

# Personal Excellence

The Magazine of Personal Leadership

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May 2011

Andy Andrews  
Author and Speaker

Live a Life of Possibility

Brain-  
Wash

Self-Limiting  
Beliefs

Achieving  
Vision



"Personal Excellence is the only reading you'll need to do for continual self-improvement both personally and professionally!"

—Sharlene Hawkes, Former Miss America, award-winning ESPN broadcaster

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Personal Excellence

May 2011

The Magazine of Life Leadership

INSPIRATIONAL • POSITIVITY

# Feed Your Mind

Seek and apply positive ideas.

by Tim Sanders

YOU SHOULD BE AS CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT YOU put into your mind as about what you put into your mouth. When you ingest information, your mind starts chewing on it, digesting it, and converting it into a thought. When *positive stuff* goes into your mind, *healthy thoughts* emerge. Your thoughts determine your success or failure, happiness or misery, and your circumstances. If you don't have a *diet plan* for your mind, you are subject to your worst memories, fear chatter, and disturbing thought patterns.

That's the premise behind Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*: "Every man is what he is, because of the *dominating thoughts* which he permits to occupy his mind." As James Allen wrote: "Good thoughts bear good fruit; bad thoughts bear bad fruit."

In *The Magic of Believing*, Claude Bristol revealed that we have two minds:

**The conscious mind** is the always-on machine that reacts to stimuli and steers the subconscious mind. It's smaller, designed to quickly analyze and interpret. By design, it stores far less in order to preserve operating room for interpreting fresh stimuli.

**The subconscious mind** is the cerebral hard drive that stores observations, experiences, and interactions. Your *thoughts* become *reality* because of your subconscious mind, which produces your feelings, instincts, and actions. Trying to recall a name, movie, or book likely drives you crazy. Eventually, the word or phrase comes to you, almost like magic.

The subconscious isn't just a mass storage device. Maxwell Maltz wrote that it's also the

creative mechanism that generates your basic instincts, intuitions, actions, and reactions. Thoughts create beliefs, and beliefs become feelings and actions. If your subconscious computes that you will likely succeed at something, it brings all your powers to bear to make it come true. If it computes that you'll fail, it will generate behavior to make that come true—that's what it means to be self-destructive.

**Your thoughts also shape how others see you, react to you, and inform your self-image.**

Your thoughts, and their resulting emotions, leak out for others to decode. Your body language betrays your spoken words—and why you can suffer a negative outburst that reveals your true feelings—no matter how much you try to maintain self-control. James Allen wrote, "We may imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot; it rapidly crystallizes into habit, and habit solid-



ifies into circumstance." You think, then act, and your actions create a series of events.

**Thoughts also impact your physical health.**

The subconscious mind tells the body what to do, how to feel, and which chemicals to create. When the subconscious mind converts a negative thought into fear and stress, the body produces the stress hormone *cortisol*, which can lead to heart disease and digestive issues. Emotional stress affects physical health. Maxwell Maltz noted, "The greatest cause of ulcers is mountain-climbing over molehills." Dr. Peale wrote, "Many people suffer poor health not because of *what they eat* but from *what is eating them*." The problem with so many people who complain of aches and pains is that *they have indigestion of the soul*.

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## Go on Mind Food Diet

Since your health is shaped by your thoughts, go on a *positive mind diet*:

**For two weeks, log everything you read, listen to, or watch.** Record the source, author, and tone (positive, helpful, neutral, negative) of all you take into your mind. Next to each entry, note how much time you spent on it. The same goes for people you spend time with. Log their names, tone, and time spent. And note how much time you spend on the Internet on unrelated activities.

**Circle negative or useless information and influences; highlight positive/helpful ones.** Assess your total intake, positive or negative. The more aware you are of your mind diet, the more control you have over it.

**Filter out the negative.** Eliminate *junk mind food* and negative influences. They are toxins and fillers that expand and squeeze out any good stuff. Avoid gossip—it's *social pornography*. Celebrity publications promote voyeurism. Be purposeful in your Internet use.

**Filter out negative people and their nasty attitudes and ideas.** If they pick on you, complain, gossip and gripe, warn them that *you are on a mind diet*, taking in *only what is good for you*. If they remain negative, stop hanging out with them—they poison your outlook. Trim them from your social circle, your work, and your time on-line. You can choose whom you interact with. In some cases, you may need to "break up" with a friend or loved one, change social or civic groups, or even quit your job. If you spend time on *Facebook*, be judicious about the quality of your feeds.

**Ingest more of the good stuff.** Be *highly selective* about how you stay informed. Read magazines that enrich your point of view and newspapers that provide relevant information. Seek sources of constructive knowledge. Good books *enlighten* your perspective. They tend to fall into four categories: *inspirational* (philosophical, psychological, or spiritual); *instructional* (personal or professional guides); *history or reference*; *future or trends* (how the world is changing).

**When you look for friends, evaluate their outlook, not just their proximity or relevance to your practical needs.** When you find a conversation partner who lifts you up, spend more time with him or her. Tap into their joy and happiness. Soak up positive thoughts—notice families reuniting, kids having fun, people smiling and laughing, and military men at airports. Such scenes bring joy and positive energy. During holidays, birthdays, or award ceremonies, witness others in joy mode and celebrate with them.

**Call up positive memories.** Manage what memories you call up. Idle thoughts enable your subconscious mind to run wild and dredge up random memories, often accom-

panied by powerful negative emotions such as fear. So, when memories enter your mind, ask, *Am I bringing up a nutrient or an irritant?* Often irritants have physical manifestations, such as hot cheeks, a pit in your stomach, or a clenched fist. A nutrient can feel like a cool drink of water or a gentle high. When you sense a bad memory, spit it out. If it returns, say, *Delete, please*. Bad memories generate thoughts of regret as you chew on the painful past. Once you learn a lesson from a mistake, declare the details "useless memories" and discard them. Store insights; delete details.

**Meditate on success experiences—times when you displayed courage, cunning, and tenacity.** You were masterful. You effortlessly performed *above expectations*. The results were positive, feedback glowed, and your confidence soared. Maxwell Maltz wrote, "*Memories of past success give us self-confidence for the present task.*" *Nothing succeeds like success.*

When you face a challenge, relive a success experience. Think of how courageous, creative, or forceful you were. Consider how similar that situation is to your present task. Carry a picture from the experience in your wallet or on your smart phone.

**Store thoughts of happy times in your mind food for idle moments.** You can store up your moments of happiness and triumph so that in a crisis you can draw upon these memories for help and inspiration. Recognize every positive emotional moment, save it in high-definition, and store it in your mind for easy access. When you feed your mind positive memories, you push out the bad ones.

**Start in the morning with your mind's breakfast.** This sets the tone and instructs your subconscious on what it should notice, process, and store. Ease into the day. For the first hour, don't go online, check e-mail, or read the newspaper. Instead, reading quality books or magazines, spending half the time reading spiritual and inspirational material. After lunch, snatch five minutes of positive thought time to review what is going right. When you get home, don't just switch on the TV. Before bed, read a little more, but don't consume provocative content.

**Your mind is the key to how you think and how confident you will be.** Try this daily plan, and you'll soon see results. When you possess a confident outlook, you perform at your highest level. When you believe in yourself, the people you rely on, and something greater than yourself, you'll achieve what you once thought was impossible. You can rise above personal and financial losses when your thought patterns become mostly *optimistic, hopeful, and constructive.* PE



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**ACTION:** Go on a mind food diet today.

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# I'll Do It Later!

Overcoming procrastination.



by Barry Eisen

**S**TUCK CAN BE A WAY OF LIFE. Ever find yourself daydreaming, eyes wide open seeing nothing, doing your best impersonation of a storefront manikin? How about that getting-ready moment as you prepare to make an important phone call and find yourself *staring* at the phone as if it would provide you the meaning of life? Do you find yourself doing small, time-consuming tasks when you know you need to address something greater that will make a real, important difference? And while you *KNOW* it, you continue doing the minutia anyway?

Everyone procrastinates. But *when procrastination becomes an obvious and consistent part of how you see yourself*, a part of personal identity, regardless of how much you understand it intellectually, it can also become a *self-fulfilling prophesy*. You become that about which you think. The attention to negative self talk—such as, *I'm a procrastinator. I never have enough time. My life is so cluttered. I always do things last minute*—reinforces the behavior, regardless of how loathed.

Many people justify that procrastination is just something they do, and that this pressure works for them. But, when I ask if they would rather do the same actions with comfort and ease, without the self-imposed pressure and, not only sail in by the deadline, but be done at the first, available appropriate time, they respond with an enthusiastic Yes!

**Procrastination is learned and can serve a purpose for those who become its slave.** The *whys* are unimportant. Analyzing why you procrastinate can lead to the *paralysis by analysis*. Unfortunately, understanding *why* you do something does not necessarily cause you to replace the behavior.

**Anything learned can be relearned.** You do things to either minimize loss and pain or to maximize pleasure. So, instead of trying to figure out *why you are the way you are* by playing mental gymnastics, focus on *what you do want*.

## Follow the Do-It-Now Formula

**How can you become a Do-It-Now Person?** How can you go from being a procrastinator to living on auto-pilot as a *Do-It-Now person*? Follow eight steps:

**1. Recalibrate your identity and mindset.** The rule is *Be-Do-Have*. First you must decide *who you are to be*. Adopt "I am a Do-It-Now Person" as a personal identity. As you repeat this idea to yourself, it becomes a belief.

**2. Write long term and short term goals** that are specific, including target dates for completion. These must be meaningful so that they move you, exciting and realistic enough to stretch you without overwhelming you, and big enough to stimulate your grow.

**3. Write your To-Do list** before you go to sleep on a large piece of paper. Don't *cram your thoughts* to fill a small space. Prioritize each item with an A, B, or C using the importance of it being done the following day. Use ONLY ABC. A's are significant and important, highest value. A's are MUSTs. B's are



significant and clearly subordinate *tomorrow* to the A's. C's have value and are to be approached only if A's and B's are done. If picking up the cleaning is not critical and the A's and B's are not done, pass the cleaners. Get to highest-value thinking, not convenience thinking. Prioritize your A's with a 1, 2, or 3, according to their priority, schedule, location. Most people say they do this sometimes. Why? It's often automatic when the stakes are high. The trick is using consistently the skills that serve.

**4. As you accomplish each item on the list, cross it out.**

**5. Carry over and re-prioritize each remaining item** when making your new list for the next day. Some C's of one day become A's another. That doesn't mean you procrastinated. It may signify that you invested your time well.

**6. Daily, make time for meditation or self-hypnosis.** Once you are relaxed, make affirmations stating and visualizing your goals. In your unconscious,

these positive images replace the old, mediocre and self-defeating thoughts. Include suggestions such as, "I have a do-it-now attitude. I make excellent choices and follow through based on highest value to completion on each of my priorities at the first appropriate time." With these post hypnotic suggestions, you are reaffirming your purpose and personal motivations, and establishing the reflex action of a *decisive, action-oriented, do-it-now person*.

**7. Use mental triggers to support yourself when you slip.** When you catch yourself daydreaming or wasting time, take a breath and say, *How great I noticed*. Ask yourself, *What is the highest priority that needs to be done right now?* Use a physical trigger, like snapping your fingers, and choosing calm, pride and satisfaction as your energy. Go do the highest-value priority that needs to be done. Negative attachment amplifies what's wrong rather than what's right. For example, if you only give attention to a child when he or she does something inappropriate, the child will learn to get attention by doing inappropriate things. Acknowledging the child who does something right focuses the child, through recognition, on repeating what gets that reward or the pleasure. You get where you look. Look to pulling up the feelings you'll have knowing you've made the highest priority choices. You and the child learn the same way.

**8. Team up with an accountability buddy.** This is where a good manager, mentor or coach comes in. Once a week check in and discuss your victories. Just having this standing appointment will help get you past yourself and have you stretch to create victories to share. Keep it positive and constructive. Don't let this accountability time turn into a pity party. It's legitimate to cover areas for fixing after celebrating the largest and smallest successes. Choose strong, positive people as partners.

To create an attitude or habit pattern, take these steps consistently. **What is easy to do is also easy not to do.** What is awkward in the beginning becomes easier day by day. Show yourself what you *can* do! Two to four weeks seems to be the tipping point in the establishment of an attitude such as, "I have a do it now attitude. I do what is important with ease and consistency." Put these tips to use immediately. Add it to your affirmations. Become the *BE* of the *be-do*-have order. DO IT NOW! PE

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# Killing Time

Avoid interruptions.



by Danita Johnson Hughes

**T**IME GETS LOST. PEOPLE KILL time. Time flies. It gets wasted. We spend time. Time passes. It drags on or it hurries by. Those behind bars are *doing time*. At times, we have no time left; we're *out of time*.

Thomas Edison noted, "Time is really the only capital any human being has, and *the one thing* he can't afford to waste."

The perception of not having enough time for things we must do, or want to do, causes stress. Continued exposure to stress can have an adverse effect on your physical and mental health. Since you spend much of your time at work, meeting your employer's expectations is vital. *Managing your time effectively, however, is often hampered by interruptions.* These hinder effort, curtail creativity, and decrease productivity by disrupting thought processes and workflows, causing you to lose focus and take longer to complete tasks.

*Think back to your last day at work. I bet it went something like this.* You arrive at work, sit down, and slowly begin to get into a groove, working on that report that's due at the end of the day. After 30 minutes, you quit to go to a meeting that was scheduled a few days ago. After the meeting you think, "What a waste of time. They could have just sent a memo for us to read."

You go back to your office. The phone rings. It's Tom. You decide not to answer. Whatever it is, it can wait. Two minutes later, Tom is knocking on your door. You bite your tongue and invite him in, thinking, "Can't he take a hint? I'm busy!" He spends 20 minutes discussing the meeting and how he thought it was such a waste of time.

The phone rings again. It's Jenny. You don't answer. *You need to complete this report.* Jenny sends you an email. You open it. She needs to discuss a matter of mutual concern—at your earliest convenience. You email her that you'll meet with her later in the afternoon.

You notice several emails received today. You think, "Maybe I'll read some of these and get them out of the way. Two hours later, it's past lunch time and you haven't eaten. You take a break. When you return, Jenny is waiting.

After Jenny leaves, before you restart your computer, you take a bathroom

break. You run into John in the hallway. He comments that he hasn't seen you all day and wants to know what you've been up to. You tell him you have a report due and need to get back to it. The two of you talk for 10 minutes.

You complete that trip to the bathroom, *resolving to get back to that report.* Once in your office, you remember a file you need but don't recall where you put it. After 30 minutes you locate it. Finally, you get back to your computer.

As you're working, your boss walks in and wants to know how it's going.

*Does this sound familiar?* If so, you may be experiencing *time stress*. Learning to manage your time more effectively by controlling interruptions is the key to reducing stress and being more productive and successful on your job.

Here are *six helpful strategies* for

using your time more effectively:

- Organize and prioritize your work.
- Assess the interruptions you experience most. Are they necessary or not?
- Distinguish between available time and time that is off limits.
- Postpone unnecessary interruptions until you have some available time.
- Be willing to say "no" to do more with the time you have.
- When interruptions are unavoidable, encourage the interrupter to get to the point quickly. Establish how much time you have—say, *10 minutes*—and stick to it.

By managing how you spend your time, you'll have a little more to spend. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Apply these six strategies.

## PROFESSIONAL • SPEECH

# Memorable Speech

Remember these seven rules.



by Patricia Fripp

**Y**OUR GOAL AS A SPEAKER is to speak in such a way that you are remembered and repeated; however, it's easier said than done. Here are some tips.

**1. Speak in short sentences or phrases.** Edit your sentences to a nub. Jerry Seinfeld said, "I will spend an hour taking an eight word sentence and editing it down to five." In comedy, the fewer the words between the set-up and the punch word, the bigger the laugh. Change the punch word or phrase to impact phrase.

**2. Don't step on your punch word.** It should be the final word or idea in the sentence. The otherwise-powerful word "today" can also be the biggest impact-diluting word if you use it wrong. For example, in the sentence, "You have to make an important decision today," your punch word should be *decision*. So switch it around and change the noun *decision* to the active verb *decide*. "Today, you have to *decide!*"

**3. Perfect your pause.** Deliver your punch word and then pause . . . and pause . . . and pause. Give listeners time to digest what you've just said. Get comfortable with silence; don't be tempted to rush on or fill it with "um's."

**4. Repeat your key ideas more than once.** Do not be afraid to be redundant. Instead, worry that tomorrow your aud-

ience won't remember your key ideas.

**5. Never read your speech.** The audience wants to hear from *you*. If you are simply going to read a script or titles off a PowerPoint slide presentation, you could have stayed home. (PowerPoint is a visual aid, not a scripting aid.)

**6. Use stories to help your listeners to "see" your words.** Statistics and facts are fine, but sell your message and make yourself unforgettable by getting listeners to make the movie in their heads. For example, you might say, "Drunk driving is a bad idea. Let me share with you some statistics." Instead say, "Never, never, *never* drive drunk! Not even after one beer. My friend Eliot Kramer was positive that two drinks couldn't affect his judgment." (Hold up a single shoe, dangling from its shoe-laces.) "Six months ago, he died." Then, add some statistics and conclude with a reference to your *powerful story*.

**7. Say something memorable.** Presidents have gifted speech writers to coin ringing phrases, but you can be just as memorable when you think about *what* you want to say and *why*. For example, when Mike Powell was a senior scientist at Genentech, he said: "Being a scientist is like doing a jigsaw puzzle, in a snow storm at night, when you don't have all the pieces, or the picture you are trying to create."

Apply these seven ideas so your words will be remembered and repeated. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Make your speeches more memorable.



# Creative Thinking

*The best time for it is now.*



by Michael J. Gelb

WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH, you reflexively contract and adopt a pessimistic, cost-cutting mindset. But, tough times *require more* creativity, innovation, and inspiration. Without *creative optimism*, there is no innovation—and innovation is vital to *financial success* and *personal fulfillment*!

The default setting of your brain is reactive and short-term. Creativity requires you to wake up and free yourself from habit, to shift from a *medieval mindset* to a more *Renaissance attitude*.

Although today we assume that *creativity* is a natural human attribute and that we all have the option to be creative, this notion has only been around for about 500 years. Our understanding of creative potential is linked with the modern notion of individuality.

Before the Renaissance, the concept of *individuality*, as we now understand it, did not exist. Paintings remained unsigned, and painters, anonymous, because the individual was considered unimportant. All creative power was vested above.

In architecture, Gothic cathedrals like Chartres were products of thousands of people toiling anonymously in collaborative efforts over hundreds of years. Chartres and other cathedrals were designed

to give the person who entered them an overwhelming *feeling of insignificance* in the presence of an omnipotent Deity.

During the Renaissance, the power and potency of the individual began once again to be celebrated, as they had been in Greek and Roman times. In 1486, the Pico della Mirandola offered his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, heralding the shift from the medieval view that disempowered the individual, to the revolutionary notion that we have been placed at the very center of the universe, and blessed with powers of free will and creativity that are unlimited and virtually godlike. He argued that creativity is part of our expression of free will, part of what makes us uniquely human. We create because it is our birthright. Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man*

and Michelangelo's *David* are the best-known symbols of this humanistic rebirth of individual creativity.

Leonardo DaVinci reigns as the supreme expression of the *Renaissance Man* or *Uomo Universale*. DaVinci serves as a global archetype of individual creative possibility. In 1994 Bill Gates paid \$30.8 million for 18 pages of DaVinci's notebooks. Gates knows that his legacy resides in his role in the transformation to the Information Age; he wants to associate himself and his brand with the works of a man who embodies the spirit of the new age. In the Renaissance, *creativity* was more than just an expression of higher truths: it became a means to earn a good living and a driving force of capitalism. Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael and all their fellow geniuses wouldn't have created much of anything without the Renaissance equivalent of corporate sponsorship.

*Capitalism provides the most energy and opportunity for creative expression.* The United States of America—founded on the remarkable idea that we are all created equal and have an inalienable right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—is the greatest capitalist entity in history thus far.

Maintaining our economic leadership demands that our schools and universities improve their ability to teach the skills of imaginative and analytical thinking in balance. Although schools often pay lip service to the ideal of the balanced Renaissance individual, in practice we suffer from a preponderance of "half-witted" thinking.

The terms *left-brained* and *right-brained* became popular via the Nobel prize-winning research of Professor *Roger Sperry*. He discovered that in most cases, the left hemisphere of the cerebral cortex processes analytical thinking while the right hemisphere processes imaginative thinking. "Our educational system tends to neglect the non-verbal form of intellect," he said. "Modern society discriminates against the right-hemisphere."

The result is that individuals with left-hemisphere dominance tend to do well in school but often fail to develop

their creative capacities, while individuals who are right-hemisphere dominant often feel guilty for the way they think. Moreover, the notion that creativity is a function of the "right-hemisphere" is faulty. Without "left-hemisphere" planning, discipline and logic, nothing is accomplished or created.

Leonardo DaVinci is the supreme exemplar of left-right hemispheric balance and the marriage of art and science. He emphasized that the ability of the artist to express the beauty of the human form is predicated on a study of the science of anatomy. But Leonardo's science was also based on his art.

While championing "left-brained" attention to rigorous practical analysis, Leonardo also urged his students to awaken the generative power of imagination. Offering "a new and speculative idea, which although it may seem trivial and almost laughable, is of great value in quickening the spirit of invention."

He urged students to contemplate abstract forms—patterns of smoke, clouds, and swirls of mud—and to allow the imagination to run freely to discover in these mundane forms "the likeness of divine landscapes, an infinity of things." The ideas generated in this flight of the imagination "may then be reduced to their complete and proper forms."

*Leonardo guides us to generate first, and then organize.* This instruction to balance the primary functions of the two hemispheres of the cerebral cortex is a breakthrough in the development of human thought. In the thousand years before DaVinci in Europe there was little encouragement to "quicken the spirit of invention" by seeking "divine landscapes" or searching for the "infinity of things."

Before Leonardo the concept of *creativity* as a human function and an intellectual discipline didn't exist. In effect, he invented the discipline of *creative thinking*. He also points us toward a compelling reason to create: *to know ourselves and the world around us—to appreciate truth and beauty—by mirroring the creative source.*

In challenging times, creativity becomes essential to manage change. Innovating in the face of complex challenges demands that you use *your whole brain*. It's easy to be optimistic when things are easy, but it's vital when times are tough.

*Embrace a creative, optimistic, Renaissance attitude to tough times.* As Leonardo said, "Fix your course to a star and you can navigate through any storm." PE

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**ACTION:** Engage more in creative thinking.



# Self-Limiting Beliefs

Here are seven you should avoid.



by Cy Wakeman

DO YOU FLIPPANTLY THROW around clichés and sound bites of untested *conventional wisdom*, and use them whether they are true or useful? Operating with limiting beliefs keeps you from delivering results. Eradicate these seven beliefs.

**Belief 1: Everyone's opinion should count.** By adopting this belief, you create a false impression that *buy-in is optional* and that everyone has the right to their opinion, even when it impedes progress. People who want to be consulted on *each decision* only create chaos. Can you imagine what traffic would be like if each person opined on whether or not stop signs were needed? No, they just stop, not offended that they were not consulted, and drive on. We need the same behavior so we can move on to results.

**Belief 2: There is no "I" in Team.** With no *I* in *Team*, leaders ensure that *no one takes accountability for their part in creating current results* and won't create anything better in the future. There may not be an *I* in *team*, but there is an *I* in *win, productivity, improvement, drive, and competitive*. People who produce results, in spite of challenges, focus their energy on achieving desired results or learning what to adapt next to achieve desired results. Each team member must honestly assess what *I* do to contribute, and what *I* need to change. Without an *I* in *team*, the odds of better results are slim.

**Belief 3: Accepting accountability for failures leads to a loss of credibility.** You may avoid having failure pinned to you when, in fact, *credibility is lost by avoiding accountability*. Step up and take responsibility. Owning mistakes breeds confidence that they'll get fixed. When challenges appear, don't blame, bolster your position, or make excuses. Respond with integrity and courage, accounting for the choices and actions that led to poor outcomes. You'll gain an advantage over blame-shirking colleagues. People feel safe in a place that shies away from blame. They step up, buy in, engage, and perform to their potential.

**Belief 4: There is no such thing as a stupid question.** Stop allowing people to pull you away from your main role with *stupid questions* such as, "Why do things keep changing?" or "Why doesn't anyone tell me anything?" or "Who thought of this?" These are *stupid questions* because

they have no answers. *They simply blame.* To address such questions is a waste of resources. Instead, ask: "How can I get the information I need?" or "How can I help support the idea?"

**Belief 5: Don't come to me with a problem without a solution.** Insisting that the person who identifies an issue must also recommend a workable solution only stops communication and leads people to believe that they can have no real impact short of inventing *the total solution* for a problem. We need people to raise issues and teams of *accountable people* to solve them.

**Belief 6: In uncertain times, it is best to wait for clarity before taking action.** The new mantra seems to be, "Stop all action!" Many people hunker down and discontinue the basic actions necessary to make progress—until

they have more information and are clear about what to do next. The problem is that *clarity does not come to you through thought and planning alone.* Clarity comes from action, followed by reflection. Action generates inspiration and leads to clarity.

**Belief 7: Great results can only come from perfect plans.** All plans entail some risk. There are no perfect plans or decisions—all have downsides. The best use of your talent and energy is to *implement the plan with excellence*, using talent to mitigate risk and succeed in spite of the challenges. Commit to doing whatever it takes, help anticipate problems, and rally teams around solutions. PE

Cy Wakeman is a speaker and author of *Reality-Based Leadership (Jossey-Bass)*. Visit [www.cywakeman.com](http://www.cywakeman.com).

**ACTION: Eradicate your self-limiting beliefs.**

MENTAL • CONFLICT

# Can't We Get Along?

Prevent conflicts from ruining life.



by Tim Scudder

IT STARTS IN THE MORNING with the kids before you go to work, then kicks into second gear with your co-workers or boss, and culminates at home with your spouse and children. It's conflict, and it need not be a part of your daily life.

Conflict can be an opportunity to resolve long-standing issues and help you lead a more fulfilling and productive life. The secret is understanding the *five keys to managing conflict*, and how to move toward resolution.

The key to managing conflict isn't just about pushing them to resolution, but also learning how to have *nicer conflicts*. As one conflict is resolved, others will take their place, so learn how to make conflicts *productive* and *positive* experiences, instead of allowing them to distract you from your goals.

Use *five keys* to managing conflict:

**1. Anticipate.** Anticipation starts with knowing who you're dealing with. Then ask yourself how various people might view the same situation differently. When two or more people see things differently, there is the potential for conflict. If you can figure that out, you have a good shot at steering clear of it.

**2. Prevent.** Preventing conflict is all about the deliberate, appropriate use of behavior in your relationships. A well-

chosen behavior on your part can prevent conflict with another person. But you need to prevent conflict in yourself sometimes too, and that might have more to do with choosing your perceptions than choosing your behaviors.

**3. Identify.** There are three basic approaches in conflict: *rising to the challenge, cautiously withdrawing, or wanting to keep the peace.* When you can identify these approaches in yourself or others, you are empowered to handle the situation more productively.

**4. Manage.** Managing conflict has two components: *managing yourself* and *managing the relationship.* Managing conflict is about creating the conditions and empowering them to manage themselves out of the emotional state of conflict. It's also about managing yourself out by taking time to see things differently.

**5. Resolve.** To create resolution, you need to show others a path back to feeling good about themselves. When they feel good about themselves, they're less likely to feel threatened and free to move toward a compromise and resolution.

*Unresolved or poorly managed* conflict costs you in ways you can't even calculate—in lost memory, low productivity, bad morale, and high turnover. Well-managed conflict can prevent those losses and promote higher productivity and a better bottom line. So, the end result will not only be *fewer conflicts*, but also *nicer ones* with positive results. PE

Tim Scudder is CEO of *Personal Strengths USA* and co-author of *Have a Nice Conflict*. Visit [www.haveaniceconflict.com](http://www.haveaniceconflict.com).

**ACTION: Practice managing your conflicts.**



# Your Dominant Skill

*Surviving your personal Serengeti.*



by Stefan Swanepoel

**G**ROWING UP IN AFRICA, I've always had an affinity for the wild and the animals that rule the untamed land of the Serengeti. Each year, more than two million animals migrate 1,000 miles through the harsh plains of East Africa—a migration so dangerous and incomparably massive that it's often considered the number one natural wonder of the world. While many animals succumb to hunger, thirst and predators, others use their inborn skills to survive.

*We're all facing a struggle of some sort—our personal Serengeti*—whether it's a struggle to find a job, to find balance between work and family, to keep your company afloat through the recession, or to pay the growing stack of bills. Surviving these tough times requires that we rely on our innate skills—the same skills used by the animals of the Serengeti as they make their dangerous journey. While we each possess many of these skills, one is generally more dominant for each of us than the others, and overcoming your personal Serengeti requires that you know your standout skill and how to best use it.

- Are you *enduring* like the *wildebeest*, with the ability to remain steadfast and persevere through whatever challenges are thrown your way? Endurance, in its simplest form, is your ability to apply yourself for long periods of time. This quality keeps your mind going when your body wants to quit and gives you the mental capacity to continue moving forward, despite the obstacles, hardships, pain or fatigue. To maximize this skill, you must remain flexible and patient, keeping things in perspective. You need to develop mutually supportive and caring relationships with those around you. The support and encouragement from others will enhance your ability to persist through challenging situations. There is strength in numbers.

- For those who *strategize* and plan every move, you are most like the *lion*. You know what you want and have a roadmap for how you are going to get it. People whose primary skill is strategize have the ability to organize their thoughts, ideas, experiences, skills, expertise and expectations to achieve

the desired goal. Strategy is not just about the end; rather it is the means to that end. Maximizing this skill requires that you recognize your goal and create a written plan to achieve that goal, paying special attention to your objectives, tactics and resources.

- Are you an entrepreneur, always looking for some new enterprise? This skill is seen in the *enterprising crocodile*. Like the crocodile, enterprising people possess the energy, creativity and ambition to see possibilities that others cannot. The enterprising individual is passionate about work, learns from mistakes, understands their personal weaknesses as well as their innate strengths, recognizes opportunity and makes strategic decisions with limited data. To best use this skill, you must learn to evaluate and analyze potential



risks before diving into a deal. Developing a plan to address potential problems and risks early on will ensure that you are able to make the most of every legitimate opportunity.

- *Efficiency* is highly valued today, as instant results are expected. This skill is seen in the *cheetah* and in people who finish the job in the shortest time with the least wasted resources. Those with talent in this area can overcome interruptions, distractions, mistakes and mental and physical fatigue while focusing on being effective and productive. Maximizing this skill requires that you know your limits and complete the job successfully, without putting a strain on the rest of your life.

- *Grace* is often overlooked today, in business and life. However, *gracefulness* is a vital skill and one that is found in the *giraffe* and in people who put a premium on doing the right thing, no matter what. Graceful individuals develop interdependent relationships that are fostered through patience, self-

discipline, dignity, honor and respect. They accomplish this by recognizing others' strengths and weaknesses and attempting to build them up. Grace is a disposition that requires compassion toward others and the desire to extend good will. Grace represents style, finesse, kindness, professionalism and doing the right thing. Maximizing this skill lies in monitoring your tone and approach, as this impacts how you establish grace.

- Do you enjoy stepping outside your comfort zone to try something new and different? That skill is represented by the *risk-taking mongoose*. Risk-takers evaluate all the options on the chance they are taking before making a decision. They frequently review goals and determine the various routes to get to the destination. Often, they choose the path with the highest risk in order to gain the maximum reward. To make the most of this skill, you can't ignore the risk, assume you can't do anything about it, or intellectualize the risk to the point that you avoid taking action. Those with strong risk assessment skills sort out the best of risky opportunities.

- Do you speak eloquently, understand body language and realize the importance of getting your message across accurately? Successful relationships—in both business and in life—depend on good communication. Those who possess the skill of *communication*, like the *elephant*, understand that more words aren't often the best path. In fact, the more words we use, the more our message can be obscured. Skilled communicators understand how critical both verbal and nonverbal exchanges are. To maximize this skill, keep focus on all four sources of communication: verbal, nonverbal, written and visual. Also key is the ability to empathize with another's point of view when delivering your message. Great communicators are first and foremost great listeners, with the ability to "hear" what the other party is attempting to communicate.

*More important than which animal you relate to most is discovering how you can best use your skill to survive and succeed in the challenges you face.* Achievement comes from understanding yourself and honing your talents.

The challenges faced by the animals of Africa's Serengeti are different than ours, but the skills they demonstrate in overcoming their harsh conditions are excellent examples for us as we face the challenge of our personal Serengeti. **PE**

*Stefan Swanepoel is author of Surviving Your Serengeti: 7 Skills to Master Business and Life (Wiley). To learn which animal you are, see [www.WhatAnimalAml.com](http://www.WhatAnimalAml.com).*

**ACTION:** Use your dominant skill to succeed.

## Effortless Excellence

Do you focus, fold, or freeze?



by Ted C. Buffington

**D**O YOU PERFORM YOUR BEST in times of emergency, challenge, or crisis? We have all experienced days when our self-interference is at a minimum. Whether on a sports field, at work, or in some creative effort, we've had moments when our actions and performance flow with a kind of *effortless excellence*.

This mental state is often referred to as *in the zone*. At these times, your mind is quiet and focused—and your body responds with exceptional performance. When you are in the zone, you excel, you learn, and you enjoy yourself.

You have also experienced the opposite—times when everything you do seems difficult. With your mind filled with self-criticism, hesitation, and over-analysis, your actions become awkward, poorly timed, and ineffective. This can create mental mistakes. These times can be *personally frustrating* or *overwhelming* and *professionally devastating*, especially in times of emergency or danger.

### Understand the Mental Game

My work is directed toward training people how to decrease mental interferences to enhance performance. I refer to my approach as *the mental game* because it sometimes seems like a competition, a game of tug-of-war between attention and focus. I have immediate feedback if I am winning or losing the game.

The general concept is simplified and illustrated by the equation:  $P = C - I$  or, *performance is equal to competency minus interference*. The quality of your performance will always be equal to *your competency minus your mental interference*.

**Capacity vs. ability.** By *competency*, I mean all that you bring to that particular performance expression at that particular moment in time. It is all your previous training, conditioned patterns, experiences, perceptions, and mindsets.

*Competency* also considers the relationship between *capacity* and *ability*. A person might have the *capacity* to learn a skill but lack the *ability* to apply the knowledge to meet performance specs.

For example, people are most often selected based on their *capacity* to perform—not their *ability* to perform. Résumés, pre-testing, and screening interviews can only help determine an individual's *capacity* to perform tasks.

The ultimate test occurs in real time—when *competency* is determined through confirmation of *capacity* and *ability*. Newbies are not expected to be *expert*. Initially, they are only put into situations where their performance is expected to be equal to their competencies.

In many situations, there is a probation period to determine if *ability equals capacity*. This is called *potential*—does he or she have the potential to match the assumed capacity with the expected level of ability to perform as required?

As newbies receive more training and experience (competency), the quality of their performance improves, as does the trust in their competency. If competency alone were the secret for optimal performance, human errors wouldn't happen.

**Errors happen when you lose focus.** Most errors have little to do with

competency. Accidents are the result of competent people losing focus. Often, the closer you get to *expert*, the greater the chance for the basic patterns and processes to be overlooked or ignored because you can no longer appreciate their value.

If competency-based training were sufficient to guarantee consistent performance, no *expert* would *ever* fail. There would be no choke point in sports. Accidental deaths would be rare. No plane crashes would occur due to pilot error. Malpractice lawsuits would cease.

In crisis preparation, practice not only *what to do* but *how to do it*—how to better control emotions under stress. **PE**

*Ted Buffington is CEO of Achievement By Design, a speaker and trainer in performance under pressure, and author of Focus, Fold or Freeze. Visit [www.toachieve.com](http://www.toachieve.com).*

**ACTION:** Seek to achieve *effortless excellence*.

## Beauty on a Budget

You can feel better about yourself.



by Tiffany Fluhme

**Y**OU DON'T HAVE TO DENY yourself to help balance the checkbook. Women are good at denying themselves luxuries, as well as some necessities, in order to make ends meet. The problem is, when you cut key items of your beauty and wellness regimen—makeup, skin care, gym membership—it will have an impact on how you feel about yourself. Your self-confidence and sense of well-being can plummet, negatively affecting your job, friendships, and relationships. So, learn to replace costly personal care activities with *budget substitutes*.

Here are **four tips** for beauty and wellness on a budget:

**1. Care about skincare.** When the recession hit, people stopped spending money on procedures like botox injections and high-end anti-aging creams. However, you don't have to spend a fortune on high-end skin care to see results. Some *over-the-counter products* use just as effective ingredients as those sold at the dermatologist's offices and plastic surgeon's offices. When shopping for cosmetics online or from your local rep, look for products that contain ingredients such as Retinol, Hyaluronic Acid, Vitamin C, and Matrixyl, and you'll see great results at low cost.

**2. Make time for makeup.** You don't need to exceed your budget on make-

up. Just find a great affordable skin care line. Radiant skin calls for light foundations and maybe a great powder to complete your look. Try a *tinted moisturizer* with an SPF and a mineral-pressed powder. And don't forget, a beautiful shade of lipstick or lip gloss is an instant pick-me-up for your look and mood. You have many options when it comes to makeup. I recommend never doing without, but spending top dollar on high end names isn't necessary.

**3. Work at working out.** During the recession hit, many women eliminated their gym memberships, but you don't need a gym to stay fit. Pop in a workout DVD, take a jog around the block, or work out at home with dumbbells and a jump rope. Exercise releases endorphins, contributing to a *sense of well being*.

**4. Cultivate confidence.** Women who take care of themselves tend to feel more confident and possess better self-esteem, which reflects positively at work and at home. Confidence always works in your favor. When you let yourself go without the *little things* that can help boost your look and your mood, the rest of your life suffers. Sometimes a little extra boost of energy and confidence can help you get noticed.

Cutting back on your expenses doesn't mean you have to cut back on your investment in yourself. Getting through tough times isn't just about the *quality of your income*, but also about the *quality of your life*—you can have both. **PE**

*Tiffany Fluhme is CEO of Fluhme Beauty and creator of "A Touch of Tiffany." Visit [www.fluhme.com](http://www.fluhme.com).*

**ACTION:** Make yourself attractive.

# Shame on You

*It's a toxic emotion.*



by Anne K. Gross

**Y**OU'RE LIKELY ASHAMED OF something that you try to hide. Shame-driven behavior is more common—and harmful—than you realize. Your face burns. Your stomach twists. You look down. Hurtful thoughts swirl through your mind: *I'm different; I'm not good enough; They'll never accept me for who I am.* Whether it's connected to appearance, race, culture, sexual orientation, illness or disability, you experience shame. The good news is that you can take some proactive steps to confront your shame and clear it out of your life once and for all.

**Shame is tied to secrecy.** This toxic emotion is born out of cultural attitudes that define some people as *less* than others. It's a debilitating feeling of being *bad, flawed, and deficient* that permeates the core of how you feel about yourself.

**Shame is a social emotion:** It causes you to live in fear that others will find you unlovable if they know you for who you *really* are. This fear prompts you to avert your gaze and fuels your silence and need to withdraw. Some people respond to shame with anger. In extreme cases, shame can have tragic consequences—like suicide.

You don't need to be disabled to feel outcast, flawed, or deficient. *Shame touches us all*, but that doesn't mean you have to just grit your teeth and bear it. You can combat its debilitating presence in your life.

Shame is destructive for three reasons:

**1. Shame causes you to live a double life** and implies that *what you're ashamed of is too painful to talk about.* You seek to hide that quality so that others don't identify it and use it to judge, ridicule, or mistreat you. Living a lie can cause you to portray the opposite of what you don't like about yourself as being true. But no matter how many people are fooled by your façade, *you* are not spared the pain of feeling flawed and defective. In fact, in private, you may be prone to outbursts of anger and debilitating anxiety. Feelings of self-hatred and humiliation can consume your thoughts. The inclination to silence the cause of shame

doesn't take away the shame, or lessen its effects. Silencing shame increases your sense of isolation and self-blame.

**2. Shame squelches intimacy.** Shame prompts you to keep others—even those you'd like to be close to—at a distance so that they won't discover or delve into your secret. This defense mechanism might manifest itself through aloofness, a judgmental nature, or having a chip on your shoulder. It explains why dysfunctional dynamics are common in families that silence mental illness, alcoholism, or other addictions. We all have areas of vulnerability, and intimacy derives from your ability to share both your strengths *and* your weaknesses.

**3. Second-hand shame harms others.** Shame isn't tangible in the way that smoking is, but it often begets *second-hand shame.* When you are with others who feel shame, you often experience their shame as if it were your own. For example, if you are shopping with a disabled friend who is confined to a wheelchair and someone stares at your friend, you may feel some degree of humiliation—and even realize that the shame you feel is similar to *how your friend must feel daily.* Such *empathy* can lead to a change in attitude or behavior. Sensing what your friend confronts daily increases your empathy for all whom society marginalizes.



## Combating Shame

You can combat shame in these seven ways:

**1. Learn what triggers your shame.** It's possible to feel shame and not know what triggers it. Review your family history. Think of secrets your family may keep (alcoholism, mental illness, or divorce. Are these issues discussed? If so, what are your family's reactions? You can often pinpoint the source of *shame feelings* by putting your family's secrets in the context of societal messages. Knowing *why* a secret is kept is the first step in diffusing your shame.

**2. Confront the personal meaning you attach to your shame.** Most shame is rooted in cultural context, but you also attach personal meaning to your shame-causing situation. To melt your negative feelings, you must determine *why* you're trying to hide something. Think of times when you have difficulty tolerating vulnerabilities in yourself or others. Do you respond with anger, or want to hide? *These are signs of shame.*

**3. Know that shame begets shame.** You desire to be accepted; you want to belong, and yet develop an authentic

self. So, you hide or downplay parts of yourself that you believe are flawed—you silence shameful subjects. However, this *out of sight, out of mind* denial strategy doesn't protect you from pain—it increases the isolation and shame you wanted to avoid.

**4. Try not to silence what you are ashamed about.** Find a trusted friend or relative with whom you can talk about your feelings. The source of your shame is likely shared by others close to you. You can help others feel less shame by communicating with honesty, respect, and curiosity. Approach others who are struggling, or whose *difference* leads others to avoid them. When it's right, ask, *How are you feeling? Would you like to talk about it?* Most people are grateful for the chance to open up about their feelings.

**5. Don't let positivity eclipse honesty.** We think that a positive attitude and a smile is the best way to meet challenges. We assume that if we can gloss over difficult experiences, they won't be as painful or prominent. A hopeful outlook can help—but don't use a positive attitude as an excuse to not confront feelings of shame. Pretending that a painful subject doesn't exist will cause you to be bound by secrets and unable to express pain. Learn what's making you feel *less than.* By acknowledging shame, you can combat the societal attitudes that create it.

**6. Spend time around other people like you.** When you are around others who struggle with the same challenge, you don't feel different. This is one key reason why 12-step programs for alcoholics, gamblers, and other addictions are so successful. Interacting with others who are in your situation is invaluable. They offer acceptance and perspective. Seek others who are affected by shame similar to yours. Join groups with people like you. Join chat groups and ease into conversations *at a comfortable pace.*

**7. Also get to know people who are different from you!** By getting to know others who have a different religious orientation, socio-economic status, or political orientation, you'll see that deep down we all share the same dreams, fears, and goals. If there was *more* comingling, there would be less shame. Talk to your children about insensitive portrayals. Ask them how they would feel if they were the butt of jokes or cruel behavior.

If you feel *inadequate, flawed, different, or less than*, ask *why.* Facing shame will help you to become *your authentic self.* PE

Anne K. Gross, Ph.D., is author of *The Polio Journals: Lessons from My Mother* (Diversity Matters Press.com). Visit [www.thepoliojournals.com](http://www.thepoliojournals.com).

**ACTION:** Combat your feelings of shame.

# Rebuilding Trust

Start taking seven steps.



by Dennis Reina  
and Michelle Reina

WHEN TRUST IS PRESENT, people are more confident, committed, and energized. They deal better with change, dare to think and work outside the box, and deliver smarter, faster results. Yet, trust is fragile. It is built, and broken, in human interaction. The key to sustaining trust is to know how to rebuild it.

**Broken trust occurs on a betrayal continuum**—from *unintentional* and from *minor*—and where a specific act or event falls on the continuum is a matter of perception.

**Unintentional betrayals** are the consequence of *careless* or *self-serving* acts. **Intentional betrayals** are deliberate acts, committed on purpose to hurt others.

**Minor betrayals**, such as gossiping, finger-pointing, or taking credit for others' work, are pervasive and erode trust. **Little betrayals** can become **big problems**, impacting *productivity* and *performance* (90 percent of employees report that they feel the effects of eroded trust daily).

**Major betrayals** affect people more suddenly and more deeply and dramatically. From violating confidences to sabotaging others' work, major betrayals rock relationships at their core.

Here is a proven **seven-step process** for mustering courage and taking constructive and compassionate action to mend broken trust, and move forward.

**1. Observe and acknowledge what happened.** Betrayal is often experienced as a loss of *what was* or *could have been*. To heal, recognize that loss and its impact. *Trust tip:* The opposite of awareness is denial. You can't heal what you ignore, overlook, or diminish.

**2. Allow feelings to surface.** Permit yourself to feel your emotions, and find proper ways to express them to work through the betrayal. *Trust tip:* Seek a quiet space and time, and ask yourself, "What am I feeling now?" Express what you are feeling in constructive ways—*writing* them down, *talking* them through, or *releasing* them through exercise.

**3. Get and give support.** Ask for help in recognizing where you're stuck and how you can shift from *blaming* to *problem solving*. Reach out to your inner circle—trusted managers, mentors, or colleagues—and be open to their sup-

port. *Trust tip:* Turn to people who you know can remain neutral—suspending their own advice, judgments, and opinions—and with whom you feel safe expressing your innermost feelings.

**4. Reframe the experience.** Put the event into a larger context. Take into account what might be going on for others. Consider the personal choices and opportunities now in front of you, including potential benefits. *Trust tip:* Think what else might be going on for you and others and how it could contribute to your behaviors or reactions.

**5. Take responsibility.** You're not responsible for *others' behaviors*, but you are responsible for *your response*. Own up to what is yours, learn lessons, and ask how you can improve the situation. *Trust tip:* Speak the truth to yourself and others—no exceptions or rationalizations.

Take action for your part; make amends.

**6. Forgive yourself and others.** *Forgiving* doesn't mean *excusing*; it means *acknowledging how broken trust has affected you* and then *releasing yourself from energy-depleting emotions* such as anger, fear, and grief. *Trust tip:* If you can't or won't forgive someone, explore why. Consider the costs and consequences of not forgiving.

**7. Let go and move on.** There is a difference between *remembering* and *hanging on*. You won't forget a betrayal, but you can choose to look forward, let go, and move on. *Trust tip:* Accept what is, without judgment or blame, learn about yourself and others, and apply those lessons. PE

Dennis S. Reina, Ph.D., and Michelle L. Reina, Ph.D., are co-authors of *Rebuilding Trust in the Workplace* (Berrett-Koehler) and co-founders of the *Reina Trust Building Institute*. Visit [reinatrustbuilding.com](http://reinatrustbuilding.com).

**ACTION:** Rebuild trust in your relationships.

## EMOTIONAL • HAPPINESS

# Keys to Happiness

Follow six tips to find daily joy.



by Tal Ben-Shahar

BY MONITORING MY LIFE AND by teaching a course on *happiness and positive psychology* at Harvard Business School, I've come believe that you and I can achieve a state of mind that will enable us to perform to our potential and experience daily joy and lasting fulfillment by following six tips:

**1. Give yourself permission to be human.** When you accept emotions—such as fear, sadness, or anxiety—as *natural*, you are more likely to overcome them. Rejecting your emotions, either positive or negative, leads to frustration and unhappiness.

**2. Happiness lies at the intersection between pleasure and meaning.** Whether you are at work or at home, the goal is to engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable. When this is not feasible, make sure you have *happiness boosters*—moments that provide you with pleasure and meaning.

**3. See that happiness mostly depends on your state of mind**—not on your status or the size of your bank account. Barring extreme circumstances, your level of well being is determined by what you choose to focus on, and by your interpretation of external events. For example, do you see the glass as half full or half empty? Do you view

failure as catastrophic, or do you see failure as a learning opportunity?

**4. Simplify!** You are much too busy, trying to squeeze in more activities into less time. Quantity influences quality, and you compromise on your happiness by trying to do too much.

**5. Recall the mind-body connection.** What you do—or don't do—with your body influences your mind. Regular exercise, adequate sleep, and healthy eating habits lead to both physical and mental health.

**6. Express gratitude**, whenever possible. Too often, you and I take our life for granted. Learn to appreciate and savor the wonderful things in life—

from people to food, from nature to a smile.

**Happiness is the ultimate currency**, the end toward which all other goals lead. *Happiness perception* is not about rejecting the material but rather dethroning it from its status as *the highest on the hierarchy*. Aristotle wrote,

"Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence," and the Dalai Lama asserted: "The very purpose of your life is happiness, and the very motion of your life is toward happiness." When the questions that guide your life are about finding more meaning and pleasure (*happiness perception*) rather than about how you can acquire more money and possessions (*material perception*), you're likely to derive benefit from the *journey* and the *destination*. PE

Tal Ben-Shahar, Ph.D., is a popular professor at Harvard Business School and author of *Happier: Finding Pleasure, Meaning and Life's Ultimate Currency*.

**ACTION:** Use these tips to find daily joy.

# Brainwash

You are not average.



by Seth Godin

**Y**EARS AGO, THE SYSTEM SET you out to *brainwash* you that you are average; that *compliant work* is the best way to a reliable living; that creating *average stuff* for *average people* is an easy way to *get what you want*.

Step out of line and *the system* would nudge (or push) you back to the center. Show signs of real creativity, originality or genius, and well-meaning parents, teachers, and authority figures would eagerly line up to get you back in line.

**The good news is this:** You can *reinvent yourself*, regardless of what you do, who you do it with, or what the people around you expect—because there's more leverage, more freedom and more opportunity today than ever before. There are new ways of interacting, making a living, and making a difference.

**Are you serious about transformation**, about a reinvention that changes the game, an *overhaul* in *what you believe* and *how you do your job*? If you are up for that, then start here and now.

**You can do work that matters.** The economy gave you the leverage to make a difference, the leverage to spread your ideas, and the leverage to have impact. You have more leverage (more chances and more power) to change the world than at any other time in history. What are you going to do about it? When?

## Seven Levers

Seven levers are available to you:

**1. Connect.** Social media is either a time-wasting effort, or it's a crack in the wall between you and the rest of the world. It's a choice—up to you. If you're keeping score of how many followers you have, how many comments you get, or how big your on-line footprint is, then you're *measuring the wrong thing* and *distracting yourself from what matters*. Digital media offers you a chance to make real connections, to gain insights from people you'd never interact with any other way. We were isolated, now we're connected. If you can reach and touch or change people, you will gain in influence, authority and power. This changes everything—if you let it.

**2. Be generous.** The new economy involves trading in things that don't cost money. There's no incremental cost in writing an essay, composing a song or

making an introduction. Since it doesn't cost money to play, you can give before you get. The *generosity economy* rewards people who create and participate in *circles of gifts*. Not the direct I-gave-you-this-you-give-me-that giving and get of a traditional economy, but instead the tribal economy of individuals supporting one another. Tribes of talented individuals who are connected, mutually trustful, and supported by one another are in a position to create a movement, to deliver items of value, to move ideas forward faster. So, share your gifts, make generous contributions to the people you work with. Build a thriving community, one that can't help but turn a profit.

**3. Make art.** Art is an original gift, a connection that changes the recipient, an ability to make a difference. Art isn't a painting or poem—it's something that any of us can do. If you interact with others, you have the platform to create something new—something that changes everything. I call that art. Art is the opposite of trigonometry. Art doesn't



follow instructions or a manual or a boss's orders. Instead, art is the act of creating the uncreated, of connecting with another person at a human level. More markets will reward art and hand out compliant work to the lowest bidder. *Art feels risky because it is*. The risk the artist takes is that you might not like it, might not be touched, might actually laugh at the effort. And it's taking these risks that lead you to get rewarded.

**4. Acknowledge the lizard.** The lizard brain—that *prehistoric brainstem* that all of us must contend with—doesn't like being laughed at. It worries about safety and dishes out anger. Being laughed at is the lizard brain's worst nightmare. And so it shuts down our art. Steven Pressfield calls this shutdown *the resistance*—the little voice in your head that keeps your head down and encourages you to follow instructions. The resistance lives in fear, and shuts you down at the first sign of derision or ostracization. The resistance voice is complicit in the brainwashing, because resistance is easy to arouse. Artists figured out that *resistance is the sole barrier between today and their art*. The act of genius required to

*produce original work is crippled by resistance*, and ignoring the voice of skepticism is critical in doing the work. We acknowledge the lizard so we can ignore it.

**5. Ship.** Scarcity creates value. People pay extra for things that are hard to get, while *things that have a surplus* go cheap. That's economics. So, what's scarce? The ability to ship. If you can get something out the door while your competitors cringe in fear, you win. If you can make things happen, you become indispensable. If you can get things done, close the sale, ship the product and make a difference, you're the linchpin that we can't live without. Shipping is difficult because of the lizard brain. The resistance doesn't want you to ship, because if you ship, you might fail. If you ship, we might laugh at you. If you ship, you may be held accountable for your decisions. The key to the reinvention of who you are, then, is to become *someone who ships*—to have the rare skill of getting things done, making them happen and creating outcomes that people seek out.

**6. Fail.** A key part of shipping is *the ability to fail*. Reinventing the marketplace demands that you have the ability to fail, often and with grace—and in public! The old economy was based on factories and institutions, things that took a long time to build. No one at Buick or the Metropolitan Opera was interested in failure. It took too long to create these institutions for them to relish the idea of growth through failure.

Today, though, the only way to grow is to ship risky things, to create change, to make art, to change people. And yet, *shipping risks failure*. So we demand you fail. I hope you're up for that. For generations, artists tried to feign nonchalance, so their art would appear to be without effort and thought. Yet it's the obvious and supreme effort that goes into creating art, challenging the lizard, and fighting the resistance.

**7. Learn.** School used to exist to learn a trade. You apprenticed, then worked the rest of your life in the same job, in the same town, in the same factory, doing the same work. To bring the school-as-event mindset to work today is to court certain failure. *School isn't over. School is now*. School is blogs, experiments, experiences, and the constant failure of shipping and learning. Read something that challenges you to think differently. The path to reinvention is just that—a path. The opportunity is to discard what you think you know and learn what you need to learn—every day. PE

Seth Godin is author of *Poke The Box*. Visit [sethgodin.com](http://sethgodin.com).

**ACTION:** Use these seven levers of success.

# Financial Quakes

Weather the quakes and tsunamis.



by John Hauserman

WHILE THE HUMAN TRAGEDY in Japan is both heartbreaking and unimaginable for those of us so far from ground zero, it forces us to ponder the possible ripple effect on our personal finances.

There are many risks in play: collapsing stock prices, skyrocketing oil and energy costs, and a return of runaway inflation are just some concerns. Food and gas prices are already on the rise. The cost and availability of goods and services may change rapidly as our discretionary money is suddenly reduced. Governments have announced measures that may go from remedial to drastic as events beyond their control hammer the markets and geopolitical landscape.

**What can you do?** First, don't panic. Nothing will happen fast. You can avoid falling prey to these hazards and protect your finances by taking five steps:

**1. Take an inventory of your savings and investments.** Determine which of your assets are betrothed to short-term goals like a vacation, automobile purchase, or college savings for a kid who is already in high school. Identify places where you can rebalance strategically.

**2. Reduce your investments in volatile holdings carefully.** When times are in a state of flux, you do not want to have a lot of your assets in volatile stocks, mutual funds or even high-yielding bonds. There is just too great a risk that when you need the money it might not be available in sufficient quantities to meet your needs. Savings vehicles like money market accounts, Cd's, and short term bonds, while slow growing, don't engender the same volatility and risk, and are therefore considered more appropriate for those goals that have a life span of less than five years.

**3. Pay attention to opportunities presented in recovery.** With the devastation of the earthquake and tsunami, the Japanese have shown that they are an incredibly resilient, industrious, disciplined and hard-working culture. No matter what happens, there will be enormous reinvestment in roads, factories, houses and most other facets of a modern economy. Rebuilding efforts tend to create great prospects for the industrious who provide needed supplies, material, and expertise. Any short-term stock

market slide—the frequent companion of unexpected disasters (like the one experienced by world markets in the days after the Japanese disaster)—become an opportunity to buy stocks and other assets at discount prices, provided that you are in it for the long haul.

**4. Take baby steps when buying into new assets.** Keep up with your steady saving plans and investments like your 401k, even when they suffer a temporary setback driven by gloomy headlines. Events like these enable fund managers to purchase shares at bargain prices, and those shares typically find their way to loftier levels after the dust clears (as long as you wait it out). Those systematic 401k contributions are an excellent means to move into a new investment over time. A strategy known as *dollar cost averaging* is a good approach for

those who have a big nest egg. Rather than place a large bet all at once, you move a set amount at predetermined increments (say \$5,000 invested on the first of every month). Most brokerage firms and mutual fund companies can set this up with just a phone call.

**5. Get some professional assistance and advice.** There are financial planning professionals whose sense of fair play trumps the mindless pursuit of a quick buck. Work with a *fee-only financial planner* who charges a simple fee for advice or management, rather than a commission or charge to move money around. Ask your advisor to review your investments and assets, discern your goals, tax situation, and risk tolerance. **PE**

John Hauserman, is a financial planner and investment advisor. Visit [www.retirementquest.com](http://www.retirementquest.com).

**ACTION:** Monitor your financial investments.

## FINANCIAL • GIVING

# Why Give?

It is its own reward.



by John Killinger

AMERICANS ARE KNOWN for giving until it hurts, but it's ironic that the people who can afford to give the least are generally the ones who give the most. Those who earn less than \$20,000 become *twice as charitable* as those who earn \$100,000, even though they donate one fourth as much. Other findings include:

- Americans give \$300 billion to charities each year.
- There are 973,354 public charities in the US who collect more than \$1.3 trillion dollars—more than the US government collects in taxes!
- The wealthiest 10 percent of Americans account for 25 percent of the amount of money received by charities.
- When calculated as a percentage of income, the poorest people become the most charitable.
- Conservatives are more likely to give than Liberals.
- Religious people give more to secular causes than secular people do.

These findings are not surprising to me. That's why I wrote a fictional account of a pastor and his wife who gave half their wealth to save two church employees from being laid off, and sparked a national phenomenon.

I think Americans innately understand how good people feel when they use part of what they have to relieve

others who are suffering during hard economic times. If you want to feel good and truly enjoy life, simply share part of your comfort and means with others. What you lose in the bank account, you gain threefold in spirit.

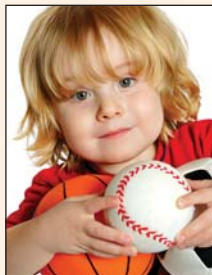
In the age of government bailouts, I believe that we should be more mindful of taking care of each other, instead of waiting for a handout from Uncle Sam. We really don't need the government to make things better. We can do it ourselves, and have done it ourselves, much more efficiently and successfully, both individually and in groups.

The media got the story backwards when it reported how billionaire investor Warren Buffett promised to give roughly 90 percent of his wealth away to charity, and then challenged other billionaires to do the same. They always tell the story as if Buffett was trying to inspire others to give. I think it was the other way around. *He* was inspired by others to give, and he wanted to spread that inspiration around. I think he understands that few things make us feel better than helping others in need.

**Good works inspire more good works**—they are contagious. We live in a rich world, but sometimes we forget our blessings because we're too busy trying to make money or accumulate possessions. There have always been the *haves* and the *have nots*. Instead of those two extremes, why can't it simply be *us*, all together? **PE**

John Killinger is a Baptist preacher and storyteller and author of 70 books, including *The Zacchaeus Solution*. Visit [www.johnkillinger.com](http://www.johnkillinger.com).

**ACTION:** Give to inspire others to give.



# I Feel the Need to Pray

And I'm not alone in my prayers.



by Barack Obama

I DID NOT COME FROM A PARTICULARLY religious family. My father, who I barely knew, was said to be a non-believer. My mother, whose parents were Baptist and Methodist, grew up with skepticism about organized religion, but she usually took me to church on Easter and Christmas.

And yet my mother was a very spiritual person, guided by the *Golden Rule*, and nagged me about homespun values like honesty, hard work, kindness and fair play. I came to understand the equal worth of all men and all women, and the imperatives of an ethical life and the necessity to act on your beliefs. Because of her example, my earliest inspirations for a life of service ended up being the faith leaders of the civil rights movement. Their call to fix what was broken, a call rooted in faith, led me to sign up as a community organizer for a group of churches in Southside Chicago. There I came to know Jesus Christ for myself and embrace Him as my lord and savior.

That was over 20 years ago, and my faith journey has had its twists and turns. I have thanked God for the joys of parenthood and Michelle's willingness to put up with me. In the wake of failures and disappointments, I've questioned what God had in store for me and been reminded that God's plans for us may not always match our short-sighted desires. These past two years as president have deepened my faith.

*The presidency has a funny way of making a person feel the need to pray.* Abe Lincoln said, "I've been driven to my knees many times by the *overwhelming conviction* that I had no place else to go." Fortunately, I'm not alone in my prayers. Pastor friends come to the Oval Office on occasion to pray with me and for the nation. The Camp David chapel provides respite and fellowship. Joshua DuBois, director of our *Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnership's* office, starts my morning with meditations from Scripture. And I have friends—*known and unknown*—who pray for me every day.

*It's also comforting to know that people are praying for you who don't always agree with you.* Even though we may be on opposite sides of many issues, what binds us is a shared faith—

a recognition that we pray to and serve the same God. My faith sustains me—all the more so when Michelle and I hear our faith questioned. Ultimately what matters is not what other people say about us, but whether we're true to our conscience and true to our God.

## Five Common Themes

As I travel, folks often ask me what I pray for. Some prayers are general: *Lord, give me the strength to meet the challenges of my office.* Some are specific: *Lord, give me patience as I watch Malia go to her first dance.*" Five themes are common:

**First, I pray for my ability to help those who are struggling.** We are called to work on behalf of a God that chose mercy and compassion to the most vulnerable. We've seen much

hardship these past two years. Daily I get a letter from somebody or meet someone who's out of work or lost their home or without health care. Sometimes what I can do seems so distant, so inadequate to the enormity of the need. My faith, and the biblical injunction to serve *the least of these*, keeps me going. Faith reminds me that despite being one imperfect man, I can still help as best I can, and that God will buttress these efforts.

**Second, I pray that many others will answer this call.** None of us are alone in answering this call. It's being taken up daily by many of you in your homes, churches, temples and synagogues—and such faith moves mountains. There are many stories of people who take it upon themselves to make a difference.

**Third, I pray that Government can effectively partner with faith groups in the work of caring for the least of these.** We have expanded the way faith groups can partner with government. We're helping them feed more hungry kids. We're helping fatherhood groups get dads the support they need to be there for their children. We're working with non-profits to improve the lives of people in ways that are aligned with our constitutional principles. This work is rooted in the imperatives to help the poor. In a caring society, our charity,

must find expression not just in our families, places of work and places of worship, but also in our government.

**Fourth, I pray for humility.** God answered this prayer for me by having me marry Michelle. Whether it's reminding me of a chore undone, or questioning the wisdom of watching a football game on Sunday, she keeps me humble.

When political debates become bitter and we just listen to those who reinforce our biases, it's useful to go to Scripture to remind ourselves that *none of us has all the answers.* The challenge I find is to balance this uncertainty, this humility, with the need to fight for deeply held convictions—to be open to other viewpoints but firm in my core principles. I pray that God will show me and all of us *the limits of our understanding*, and open our ears and hearts to different points of view.

**Fifth, I pray that I might walk closer with God and make that walk my first priority task.** It's easy to be consumed by our daily worries and concerns, especially when we're obsessed with wealth and power and celebrity. Often it takes a brush with hardship or tragedy to

remind us of what matters most. We then ask ourselves how we've treated others, whether we've told our family and friends how much we love them. In moments, when we feel most intensely our flaws and the sins of the world, we most desperately seek to touch the face of God.

**My prayer is that we might seek His face every day**—that we might often rise above the *hustle and bustle*, here and now, and kneel before the Eternal; that we might remember that those who wait on the Lord will *soar on wings like eagles, and run and not be weary, walk and not faint.*

When I wake in the morning, I wait on the Lord, and I ask Him to give me the strength to do right by our country and its people. And when I go to bed at night I wait on the Lord, and I ask Him to forgive me my sins, and look after my family and the American people, and make me an instrument of His will.

I say these prayers hoping they'll be answered, knowing I must work, sacrifice and serve to see them answered. The act of prayer is a source of strength. It's a reminder that our time on Earth is not just about us; that when we open ourselves to the possibility, God might have a larger purpose for our lives. PE

*Barack Obama is President of the United States of America. This article is adapted from his National Prayer Breakfast speech, Feb. 3, 2011. Visit [www.VitalSpeeches.com](http://www.VitalSpeeches.com).*

**ACTION: Pray for your own purposes.**



# Instant Influence

Get anyone to do anything, fast.



by Michael Pantalon

WHILE WORKING WITH high-risk patients in the Bronx—including homeless men and women, drug dependent patients, and convicts—I developed *Instant Influence*, a way to motivate others quickly to higher achievement, and to make positive changes in yourself. It focuses on *six questions* that get people to tap into their deeply personal reasons for wanting to change: 1. Why might you change? 2. How ready are you to change on a scale from 1 (*not at all ready*) to 10 (*totally ready*). 3. Why didn't you pick a lower number? 4. Imagine you've changed. What would the positive outcomes be? 5. Why are those outcomes important to you? 6. What's the next step? These questions generate much more insightful answers.

## Three Basic Principles

*Influence* is based on three principles:

**Principle 1: No one absolutely has to do anything—they always have choice—and people resist doing what others tell them they have to do.** My work is rooted in *human autonomy*. In one study, two groups of students received different messages about flossing. One was a *low threat* message focusing on autonomy, and one was a *high threat* message that detailed negative consequences. The low-threat group was *much more likely to floss*. Greater than our fear of disease is the feeling that *we are in charge*.

Think of how to motivate a reluctant person to show more initiative. Threats to fire or punish him wither away in comparison to *helping him discover why he wants to excel*. Avoid threats—focus on *whys*. Motivation is more effective for causing change than relaying risks. *People are far more likely to change if they think of the positive reasons to stop a bad behavior versus the negatives of continuing bad behavior*. Also, telling people to choose something, even something they have previously liked or wanted, almost guarantees that they'll want to avoid it. People are *fiercely autonomous* and react against being told what to do. They need to feel as if *they're choosing* their destiny.

**Principle 2: Everyone already has enough motivation—and finding even one small kernel of motivation can lead to positive action.** Psychologist Martin

Seligman once studied depressed people who claimed they lacked the motivation to make positive changes. He asked them not about *what they planned to do*—which would make them think of reasons they couldn't take action—but *what they'd want to do if they had more energy*. After a week, many reported being more active. In dealing with under-motivated people, finding one small kernel of motivation can lead to positive action.

**Principle 3: When you identify your reasons for wanting to do something, positive action follows.** You may think you are depressed or unmotivated, but then you hear yourself say, "If I had more energy, I'd like to go out." *Hearing yourself say what you want to do helps*

*you find the motivation to do it*. The key is *not focusing on should aspects*. The more you think you *should* do something, the less likely you may be to do it. Identify your reasons for wanting to do something—positive action then follows.

You have a strong desire to align your *statements about yourself* with your *actions* to prove that you know who you are. So, use *action statements*—"I will do this"—and share them with others (not just say, "I need to do this," such statements fall to the bottom of your to-do list). PE

*Michael Pantalon, a psychologist from the Yale School of Medicine, is author of Instant Influence: How to Get Anyone to Do Anything, Fast (Little, Brown). Visit [www.michaelpantalon.com](http://www.michaelpantalon.com).*

**ACTION: Use Instant Influence in relationships.**

## SERVICE • ACTIONS

# Talk Less, Do More

Perform an act of service daily.



by Kirk Minor

REMEMBER A TIME WHEN working with community and church was centered around people, and not rhetoric—and I'm wondering where those days went.

There's an old axiom that states "Those who speak, don't know, and those who know, don't speak." Many people are doing a lot of *talking, protesting and bellyaching*, but fewer people are walking the walk. We have extremists protesting funerals of gay soldiers, pundits decrying the use of abbreviations for the word *Christmas*, and activists campaigning for prayer in public schools. These divisive issues have little to do with the *good works* the Bible wants the faithful to perform. And people wonder why the media tide is turning against people of faith.

A vocal contingent of religious leaders are using the Bible not as a teaching tool, but as a bludgeoning tool, which was not how the book was intended.

**If there is something about society that you don't like, chances are you can find a quote in the Bible that demonizes it.** It's easy to take just about any reference—material, secular, or non-secular—and use it as a means to pit people against each other. But that's not what the Bible was meant to do. It was meant to bring people together, to teach charity and tolerance, and to bring about peace and harmony. I think it's time that pastors and people of faith stand up

and recognize the *elephant in the room*.

**Too many people are using religion as a sword to fight those with whom they disagree**, instead of as a plowshare to help their fellow neighbors tend the land and form a community.

**The key to reversing the trend is to use actions more than words**, and for people of faith to quietly go about the good works and charity that is at the essence of the Bible's teachings.

In the face of all the shrill voices that capture the media's attention, good people sometimes wonder what they could possibly do to make a difference. Shouting louder than the other guys only results in more shouting, which never gets anything done.

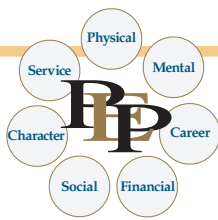
**The key to good works** is to go about your life, as one of the faithful, and to make sure you actually do at least one thing each day that reflects the faith in which you believe. The Bible has endless passages about charity, comforting the sick, and providing shelter for the poor. Imagine how many

of our unfortunate brothers and sisters we could help raise up from their situation if all who call themselves Christian did *one kind act each day* to help their neighbors. Imagine the impact on a world stricken with strife and pain when millions of people—all at once—stand up and, instead of talking about their faith, actually act on it.

That's the world the church was built to realize. That's the kind of world that can only become a reality when people of faith band together and commit themselves to achieving it. PE

*Kirk Minor was a Licensed Certified Social Worker, pastor with the United Methodist Church, and author of Journey Across The Tiber. Visit [www.www.truthsof-catholicism.com](http://www.www.truthsof-catholicism.com).*

**ACTION: Perform one act of service daily.**



## GOAL GETTERS



**We waste 15 percent of our money.** We are so focused on materialism and buying stuff, we wind up spending more on things like electronics and toys than we do on education. We love spending money on *things we don't need*.

**The top ten ways we waste 15 percent of our household income** include: apparel, tobacco, entertainment equipment, alcohol, fees and admissions to attractions, vacation lodging, pets, electronics, gifts, and meals away from home.

**We are obsessed with accumulating stuff.** One distasteful display of our adoration of gluttony takes place on the Oprah Winfrey show when she gives luxury gifts to members of her studio audience. When they are alerted to each prize, we see people screaming, jumping, even falling to their knees, as if in religious ecstasy, worshipping the false god of commerce.

—Fred Sellers, [prophetofoailmountain.com](http://prophetofoailmountain.com)



**America's values have declined over the last 50 years.** We've become a nation that craves *instant gratification*; and to satisfy these cravings, *we've all become addicted to something*. When enough people are hooked on the same substance or behavior, it crosses into cultural addiction. We need an *intervention!*

The media, government and private business act as *pushers* by justifying, romanticizing, and promoting destructive behaviors. Now we have a nation addicted to drugs, food, alcohol, gambling, pornography, shopping—even crime!

When somebody absolutely has to have something, that's called *demand*; and addiction creates huge demand, and massive profits in supplying what we crave. So in combating addictive behavior, we waste taxpayer dollars by trying to engineer *strictly political solutions*. Addictions are very expensive!

The more widespread an addiction, the more likely it's seen as *normal*; and since it's often packaged as just a harmless distraction, by the time we realize something is wrong we're hooked! The most

dangerous addictions are ones we fail to even diagnose as addictive behavior *because* we accept them as normal. It is up to us as individuals to stop the insanity!

**Addiction determines behavior**, and this leads to a nation dependent on dysfunctions that include obsessive cleanliness, food addictions, prescription drug dependency, sexual exploitation, over-consumption, crime, and cruelty! By being aware of our addictive culture, we can escape the hold of our worst impulses or *self-destructive behaviors*.

—Jane Velez-Mitchell, [KimW@hcibooks.com](mailto:KimW@hcibooks.com)



My husband Alan suffered a severe brain injury as the result of a heart attack. I tended to his recovery, and it affected our emotional and physical health. So, I created **seven tips** for helping a serious injury victim:

- **Prepare for a long mission.** Healing and recovering from a serious injury takes time. Many people continue to make progress for months and years after the injury with treatment, motivation, and practice.

- **Take breaks.** The brain consumes great energy while concentrating and relearning material. Build frequent rest breaks into sessions. Take days off from intensive rehab work.

- **Set realistic goals.** Set a few realistic, measurable goals. Alan cared most about learning to read and write; our *goals* reflected *his priorities*.

- **Prepare training materials.** We set up a table in Alan's office as his new learning center. It can be humiliating to start learning basic skills as an adult, so we selected computers and puzzles made for adults.

- **Make rehab a routine.** Doing cognitive and physical rehab became part of our *new normal* life. We scheduled time for certain practice sessions in a distraction-free room.

- **Use music.** The brain stores and accesses *music* in different ways than spoken words. Alan sang long lyrics easier than he spoke sentences. Playing an instrument and listening to music is *fun* and *stimulates the brain*.

- **Enjoy.** Revel in hope and love—a *new relationship* and life can flourish when nurtured with hope and love.

—Janet Cromer, [www.janetcromer.com](http://www.janetcromer.com)

## PersonalCOACH



### Self-Esteem

*The key to happiness.*

by Louise Hart

**H**AVING DEVOTED MY LIFE TO HELPING PEOPLE to achieve self-esteem, I can attest that we begin life as curious, creative and hopeful creatures. We see the world around us as a place filled with wonder and opportunity.

But many of us grew up with a troubled childhood set in a society that taught us to fear, hate, and harm ourselves. After starting out as butterflies, we were forced by life's hardships to become caterpillars. With this *reverse metamorphosis*, our positive, soaring souls became buried under *layers of negativity*.

The good news is that you can get metamorphosis going in the right direction again, and recover your self-esteem. Self-esteem dictates how you manage your life. It's vital for mental health, well-being, and healthy families.

I invite you to *uncover your wonderful true nature*. Recovering self-esteem is a process. As you grow older, you develop *layers of defenses*. You end up wrapped in a cocoon. You can turn back into a butterfly in **three stages**:

1. **Reaching In.** When you begin to direct your own life, your days as a caterpillar are numbered. You learn to listen to yourself, accept yourself, set personal boundaries, and formulate goals. Recovering self-esteem is a journey in discovering the remnants of your self-worth, weaving them into wings, finding *compassion* for yourself, and affirming that you have always been okay—even when you felt like a lowly plodding caterpillar. It involves understanding what happened to you, healing wounds, and moving to a better place.

2. **Reaching Out.** Loosening the grip of the past, you start spinning your cocoon and growing within it. Exercises and experiences serve as stepping stones to discovering and recovering self-esteem, and becoming a butterfly, finding new power, and returning to your community to build a new life.

3. **Reaching High.** The final step involves emerging from your cocoon, spreading your wings, and living your life in a whole new way. Transformation introduces infinite possibilities for joy, adventure, love, and delight which bring lightness and continual renewal to the soul. Life itself becomes its own reward.

**Improving your self-esteem is the most important thing you can do** to develop the *inner strength* to resist pressures to use drugs or drink excessively. It gives you the courage to make good lifestyle decisions, set boundaries, lose weight, stop smoking, and find a better job. **PE**

Louise Hart is co-author with Kristen Caven of *On the Wings of Self Esteem*. Call 510-625-0589 or [www.upliftprograms.com](http://www.upliftprograms.com).

**ACTION: Boost your self-esteem.**

# Achieving Vision

## Take five decisive steps.



by Andy Andrews

**M**OST PEOPLE FAIL BECAUSE of an undecided heart.

We all know people who tell you about a decision they're trying to make, lament over the options, ask for your opinion, and then they'll talk to someone else about their decision, asking for more opinions! Truth is truth. *I have found that it is better to be alone and acting upon the truth in my heart than to follow a gaggle of silly geese doomed to mediocrity*, said Christopher Columbus.

The key to having a *decided heart* is having a *clear vision* for your life. Here are five steps to achieving your vision:

**1. Identify your drivers.** What are the drivers in your life? *Did you become a doctor because you love helping people or because you wanted a prestigious profession? Did you join the military because you thrive on adventure or because you love your country?* Now think about what decisions you need to make about your future.

What will drive those decisions? What do you value more than anything else? The more powerful the driver, the more committed you'll become. Considering what drives you, identify areas of growth, where you want to be in three, five, ten years. This is the first step to setting a clear vision for your future.

**2. Set lofty goals.** Think big! If what you're working toward isn't big enough, you'll be ambushed by bigger things every day. If you're hunting rabbits in tiger country, you have to keep your eyes peeled for tigers. But if you're hunting tigers, you can ignore the rabbits!

To stay focused on your vision, make sure the destiny you're working toward is worth the hassle. Brainstorm a master list of lifetime goals—big and small. *Do you want to write a book? Start a company? Learn a foreign language? Take martial arts? Master calligraphy?* Your goals should help you move toward your vision. *Set lofty personal and professional goals.*

**3. Burn your boats.** In 1519, an extraordinary man set sail on the final leg of a voyage from the Cuban shores to the Yucatan Peninsula on a quest to capture a fortune in gold that had been defended by the Mayans for 600 years. Hernando Cortez knew that victory depended on *commitment*, so he tried a different tactic. Before the battle, he told his men, "Burn the boats. If we go home, we're going

home in their boats." On their leader's orders, they burned their own boats!

What boats in your mind continue to float the excuses and limiting beliefs that keep you from getting what you say you want? What boats do you need to burn? *Be 100 percent committed—burn your boats.*

**4. Thrive on rejection.** If you're afraid of criticism, you'll have little impact on the world. Criticism runs rampant, and if you're inhibited by it, you'll drown in its deep waters. Anytime you do something unrealistic by other people's standards, they'll bray like donkeys. Outside your personal board of directors, you should not care what anybody thinks or says about your vision. If you worry about what other people think, you'll have more confidence in their opinion than your own. Your future does not

depend on the opinions or the permission of others. To accomplish your vision you need to thrive on rejection.

**5. Live a life of possibility.** One great challenge to achieving your vision is your limiting beliefs: *I can't do it, I'm not good or smart enough, I can't make it work.* Often, simply being aware of limiting beliefs can dissolve them. *What are five limiting beliefs you have about yourself?* Uncover your destructive beliefs, write them, then turn them into a positive. If you believe, "I'm too old to be creative," change it to, "Age gives me the wisdom and gift of creativity."

Your dream is in your heart for a reason. *Live your life as one full of possibility.* PE

*Andy Andrews is a popular speaker and best-selling author of the The Noticer, The Traveler's Gift, and The Final Summit. Email Robert@AndyAndrews.com, or call 615-791-5500.*

**ACTION:** Take the five decisive steps.

## INSPIRATIONAL • RIGHT

## Do What's Right

### Or do what is right now?



by Kyle Scott

**E**THICS IS TRICKY BECAUSE the point of business, *to produce profit*, often conflicts with *ethics*. And ethicists rarely have a grasp of life outside of idealized environments. And you rarely have time to read Aristotle, Nietzsche, or Thomas Aquinas to decide what is ethical, moral, and just.

So, I provide *three easy questions* to ask when weighing your decision:

**1. Would you accept the explanation from your kids?** It's been said,

"If you want to compete this is what you have to do," when trying to justify a decision that is unethical. This is the adult equivalent of saying, "But all my friends are doing it." So, is the decision you are about to make one that you would want your child to make, or is

the justification for your decision one that you would accept from your child when he or she has done something that goes against your instruction? You have a hand in making the world what it is. When in business you earn the ability to make choices for yourself and others, you owe it to your stakeholders to earn a profit, but you also owe it to those people, yourself, and your family to act ethically. So, you have to decide which is more important at any one time.

**2. Will it make you happier?** Often you don't know what makes you happy, except from experience. Some think

money will make them happy only to find out once they get it that they're not any happier than when first starting out. To make an ethical decision, you must decide *what will make you happy*. Socrates noted *what makes us happy is what makes us better people*. You become better, and happier, when your higher desires—such as the desire for justice, moderation and courage—guide base desires, such as hunger or sexual attraction. If your higher desires do not guide your base desires you'll be led to gluttony and debauchery. Everyone gets hungry, but moderation is a higher desire. No one can tell you what will make you happy, or when you are following your base desires or your higher desire—you must know yourself.

**3. Do you exert power?** If you have

to *manipulate or coerce* someone into going along with your plan, or to achieve your goal, you should rethink your plan. If you can present your argument in a persuasive manner without robbing others of their ability to decide for themselves, you act ethically. When you strip someone of their capacity to reason, or to act upon what they reason to be the best choice, you deny them their dignity—and therefore act unethically. Whether you withhold information from them or threaten them with punishment if your will is not followed, you deny them the capacity to reason for themselves.

You should not act badly because it is *easier* than being good. *Ask yourself these questions when making decisions to help you decide which path to follow.* PE

*Kyle Scott, Ph.D., lectures at University of Houston, and is author of Federalism. Email kascott@uh.edu.*

**ACTION:** Ask yourself the three questions.



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