

Personal Excellence

The Magazine of Personal Leadership

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January 2013

R. Kay Green
Consultant

Five
Questions

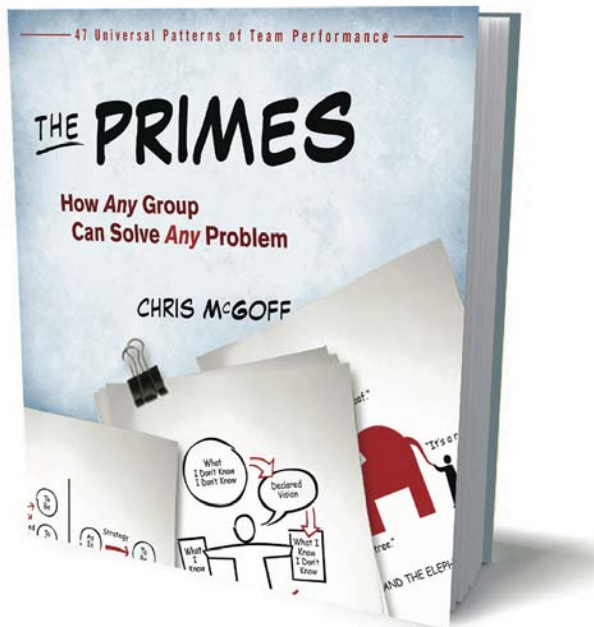
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The Magazine of Life Leadership

INSPIRATION • CHAMPIONS

Icing on the Cake

It's the chocolate of champions.

by Zig Ziglar

ONE FAVORITE EXPRESSION OF SUCCESSFUL AND competitive people is the phrase, "If such-and-such-a-thing happens, that will just be *icing on the cake*." A sprinter, for example, might say, "I'll try hard to win the race and if I break the record, that will be *icing on the cake*." A salesperson might say, "My goal is to meet my quota this quarter, and if I win the trip, that will be *icing on the cake*."

Hakeem Olajuwon, the all-pro center for the Houston Rockets, gave a new dimension and thought to that phrase just before the final game in the 1994 championship series with the New York Nicks. The teams were tied at three games each and each game, with one exception, had been decided in the last seconds. It was one of the great championship series.

Just before the championship game, a reporter asked Hakeem if his life would be ruined if the Rockets did not win. His answer indicates his sincerity and humility. "I've seen some guys who did win a championship, but at the end of their careers they weren't happy. To me, that's not a successful career. If you feel joy about what you've accomplished in your profession, you've had a successful career. For me the championship would be *icing on the cake*, but I'll still have the cake, no matter what. You can look at how far you've come and be happy or dwell on where you haven't been and spend your lifetime believing you have been deprived of something. I can't."

Incidentally, Hakeem means "doctor" or "wise one," and Olajuwon means "at the top." His name reflects his approach to life. Of all

the attitudes we can acquire, the attitude of gratitude is the most important—and life changing.

Hitting the Bull's Eye

Howard Hill was the greatest archer who ever lived. He entered over 300 archery tournaments and placed first in each of them. He retired early because most of the best archers quit competing with him in tournaments, knowing they would only be competing for second place.

Howard Hill was so good that he killed a Cape Buffalo, a Bengal tiger, a Polar bear, 20-foot shark, and a bull elephant with his bow and arrow.

As a youngster I saw newsreels of Howard Hill hitting the bull's eye from 50 feet away and then taking his second arrow and splitting the first one with it. He could compete with a rifleman from 50 feet. I've never shot the bow and arrow in competition, but if you have

good health and eyesight, I could train you in 30 minutes to hit the bull's eye more consistently than Howard Hill—if we were to blindfold him and turn him around so he would have no idea which direction he was facing.

How can a person hit a target he can't see—and how can you hit a target you don't have?

Have you set goals in your personal, family and business life? The principle is this: *you go as far as you can see; and when you get there you will always be able to see farther*. If you can't hit a target you can't see, how can you hit one you don't even have? Set goals and take action!

Build on the Proper Foundation

Table tennis was popular when I was in high



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school. A friend taught me to use the *three-finger grip* on the paddle. I often competed with a friend whose physical talent and competitive spirit were similar, so we alternated in the win-loss column.

One day a new kid came to town, and he used the *handshake grip* and dominated me. I was somewhat chagrined at the experience, but I could see that he could do things with that grip that I would never do with the way I was holding the paddle—regardless of how long or how often I practiced.

So, I changed the way I gripped the paddle, and for the next few weeks my performance dropped. In fact, for about six weeks my regular playing partner won every game. However, as I mastered the new concept, I finally won. From that point forward, my table tennis improved remarkably.

As you change and learn, you might not make immediate progress, but if the fundamentals are correct, you can rest assured that as you *drill for skill* and start to own the procedures, your career will definitely move to new heights.

Night Cookies Are Good

Buckner Fanning tells this story:

It's a dark night and Snoopy is outside the dog house, looking up into the skies. Then he's kicking on the door and Charlie Brown calls out, "Are you feeling lonely again?" Then we see them on a walk and Charlie Brown says, "It's a terrible feeling, isn't it?"

In the next frame, they're in bed with the covers pulled up. Charlie Brown is comforting his depressed dog: "You wake up in the middle of the night and everything seems hopeless. You're all alone. You wonder what life is all about, and why you're here and does anyone really care, and you just stare into the dark and feel all alone."

In the final frame, Snoopy longingly asks, "Do we have any *night cookies*?"

We all need *night cookies*. They happen when you do something *nice* for someone. You receive one when someone does something *nice* for you. Be helpful. When you see a person without a smile, give him yours. You win whether you give or get *night cookies*; and *the more you give, the more you get*.

Manners Do Matter

Today good manners are rare. However, good manners, including expressions of gratitude, are among the greatest assets you can have. Without gratitude, happiness is rare. With gratitude, happiness is the result.

For example, after he starred in his first movie, *Roy Rogers* began receiving fan mail, which he wanted to answer. However, his salary of \$150 a week did not even cover the postage. He talked to the head of Republic Pictures in the hope that the studio would handle his fan mail. He was turned down

and told not to bother answering fan mail.

Being a genuinely good guy, Roy felt that if someone wrote him a fan letter, he should answer it. Fortunately, the movie made him so popular that he could go on a personal appearance tour. He traveled many miles and performed countless one-night stands to raise the money to pay the salaries of the four people it took to answer his fan mail. As a result of answering his fan mail, he built a fan base that remained faithful to him for decades. Yes, the good guys and gals really do win. So, develop some manners; respect others; be grateful for what you have.

Growth or Self-Fulfillment

There is a vast difference *between personal development and self-fulfillment*. *Self-fulfillment* is the student who acquires knowledge so he or she can parade in front of others to get accolades. It's the guy who goes to the gym, builds his body, then admires himself in front of the mirror. It's the *look out for number one* mindset. In contrast, *personal growth* is the teacher who acquires the same information so he or she can teach someone else. It's the athlete who also spends countless hours in preparation so that he or she can make a greater contribution to the team. Real happiness comes when you teach and inspire others to be the best they can be.



Double Duty for a Better Life

Many people tell me that *they do not have enough time*, yet we all have exactly 24 hours every day. Obviously, some people use their time more effectively than others. When I have to wait, I read business-related material. While on the road, I do most of my work so that when I get home I can indulge in some of my pleasures in life, like playing golf or visiting with the family. I watch the news while I'm getting dressed or preparing for bed or packing my bag. Organize your time around as many "two-fer's" as possible—you'll be more effective and have more fun.

Finishing Well

Integrity is who you are—a measure of your character that determines your behavior. *Ethics* are the result of your integrity. People of integrity rarely do unethical things (you can't consistently perform in ways that are inconsistent with the way you see yourself). Good guys and the good gals really do win. They not only live well, *they finish well*. They have *more of the things money will buy*, and *all of the things that money can't buy*. So, build your integrity—and I'll see you at the top! PE



Zig Ziglar was known as America's Motivator. He authored 32 books. He is remembered as a man who lived his faith daily. Visit www.Ziglar.com.

ACTION: Finish your life well.

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Stop Listening

Make yourself available.



by Chris McGoff

I ARRIVED AT THE RESTAURANT early to ensure we would be seated at a private table.

My expected guest was an executive of a major enterprise and one of my most important customers. I requested the meeting with her to solicit her feedback on how my team was doing and to better understand her priorities and pressing issues—to *hear how we could enhance our value to her*. I also needed to ask her a favor. I had a big agenda, and the stakes were high. Too much was on the line merely to *listen attentively*. I was there to *be a listening from nothing deeply*.

You have likely internalized the value of *listening*. I now challenge you to *stop listening* and start *being a listening from nothing deeply*. How does this differ? The changes are subtle; the shifts in behavior, small. But the response will be staggering: People will figure things out on their own, will feel better about themselves, will reveal things of intense value, will seek you out, will find you charismatic, will think you are an excellent conversationalist, and will increase their *trust* in you and their *loyalty* to you.

To understand what the phrase *being a listening, from nothing, deeply* means, we must break it down, piece by piece.

- **Being a listening.** *Listening* is an activity, something you do. *Being a listening* is a state of being, something you are. Listening requires effort; being a listening simply requires presence. In being a listening, you are making yourself completely available for another person to speak into. Being a listening is selfless and generous. It is a gift.

- **From nothing.** While being a listening from nothing, you must relinquish your right to do or be anything else. Reflect on all the times you only convey half of your thoughts before you sense that the other person is poised to interrupt you. They are so anxious to tell you *what they think* that they don't allow you the time to complete your thought. In their hyper-activated analyzing and judging minds, your words are simply raw material to be quickly reconstituted into things that they want to say. Now imagine speaking to someone who has relinquished their right to prepare and construct a response or even to think

about what is being said until you have stopped saying what you want to say. Amazing, isn't it?

- **Deeply.** When trying to focus exclusively on *what is being said*, your brain buzzes with filtering and shutting out extraneous noise. Furrowed brows, wrinkled foreheads, leaning forward, and regular nods are outward expressions saying *I'm focusing on what you are saying*. But all this *concentration activity* merely distracts you further! What outwardly appears to aid listening is internally hindering it. When listening *deeply*, you take in absolutely everything. In opening yourself up to the subtle sounds of your surroundings, you enable yourself to better absorb what is explicitly being said. This may seem counter-intuitive, but try it. When the person speaking finishes a thought, wait in silence—giving them time to take stock of what they said and formulate their next thought. Your job is to *hold that silent space*, to act as an open clearing into which additional thoughts can be formulated and shared. You will find that these second- and third-order



thoughts tend to be the most profound and valuable. Tragically, most of this intellectual gold rarely sees the light of day in our rapid-fire world.

You know when you have stopped listening, and started being a listening, when you take these five steps: 1) You are fully present, comfortable, and exactly where you choose to be; 2) You feel privileged to create a vast, judgment-free clearing for people to speak into so people can create themselves for you as they rarely have a chance to do with anyone else; 3) You are curious to know *the thinking behind their thinking*—beyond *what* they are saying but also *why* they are saying it in this way, at this time; 4) You are generous and patient—when people complete an idea, you hold a silence that is broken only by their additional thoughts, assuming that they have three *packets* to share before they will ask what you think; and 5) When you are asked *What do you think?*, you take few seconds to think about your response, because you are devoid of pre-formed opinions. Your

response will often be in the form of *probing* since you want to delve deeper.

If this listening is so valuable, why is it so rare? Narcissists and self-absorbed people (most of us at some time) listen only from *what does this mean to me?* Insecure people process what they're hearing in real time so they can respond quickly, thus protecting themselves from being *discovered* as intellectual frauds. The players are chronically distracted by the possibility that *someone over there* or the text that just buzzed in their pocket might be more important than the person with whom they're communicating.

Today's astonishing advances in technology have tricked us into feeling hyper-connected in an already kinetic world. But the truth is, this increase in connectivity is directly proportional to an increase in loneliness. Now, more people are learning the joy of *disconnecting* from *over there* and being fully present to that which is *right here*.

A practical way to start being a listening from nothing deeply is to ask a person simple questions: *What's it like being you today?* or *What is becoming clear to you?* or *Tell me something about our relationship that I do not know*. Follow the five steps, and brace for impact. By *being a listening from nothing deeply* you create clearings into which others can speak, share, and feel secure as they express their most intimate feelings and ideas.

That night at the restaurant, my guest responded by sharing deeply, vulnerably and authentically. She talked about our project and helped me see some changes I could make to enhance our value. She told me about pressures she was feeling from her boss. She told me about her aspirations and what she was contemplating doing with her life after this job. When we said our goodbyes two hours later, my guest thanked me profusely for the extraordinary conversation and meal, though I said very little and her food went largely un-noticed. Our relationship transcended to a new level of trust and caring. And the next day, she took care of that favor I requested.

I invite you to try *being a listening from nothing deeply*. People seek this listening. And when they find it in you, they'll offer you their concerns and ideas, their caring feedback and praise, their burdens and treasures, their deepest fears and highest hopes. The rewards will be tremendous. PE

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ACTION: Be a listening from nothing deeply.

Make Wiser Choices

Take these five simple steps.



by W. Granville Brown

LIFE IS FILLED WITH CONFUSING options and competing interests. For better or for worse, your life is shaped by your *choices* and *decisions*. The distinction goes far beyond semantics. A *choice* is a selection from among options, and a *decision* entails reaching a conclusion or passing judgment on an issue.

Understanding this distinction helps you to navigate your life. For example, a friend, Lisa, loved the year-round sunshine of Las Vegas where she worked. But she complained about being unable to break through the glass ceiling at her job. Finally, her company offered her a promotion: managing its new branch in Boston. Although this seems like a no-brainer *decision*, she clouded her mind as if she had multiple *choices*.

If Lisa had attractive career options in other cities, she would be faced with *choices*. But, the options were between the safety and comfort of what she knew versus the *unknowable future of opportunity*. Her dilemma begged a *decision*.

Much of the time, however, you face *choices*: Do you choose to adhere to your curfew or violate it? Do you choose to spend all of your earnings or save part of them? Once you recognize the *choices* in your life, you can think each one through and make the one that is right for you. You'll also need to recognize that, since it is your choice, you must deal with the consequences. You must accept responsibility for those choices.

No matter who you are, you can fall prey to temptation, lust, and greed, and have your faith and beliefs shaken. But know that you possess the *free will* to make your *choices*. In facing this reflected truth as you gaze in the mirror of self-revelation, you must admit that *no one can make you do anything you don't really wish to do*, especially if you have the faith in yourself to persevere, even in the most arduous endeavors you face.

Today, just about *anyone* can become famous or infamous—idols and celebrities that embody the *perfect life*. When an idol makes a mistake, you may sense a sadistic glee once the feeling of betrayal passes. You may suppose that their fall lifts you up. It doesn't. It simply illustrates that elevating your soul is within you, and it begins with your decisions.

Your choices are packaged with your beliefs, paradigms, behaviors, and ability to deal with the consequences. *You can make your own decisions, but with choice comes a measure of accountability and responsibility*. When you receive an unfavorable result (failure), you tend to mask the result in excuses, rationalizations, or explanations to cast them as the reason for the result. In some cases, a sense of entitlement comes into play. You may feel that, based on your achievements, you are entitled to make unwise choices (I deserve this indulgence). Your character isn't determined by how you conduct yourself when the choices are easy, but rather by how you conduct yourself when your life is tough. *Adversity doesn't build character—it reveals it*.

While the media may showcase the flawed choices of Tiger Woods and oth-

ers, instead of *passing judgment* on those who fall due to unwise choices, learn a lesson and apply it to your life. Ask yourself, "How do I make choices in my life?"

To make wiser choices, take five steps:
 1. *Think it out:* Ask the right questions. Is this the right thing to do? How will this affect me and/or my family? Why am I doing this?
 2. *Deal with the consequences:* take ownership.
 3. *Accept responsibility* for your actions.
 4. *Be accountable* for your actions.
 5. *Be honest with yourself*.

The more you practice these steps, the better you become in making wise choices that lead you forward—not standing in place, going backwards, or living a life of regret. **PE**

W. Granville Brown is a certified life coach and author of *5 Simple Steps to Choosing Your Path*. Visit www.wgranvillebrown.com.

ACTION: Apply these steps to make wise choices.

MENTAL STRATEGIES

Reinvent Yourself

How to re-strategize your life.



by R. Kay Green

HAVE YOU MET YOUR GOALS in recent years? Have you experienced recession, bankruptcy, or downsizing? Look back and objectively assess whether your strategies have worked well. Have you improved upon past years' performance? Or is it time to take a new tack?

Setting goals is now a priority. So, reflect on your progress. In planning your professional and personal goals, honesty is key.

When old strategies aren't working, the goal must be to figure out something new. This may be the time to *reinvent yourself*. Perhaps you've reached a point where it's time to create a new version of yourself. This is the point when the artist throws out the original canvas and starts on a new canvas.

Reinventing yourself is when you realize that *the person you are*, the career you are in, or the business you lead, *no longer fits with your future*. So, you reassess who you are and what you are doing, come to terms with things that aren't working, and reinvent yourself.

Consider **three key strategies:**

1. **Start with a clean slate.** Trying to hold onto old strategies that once worked for you is the surest way to prevent a reinvention. Avoid the tendency to want to drift back into previous strategies. Create a new *you*. Start

off with the mindset that the old you doesn't exist anymore. Imagine yourself as a student fresh out of college. Remember the way you felt back then? You were a clean slate and a world of possibility stood before you. That's how you should think of yourself now. Nothing you have done to this point happened or matters. All that matters is what you will do with the *new you*.

2. **Decide what you want to be.** Who you want to be can't be the same as it once was. You're a *new you*. You may have spent years dreaming about achieving that *one thing*. When it doesn't work out, it's tough to let go of the old dream. But now, you're coming up with a *new you*, and that *new you* must do some soul-searching to determine what the best *new path* might be. What are the honest strengths you bring to the table? Consider shaping your strengths into a brand that you admire. What are the brands you value most? Is there anything *about you* that matches with *that brand*?

3. **Get out and take action.** The first step is always the toughest. You are, after all, dispelling everything you've ever done and doing something completely different. That can be scary. Terrifying even. But don't let your fear cause you to drag your feet. Don't stall. Don't wait. Get out there, take action, and reinvent yourself. Make the honest, accurate, and wise decisions that will lead you to greater success. **PE**

R. Kay Green, Ph.D., is CEO of RKG Marketing Solutions and author of *I've Been Called the B* Word... Now What Do I Do?* 13 Rules for the New-Age Professional Woman. Visit www.ivebeencalledthebword.com.

ACTION: Reinvent yourself this new year.

10X Your Influence

Exercise the power of proactivity.



by Ken Shelton

IN YOUR ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS, you need to gain the power to influence people and then exercise and expand your influence over time in your own circles to gain and sustain desired results.

I outline 15 sources of *personal influence power* (PIP) and review 7 *habits* to help you gain the influence you need.

I encourage you to assess your PIP to establish a baseline (use the *PIP Meter*, below). And then tap into the *Power of Positivity*, which has 3 to 10 times more influence power than negativity, and the *Power of Affirmation*—“I have the POWER to 10X influence”—and *Power of Visualization*—“I see myself having influence and see in detail the desired outcome of my influence power.”

You might also tap into the *Power of Influential Models and Mentors*. Who has influenced you most? How? Create and tell *Stories of Influence Power*—times when you/others exercised pro-activity and gained exponential influence.

Influence Power Meter

Use this *meter* to assess your PIP: Give yourself 1 to 6 points for each of the 15 Sources, and 1 to 10 bonus points for how well you leverage your top three sources of strength (100 possible points).

1. Appearance: weight, height, looks, appeal, attractiveness, image, wardrobe, grooming

2. Energy: strength, charisma, confidence, personality, fitness, body language

3. Voice: speaking, presentation, vocabulary, negotiation, conversation, expressiveness, second language

4. Character: example, integrity, trust, ethics, honesty, respect (walk the talk)

5. Reputation: Social/professional status, public relations, networking, personal and professional relationships

6. Works: achievements, accomplishments, contributions, service

7. Knowledge: ideas, writing, innovations/inventions, wisdom, expertise, judgment, education

8. Skills: experience, abilities/capabilities, information, facts, data, resources, access to power



9. Position: title, role, rank, formal authority, recommendation, referral

10. Coercion: ability to do damage, use of fear, bribes, threats, warnings, punishments, humiliation, demotion, firing, censure, harm, loss, bad reviews

11. Celebrity status: name/face recognition, fame, endorsement, brand

12. Willpower: freedom to choose, proactive response, creativity, courage

13. Listening: empathy, understanding, consideration, openness

14. Incentives: rewards, recognition, money, promotion, promises, reciprocity

15. Inspiration: spirit, zen, vision, passion motivation, meditation, higher power

Add up your points, remembering 10 possible bonus points. What three sources are your strongest?

Now, use this affirmation: I have the POWER to have 10X more influence on the people who mean the most to me.

7 Habits of Influence

I now see Stephen R. Covey's 7 *Habits as Habits of Influence*, since being

Highly Effective hinges on this formula: **Relationships + Influence = Results**. Let's review these 7 *Habits* in the context of influence:

1. Be proactive. Reactivity is stimulus-response behavior. Exercise the power and freedom to choose: take *Response-Ability* (initiative): Act (influence) and be acted upon (open to influence).

Use positive, proactive words. Expand your *Circle of Influence* to shrink your *Circle of Concern*. Act on what you can control—directly and indirectly. Keep commitments and promises.

2. Begin with the end in mind. Identify *who* you want to influence, *why* and *how*. Make sure that you're not working in the *Wrong Jungle* and that you ladder is not leaning against the *Wrong Wall*. See the difference between *Efficient vs. Effective*. Engage first in mental/spiritual creation or imagination to realize desired *physical* creation. Write a *Personal Mission Statement* and strive to be *Principle-Centered*, as *Other Centers* take you off your end-in-mind.

3. Put first things first. Tap into your creativity: Your power to create your day, week, and world. See that time/

life management is personal leadership: Give priority to the *Important* over the *Urgent* as you seek to make a positive difference. Have a big YES so you can say NO to other things. Define your *roles and goals* and do *weekly organizing* and *daily prioritizing* to achieve the *Daily Private Victory*. Exercise flexibility and adaptability around *priorities* and *people*.

4. Win-win or no deal. Now gain the *Public Victory*: Social reputation/influence. Make meaningful regular deposits in the Emotional Bank Accounts of those you seek to influence. Go for *Win-Win or no deal*. Be open to the other options. Show *Maturity*—courage plus consideration—and an *Abundance mentality* to enjoy win-win relationships, deals, systems, processes, and culture.

5. Seek first to understand. Exercise *empathy* as you listen to understand both the emotional and rational expression. Diagnose before your prescribe. Beware of your *autobiographical responses*. Realize that comprehension changes perception. Then, *seek to be understood* by using both emotional and rational expression.

6. Synergize: Seek the 3rd alternative. In your communication, go from being defensive, to being respectful, to being creative. *Synergy* means *One plus one = more than two: the Whole is greater than the sum of the parts*. Seek the 3rd alternative: better option than original plans. The cure for negative synergy is to *Value the Differences*. Lower restraining forces to tap into facilitating forces.

7. Sharpen the saw. If you're too busy to *sharpen the saw* (self-renewal), you will be ineffective. Engage in *four dimensions of self-renewal*: physical, mental, emotional/social, and spiritual. To boost your power to pro-act, take initiative daily. *Synergy* suggests an ascending spiral: *commit, learn, act*. As you gain inside-out influence, you become a change agent.

Apply these ideas to your challenges. Create a *Personal Influence Plan* and follow up to gain and sustain 10X more influence with the people and priorities that mean the most to you. Think of your *Influence Activities* as your *big rock* priorities and schedule time for them each week until they become *habits*.

Select *influence activities* or *behaviors* that align with your *personal sources of influence power*. Select your top *influence activity* and schedule 30 minutes for it each day. Doing this activity daily for at least 30 days will make it a habit—and it will make a big difference in your influence on relationships and results. PE

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ACTION: Create your PIP Action Plan.

Rejection

It can be the greatest gift.



by Simon T. Bailey

YESTERDAY I RECEIVED A rejection email from an agent who had pitched my presentation to a premiere organization, giving me a shot to share my expertise on a stage that has been graced by top speakers, thought leaders, and authors.

The rejection was short but encouraging: "I'm so sorry. They did not select you. Their terrible loss! I'll suggest you again in my next proposal."

I wrote back, "This is exciting news. I am so happy you told me that they did not select me. Now I'll take my game to the next level." What my agent didn't know was that *this is the third year in a row I've been rejected by this group* (two other agents had pitched me to this organization). In fact, I personally know one of the key decision makers and have wished him a happy birthday over the years. I know some folks on the committee and have worked all the angles to be accepted into *the club*.

I'm done trying to fit in and win acceptance. Have you ever felt like you were standing at the bus stop, only to watch the bus pass you by? You are left with a disconcerted look on your face that says, *What just happened here?*

Although I responded to the agent's rejection email quickly and in a positive manner, as reality sank in, *the disappointment of not being chosen was unsettling.* It took the wind out of my sails. So, to calm down I re-read *The Game of Life and How to Play It*, written by Florence Shinn (1925). She wrote: "The thing man seeks is seeking him—the telephone was seeking the bell." It was a *Vuja de moment*, inviting me to shift from average to brilliant living: *I was seeking something that wasn't seeking me.* I needed to let it go and open up to what wanted to emerge and to what belonged to me.

For three years, I had submitted my video with all the bells and whistles their criteria required. But I was passed over again. I so wanted their approval; I sought their validation—confirmation that I was invited into the club to walk among the gods of the speaking industry, and to impress others by saying, "I've spoken at this organization."

In my warped mind, I had convinced myself that entry into this organization would be my *rite of passage*, my golden

ticket to fame and fortune. How had I become so intoxicated, inauthentic, and incongruent with who I am and how I operate? The organization that rejected me three times did me a huge favor. *Now I am moving on.* I didn't need this firm to give me their *Seal of Approval*. I was born in brilliance to be brilliant—and *so are you.* However, if you don't recognize your brilliance, *no one else will.*

Out of this disheartening situation, I chose to bless the decision-makers and wish the selected speakers a brilliant future. I encourage you to do the same: Whoever has rejected you in times past, *bless them and wish them the best.* You don't need the negative energy.

You should accept rejection, bless it, and move on. In fact, *thank all those*: who *de-friend* you on Facebook; who stop following you on Twitter; who don't do

business with you; who reject your proposal; who don't return your call; who ignore your e-mail, delete your text, or don't post a comment on your blog; who don't hire you, don't buy from you, or don't give you a stellar review. Bless them and wish them a brilliant future. Be grateful that they find their happiness elsewhere. It won't change them, but it will change how you choose to see them.

Thank you, Rejection. You are an amazing teacher who invites us to look within and decide how we will soar to the next level. My friend Willie Jolley says, "a setback is a setup for a comeback." So, give thanks. *Rejection is the greatest gift in the world.* PE

Simon T. Bailey is a thought catalyst and author of *The Vuja Dé Moment! Shift From Average To Brilliant.* Visit www.simonbailey.com.

ACTION: Learn from rejection and move on.

PROFESSIONAL • SUCCESS

Beyond Numbers

How did you do last year?



by Karen Wright

AS YOU START A NEW YEAR, reflect on what went well last year. No doubt you had some clear goals—and metrics to define them. You can recite some numbers or scores. And, if the numbers are up, you're likely feeling satisfied with what you accomplished.

But do the numbers fully express your success? How is your health? Are you on track with your career goals? What did you do to sharpen your mind, build your skills, or broaden your knowledge? Did you nurture your key relationships? Spend time setting and reflecting on your goals and life direction? *Did you have fun?*

How do you feel about your year when you look beyond the numbers? If you had another year like the last one, would it contribute to you living the life you desire? If you met your business deliverables and kept in good physical health, you probably feel successful. If you pursued an outside interest and had a few date nights, you likely consider your life reasonably balanced. But are you thinking *big enough, long term enough?* Is it possible to fire on all cylinders, functioning well today, and laying the groundwork for success in the future?

I find that leaders who not only deliver results but also thrive in the role have personal discipline—the ability to estab-

lish a habit and stick with it—and they have a broader sense of success and often use metrics to enhance their lives beyond their business, knowing that numbers are always insufficient as a measure of total life satisfaction.

If you put metrics to something, it gets your attention—and it improves! For instance, the CEO of a retail chain finds one item daily that relates to a good moment, memorable incident, or notable event—and places the item in a box to collect evidence of his good fortune.

Another client, the HR lead in a HMO, can tell you her blood pressure, cholesterol and blood oxygen levels from last year's physical—and she works all year to ensure this check-up shows improvement.

What you measure is not important—what matters is the attention that you give to something that you decide to measure—something you deem to be vital to your success and happiness. If you seek a better social network, identify people you want to connect with, and dedicate time daily to venture out. If you're losing touch with friends, set a goal to see people who matter to you regularly and calendar those get-togethers. If you seek new learning, plan to attend conferences or take courses.

And what about your relationships? Fun? Romance? You might also measure these softer areas to increase focus. Use familiar metrics to build habits that will sustain you. PE

Karen Wright is a Master Certified Coach and author of *The Complete Executive.* Visit karenwrightcoaching.com.

ACTION: Seek success with and beyond numbers.

Five Questions

These can change your life.



by John R. Stoker

SOMETIMES WE ARE SIMPLY unconsciously conscious. We walk around in the light of day, but we are unaware of where we are, where we're going, or what we're doing. Not until we pass the exit do we realize that we've missed the destination we thought we were heading for. Here are *five questions* that will heighten your level of awareness and increase your ability to change your life and achieve the results you desire.

1. What are you feeling? Your feelings or emotional reactions are a powerful reflection of what you value. For example, if you are feeling angry, frustrated or disappointed, these emotions are a sign of some misalignment with your personal values—hot or negative emotions are symptoms of violated values. *Positive emotions* or feelings like contentment, satisfaction, or excitement indicate that values have been affirmed.

Suppose your boss tells you that you did a terrible job on a presentation. You may feel angry or frustrated because you believed that your work would be acknowledged and appreciated. When your expectations went unrealized, and you received feedback contrary to your perceptions of your effort, your hopes were dashed, and your values for hard work and performance were violated.

If your performance had been praised, you might have felt excited and pleased at the acknowledgement for a job well done, affirming your personal value for professional performance and the acknowledgment of appreciation. *Pay attention to your feelings*—they reflect alignment with your values.

2. What are you observing? From the time you awake each day, you observe what goes on *around you*, but you don't observe what you are observing. Earlier in life I practiced law. One client asked me to help her with her *seventh* divorce. At one point I asked her a very personal question: *Do you ever wonder if the universe is trying to teach you something?*

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Have you ever asked yourself what you might be doing that contributes to your relationships ending this way?"

She reflected, smiled and asked, "Will you do my divorce or not?"

We become so mired in the events of our lives that we don't realize when we are stuck. The old saying is true: *fish discover water last*. Instead, we should be both participants and observers of our lives. Our behavior and the consequences of our actions constantly send us messages, as does the environment surrounding us, but we usually ignore them. The ability to objectively observe our experience allows us to consciously make different choices should we desire. *Observe what you are observing.*

3. What are you interpreting?

Noticing how you interpret your own observations will help you understand your feelings (because thoughts create feelings), and will also help you recognize the particular slant or bias you mentally assign to your experience.



One counselor told me that she was surprised at how many people stayed in abusive relationships. When asked why, they would reply: "The devil I know is better than the devil I don't."

Two interpretations can be made about such thinking. These people might believe that either: 1) it is easier to stay with what they know than to try something new, or 2) anyone else they might choose will be as bad or worse as the current partner. Being aware of your thinking can help you understand your choice of behavior—because thinking drives behavior.

Exposing your thinking and learning to challenge its accuracy is the key to improving your results. Just because you *think* something doesn't guarantee that it is an accurate representation of reality. Yet we get so caught up in the way we think about things that we seldom stop to challenge our thoughts for their accuracy. We often make assumptions that are incomplete or inaccurate, and then breathe life into them by living them into being. So, learn to check

your thinking by evaluating or substantiating your observations. *Notice your interpretations and challenge their accuracy.*

4. What do you want—and why?

Knowing what you want is an exercise in identifying and clarifying your purpose and goals. Answering this question is about making conscious choices. A lack of clarity leads to unrealized aspirations. The clearer your intent, the greater the likelihood that you will be successful in achieving what you want.

A ski instructor will usually caution, "Whatever you do, don't look at the trees when you start heading down the hill!" Why? "Because that is where you'll end up—in the trees!" Stay out of the trees; get clear on what you want.

After identifying what you want, ask yourself *why* you want what you want. This helps you to identify the values or rationale behind what you want. If your *why* is big enough, it will help you overcome the debilitating power of excuses or stories you tell to justify your lack of results. Understanding your *whys*—your values—will strengthen your resolve and increase your motivation to pursue your goals. *Identify what you want and why to drive results.*

5. What are you focusing on? Answering this question enables you to recognize when your *what* and *why* are out of alignment with your *thinking* and *doing*. Just as your feelings reflect your alignment with your values, your results are a reflection of your focus. And where your focus goes, your energy follows.

A friend recently discovered that he was not getting an expected raise and a promotion. For weeks after his discovery, all he could do was focus on what he didn't get. He whined, stressed, and complained about the company, his boss, and his work. Focusing on what he didn't get created more negativity. Finally his spouse, tired of all the drama, pointed out that his energies would be better spent focusing on what he ought to improve and change. Only then did he shift out of *victim* or *woe-is-me* mode.

It's important *not* to focus on what you *don't* want. Instead, clearly focus your *aspirations*—your remarkable brain will then help you achieve these results. A ski instructor should say: "Whatever you do, always look downhill and *pick out the path where you want to go.*"

Increase your *awareness* of your feelings, observations, interpretations; your *what's* and *why's*; and your focus—*it's the clue to what you can achieve.* PE

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ACTION: Ask and answer these five questions.

True Happiness

It's the most elusive gift of all.



by Guy Hatcher

WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU really happy? Hint: The answer is linked to your values.

If you were to picture yourself happy, what would that picture be? Would you be on a beach, relaxing in your own back yard, traveling the world? This year you can give yourself the gift of happiness if you want to. It's up to you.

You may balk at this assertion and ask, *Is it really up to me? Doesn't happiness cost money?* Of course, money is one element, but, you shouldn't assume that having more money will make you happier. I've met with more than 10,000 families during my career, and I've seen it all. I've seen the happiest of families thriving in the worst of situations, and I've seen bitter battles where families were broken apart over mere trinkets. I boil down the difference between both kinds of families to one thing: values.

While you have many reasons to be happy, you also create reasons for your unhappiness, often while you're pursuing success. Unless you keep focused on your core values, you will slide down a rabbit hole of problems—like being over-stressed, which can lead to other serious issues like obesity, diabetes, a sense of lost community, taxing financial burdens, and over-committed schedules. However, when you firmly stand on your principles and core values, you can better define what happiness is for you and tie your happiness to things that truly matter—like your faith, your family, and your friends.

I find that most people simply want to have enough assets to feel that they have control of their life so they can live comfortably, maintain their health, and pursue their opportunities of choice regarding lifestyle, recreation, and charitable involvement. Clearly affluence has little correlation with happiness. In fact, financial success can create a new list of problems—such as obesity, diabetes, eating disorders, psychological disorders, and unhealthy activities, and overspending.

If money doesn't create happiness, then what does? Happy people chose to value relationships—with each other, with special friends, and with their Creator. Valuing your faith, family and friends is the rock-solid foundation for

building a life of true happiness.

Money helps you to be self-reliant, provides the basic necessities of life, and enables you to care for your family, now and in the future, but it should not be the foundation to your happiness. So, be happy now! Stop waiting for the God or Government to fix all your problems—so you can then be happy! You will wait indefinitely for a hand-out that will never come, or at least not in the form you expect. Things won't go back to *the way they were*. In the new economy, you still have choices you have to make, and the prize is still *ultimate happiness*, but the path toward the destination of your dreams does not involve going back to the way it was, nor does it involve a *happiness-fix*. To win this new game, you need to see what the choices are, and pick one. You

can sit and wait on help that is never going to come, or choose to move forward. In deciding to take action, you also decide to choose your happiness. That is a choice you must make daily. Your happiness is not a direct result of how much money you have. Instead, you experience true happiness because of what you choose to value: your family, your friends and your faith. If you measure your happiness in this way, you'll be happier. Your degree of happiness comes down to your choices in life, and when you use your core values to help you define your long-term happiness, it transforms your life into a legacy that will last long after you are gone. PE

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ACTION: Seek true happiness.

SOCIAL • LIES

What's Your Lie-Q?

Are self-lies holding you back?



by Cathy Holloway Hill

PROPHETS AND PHILOSOPHERS throughout history have spoken of the potential calamities embedded within lies. Relationships are ruined every day because of lies. Think about the collapse of our economy starting in 2008—it didn't happen because bankers and other key players were honest and acted with integrity. It happened because of lies. But the most damaging lies are the ones we tell ourselves. Self-lies cause us to perpetuate a *cycle of failure*.

The first step in reversing the *cycle of failure* pattern is recognizing self-lies. So, I developed three questions—a Lie-Q test—for people who can't seem to find success, whether it's in romance, weight loss, finances or just general contentment.

• **Have you ever told yourself, "I'm too old for that"?** That's just one common self-lie. Others include: *I will never find true love; I'll never get out of debt; I can't change who I am.* Even a brief analysis shows how illogical these lies are—since people find true love, get out of debt and change every day—yet we persist in believing them. If you tell yourself *you can't*, then *you won't* make the real effort required to succeed.

• **Do you pretend to be happy when you're not?** Many of us pretend to be

happy on the job or at home when, in truth, we're very unhappy. Sometimes we pretend for the sake of others, or because we worry about the consequences of expressing our true feelings. And sometimes, we do it to convince ourselves that we're happy. Are you happy? If you're not sure, or if you're sure you're unhappy, get into *self-discovery mode*. Take a close look at the hobbies, relationships, activities and work you enjoy. Determining what they are and working them into your life helps you feel more content.

• **Do you think you can't find a more satisfying job?** It's important to find satisfaction in your work. You spend

most of your waking hours on the job; so if yours feels tedious, meaningless and dead end, you will be happier if you're at least working on a Plan B. Since the economic downturn and soaring jobless rates, the mantra has been, "Be grateful if you have any job at all." That's the

wrong attitude. If you have an exceptional skill and are willing to work hard, chances are you can find something that makes you happier. If it's not a paying job, perhaps some volunteer work on the side. Make a list of your skills and the things you enjoy. Do any of these match job descriptions in the real world? You may be surprised to find that your dream job—or something close to it—is out there. Why wouldn't you go for it? PE

Cathy Holloway Hill is founder of C. Holloway Hill Enterprises, a consulting, training and speaking firm, life improvement consultant, and author of *Lies, Love & Life*. Visit www.chollowayhill.com.

ACTION: Tell yourself more self-truth.



Commit to Health

Experience positive change.



by Steve Cutler

AS A GENERAL MANAGER AT Life Time Fitness, I see it every year. Come January 1, the list of new members skyrockets.

People who were sitting on their couches in December are battling it out on the treadmill with resolution and determination. It's an inspirational sight to see.

Come February, however, the New Year's resolution wave has passed and the gym settles back to normal. Few people make the transition from *New Year's resolution* to a *healthier way of life*.

Why? In my opinion, they start off on the wrong foot. Making a resolution to lose weight is about as meaningful as a five-year old promising to never lie again. To explain why making a commitment is more powerful than making a resolution, let's look at the difference. A *resolution* is "the act of resolving or determining upon an action or course of action, method, or procedure." In contrast, a *commitment* is defined as "a pledge or promise—an obligation."

Think about the difference in *personal responsibility* between the two. A *resolution* helps you "determine the course of action," but fails to create the same emotional tie as making a *commitment*. This is because determining the process or course of action to achieve a goal is not the same as making the promise to achieve it. When you promise or make an obligation, it puts your credibility on the line, and maintaining your credibility has a huge impact on motivation.

So, this January, I challenge you to ditch the resolution and commit. Your commitment can come in many forms, from big to small changes. Take Doug, a Life Time Fitness member whose story inspired us all to be our own lifeboat. In 2010, Doug was 53 years old and about 85 pounds overweight. He hadn't given much thought to his health. As a basketball coach he knew the importance of staying in shape, but was more focused on the habits of others than his own. That same year Doug was set to scale a mountain in Cozumel, Mexico with his coaching buddies. The plan was to start in the water and scale the 30-foot mountain. While his friends were celebrating at the summit, Doug was still wading in the water. After several attempts to start

his climb, he gave up and prayed that no sharks would swim by. It occurred to him in that moment that should danger arise, he could not save himself. While he was only 53 years old, he was truly incapable of saving his own life.

On the flight back home Doug committed to *lose 90 pounds*. He was going to do better and be better. He worked his way up from 10 minutes of cardio to 60 and slowly committed to enhancing his workout regime one step at a time. After one year, Doug met his goal and set a new one—he is committed to conquering the mountain that inspired him to change.

You aren't aiming to get healthy because of the threat of a shark attack, but you do have many reasons to commit:



- Two in three individuals are obese, generating \$190.2 billion in health expenses each year (and becoming the number one killer of Americans)
- Our children's life expectancy is now less than ours
- More than 105 million Americans have cardiovascular disease
- The average child spends 30 percent of his/her day in front of a screen
- Due largely to obesity, 25.8 million Americans have diabetes

If these stats aren't motivating, find *something* to help you reach your goals. For Doug, it was the memory of his failure to climb the mountain. He knew that he never wanted to be lacking in the face of a challenge again. For others, signing up for a 5K helps. By committing to something, they simply have to do it—there is no room for failure.

For Keely, her kids motivated her to commit to a healthy way of life. After having her third kid and weighing in at just under 300 pounds, she realized that she was passing a very dangerous legacy down to her family. They were quickly adopting her daily fast food

diet and had an impressive collection of fast food toys. She started with three small commitments: 1) Her kids would not see her suffer through a diet (the last thing she wanted was for them to learn to feel guilty or stressed about what they ate); 2) She would make exercise fun and engaging for her whole family; and 3) She would join a program with people who would hold her accountable and reach her goals. It worked: Keely lost 58 pounds in 90 days! She helped build a strong foundation of health and wellness for her family, friends, and community. Her *small commitments* grew into positive change for all around her.

Our country needs more stories like Doug's and Keely's. In our efforts to make this happen, we are transforming New Year's Day into *Commitment Day*. Why? As a nation, we need to refocus our energy away from extreme dieting and fleeting goals, and focus on life-long changes for the betterment of our health and wellness. If we can all start the year with a strong, attainable commitment to change, we can do it!

I encourage you to make your commitments. Start with small commitments such as: drinking more water during the day, giving up soda, removing unwanted stress, adding fitness to your weekly routine, stretching while watching TV, cooking with better ingredients, signing up for a fitness program, and enlisting a friend to hold you accountable.

Join the Commitment Day movement in January. You can also sign up to participate in the Commitment Day 5K in one of 28 cities across the country.

Getting healthy is no longer a resolution you can extend each year. When you commit, by definition you're obligated to reach your goals. *Revolutionize your resolutions by turning them into powerful commitments* to achieve your total health objectives, athletic aspirations, and fitness goals by engaging in your areas of interest—or discovering new passions. Our *Healthy Way of Life* approach enables you to achieve this.

Commit to a healthy and active way of life. *Commitment Day* is about millions of people committing to healthy, active lifestyles for themselves and their families. At a time when our nation is seeing rising obesity rates, a generation of children facing serious health consequences, escalating health care costs and controllable diseases spiraling out of control, *the time for us to take action is now.* PE

Steve Cutler is General Manager of Life Time Fitness, South Valley, The Healthy Way of Life Company. Visit www.lifetimefitness.com or www.CommitmentDay.com.

ACTION: Commit this year to health.

The Best Thing

You can create in your life.



by Deepak Chopra

EVERYONE IS FINDING A WAY to arrive at the same three things: achievement, success, and a legacy. *Achievement* means attaining a goal that means something to you personally. *Success* means finding fulfillment in your goal. A *legacy* means leaving behind something that is valued and remembered.

As much as the *social network* facilitates *achievement*, *success*, and a *legacy*, reaching them has become confusing. Thirty years ago, our lives were more local. We knew about economic events far away, but they didn't impact us personally. The people we knew were usually born and raised in the same area or country as we were.

Now the path has become broader, and we can live a life with wider scope. The potential for expanded *achievement*, *success*, and *legacy* are greater than ever. However, we run into some things that we cherish and that are scary to let go of: familiar surroundings, a feeling of belonging, the security of the group, and the comfort of conformity.

In the spirit of exchanging inspiration and influence, I ask: *What is the best thing you can create in your life?* Hint: It's not *achievement*, *success*, or a *legacy*. It's a clear path to reach those things—and that path is available only by a *conscious lifestyle*. Expanding your awareness is the best thing you can create in life, because it serves as the foundation for meaning, purpose, love, inspiration, and personal growth.

Short- vs. Long-Term Desires

To fashion a *conscious life*, you must address the *unconscious way* that you spend your days. Activity automatically fills the time you devote to it. *Unconscious living* is the same as having constricted awareness. *Conscious living* is a process of expanding your mind.

In life, short-term desires compete with long-term desires, and by finding the right balance you reap the greatest success. If you focus too much on short-term gratification, things like eating, drinking, running errands, keeping everything neat and tidy, micro-managing others, perfectionism, gossip, these trivial distractions become too important. Such activities are wasteful. They

require a short attention span; and in place of long-term gratification, you settle for *tiny hits of pleasure*.

Long-term desires are emotionally more mature, because they delay gratification in the service of a *bigger reward*. *Do something, anything today* that goes toward fulfilling your long-range vision, plan, project, or mission.

Here are five suggestions: 1) set a single vision, project, or mission; 2) set time aside to work on it daily; 3) do research, make connections, investigate your audience, learn from similar projects, challenge your assumptions, write a proposal, seek a mentor or partner, and raise capital; 4) set interim monthly

deadlines that you can meet; 5) be open about changing the project as it unfolds.

Each step should be interesting and exciting to you. *Consciousness expands when you feel creative, passionate, and joyful*. If you don't feel this way, you won't wake up every morning eager to fulfill your long-range goal. By following the *five steps*, you become action-oriented; your goal doesn't drift or become an empty dream. The most valuable goals begin on the inside and work outward. PE

Deepak Chopra, MD, is the author of 65 books with many New York Times bestsellers and co-author with Rudolph Tanzi of Super Brain (Harmony) and a novel God: A Story of Revelation (HarperOne); www.deepakchopra.com.

ACTION: Create the best in your life.

PHYSICAL • RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions

Make them stick.



by Greg Bell

WITH THE ARRIVAL OF 2013, you may be making a new year's resolution or two. For most people, however, the annual attempt to *start fresh and turn over a new leaf* will fail (of the 62 percent of people who make New Year's resolutions, a mere 8 percent succeed).

After more than a dozen years of working with and studying successful people and teams, I believe this:

Giant timber bamboo farmers can teach us a lot about what it takes to make our resolutions stick. *If you water giant timber bamboo in the first year, nothing happens. If you water the second year, nothing happens. If you water the third year, nothing happens. But when you water the bamboo the fourth year, it will rocket up an astonishing 90 feet in only 60 days.*

Water the Bamboo is a metaphor for success based on the idea that success is fueled by creating unshakable motivation and persistence, developing laser-like focus to avoid distractions, and being fully committed to pursuing your goal.

Take Eight Proven Steps

I suggest eight steps to help you kick aside the *woulda*, *coulda* and *shoulda's* and make this year's resolutions stick:

- **Have a compelling vision of what you want to achieve:** After all, if you don't know what you are working towards, how will you know whether you're making progress?

- **Delineate goals:** Pinpointing mini-

goals helps ensure you get where you want to go. Instead of setting out to exercise every day of the week for an hour, commit to exercising for 10 minutes five times a week. Once you get in the habit of fulfilling this mini-goal, increasing it by 10 minutes will be easier since you have already formed the habit of exercise.

- **Believe in yourself and your vision:**

Whether you believe you will be successful or you believe you won't—you're right. *Believing* will give you the energy and effort to achieve success.

- **Strengthen supportive relationships:** No person is an island. Make a list of the people who can help you achieve your goal and work on keeping those relationships strong.

- **Exercise self-discipline:** As Teddy Roosevelt said, "With self-discipline most anything is possible." Great achievement largely comes from self-discipline.

- **Will it to happen:** *I will* are two very powerful words. *Wanting* something to happen is one thing—*Willing* something to happen is quite another.

- **Be optimistic:** Successful people don't throw pity parties. They see challenges as opportunities. They focus on creating solutions amidst the obstacles. They remain hopeful, energetic and motivated in the face of *negaholics*.

- **Commit:** Commitment is the bridge between desire and accomplishment. Making resolutions stick takes unwavering commitment and adopting a non-negotiable approach to reaching your goal. No excuses, *no holding back*, no sabotaging your own success. PE

Greg Bell, CSP, is author of Water the Bamboo: Unleashing the Potential of Teams and Individuals, and founder of the Water The Bamboo Center for Leadership. Email greg@waterthebamboo.com.

ACTION: Take these 8 steps to meet resolutions.

Better Off in Four Years

Repeat: It it's going to be, it's now up to me!



by Gregory S. Downing

FOLLOWING THE ELECTION, many people are wondering, *What will Obama's reelection mean for job creation, Social Security, healthcare, college tuition, and other hot-button issues?* Given the shaky state of the economy, some angst is unavoidable. But it's absurd to think that whoever occupies the White House for the next four years will seal your fate and make or break your future. *They* can't save you. Only *you* can save you.

Repeat: *If it's to be, it's up to me.* You can't afford to wait on salvation from any politician—or, for that matter, any employer or teacher in any school.

The old formula that allowed people to build a comfy middle-class life is gone. Instead of obsessing over what you can't control, focus on what you *can* control. Learn how to think about work and wealth in a whole new way.

For example I know firsthand how *entrepreneurship* can transform your life. Once a car dealership manager working grueling 80-hour weeks, I'm now a millionaire many times over who takes four months of vacation a year (I made my wealth as a real estate investment business owner). Regardless of the field you choose, entrepreneurship is the *only* logical path to financial freedom in a global economy where half of all college grads are moving back home jobless and saddled with debt.

The entrepreneurship I espouse is *not* the *open your restaurant and bust your butt working there seven days a week* variety. Rather, it centers on *generating multiple streams of income* (earned, passive, and portfolio) so that *the money you make isn't directly connected to the time you spend.*

A single paycheck, even two paychecks added together, is no longer enough to allow a family to live comfortably *and* provide for the future. If you're lucky enough to get a good job—and that's a *big if*—you might scrape by, but you'll work yourself into an early grave. And, if the job goes away, the money stops. It's no way to live—and it's no way to teach your children to live.

Anyone can make the leap to entrepreneurship, and financial freedom. Sure, you may have to learn new practical skills—but mostly it's a matter of

changing your mindset. Once you break free of *middle-class programming*, half the battle is won. Here are ways to do it:

- **Commit to changing your life—and don't break that commitment.** You keep your word to others, or at least try to. But what about the promises and pacts you make *with yourself*? You are more likely to break agreements with yourself. Since becoming an entrepreneur requires a dramatic change in both mindset and habits, you won't get far if you keep letting yourself off the hook.

It's easy to justify breaking an agreement with yourself because no one will ever know. Sometimes you even do it unconsciously. But your private decision has consequences for both your future and your family's future.



Breaking commitments hurts you because your subconscious gets accustomed to your *crying wolf*. Then, when you want to make a big change in your life, your subconscious simply doesn't believe you. It will work against your success. So when you don't do what you say you are going to do, you are actually giving yourself permission to falter, to quit, and to fail.

- **Take action now. Don't wait.** *I'd like to build my wealth. I want to start my own business. It would be great to be in firm control of my financial future.* These are nice, positive thoughts, but when they're not paired with action, they are only daydreams. Only action—not plans, not goals, and not ambition—gets results. Every day that you *don't* take a concrete step forward is another day of the status quo, another day of accepting a mediocre, hum-drum life.

Take action toward your dreams each day. Even if it's an imperfect action—even if it's later revealed to be an out-and-out mistake—it's still better than letting fear keep you stuck in an unsatisfying life. Life rewards action.

And yet, most people just keep going through their daily motions, procrastinating, thinking their ideas to death, and never moving forward on them. Every morning, ask yourself, *What action can I take today to move toward my dream of financial independence and self-reliance?* Then do it, for your own sake and for the sake of your family. Otherwise, one day you'll look back at your life and realize that while you had good intentions, you did not create results.

- **Remove all unconscious, negative, and scarcity-based programming.** You have been *programmed* with belief systems that aren't designed to help you attain wealth—indeed, they barely work at all anymore. But because everyone around you is buying into the formula, you assume it's the *right* way. We all have an *inner sheep* that is afraid to go against the herd, that fears it will be punished if it goes against cultural norms. That's a shame, because while we're staring at the hindquarters of the sheep in front of us, we're ignoring a world filled with riches for the taking.

Evaluate what works for you as you strive toward a life of wealth and abundance. First, think critically about risk and reward, and determine how to effectively balance the two. This involves looking closely at your emotions, your willingness to take action, and your desire to move forward when an opportunity to build wealth arises.

Often, you'll find that fear, not a rational reason, is holding you back. But you can gradually reprogram your beliefs about the fear of investing, the availability of money, and the lack-mentality that is so common in our society. And as you begin to experience greater rewards, you'll confirm the beliefs and actions that create wealth.

- **Assume 100 percent responsibility for the results in your life.** It's easy to blame disappointments and failures on everything *other* than yourself—the economy, the weather, your work. You can't always foresee or control what happens in your life, but you can choose how you respond to those circumstances.

I get it—life has a way of derailing your plans. There are bills to pay, problems to solve, and circumstances that need attention. You need to deal with these issues, but you cannot allow them to stop you. Every day, you *must* make time to move toward the life of your dreams, no matter how small the step. PE

Gregory S. Downing is a speaker, family expert, consultant, and author of Entrepreneur Unleashed: Wealth to Stand the Test of Time (Legacy Unleashed Press). Visit www.GregoryDowning.com.

ACTION: Seek a life of abundance.

Leaving Your Legacy

Plan for those you leave behind.



by Eleanor Blayney

WHEN YOUR THOUGHTS turn to your loved ones, you tend to reflect on the *legacy* you will leave. To ensure those reflections turn into reality, take time this month to create your estate plan.

Everyone needs a plan for the management and disposition of assets, care of dependent children and relatives, health care, and your physical comfort when death or disability silences you.

Estate planning is one of 12 steps in CFP Board's year-long *12 for '12 Approach to Financial Confidence*—presenting all the steps for successful personal financial management, one each month during the year, including: establishing realistic goals, tax planning, emergency and risk management, investing, retirement, debt management, and estate planning.

Consider these four tips when creating your estate plans.

1. Take inventory of what you have and determine its value. Account for all items that you can make decisions about: financial assets, real property, intangible property such as a patent or copyright, even computer files and passwords. Determine the financial value of each asset, as well as any debts you owe. Review how each asset is titled, or if there is a beneficiary designation associated with the asset. Any account or title that is in joint name or carries a beneficiary designation (retirement plan, life insurance policy, annuity or pension) already carries *transfer instructions* as to who will receive the asset after you. Anything else requires the specific instructions contained in a will or trust document.

2. Consider whom you would like your assets to go to, if not already decided by title or beneficiary designation. Determine if your beneficiaries or heirs are ready—by age or maturity—to receive such assets. Are they too young to own property or assets in their names? Are they incapable of managing these assets responsibly? Is the asset illiquid (such as a residence with a mortgage, or an ownership share in a closely held-business)? Would the inheritor of the illiquid asset have a difficult time coming up with the additional funding that might be needed to hold such an asset? A *yes* response means that more elaborate strategies than a simple transfer may be warranted.

3. Decide whom you do NOT wish

your assets to go to. While most people want to benefit a relative, no one wants this relative to be *Uncle Sam*, or his extended family in the guise of state or local government. Few married people are okay with the prospect of their assets going to the *next* wife or husband, should they die before their spouses. And it's unlikely that a bequestor wants his or her wealth to be consumed in paying off a family member's creditors. If any of these *yes, but situations* apply to you, address them in estate planning.

4. Use life and disability insurance to create an estate if you have nothing to bequest but have individuals dependent on your support. Get life and disability insurance to ensure your dependents aren't left without resources, should you die or become unable to earn a living. Before getting such coverage, assemble

your medical records and information, along with all the data on your assets.

To tie all parts of your estate together into a plan that represents your wishes, consult with a *CFP professional* who has a comprehensive focus on all aspects of your life (your family circumstances, your personal goals and preferences, your financial resources) as well as the federal and state laws that govern the income and estate tax consequences of asset transfer. He or she will know what tools—wills, trusts, powers of attorney, added beneficiary designations, or more complicated transfer strategies—your plan will need (and communicate your special needs to a qualified attorney). **PE**

Eleanor Blayney is a Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc. ("CFP Board") Consumer Advocate. Visit www.directionsforwomen.com.

ACTION: Plan to leave a legacy.

FINANCIAL • PROTECTION

The Fiscal Cliff

Protect yourself from a fall.



by Chuck Bentley

PREDICT THAT A *PHONY FIX* IS in the works. Disaster will be averted—temporarily.

But to minimize the impact of a coming economic collapse, you need to make personal financial changes now.

Without any agreement to avert the fiscal cliff before year's end, you will likely pay more taxes (taxes may rise about \$3,500 per household).

Don't wait for government to act—outline a *course of action*. To stave off financial hardships on the horizon, you should:

- **Check your deductibles.** Expect the fiscal cliff fix to include more taxes. Note your withholding declarations to avoid giving the government a free loan that you'll later celebrate as a *bonus* when you receive your refund.

- **Review your health care status.** Under pressure from Obamacare, companies could choose to pay a fine rather than provide insurance or reduce hours of full-time employees. They won't do this because they're *evil*, but because they're trying to survive. Study the healthcare market. Then, if you need to buy individual health insurance, you're ready.

- **Decrease your expenses.** Given Uncle Sam's voracious appetite for other people's money, the rising cost of necessities (under pressure from rising energy prices, increased taxes and healthcare costs) will impact all budgets. Already



retailers, especially in the food industry, are talking about price increases. Begin planning today to cover those costs.

- **Downsize your debt.** As the Bible says, "the borrower is servant to the lender." Free yourself from the burden of debt to give yourself flexibility and more financial margin to adapt to changes in this economy.

- **Diversify your income sources.** Half of the global workforce is part-time. This trend will hit the U.S. as more companies are forced to cover the costs of healthcare. Multiple income streams are a hedge against losing a single full-time job. Consider a home-based business to supplement your income.

- **Diversify your investments.** Don't rely solely on the stock market for your investments (with 100 percent of your money in equities). Investments can be made in many forms, including bonds, real estate, currencies, and commodities. Have a timeless hedge against volatility.

- **Plan for charitable giving.** With so many people hurting, consider how much you can give and what you can do to ease the suffering. This will also reduce the amount you pay in taxes.

- **Begin a budget (if you haven't one).** Many tools are available for those who want to plan to survive and thrive, no matter the economy. Strengthen your finances for the turbulence ahead.

In an uncertain economy, you must prepare. Reduce your uncertainty and anxiety by *taking corrective action now*. **PE**

Chuck Bentley is CEO of Crown Financial Ministries. Visit www.crown.org.

ACTION: Protect yourself from a fiscal fall.

Misguided Selflessness

Acknowledge that you have feelings.



by Patrick Lencioni

BEING A LEADER IS A LONELY job. Anyone running an organization, department, school, church, battalion, team, or family must accept the fact that the role they have is often a difficult, sacrificial and solitary one.

But that doesn't mean it should be thankless or unfulfilling—or always lonely. When humble, well-intentioned leaders convince themselves that they are supposed to be completely without needs, they create big problems for themselves and their organizations. Even the most mature, humble and unselfish leaders are inevitably going to find themselves in a position of need—genuine feelings of disappointment, frustration, under-appreciation, or burn-out. Most good leaders, believing they are doing the right thing, tend to deal with these feelings on their own. Maybe they have a spouse who is good at listening, or perhaps they have a reliable coach.

Other good leaders do what my high school football coaches used to tell us when we were tired or a little injured: *suck it up*. Essentially, they ignore their feelings, reminding themselves that their job is a difficult one and that they should be tougher.

But neither of these strategies is sustainable. Eventually, even the toughest, most emotionally durable leaders must address the legitimate feelings they have with the people who are most directly involved with the issues that are causing those feelings. When they don't, they put themselves in a position to harm their teams.

When you allow genuine feelings to ferment without resolution, you eventually let those feelings leak out in one unproductive, unresolvable way or another. In most cases, you behave in ways that are slightly passive aggressive, autocratic or unnecessarily critical of team members (I know this because I've done it).

Team members, who don't know what is going through their leader's mind, can't possibly understand where this is coming from, and so they're left to either acquiesce to the sudden autocracy, or to resist the leader's arguments

and criticism. Essentially, they are blind to the real issues at play, leaving them incapable of responding in a productive or useful way. The only way for you to address this situation effectively is to openly admit to your team that you feel frustrated, disappointed, over-burdened, or under-appreciated. Then let your team members digest that information, and begin the messy process of working through those issues with honesty and humility.

You may be thinking, "The last thing I want to do is tell people that my feelings are hurt." You may be afraid of coming across as weak, or needy. As noble as that may seem, in reality it is a subtle form of pride and invulnerability. Leaders are just as



human as the people they lead, yet they often refuse counsel from their team. Worse, it deprives team members of the information they need to figure out what actions they can take to alleviate those feelings.

When you humbly acknowledge your humanity, even when that humanity is not pretty, you give your team members a chance to understand what is going on in their leaders' hearts and minds, empowering them in that moment to be the stronger party in the relationship. Not only will that enable them to address whatever issues need to be resolved, but it will make the team stronger and more resilient going forward.

This same principle applies to leading children and families. For example, as a father of two teenage boys, I sometimes find it necessary to remind my sons that one of their few chores—putting the garbage cans out for trash day—has yet to be done. The next morning, the garbage cans are still nowhere to be seen, because neither of

the boys fulfilled their responsibility. Worse yet, when reminded, they shrug their shoulders like it's no big deal.

In this moment of truth, I will usually do one of two things (neither of which is terribly effective). Sometimes I will simply go and put the garbage cans out on my own, convincing myself that my sons are busy and that I'm a selfless dad. Other times, I'll loudly admonish my sons to "get their butts outside before the garbage truck comes and mom has to call the garbage company to have a special trip made which will cost the family money that will come out of their allowances . . . !"

As I said, neither of these options is effective. Though sometimes a parent/leader needs to pick up the slack for a busy child/employee, and sometimes he has to get a little upset and demand action, another way usually works better, but is rarely used.

As a parent, the best thing I can do for my boys, my family and myself, is to sit with my sons when the situation is not red-hot, and let them know that I feel a little disappointed, disrespected or underappreciated by them.

Without passive aggressiveness or stinging guilt, I simply need to ask them to see the situation from my point of view, and invite them to imagine what it is like to be me. In most cases, even with teenagers, the response is one of genuine empathy, understanding and contrition, usually leading to a change of behavior.

But this requires that I, as a leader, set aside my authority for a moment and become a vulnerable human being. Without being pathetic or weepy, I need to be honest about my feelings as a person and treat my sons with the level of trust and responsibility that I believe they can handle. This will give them the information they need to make the decisions that will bring about the best possible outcome for everyone.

The only way for me to do this, however, is to avoid the pride-filled temptations to be a lonely martyr or an indignant tyrant. Ultimately, neither of these provides my sons with the information or perspective they need to become the people they need to be. My vulnerability in acknowledging that I have feelings, rather than being an agent of selfishness or neediness, is actually a gift to them. And it will probably get the trash out on time too. **PE**

Pat Lencioni is CEO of the Table Group and author of Five Dysfunctions of a Team, Three Signs of a Miserable Job, and The Advantage. Visit www.tablegroup.com.

ACTION: Let people know what you are thinking.

Giving to Others

It just makes you feel good.



by Lesley Mansford

WHY DO PEOPLE LIKE TO give? It simply makes them *feel good*. In fact, *giving to others* is among the top three *feel good* activities for most people. That explains why 94 percent of Americans have donated to those in need; 98 percent feel connected to a charitable cause; and 65 percent of women and 54 percent of men feel their donations make a difference.

In our survey on giving, only *Being in love* and *Hugging your children* top *Donating to others* as the best *feel good* activity. What *positive and pleasurable feelings* result from giving? When you donate to those in need, you feel hope, feel that you are making a difference, feel satisfied, feel good about yourself, and feel excited. Mixed with these good feelings is the feeling of *frustration* that you can't give more (perhaps even *guilt* that you have what others do not have).

Our survey also reports on giving preferences: Almost all people think there are causes that they can relate to and in turn make them more likely to donate to. Two-thirds think people relate especially to child welfare causes. Half think people relate especially to animal causes. Most people who have ever donated to those in need feel that their giving truly will make a difference.

Since people find *donating to others* to be one of their three favorite *feel good* activities, my company, Razoo, participated in *Giving Tuesday* through our online giving platform that lets anyone give to any charity of their choice quickly and easily. You can even start your own fundraiser to raise even more funds. *Giving Tuesday* is a powerful counterpart to the massive shopping days of *Black Friday* and *Cyber Monday*. It is a great way to remind people to balance *shopping sprees* with *giving sprees*. While most people complain about the hassles of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, they love all the good feelings that come from giving. In effect, *Giving Tuesday* represents an *opening day* for the giving season. It makes it easy for you to engage with the causes that matter most to you, and our online giving platform helps you do that.

To date, our online platform that facilitates non-profit fundraising (social giving) has channeled \$97 million to more than 12,000 nonprofits. Our 24-

hour *giving contests* are designed to assist local nonprofits. For example, a recent *giving day* enabled GiveMN to raise \$14 million for various Minnesota-based charities. Such events give smaller nonprofits the chance to participate in online fundraising—to give it a go and find out it's so easy to connect with donors. When organizations incorporate Razoo's tools—everything from blog articles on how to leverage event photos to get more donors to a donation widget for a website or Facebook page—they can have a very efficient fundraiser.

Most small charitable organizations think that online fundraising is difficult and costly, but Razoo makes it easy. We do take 2.9 percent of each transaction,

but it's much lower than other options. And over 75 percent of the nonprofits that participate get from 50 to 70 percent new donors, and 60 percent of the nonprofits spend *10 hours or less* on the event.

More *individuals* are now using our fundraising tools to drum up support for causes or life events, such as a wedding or birthday. Today, many people are looking to *get less* and *give more*. Our vision is to build the leading online giving community globally. Putting the donor in the center of that experience can make it fun, meaningful, and life changing. **PE**

Lesley Mansford is CEO of Razoo, a venture-funded social enterprise transforming people's lives through meaningful giving. Visit www.razoo.com.

ACTION: Give what you can to others.

SERVICE • LEADERS

Genuine Service

Is that your true focus?



by Tres Tanner

CERTAIN LEADERS ESPOUSE an attitude of *I may be in error but never in doubt*. Bold self-assurance characterizes their posture as leaders. Leaders like this are prone to convey the unspoken message, *Follow me, because I know the way*.

This style of leadership is sometimes required. Dire situations call for leaders who can inspire their followers with their own self-confidence (such as Winston Churchill did in motivating the people of Great Britain to resist the tyrannical onslaught they faced during World War II). And yet, often, what is more important in a leader is genuine and consistent personal humility, truly believing himself to be a *servant* rather than one who occupies a position of power.

While effective leaders may exhibit an array of characteristics and styles, I admire and follow those leaders who I am convinced are earnestly striving to *serve* those they lead, rather than to direct their followers through the exercise of their personal position or power, whether the leader is functioning in a council of their church or school, the board room of a large corporation, or as an elected official on a national level.

Leadership always affects outcomes, but decisions about such are particularly important at times we help choose those leaders we would prefer to follow. In this regard, I find one thing ironic about many whose livelihoods are based on

their decision to engage in *public service*. Often, their track record reflects an orientation of focusing their efforts on personal gain or self-aggrandizement, rather than to consistently *serve* others.

Can you be an *effective leader* and a *genuine servant* at the same time? Yes, but since most elected leaders tend to communicate that they are motivated by a desire to *serve the people*, is there any way to know for certain ahead of time whether a *wannabe leader* will be a *servant-leader*? Perhaps not. Still, I find it useful in assessing a leader's service orientation to *ask these four questions*: 1) When seeking outcomes that purportedly benefit others, do the leader's actions often represent a clear sacrifice

of personal time with no direct benefit to self? 2) Does it *feel* that a leader commonly operates on the same level as his/her followers, rather than seeking to function from a position of privilege or power? 3) Will the leader's ideas lead to results that ultimately benefit *most people* and the *whole community*

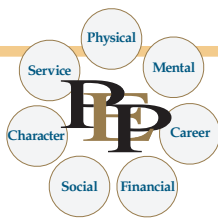
being served, rather than one group at the expense of others? 4) Who tends to get the credit for accomplishments—the leader or those who do the real work?

I'll never forget the example set by an Assistant City Manager who insisted that a *plaque of recognition* honoring those who built a civic center have the name of *every construction worker and groundskeeper*, rather than a list of top city officials. When you elect or follow a leader, or be a leader yourself, reflect on ways to ensure that the *leadership is, in fact, centered upon genuine service*. **PE**

Tres Tanner is CEO of Tierra Tranquila in Cosa Rica. Email dr.tres.tanner@gmail.com.

ACTION: Provide genuine service.





GOAL GETTERS



People prefer to receive appreciation in five ways:

1) *words of affirmation*—using words to communicate a positive message: praise for achievements and affirmation for positive character and personality traits; 2) *quality time*—giving an individual time and undivided attention: quality conversation, shared experiences, small group dialogue or working closely; 3) *acts of service*—voluntarily and enthusiastically doing something for another person that brings relief to their long lists of *to dos*; 4) *tangible gifts*—giving a gift the person values (this requires that you pay attention, listen, learn, and take an interest); 5) *physical touch*—offering a handshake, high five, pat on the back, or hug communicates positive messages—a sense of *trust, closeness, connectedness and caring.*

—Gary Chapman and Paul White, *The Five Languages of Appreciation*



Be a patient of patience.

Patience truly is a virtue. If you are not a *patient of patience* you will become its victim. In today's microwave world, we start tapping our foot when it takes 30 painstaking seconds to pop popcorn. But *greatness takes time to grow.* The rewards of patience are similar to the results of planting an exotic Chinese bamboo seed. When this seed is planted and nurtured, it can take up to two years for a sprout to break through the earth. It requires the right watering, sunlight, care and feeding so it can build a strong root structure, invisible above ground. However, once it breaks ground, this plant can grow over 100 feet in two weeks! The *benefits of patience* are abundant with this seed . . . just as they are with personal patience. Be impatient to plant *the seeds of excellence*, but be patient enough to watch them grow. "The strongest of all warriors are *Time and Patience*," said Leo Tolstoy. "Patience is also a form of action," said Auguste Rodin. We compete in a more, better, faster world, but patience still pays off.

—Lee J. Colan, Ph.D., *The L Group*



Age is all in your mind. If you think you're old, maybe you are, but that's a choice you are making.

The *Fountain of Youth* resides in you—it is a matter of simply unlocking the correct keys. If you're always searching for an external fix, you are on a never-ending goose chase of plastic surgery and Botox that inevitably continues into perpetuity. However, when you learn about the codes in your DNA that control aging and how to simply unlock them, you can reverse age forever—at the rate you choose! In addition to cultivating a free and youthful mind, you must also **take some physical steps to promote a youthful look.** These steps might include: 1) sleeping without a pillow; 2) using coffee in your bath; 3) using *the recessive side* of your body (it gives you a more balanced physique); and 4) using healthy replacements for several common products that cause aging.

—Veronica Grey, *eternalyouthandimmortality.com*



Learn to deal with failures.

When I was Chairman of Sony Pictures, Akio Morita, Chairman of Sony Corp, asked me about our projections of success for our annual *slate of movies*. I said: "Of the 16 pictures, we can expect: 4 will be *global blockbusters*, 4 will be *profitable domestic films*, 4 will be *cash break-even investments*, and 4 will be *flops*." He replied, "Why do we have to make flops?"

Wow! What a strategy. *Just make hits!* Why didn't I think of that? It would be great if we could press a *repeat* button for success. But, we all have flops. I've had flops in movies, music, and television. I learned: *I am not in charge of success—only of the process that hopefully yields more success than failure.* I began to be guided by **three affirmations:** 1) my process and diligence to execute are the best I can do; 2) my attitude and determination to remain positive and confident are catalysts for my success; and 3) my resiliency and ability to see failure as but a *speed bump* on the road to success enable me to get back up when I'm knocked down.

—Peter Guber, *Author, Tell to Win*

PersonalCOACH



Bad Habits

Resolve to kick them.

by Joe Burgo

IF YOU MAKE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS, YOU are familiar with this story: on January 1, you're full of resolve to lose weight, drink less, save money, or quit smoking. But soon, you slip back into the same old habits. That's because *these habits are defense mechanisms that help protect you from emotional pain.* For example, going on a weight-loss diet might bring out a greater awareness of unmet physical and emotional needs. Giving up smoking might reveal anxiety or depression, and cutting back on drinking takes away the potent emotional pain killer alcohol provides.

If you're unprepared to cope with the frustration, longing, sadness or other feelings that come up when you make these changes, you can't stick with your resolutions for long.

You can overcome bad habits and stick to your resolutions by taking five steps: 1) identify what unmet need or pain lies behind the habit you're trying to break; 2) see *bad habits as friends* that distract you from pain, and consider how you'll cope without them; 3) develop coping strategies and find alternate sources of comfort that address the pain rather than mask it; 4) set realistic goals and take small steps, allowing yourself the time to adjust to the emotions that arise; and 5) don't go it alone—find a partner to reinforce your efforts (consider joining a support group).

When you make resolutions, realize that your *bad habits* may be protecting you from emotional pain. Identify what unmet need or pain lies behind the habit you're trying to break. Seek to understand: *Why Do I Do That?*

Have you ever wondered why you struggle in relationships, or burst out in anger at the people you love? Do you wish you could change? You can! Most of your relationship problems are driven by *unconscious pain* and *the lies you tell yourself to hide from it.* By focusing on these lies, which both shield you from pain and stop you from addressing it, you can see the emotions giving rise to the feelings and behavior that undermine your relationships and happiness. You can better understand yourself, develop a vivid but manageable emotional life, get more out of what you need from relationships, and develop realistic expectations for yourself.

Seeing the *unconscious forces* that shape your behavior is key to developing the *mind-set* you need for *growth or change.* PE

Joseph Burgo, Ph.D., is author of *Why Do I Do That? blog, After Psychotherapy.* Visit www.afterpsychotherapy.com.

ACTION: Resolve to kick your bad habits.

Faith Transforms Tragedy into Enlightenment in three ways.



by Caroline Flohr

EIGHT YEARS AGO, I WAS A busy wife and mother to five children when my 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah, was killed in a car accident. I was forced to dig into the deeper meaning of existence and came away with profound edification. Before Sarah's death, I was living under major misapprehensions. I believed that *tragedies happened somewhere else, to other families, and were something we only read about.* But on Aug. 23, 2004, it happened in my community—to my family, to me. After Sarah's death, it took me several years to come to some kind of peace.

I learned that *death comes when it will, and life and death are inextricably linked.*

On the fifth anniversary of Sarah's death, I (along with family and friends) agreed to release her from our pain and grief, emotions that ensnared her spirit.

You can turn *devastation* into *spiritual enlightenment* for yourself and your family. No parent ever gets over the loss of a child, but I've been amazed by *the power of family, love and faith* in healing. I've allowed my heart to mend, to hold onto her memory but not the pain of her loss. I've become a more spiritual person; and my faith made inner peace possible:

- **Faith is taking the first step**, even when you don't see the whole staircase, as Martin Luther King said. What does a bereaved mother do? After a few weeks, I cancelled Sarah's cell phone, and the family slowly returned to a regular routine. I still light a candle during dinner, with a picture of Sarah and her twin sister placed nearby. Though we can't see Sarah, we feel her presence. It may be in the kindness of a stranger, the sudden appearance of something that was lost, or the smell of a certain fragrance. *Faith is believing in that which you can't see—and not ignoring what you can feel.*

- **The present is a present:** Within weeks of Sarah's death, the family dog died. We then welcomed a yellow Lab. While witnessing the joy this dog brings to us, I see that experiencing joy in life is a gift. Consider every moment given to you a gift, including the memories of loved ones no longer physically in your life.

- **Interweaving death with life:** In the years since her death, I learned how to weave the reality of death into my daily life. Death is no longer one heavy fact that cuts through life but rather a part of

life that makes joy sweeter and relationships richer. By interweaving death with life, you're reminded of *what's important.*

- **Deeper meaning:** Through the death of a loved one, you're changed. The question is *how.* Will you grow, or become diminished? I grew with the realization that *death* is just the beginning of another phase of existence. Wrote Rabindranath Tagore: "Death is not extinguishing the light—it is putting out the lamp because dawn has come."

- **Celebrate life:** When you can look at the life of a person who has passed and see *more beauty than pain*, you should rejoice. The joy of *wonderful memories* is more powerful than sadness. When loved ones pass, *graces are given as gifts* to those left behind. When you *acknowledge them*, your life can expand.

- **Ready for anything:** Once you experience the worst and pull through, you can survive just about any adversity. Maya Angelou wrote, "You may encounter many *defeats*, but you must not be *defeated*. It may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it." Have faith in your *inner strength.*

- **Appreciate what you have:** Life as you know it will end. This includes everyone you know, love, and care about. Since you don't know what the future will bring, take every chance to *embrace the present and your loved ones.* PE

Caroline Flohr is author of *Heaven's Child* and participating author at Seattle University's Search For Meaning Conference in March 2013. Visit www.heavenschild.com.

ACTION: *Relay on faith amid adversity.*

INSPIRATION • GUIDANCE

Divine Guidance Move through four stages.



by Caroline Myss

DEVELOPING THE CONFIDENCE to seek *divine guidance* and *pursue goals* is one way that *personal power* becomes an agent of *personal change.* You can invoke a spiritual presence into your life by asking: *Why am I here?* No prayer is right or wrong, but examining the quality of your prayers can bring you to look beyond your self toward something more intelligent and powerful. Seeking *divine guidance* means to stop asking for *things* and start asking for *what really matters:* trust, patience, faith, endurance, gratitude, acceptance, and love.

When you seek *the Divine*, be prepared to have your life reordered, *false voices* taken away, distractions eliminated, until you're left only with *the clear voice of divinity.* When this voice speaks—often in unexpected ways—it can leave you confused and unsure of what you really want.

As you bring a spiritual presence into your life, you'll move through *four stages:*

- **Separation.** When you tell the Divine that you want *false voices*—influences that distract you from truth—out of your life, expect the world as you know it to change. As you move away from the *mundane* to having a *mission*, you may feel like *a stranger in a strange land*, not knowing who or what to trust.

- **Dark night of the soul.** You may feel *sad, depressed, lost, ungrounded, or aban-*

doned. You might mistake *the dark night* for an emotional crisis. But a *dark night* will often enter your life in a most joyous time. It enables you to hear *the voice of guidance.* You may begin to meditate or read spiritual material, and now you feel your efforts should be rewarded. When that doesn't happen, your concepts or core expectations of the Divine start to breakdown, and you begin to distinguish between *high-voltage divine guidance* and *your own personal ambition.*

Examine your prayers: Are you expecting God to solve problems that you should resolve? Do you ask *the Divine* to take away the mysteries of your life, rather than learning their lessons? The journey is not about *controlling* what you get, but *embracing* whatever comes. You'll be guided to *the lessons you need to experience.* Your job is to *master your responses.*

- **Light.** In this stage, *the light* comes back on—or *the darkness* dissipates. This may not come as profound visions, but simply a *sense of not feeling lost anymore.* You stop interfering with change, and seek to go along with it.

- **Appreciation.** In this stage, you live in gratitude and take life as it is. You no longer need *the Divine* to give you what you think you want, but rather you are grateful for what you have. Guidance is always there, just not always in the form of your expectations. Appreciating life becomes your spiritual practice.

These stages may not occur sequentially; in fact, you might not even recognize them until all is said and done. PE

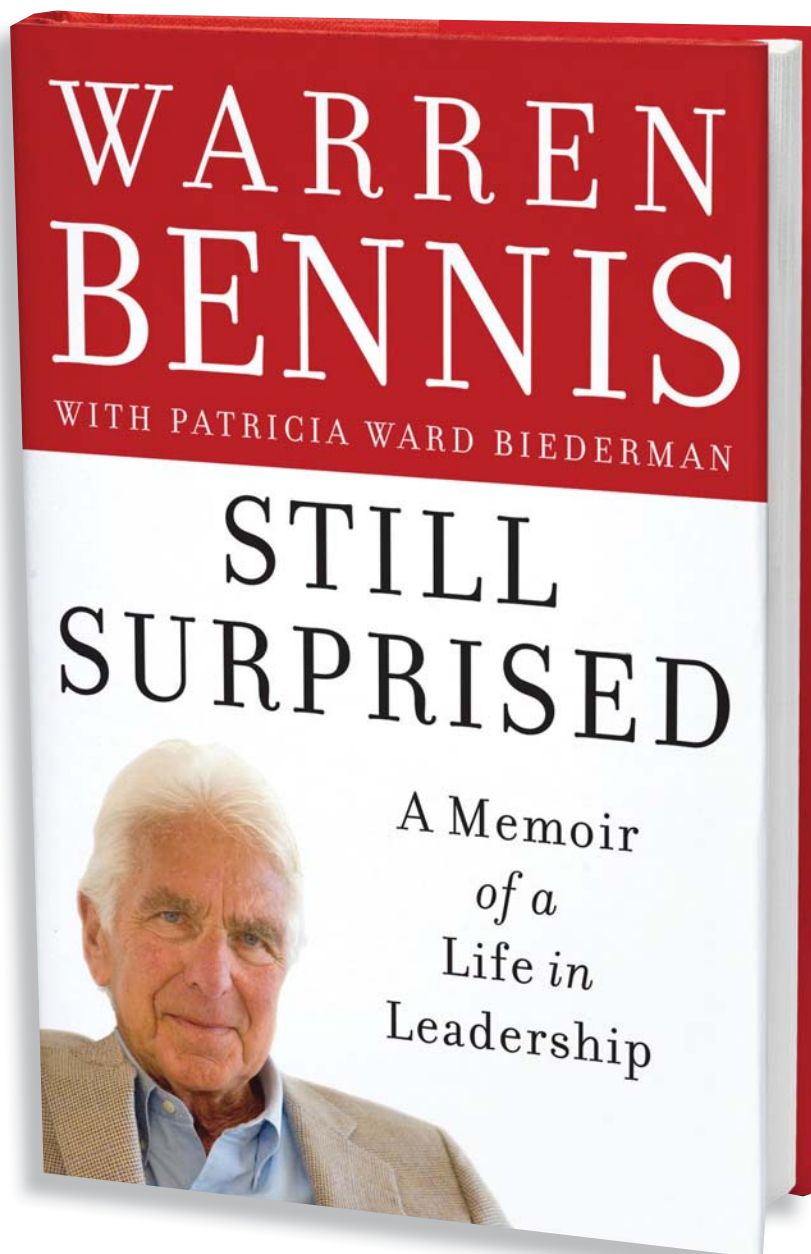
Caroline Myss is author of *Anatomy of the Spirit* and *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can.* www.myss.com.

ACTION: *Seek Divine guidance in your life.*



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