideas. People who can add value to another's thoughts. People who can emotionally handle quick changes in the conversation. People who appreciate the strengths of others in areas where they are weak. People who understand their place of value at the table. People who place what is best for the team before themselves. People who can bring out the best thinking in the people around them. People who possess maturity, experience, and success in the issue under discussion. People who will take ownership and responsibility for decisions. People who will leave the table with a "we" attitude, not a "me" attitude. Too often we choose our brainstorming partners based on feelings of friendship or circumstances or convenience. But that doesn't help us to discover and create the ideas of the highest order. Who we invite to the table makes all the difference.

5. Compensate Good Thinkers and Collaborators Well Successful organizations practice shared thinking. If you lead an organization, department, or team, then you can't afford to be without people who are good at shared thinking. As you recruit and hire, look for good thinkers who value others, have experience with the collaborative process, and are emotionally secure. Then pay them well and challenge them to use their thinking skills and share their ideas often. Nothing adds value like a lot of good thinkers putting their minds together. No matter what you're trying to accomplish, you can do it better with shared thinking. That is why I spend much of my life teaching leadership. Good leadership helps to put together the right people at the right time for the right purpose so that everybody wins. All it takes is the right people and a willingness to participate in shared thinking.

Thinking Question Am I consistently including the heads of others to think "over my head" and achieve compounding results?

10 Practice Unselfish Thinking "We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own." —BEN SWEETLAND So far in this book, we've discussed many kinds of thinking that can help you to achieve more. Each of them has the potential to make you more successful. Now I want to acquaint you with a kind of thinking with the potential to change your life in another way. It might even redefine how you view success. Unselfish thinking can often deliver a return greater than any other kind of thinking. Take a look at some of its benefits:

1. Unselfish Thinking Brings Personal Fulfillment Few things in life bring greater personal rewards than helping others. Charles H. Burr believed, "Getters generally don't get happiness; givers get it." Helping people brings great satisfaction. When you spend your day unselfishly serving others, at night you can lay down your head with no regrets and sleep soundly. In *Bringing Out the Best in People*, Alan Loy McGinnis remarked, "There is no more noble occupation in the world than to assist another human being—to help someone succeed." Even if you have spent much of your life pursuing selfish gain, it's never too late to have a change of heart. Even the most miserable person, like Charles Dickens's Scrooge, can turn his life around and make a difference for others. That's what Alfred Nobel did. When he saw his own obituary in the newspaper (his brother had died and the editor had written about the wrong Nobel, saying that the explosives his company produced had killed many people), Nobel vowed to promote peace and acknowledge contributions to humanity. That is how the Nobel Prizes came into being.

2. Unselfish Thinking Adds Value to Others In 1904, Bessie Anderson Stanley wrote the following definition of success in *Brown Book* magazine: He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much; who has enjoyed the trust of pure women, the respect of intelligent men and the love of little children, who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who has left the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who has never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed to express it, who has always looked for the best in others and given them the best he had,

whose life was an inspiration, whose memory a benediction. When you get outside of yourself and make a contribution to others, you really begin to live.

3. Unselfish Thinking Encourages Other Virtues When you see a four-year-old, you expect to observe selfishness. But when you see it in a forty-year-old, it's not very attractive, is it? Of all the qualities a person can pursue, unselfish thinking seems to make the biggest difference toward cultivating other virtues. I think that's because the ability to give unselfishly is so difficult. It goes against the grain of human nature. But if you can learn to think unselfishly and become a giver, then it becomes easier to develop many other virtues: gratitude, love, respect, patience, discipline, etc.

4. Unselfish Thinking Increases Quality of Life The spirit of generosity created by unselfish thinking gives people an appreciation for life and an understanding of its higher values. Seeing those in need and giving to meet that need puts a lot of things into perspective. It increases the quality of life of the giver and the receiver. That's why I believe that There is no life as empty as the self-centered life. There is no life as centered as the self-empty life. If you want to improve your world, then focus your attention on helping others.

5. Unselfish Thinking Makes You Part of Something Greater than Yourself Merck and Company, the global pharmaceutical corporation, has always seen itself as doing more than just producing products and making a profit. It desires to serve humanity. In the mid-1980s, the company developed a drug to cure river blindness, a disease that infects and causes blindness in millions of people, particularly in developing countries. While it was a good product, potential customers couldn't afford to buy it. So what did Merck do? It developed the drug anyway, and in 1987 announced that it would give the medicine free to anyone who needed it. As of 1998, the company had given more than 250 million tablets away.

19 George W. Merck says, "We try never to forget that medicine is for the people. It is not for the profits. The profits follow, and if we have remembered that, they have never failed to appear." The lesson to be learned? Simple. Instead of trying to be great, be part of something greater than yourself.

6. Unselfish Thinking Creates a Legacy Jack Balousek, president and chief operating officer of True North Communications, says, "Learn, earn, return—these are the three phases of life. The first third should be devoted to education, the second third to building a career and making a living, and the last third to giving back to others—returning something in gratitude. Each state seems to be a preparation for the next one." If you are successful, it becomes possible for you to leave an inheritance for others. But if you desire to do more, to create a legacy, then you need to leave that in others. When you think unselfishly and invest in others, you gain the opportunity to create a legacy that will outlive you.

HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE SATISFACTION OF UNSELFISH THINKING

I think most people recognize the value of unselfish thinking, and most would even agree that it's an ability they would like to develop. Many people, however, are at a loss concerning how to change their thinking. To begin cultivating the ability to think unselfishly, I recommend that you do the following:

1. Put Others First The process begins with realizing that everything is not about you! That requires humility and a shift in focus. In *The Power of Ethical Management*, Ken Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale wrote, "People with humility don't think less of themselves; they just think of themselves less." If you want to become less selfish in your thinking, then you need to stop thinking about your wants and begin focusing on others' needs. Paul the Apostle exhorted, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

20 Make a mental and emotional commitment to look out for the interests of others.

2. Expose Yourself to Situations Where People Have Needs It's one thing to believe you are willing to give unselfishly. It's another to actually do it. To make the transition, you need to put yourself in a position where you can see people's needs and do something about it. The kind of giving you do isn't important at first. You can serve at your church, make donations to a food bank, volunteer professional services, or give to a charitable organization. The point is to learn how to give and to cultivate the habit of thinking like a giver.

3. Give Quietly or Anonymously Once you have learned to give of yourself, then the next step is to learn to give when you cannot receive anything in return. It's almost always easier to give when you receive recognition for it than it is when no one is likely to know about it. The people who give in order to receive a lot of fanfare, however, have already received any reward they will get. There are spiritual, mental, and emotional benefits that come only to those who give anonymously. If you've never done it before, try it.

4. Invest in People Intentionally

The highest level of unselfish thinking comes when you give of yourself to another person for that person's personal development or well-being. If you're married or a parent, you know this from personal experience. What does your spouse value most highly: money in the bank or your time freely given? What would small children really rather have from you: a toy or your undivided attention? The people who love you would rather have you than what you can give them. If you want to become the kind of person who invests in people, then consider others and their journey so that you can collaborate with them. Each relationship is like a partnership created for mutual benefit. As you go into any relationship, think about how you can invest in the other person so that it becomes a win-win situation. Here is how relationships most often play out: I win, you lose—I win only once. You win, I lose—You win only once. We both win—We win many times. We both lose—Good-bye, partnership! The best relationships are win-win. Why don't more people go into relationships with that attitude? I'll tell you why: most people want to make sure that they win first. Unselfish thinkers, on the other hand, go into a relationship and make sure that the other person wins first. And that makes all the difference.

5. Continually Check Your Motives François de la Rochefoucauld said, "What seems to be generosity is often no more than disguised ambition, which overlooks a small interest in order to secure a great one." The hardest thing for most people is fighting their natural tendency to put themselves first. That's why it's important to continually examine your motives to make sure you're not sliding backward into selfishness. Do you want to check your motives? Then follow the modeling of Benjamin Franklin. Every day, he asked himself two questions. When he got up in the morning, he would ask, "What good am I going to do today?" And before he went to bed, he would ask, "What good have I done today?" If you can answer those questions with selflessness and integrity, you can keep yourself on track.

GIVE WHILE YOU LIVE In the fall of 2001, we all witnessed a demonstration of unselfish thinking unlike anything we had seen in the United States for many years. Who can forget the events of September 11, 2001? I had just finished teaching a leadership lesson when my assistant, Linda Eggers, came into the studio to announce the tragic news. Like most Americans, I remained riveted to the television all day and heard the reports of the firefighters and police officers who raced into the World Trade Center towers to help others, never worrying about their own safety. In the days following the tragedy, millions of Americans expressed a great desire to do something that would help the situation. I had the same desire. My company was scheduled to do a training via simulcast on September 15, the Saturday following the tragedy. Our leadership team decided to add a one-and-a-half-hour program titled "America Prays" to the end of the simulcast. In it, my friend Max Lucado wrote and read a prayer, expressing the heart's cry of millions. Franklin Graham prayed for our national leaders. Jim and Shirley Dobson gave advice to parents on how to help their children deal with the event. And Bruce Wilkinson and I asked the simulcast viewers to give financially to the people injured on September 11. Amazingly, they gave \$5.9 million, which World Vision graciously agreed to distribute to those in need. Unselfish thinking and giving turned a very dark hour into one of light and hope. Less than two weeks after the tragedy, I was able to travel to Ground Zero in New York City. I went to view the site of the destruction, to thank the men and women clearing away the wreckage, and to pray for them. I can't really do justice to what I saw. I've traveled to New York dozens of times. It's one of my favorite places in the world. My wife and I had been up in the towers with our children many times before and have wonderful memories of that area. To look at the place where the buildings had once stood and to see nothing but rubble, dust, and twisted metal—it's simply indescribable. What many Americans didn't realize is that for many months people worked diligently to clean up the site. Many were New York City firefighters and other city workers. Others were volunteers. They worked around the clock, seven days a week. And when they came across the remains of someone in the rubble, they called for silence and reverently carried them out. Since I am a clergyman, I was asked to wear a clerical collar upon entering the area. As I walked around, many workers saw the collar and asked me to pray for them. It was a humbling privilege. American educator Horace Mann said, "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." According to this standard, New York City's firefighters are certainly prepared for death. The service they perform is often truly heroic. You and I may never be required to lay down our lives for others, as they did. But we can give to others in different ways. We can be unselfish thinkers who put others first and add value to their lives. We can work with them so that they go

farther than they thought possible. Thinking Question Am I continually considering others and their journey in order to think with maximum collaboration? 11 Rely on Bottom-Line Thinking “There ain’t no rules around here. We’re trying to accomplish something.” —THOMAS EDISON, INVENTOR How do you figure out the bottom line for your organization, business, department, team, or group? In many businesses, the bottom line is literally the bottom line. Profit determines whether you are succeeding. But dollars should not always be the primary measure of success. Would you measure the ultimate success of your family by how much money you had at the end of the month or year? And if you run a nonprofit or volunteer organization, how would you know whether you were performing at your highest potential? How do you think bottom line in that situation? A NONPROFIT’S BOTTOM LINE Frances Hesselbein had to ask herself exactly that question in 1976, when she became the national executive director of the Girl Scouts of America. When she first got involved with the Girl Scouts, running the organization was the last thing she expected. She and her husband, John, were partners in Hesselbein Studios, a small family business that filmed television commercials and promotional films. She wrote the scripts and he made the films. In the early 1950s, she was recruited as a volunteer troop leader at the Second Presbyterian Church in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Even that was unusual, since she had a son and no daughters. But she agreed to do it on a temporary basis. She must have loved it, because she led the troop for nine years! In time, she became council president and a member of the national board. Then she served as executive director of the Talus Rock Girl Scout Council, a full-time paid position. By the time she took the job as CEO of the national organization, the Girl Scouts was in trouble. The organization lacked direction, teenage girls were losing interest in scouting, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit adult volunteers, especially with greater numbers of women entering the workforce. Meanwhile, the Boy Scouts was considering opening itself to girls. Hesselbein desperately needed to bring the organization back to the bottom line. “We kept asking ourselves very simple questions,” she says. “What is our business? Who is our customer? And what does the customer consider value? If you’re the Girl Scouts, IBM, or AT&T, you have to manage for a mission.” 21 Hesselbein’s focus on mission enabled her to identify the Girl Scouts’ bottom line. “We really are here for one reason: to help a girl reach her highest potential. More than any one thing, that made the difference. Because when you are clear about your mission, corporate goals and operating objectives flow from it.” 22 Once she figured out her bottom line, she was able to create a strategy to try to achieve it. She started by reorganizing the national staff. Then she created a planning system to be used by each of the 350 regional councils. And she introduced management training to the organization. Hesselbein didn’t restrict herself to changes in leadership and organization. In the 1960s and ’70s, the country had changed and so had its girls—but the Girl Scouts hadn’t. Hesselbein tackled that issue, too. The organization made its activities more relevant to the current culture, giving greater opportunities for use of computers, for example, rather than hosting a party. She also sought out minority participation, created bilingual materials, and reached out to low-income households. If helping girls reach their highest potential was the group’s bottom line, then why not be more aggressive helping girls who traditionally have fewer opportunities? The strategy worked beautifully. Minority participation in the Girl Scouts tripled. In 1990, Hesselbein left the Girl Scouts after making it a first-class organization. She went on to become the founding president and CEO of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, and now serves as chairman of its board of governors. And in 1998, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. President Clinton said of Hesselbein during the ceremony at the White House, “She has shared her remarkable recipe for inclusion and excellence with countless organizations whose bottom line is measured not in dollars, but in changed lives.” 23 He couldn’t have said it better! WHY YOU SHOULD ENJOY THE RETURN OF BOTTOMLINE THINKING If you’re accustomed to thinking of the bottom line only as it relates to financial matters, then you may be missing some things crucial to you and your organization. Instead, think of the bottom line as the end, the takeaway, the desired result. Every activity has its own unique bottom line. If you have a job, your work has a bottom line. If you serve in your church, your activity has a bottom line. So does your effort as a parent, or spouse, if you are one. As you explore the concept of bottom-line thinking, recognize that it can help you in many ways: 1. Bottom-Line Thinking Provides Great Clarity What’s the difference between bowling and work? When bowling, it takes only three seconds

to know how you've done! That's one reason people love sports so much. There's no waiting and no guessing about the outcome. Bottom-line thinking makes it possible for you to measure outcomes more quickly and easily. It gives you a benchmark by which to measure activity. It can be used as a focused way of ensuring that all your little activities are purposeful and line up to achieve a larger goal.

2. Bottom-Line Thinking Helps You Assess Every Situation When you know your bottom line, it becomes much easier to know how you're doing in any given area. When Frances Hesselbein began running the Girl Scouts, for example, she measured everything against the organization's goal of helping a girl reach her highest potential—from the organization's management structure (which she changed from a hierarchy to a hub) down to what badges the girls could earn. There's no better measurement tool than the bottom line.

3. Bottom-Line Thinking Helps You Make the Best Decisions Decisions become much easier when you know your bottom line. When the Girl Scouts were struggling in the 1970s, outside organizations tried to convince its members to become women's rights activists or door-to-door canvassers. But under Hesselbein, it became easy for the Girl Scouts to say no. It knew its bottom line, and it wanted to pursue its goals with focus and fervency.

4. Bottom-Line Thinking Generates High Morale When you know the bottom line and you go after it, you greatly increase your odds of winning. And nothing generates high morale like winning. How do you describe sports teams that win the championship, or company divisions that achieve their goals, or volunteers who achieve their mission? They're excited. Hitting the target feels exhilarating. And you can hit it only if you know what it is.

5. Bottom-Line Thinking Ensures Your Future If you want to be successful tomorrow, you need to think bottom line today. That's what Frances Hesselbein did, and she turned the Girl Scouts around. Look at any successful, lasting company, and you'll find leaders who know their bottom line. They make their decisions, allocate their resources, hire their people, and structure their organization to achieve that bottom line.

HOW TO ENJOY THE RETURN OF BOTTOM-LINE THINKING It isn't hard to see the value of the bottom line. Most people would agree that bottom-line thinking has a high return. But learning how to be a bottom-line thinker can be challenging.

1. Identify the Real Bottom Line The process of bottom-line thinking begins with knowing what you're really going after. It can be as lofty as the bigpicture vision, mission, or purpose of an organization. Or it can be as focused as what you want to accomplish on a particular project. What's important is that you be as specific as possible. If your goal is for something as vague as "success," you will have a painfully difficult time trying to harness bottom-line thinking to achieve it. The first step is to set aside your "wants." Get to the results you're really looking for, the true essence of the goal. Set aside any emotions that may cloud your judgment and remove any politics that may influence your perception. What are you really trying to achieve? When you strip away all the things that don't really matter, what are you compelled to achieve? What must occur? What is acceptable? That is the real bottom line.

2. Make the Bottom Line the Point Have you ever been in a conversation with someone whose intentions seem other than stated? Sometimes the situation reflects intentional deception. But it can also occur when the person doesn't know his own bottom line. The same thing happens in companies. Sometimes, for example, an idealistically stated mission and the real bottom line don't jibe. Purpose and profits compete. Earlier, I quoted George W. Merck, who stated, "We try never to forget that medicine is for the people. It is not for the profits. The profits follow, and if we have remembered that, they have never failed to appear." He probably made that statement to remind those in his organization that profits serve purpose—they don't compete with it. If making a profit were the real bottom line, and helping people merely provided the means for achieving it, then the company would suffer. Its attention would be divided, and it would neither help people as well as it could nor make as much profit as it desired.

3. Create a Strategic Plan to Achieve the Bottom Line Bottom-line thinking achieves results. Therefore, it naturally follows that any plans that flow out of such thinking must tie directly to the bottom line—and there can be only one, not two or three. Once the bottom line has been determined, a strategy must be created to achieve it. In organizations, that often means identifying the core elements or functions that must operate properly to achieve the bottom line. This is the leader's responsibility. The important thing is that when the bottom line of each activity is achieved, then the bottom line is achieved. If the sum of the smaller goals doesn't add up to the real bottom line, then either your strategy is flawed or you've not identified your real bottom line.

4. Align Team Members with the Bottom Line Once

you have your strategy in place, make sure your people line up with your strategy. Ideally, all team members should know the big goal, as well as their individual role in achieving it. They need to know their personal bottom line and how that works to achieve the organization's bottom line.

5. Stick with One System and Monitor Results Continually

Dave Sutherland, a friend and former president of one of my companies, believes that some organizations get into trouble by trying to mix systems. He maintains that many kinds of systems can be successful, but mixing different systems or continually changing from one to another leads to failure. Dave says: Bottom-line thinking cannot be a one-time thing. It has to be built into the system of working and relating and achieving. You can't just tune into the desired result every now and then. Achieving with bottom-line thinking must be a way of life, or it will send conflicting messages. I am a bottom-line thinker. It is a part of my "system" for achievement. I practice it every day. No other measurements—no wasted efforts. Dave used to call members of his field team every night to ask the bottom-line question they expect to hear. He continually kept his eye on the company's bottom line by monitoring it for every core area. When it comes right down to it, regardless of your bottom line, you can improve it with good thinking. And bottom-line thinking has a great return because it helps to turn your ideas into results. Like no other kind of mental processing, it can help you to reap the full potential of your thinking and achieve whatever you desire.

Thinking Question Am I staying focused on the bottom line so that I can gain the maximum return and reap the full potential of my thinking?

ONE FINAL THOUGHT I trust you have enjoyed this book. As you move forward, I wish you success and suggest that you keep in mind...

1. Everything begins with a thought. "Life consists of what a man is thinking about all day." —RALPH WALDO EMERSON
2. What we think determines who we are. Who we are determines what we do. "The actions of men are the best interpreters of their thoughts." —JOHN LOCKE
3. Our thoughts determine our destiny. Our destiny determines our legacy. "You are today where your thoughts have brought you. You will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you." —JAMES ALLEN
4. People who go to the top think differently than others. "Nothing limits achievement like small thinking; Nothing expands possibilities like unleashed thinking." —WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD
5. We can change the way we think. "Whatever things are true... noble... just... pure... lovely... are of good report. If there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; think on these things." —PAUL THE APOSTLE

NOTES