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Cultivate Life! magazine

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Cultivate Life! magazine
is published every week

www.trans4mind.com

Trans4mind

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Unlocking Your Creativity

By Brian Tracy

I began studying creativity more than 20 years ago. I thought it was an ability that was possessed by a few, especially intelligent people, such as artists and writers and scientists. But as I delved further into the subject, I came to a remarkable conclusion: I am a genius! Not only that, but you, too, are a genius! In fact, probably 95 percent of the population has the capacity to function at exceptional levels. Creativity is as natural to human beings as is breathing in and out. Everyone is creative to a certain extent. People are highly creative because they decide to be highly creative. It's no miracle. Creativity is like any human faculty; it can be developed with practice and strengthened with constant use.

If you improve things in small ways, you are engaging in small acts of creativity. If you make major breakthroughs, and improve parts of your life in extraordinary ways, you are demonstrating high levels of creativity. And the amount of creativity you use in your life is largely up to you.

If creativity is improvement, in what areas do you want to use it? The answer is simple. You want to use your inborn creativity to improve the parts of your life that are most important to you. You can use your creativity to improve your relationships, to increase your income and improve your business, and to assure yourself higher levels of health and happiness. With that definition, you can see clearly that you have opportunities to be creative from the time you get up in the morning to the time you go to bed at night.

Creativity is like a muscle. If you do not deliberately and consciously flex your creativity on a regular basis, it becomes weak and soft. It loses its strength.

If people criticize you for your ideas, or if you have concluded that you are not particularly creative, you will tend to be more passive and submissive and look to others for new and better ways of solving problems and achieving goals. However, if you start to practice creative thinking, along the lines that I'm going to share with you, you will be absolutely amazed at how smart you really are.

I used to think that you had to be highly intelligent to be creative. Then I found that intelligence is not just a matter of IQ. There are many people with high IQs who got excellent grades in school but who are doing very poorly at life. They are working at jobs they don't like and earning salaries that are far below their potentials. They probably haven't come up with a creative idea in years.

Intelligence is a way of acting. If you act intelligently, you are intelligent. If you act stupidly, you are stupid. That's all there is to it. You can decide to be highly intelligent and highly creative simply by doing the things that highly intelligent and highly creative people do. If you do these things over and over, you'll soon get the same results. People around you will be talking about how bright and full of ideas you have become.

There are three basic qualities of genius. Since you are a genius, you should know what they are and apply them regularly. The first quality of genius is open-mindedness. People who are fluent, flexible and adaptive in their thinking are far brighter than those who are rigid, mechanical and straitlaced. The more open you are to new ideas and possibilities, to new approaches and solutions, the more creatively you will function.

Most people tend to fall into what are called thinking traps. They assume that there is only one right answer to a problem; in reality, there could be several right answers. They jump to conclusions, assuming that because one thing happens, it is the reason for another thing's happening; there may be no relationship at all between the two events. Sometimes people think that the problem has to be solved immediately; often, the problem can be deferred for some time, and often it will solve itself if left alone. People think that certain problems have to be solved without spending any money; often, if the solution is important enough, it is a good idea to spend money on it. Another thinking trap people fall into is thinking they have to solve the whole problem; sometimes, solving just one part of the problem is enough for the time. A final thinking trap is thinking that it is your problem and you are the one who must solve it; often, it is someone else's problem, and the very best thing for you to do is to turn it over to that person and refuse to get involved.

The second quality of genius is the ability to concentrate single-mindedly

on one thing at a time, on one problem at a time. And to stay with it until it's solved. Highly creative people practice focusing on single questions and single problems, while uncreative people diffuse their mental energies by trying to do several things at once. They work on this and work on that. They pick something up and put it down. Then they go on to something else and come back. Often, they are scatterbrained, and if they do come up with ideas, their ideas are shallow and poorly thought-out.

The difference between diffusion and concentration in creativity is the difference between gentle sunlight and sunlight concentrated through a magnifying glass. It is the difference between light and a laser beam. It is the difference between a small flame and a welding torch. Your job, in increasing your creativity and enhancing your intelligence, is to concentrate your powers where they can do the most good.

The third quality of genius is the ability to approach problems systematically. People who throw themselves at their problems often become frantic and confused. They take a haphazard approach to thinking, and then they are amazed when they find themselves floundering and making no progress.

In his book *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, Peter Drucker makes the point very clearly that innovation must be a systematic process. It must be planned and organized. It is too important to be random and haphazard.

Here is a 10-step method you can use to think systematically. With this method, you develop your creativity to genius levels.

1. Change your language from negative to positive. Instead of using the word problem, use the word situation, or call it a challenge or an opportunity. If a sale falls through, you can say something like, This is an interesting challenge. It is an opportunity for me to improve my sales effectiveness so this doesn't happen again in the future.

The more positive your language is, the more confident and optimistic you will be when approaching any difficulty. The more creative and insightful you will be in identifying solutions and breakthrough ideas.

2. Define your situation or difficulty clearly. What exactly is the challenge you are facing? What is causing you the stress and anxiety? What is causing you to worry? Why are you unhappy? Write it out clearly in detail.

Sometimes what you are worrying about is what is called a cluster problem. It is a series of small problems clustered together. You need to sort them out and define them separately.

3. Ask, What else is the problem? Don't be satisfied with a superficial answer. Look for the root cause of the problem rather than get sidetracked by the symptom. Approach the problem from several different directions.

For example, if your business is slow, you could ask, What exactly is the challenge facing me? Your first answer might be that sales are down. But what else is the problem? How else could you phrase your answer to make the problem more amenable to a solution?

Here are some different ways of answering that question. You could say that sales are down. You could say also that you are not selling enough. Or you could say that people are not buying enough. Or you could say that people are buying too much of your competition's product. Or you could say that people are not buying your product the way it is currently produced or packaged. Or people are not buying your product the way you are selling it, or for the reasons you think they should, or in the quantity you need them to buy it for you to be financially successful.

In each case, by changing your definition of the problem, you change your possible approach to the solution. You expand your possibilities. You become more creative. You unlock more of your inner genius.

4. Ask, What are my minimum boundary conditions? What must the solution accomplish? What ingredients must the solution contain? What would your ideal solution to this problem look like? Define the parameters clearly.

5. Pick the best solution by comparing your various possible solutions against your problem, on the one hand, and your ideal solution, on the other. What is the best thing to do at this time under the circumstances?

6. Before you implement the decision, ask, What's the worst possible thing that can happen if this decision doesn't work? I remember once spending all the advertising money of the company I was working for on a single advertising campaign. I was convinced that, even at a low rate of return, sales would more than justify the expenditure. I failed to ask that question about the worst possible outcome. I got blindsided by the fallacy of large numbers, which says that if you advertise to an enormous number of people, the odds are that you will get a certain number of sales. What happened was that I got no sales at all from the advertising. As a result, I almost ruined the business. I should have asked, What effect would there be on the business if the advertising did not work at all?

In fact, before you make any expenditure of money or effort in trying to achieve your goal, you should evaluate what would happen if your decision were a complete failure.

7. Set measures on your decision. How will you know that you are making progress? How will you measure success? How will you compare the success of this solution against the success of another solution? If you decide to sell or market in a particular way, how will you know that you have made the right decision? How will you define a success? Make it measurable. Then monitor it on a regular basis.

8. Accept complete responsibility for implementing the decision. You might want to delegate responsibility for the implementation of the action steps to someone else. Many of the most creative ideas never materialize because no one is specifically assigned the responsibility of carrying out the decision.

9. Set a deadline. A decision without a deadline is a meaningless discussion. If it is a major decision and will take some time to implement, set a series of short-term deadlines and a schedule for reporting. If you have a one-year goal to increase your income, break down the goal into months, and then break down the months into weeks. Break down the

weeks into days and the days into hours. Then discipline yourself to do the things you need to do, every hour of every day, to assure that you achieve your weekly and monthly goals and your annual goal on schedule.

With the deadlines and subdeadlines, you will know immediately if you are on track or if you are falling behind. You can then use your creativity to alleviate further bottlenecks or choke points.

10. Take action. Get busy. Get going. Develop a sense of urgency. The faster you move in the direction of your clearly defined goals, the more creative you will be. The more energy you will have. The more you will learn. And the faster you will develop your capacity to achieve even more in the future.

The world is full of creative individuals who have wonderful ideas. But almost all of them fall down when it comes to implementation. And this is where you can excel. The future belongs to the creative minority who can not only think but also take action and put their ideas into effect.

You can solve any problem, overcome any obstacle or achieve any goal that you can set for yourself by using your wonderful creative mind and then taking action consistently and persistently until you attain your objective. Success is a mark of a creative thinker, and when you use your ability to think creatively, your success can be unlimited.

About Brian Tracy

Brian Tracy is a leading authority on personal and business success. As Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International, he is a best-selling author of books and audio and video learning programs.

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A Rational-Intuitive Decision Making Model by abracad

Making decisions is often one of the toughest challenges we face as human beings. And yet having the ability to decide is one of our greatest causes to rejoice, since it proves we are more than mere automata controlled rigidly by inflexible physical laws.

This article offers some advice on a number of decision making techniques that can be employed when faced with such an opportunity. Just as there is no universal right decision that would apply to everyone in a certain situation, so there is no singular technique that applies under all circumstances.

We are each a unique and complex mix of values, drives and goals that are frequently uncorrelated, and sometimes conflicting. In making decisions we are essentially attempting to optimize our position in relation to these many factors. If we are fortunate, there will be a clear choice that benefits us on all counts. Life is rarely so simple, and decision-making is usually a case of finding the most favorable (or least unfavorable) compromise.

Decision Types

Decisions may be classed in two groups: those we elect to face, and those which are thrust upon us. An example of the former would be applying for a different job just to see if we get it, and then having to decide whether to accept in the event it is offered. The latter kind would be losing one's job and having to decide what comes next. In the first case to do nothing is an acceptable response, in the second it is not an option.

Some decisions have a limited (closed) set of outcomes (eg deciding whether to move), in others the possibilities are infinite (open, eg deciding where to move).

For 'open' decisions with many possibilities the technique of 'brainstorming' is useful to identify and narrow down options. Sit down somewhere you won't be disturbed, relax, and have a wine or beer if it

helps loosen your mind, record whatever flows into your head. Either at the end of the session or at another time shortly after, try to summarize your ideas, identifying those that seem most useful. If time permits, repeat the brainstorming once or twice more as different ideas can arise as a result of the subconscious continuing to work on the problem.

Timing

Unless you're faced with a split-second situation, decisions generally come with a certain timescale from when you become aware of the opportunity for choice and when you have to actually decide. Sometimes you're faced with a "no-brainer"; the choice is that obvious you don't need to waste time and energy thinking, so don't! In most cases there will need to be some evaluation.

Use the timescale that's available, but don't dwell on the matter 24/7 for the entire period. There's a lot to be said for "sleeping" on decisions, or just focusing on other stuff instead. Your subconscious will continue working behind the scenes. You may reach a conclusion inside the deadline; you'll know that's the case when it simply feels "right" and you have no desire/need to expend further effort on contemplation.

Should you literally "sleep" on a decision be sure to record and examine your dreams on the night(s) on which you do so. Dreams provide the subconscious a graphic means of making its concerns visible to the conscious mind.

Head or Heart?

It is said decisions are made with either the head or the heart. The head refers to our rational, logical, intellectual analytical faculty. While the heart refers to that inner knowing or feeling that A or B is the right path, the so-called X-factor! In Jungian psychology the head and heart relate to the thinking and feeling functions respectively. Though as individuals we may tend to favor one mode over the other for a given situation, to make decisions most effectively both have a role to play in the process.

The modern world is filled with the products of science, from the electric light, automobile, to cellular phones and the Internet. We live in a technological age created by the powers of thought. And yet even in this

realm of the rational, religion and other Spiritual belief and practice continue to play a major role. The very pervasiveness of scientific discovery serves to remind us of the limits of rational analysis. Consider that successful, hard-headed businessmen such as Donald Trump often claim to be influenced by their "gut".

Human beings are complex entities - physically, mentally and Spiritually. There is a level of understanding below which matters can be understood only at the intuitive level and cannot be analyzed, rationalized or verbalized. Depending on your point of view, this level delimits the consciously inaccessible realms of the subconscious, or our Spiritual essence or source.

Listening to your heart, or going with your gut, doesn't demand placing your faith in some mystical unseen force. The human mind is immensely powerful with our consciousness at any time being akin to the tiniest tip of a gigantic iceberg, the vast majority of its substance lurks unseen beneath the surface. The hidden subconscious is a vast store of both data and processing power. How often have you struggled to recall some detail unsuccessfully, only to have it pop into your head some time after? As soon as we become aware of the opportunity or need to make a decision our subconscious silently but surely starts work on the matter. Its conclusions are revealed to us through non-verbalized feeling.

Alternative Futures

The technique of alternative futures involves speculating upon what might happen for each available choice if it were followed. For each option try to visualize not just the most-likely scenario, but also the best- and worst-case scenarios. As far as possible try to estimate the likelihood of each outcome. How do you feel about each?

Your decision will be influenced by the best best-case and most-likely outcomes, but also by the avoidance of unacceptable worst-case choices. Your unique personality comes into play here. How do you feel about this decision? Is your priority to minimize the risk of damage, or are you prepared to take risks and shoot for the stars.

Taking Advice

It's commonly said two heads are better than one, a trouble shared is a trouble halved... Whether or not you take advice on a decision depends both on the decision and your personality (ie the degree with which you want to share your life with others, and are fortunate enough to have those you trust sufficiently to do so).

If you do take advice, it's wise to take that advice from at least two, and ideally more, people with differing viewpoints. That way you avoid bias. Don't limit your advisors to those most likely to agree with you, try to solicit the opinions of a "devil's advocate". Ultimately remember though, taking advice is not, and should not be, abdication of responsibility. The opinion of others is a factor you may choose to weigh in your decision making process, it doesn't however remove the need for that process.

Letting God Decide

This is often employed a means of abdicating responsibility. In granting us free will God (in whatever form you subscribe to) has handed power to you. As such you are expected to make your own decisions employing both rationalization and intuition.

However, in some cases where, no matter how hard you try, you really cannot reach a definite conclusion you may resort to "fate", either by doing nothing and seeing what happens, or consciously delegating to some unseen hand by tossing a coin, rolling a dice, or something a little more meaningful such as consulting your horoscope or the I-Ching. In such cases test your feelings about the outcome, a distinct positive or negative reaction could indicate the right path.

The Paralysis of Fear

We are told that a rabbit caught in the headlights of a car is often frozen in fear, even though it has plenty of time to flee to safety. Decisions can have similar effects on humans. We are so afraid of getting it wrong we are unable to decide one way or another. But remember the adage: "Today is the tomorrow we worried about yesterday." In other words, however bad stuff might seem, we will meet it, pass it, and find that what lies beyond isn't nearly as bad as we imagined. We are remarkably

durable creatures, and no matter how traumatic the experience we have the ability to quickly recover our normal demeanor.

Or perhaps our inability to choose is driven by the Buridan's ass paradox. This tells of an ass standing midway between food and water unable to make a rational decision as to whether to eat or drink first. Unless the ass decides one way or another, even by the toss of a coin, its extinction is certain.

The Potential Danger of Doing Nothing

Those that find it hard to make decisions often avoid the hardship by simply choosing to do nothing. In actuality the "do nothing" option is just that, an option exercised at the expense of other, more active, options.

There's nothing wrong in doing nothing, indeed in many cases it can be the best choice, particularly where the more active options fail to convince you of their merit. However, the important point in choosing to do nothing is recognizing it as a choice in its own right and with its own implications, ie the potential opportunity cost of abandoned alternatives.

A Decision-Making Framework

When faced with a decision, begin by making a rational analysis. List the pros and cons of each path, scoring and/or ranking each in terms of importance. If time permits carry out the exercise at least twice to eliminate bias of the moment. If it helps, draw a mind map, a visual diagram exploring the various options and implications and possible outcomes of each.

Alternatively make a list of key factors arranged hierarchically. Using a computer for these analyses allows you to edit and re-edit with ease. The simplest way to represent hierarchy is to indent subordinate terms in your favorite word processor.

But also weigh this rational analysis against your feelings; you'll usually find one way feels more comfortable than the other(s). In most cases head and heart will hopefully coincide, otherwise you'll need to give the casting vote to your primary faculty.

There are no inherently right/wrong decisions. Whatever path you choose will bring its own experiences, and ultimately all experience is positive because all experience serves as our teacher.

abracad is editor of the [self help sanctum](#), built on the concept that we are essentially Spiritual entities, the sanctum is unapologetic in its Spiritual, new age self help approach. We hope and believe that the Spiritual and non-Spiritual alike will find comfort and inspiration within our pages.

See What You Perceive

By Beca Lewis

I kept looking but I couldn't see him. Del told me that he was running the stairs. I would jog by where he said he was, not see him, and run home thinking I must have missed him. But, every day he would come back and say "I saw you!"

I knew I was looking in the right place. He had described where on the Wesleyan campus he was going to be. It was a big open field and he would be at the end of it – "running the stairs". But no matter how hard I looked I could not see him.

And then one day there he was, right where he said he would be and obviously right where he had been every day even when I couldn't see him. In that moment of his "appearing" It felt to me as if he had magically appeared out of nowhere. What happened?

I looked differently.

Once in the same conversation about running the stairs he had also mentioned "bleachers". So when I would jog by I would look across the field to try and find bleachers. Now here is an interesting piece. I never saw bleachers. What I saw was my own version of what I decided must be bleachers. Why did I do this? Because I knew I was in the right place, the right open field and there weren't any bleachers. However, since I remembered that he had said bleachers I decided that they must be there so I "saw them".

However, I still didn't see Del. Finally, one day I asked again. "Where are you running?" This time he told me about the big building with the white marble stairs. "What building with the white marble stairs"? I was only looking for bleachers.

The next day I looked for white marble stairs and there he was – running the stairs. What I had seen every other day, and called bleachers, was the green grass growing between the stairs. I had not seen the stairs, the building, or Del. I was looking for something I had made up in my

own mind. I had even reinterpreted sloping hills of grass to be bleachers of some kind. I was blind to what was in front of me.

I didn't create the stairs, the building, or Del. They were there all the time. I became "un-blind" to what already was. We know we all experience this blindness in our everyday lives as ruts, habits, points of view, paradigms, and filters – it's perception!

What we create is our version of how we think things are, we create is our own perception, and our perception determines what we see. When we don't see what we want to see – we think it's not there or we make up our own version of it.

For example: we look for wealth in terms of how we have determined it is to be found. We look for it through jobs, money, and people. When we don't see it, we think it is not there. What if we described wealth differently? What if we looked for it differently? Perhaps we would see that it is right in front of us.

Another way to look at this concept is through the idea of frequencies. We are surrounded by radio signals, TV signals, and phone signals. There are even signals that appear to be long gone from our current ability to tune it to them. And that is what we do. We tune it to them. We tune into one signal at a time and never see or hear the rest. Finite Perception works the same way. It tunes us into one signal and we never see or hear the rest.

Becoming "un-blind" is the only work we can do that will make a difference in our lives. Everything has already been created. Everything has already been provided. Learning to look without filters, paradigms, or pre determination of "how it must be" must and will result in the seeing of all that we need in each moment.

When what we need appears in front of us out of what seems like nowhere it may feel like magic, or a miracle. But, it is not. It is simply the Principle of Perception in action. It is our choosing of a larger perception of what is possible that shows us what has been hidden to us – in plain sight.

Imagine that! Wouldn't it be wonderful if all our years of schools and jobs and life experiences focused on teaching us how to expand perceptions to the infinite?

It only takes a moment to shift a perception. Why not start now? Imagine what we will see when our focus is on the Infinite! Think what we will see then! ###

Pam Garcy

Part 6. The path of apparent least resistance: "I've decided to give up on my dreams."

Ever say that one to yourself? Ever stop yourself before you really even get started? I heard someone say it the other day. He said, "I just take the path of least resistance." Sometimes, this is the right thing to do. But, when this becomes a default response to all of life, it can actually create more struggle than simply honoring yourself. A lack of fulfillment in life can lead to depression, anxiety, anger problems, relationship stress and more.

If you find that you use the above statement (I've decided to give up on my dreams) to stop yourself, first consider the function of it...

- Is it helping you to accept life conditions that you absolutely cannot change? In this case, it might be that you are coping with something very challenging, and your current decision is actually helpful to you. In such cases, you might want to continue to do this until you can move from a place of "surviving" into a place of "thriving".
- Alternatively, is it allowing you to run away from feeling a little bit uncomfortable, even when there are abundant opportunities that you could pursue, if you simply decided to do so?

If you begin to move in the direction of your dreams, but then you back away, you may be avoiding dealing with an uncomfortable anxious or fearful feeling. This feeling may be something that arises for you when you step outside of your comfortable set of behaviors, called a "comfort zone". See if you can become clearer about the source of this feeling. Are you afraid of:

Failure?

Rejection?

Uncertainty?

Change?

Having to work hard?

Having to learn something new?

Pain?

All of the above?!!

To help you to begin to break past this avoidant style, here are some questions to consider:

- Did you ever stop to think what might happen in your life over the long term if you continue on the path of apparent least resistance?
- What will happen if you ignore your still small voice, the one that is urging you to be honor your inclinations?
- Is it possible that it might be more painful to ignore your inner desires than to attend to them, if you ignore them long enough?
- How might you be cheating others in the process?
- What might happen if you changed your mind and decided to reawaken even just one of those dreams?

You may be saying, "Okay, but it has been so long since I've honored myself, I don't even know what I want anymore. How can I get back in touch with that?" First, find yourself a quiet place. Allow your mind to become quiet. If you'd like, you might want to ask yourself a series of questions and see what arises for yourself. Here are some examples of questions you might ask yourself:

- How would life look if I were totally fulfilled?
- What would be going on?
- What could I be enjoying?
- What is the first step toward more fulfillment and happiness in my life?

Sometimes, it is good to take a small step in the direction of your dreams, just to see if they might still be there after all. Just a teeny weency step....because there's only one you.

Step Out of the Rush

(And into your own life)

By Guy Finley

Before you can step out of the rush and into your own life, you must first see that while anxious, hurried feelings often lend a temporary sense of self-importance, these same racing emotions actually rob you of the power you need to be self-commanding. A brief investigation will confirm this finding.

Self-command begins with being able to choose your own direction in life. And whether you're caught in the raging current of a white-water river, or being swept along by a flood of invisible thoughts and feelings, one fact remains: Like it or not, you're going where that current goes. You have no real choices as long as you're under its influence. That's why learning to step out of the rush is the same as learning how to step into your own life.

Allow the exercise described below to show you that your real nature never feels the need to rush any more than an eagle would try to swim across a lake to get to the other side.

Here's the challenge. Rushing thoughts and anxious feelings are invisible to you because each time they begin to race, you start to run with them. And after so many years of being carried along in this psychic slipstream, you've come to believe that either you are these surging inner currents, or that their power is yours. Neither case is true. You are not these waves of thought any more than a cresting tide is the entire ocean.

Now here's the solution in exercise form that will help you to slow down your life.

Beginning this very moment, intentionally separate yourself from any rushing inner condition by voluntarily stepping out of it. How can this be done? Purposefully slow yourself down by acting to consciously reduce your usual speed. Here are several suggested ways to guarantee a good start.

1. At fifty percent your normal gait, walk over to get your cup of coffee.
2. Try reaching for the phone, your glass of water or your pen at seventy-five percent your normal speed.
3. Drive the speed limit (at all times) but especially when late for an appointment.

One practice I find particularly profitable, at home and in business, is to always pause a few seconds before I answer someone's question. This special conscious pause for self-awakening is invaluable because, as the old saying goes, "Only fools rush in!" Whatever the occasion may be, choose the time and place to slow down, and then practice stepping out of the rush.

Here's the secret behind how this unique exercise delivers new self-command. Slowing down helps you become aware of yourself in a new and higher way by creating contrast between your usual speed through life and your now selectively slower one.

This enhanced self-awareness empowers you to step out of the rush of your own surging thoughts and feelings by making you conscious of their flooding presence within you as being something that doesn't belong to you. Once this is clear, then you can choose your own direction in life. Step out of the rush by slowing down. Do it Now.

Excerpted from *Design Your Destiny* by Guy Finley, Llewellyn Publications.

Remember What's Important **By Stephanie Marston, MFT**

One of the cornerstones of reducing stress and living a more balanced life is to know what you value-what's most meaningful in your life. Yet when our life is all about completing the millions of tasks on our "to do" list we often lose our perspective. We lose our ability to discern between what's important and what's not because everything feels equally urgent -equally critical.

No matter how frantic life gets, no matter how much frenzy seems to be present, the truly successful people are able to rise above the pandemonium and maintain their perspective. They can do this because they know what's important. Their values are their compass--they keep them on course regardless of the chaos and confusion of life. These people maintain a vision of what truly matters, what their life is about and what they want it to be.

By clarifying your values you can adjust your life so that you invest your time and energy in those things you hold sacred. Yet in order to do this you have to ask yourself what do I value? What's most important to me? These kinds of questions will not only help you to understand yourself on a deeper level, but ultimately to refocus your life around what's truly meaningful. As strange as this may seem, it's actually less important to understand the meaning of life itself than it is to understand the meaning of your life.

The first step in creating a more balanced life is to spend as little as five minutes a day considering how you choose to spend your time. Most of us are driven by what we think we have to do. We are slaves to our to do lists. Yet in order to live your best life you have to take control of your time and decide what it is you choose to do. Before you write down any other plans or think about your schedule decide the single most important thing you can do that day for your family, for yourself and for your work. List one "choose-to-do" in each of these areas before you list any have-to-do's.

The solution to creating a life you love is selectivity--it's about choosing. It's not about getting more done, but being more selective about what you do. Remember choose quality rather than quantity.

Let me let you in on a secret. You have the ability to balance yourself and to set your own priorities. Your influence over yourself can be stronger than any other influence. The winds of materialism, information, technology, competitiveness, and busyness may swirl around you blowing you towards overload, stress and imbalance. But you have choices each and every day. You have choices that will propel you in the opposite direction, toward the quality of life found in meaningful, quality-driven living.

Get into the habit of looking every day at the choices you're making. Our choices determine how we live. We live in a time where being selective is more difficult than ever before. Choosing how you live practicing being selective, being conscious of how you spend your finite amount of time and energy is what I call Life balance. Life Balance is discovering how to give more to yourself. It's about doing what matters and to devoting less of yourself to what doesn't. Life balance is choosing how you spend your time and precious energy.

Stephanie is an acclaimed speaker and author. She speaks from experience. Stephanie is the go to expert for those who seek to create quality driven lives. Stephanie is America's foremost life balance expert. Her new CD program, 30 Days to Sanity contains powerful, innovative, practical tools to reduce stress, balance work and family and make time for what truly matters. Stephanie is the author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul's Life Lessons for Women: 7 Essential Ingredients for a Balanced Life*, *If Not Now, When? Reclaiming Ourselves at Midlife* and *Life Coaching for Parents: Six Weeks to Sanity*. For more information and a free Sanity Saving Solution visit <http://www.30daystosanity.com> <http://www.stephaniemarston.com>

Sense of Humor **By Chuck Gallozzi**

When you lose your sense of humor, you lose your footing

When the going gets tough, how does one keep a firm footing and avoid slipping and falling into an abyss of despair? There is no better tool than a sense of humor. To support this claim, here are the words of three great men who acknowledged the power of humor to overcome adversity. First, renowned Psychiatrist, author of "Man's Search for Meaning", and 32 other books, developer of Logotherapy and Existential Psychology, and Holocaust survivor, Victor Frankl (1905 ~ 1997) had this to say, "I would never have made it if I could not have laughed. Laughing lifted me momentarily. out of this horrible situation, just enough to make it livable. survivable."

Second, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln (1809 ~ 1865) interrupted a meeting by reading an amusing story with the hope of dispelling the black clouds hovering over his staff. But no one as much as smiled. Finally, Lincoln said, "Gentlemen, why don't you laugh? With the fearful strain that is upon me day and night, if I did not laugh I should die, and you need this medicine as much as I do." Third, like David who slew Goliath, frail Mahatma Gandhi (1869 ~ 1948) overcame The British Empire. How did he do it? He explained, "If I had no sense of humor, I would long ago have committed suicide."

One of the main causes of suffering and stress is a sense of helplessness, powerlessness, or lack of control. But a sense of humor can put one back in control. For example, instead of giving in to depression, a Multiple Sclerosis patient may use humor and say, "You know, one good thing about MS is you don't have to worry about stirring your coffee anymore." Humor may not cure MS, but it will cure a bleak attitude and continue to make life worth living, for if we can learn to laugh at ourselves, we'll always have something to laugh about. Even if humor cannot extend our life, it can end it on a positive note. For instance, the head of the firing squad asked the condemned man, "Before we shoot you, would you like a last cigarette?" And the prisoner replied, "No thanks, I'm trying to quit smoking!"

Genuine humor points out the weaknesses of humanity, but without contempt. It is a commentator of life, not a critic of it. Its purpose is to uplift, not tear down, and to lighten the burdens of others, not add to them. Good humor does not belittle or promote stereotypes, for it springs from the heart, not the mind. It is a shock absorber that helps us get over the bumps in life. Those with a good sense of humor have a good sense of life.

Although it is not the proper role of humor to make fun of others, self-deprecating humor is positive because it encourages humility. It also fosters courage, for that is exactly what is needed to remove the mask one normally wears and expose one's weaknesses to all. It is because of their courage and honesty that we hold comics in high regard. When we dispense with the false notion of our self-importance, we will eliminate a major cause of suffering. With similar thoughts in mind, Francis Bacon (1561 ~ 1626) wrote, "Imagination was given to man to compensate for what he is not, and a sense of humor to console him for what he is." Life is not so much a path as it is a tightrope. By that I don't mean it is a difficult road to tread, but merely that we must keep our balance. That is, it makes sense to take our work and responsibilities seriously, but not ourselves.

Much research has been done on the on the effects of humor and laughter on our health. The benefits are enormous and include boosting our immune system, reducing stress, relaxing muscles, lowering blood pressure, increasing our tolerance for pain, and hastening the healing process. By now, almost everyone is familiar with the link between our body and mind that has been proven. For example, it has been shown that our attitude is more important than our physical health in determining how long we live. That is, senior citizens with a good sense of humor and a positive attitude, but poor health, survive longer than those that are in good health but have poor attitudes.

Another way of expressing this is to say that what jogging does for the body, humor and laughter do for our emotional, mental, and physical health. Yes, it's true; laughter is the best medicine, so we can become our own best medicine. Those with a good sense of humor are cheerful. Every day to them is a sunny one. If storm clouds should appear, they rely on laughter, for like lightning, it adds moments of brightness to the darkest days.

Use the acronym L.A.U.G.H.T.E.R. to remind you of some of its benefits.

'L' stands for LIVE life to the fullest. When we share humor, we are living in the moment and spreading joy.

'A' stands for an AWARENESS and APPRECIATION for the incongruities of life. The inconsistencies and ironies you face offer unlimited opportunities to laugh at them. For example, what can be more ridiculous than the way I look as I type this article? I am wearing long johns and trousers, an undershirt, tee shirt, two sweaters, a winter jacket, and a winter hat. Not to be funny, but to stay warm. You see, the heater in my house is not working, and neither is the repairman - because today is a holiday. I have to type fast just to keep my hands warm!

'U' stands for USE your brain to drain pain with laughter. USE humor to discover delight, joy, and peace of mind.

'G' stands for GOOD HUMOR at all times. I repeat, at all times, for as George Bernard Shaw (1856 ~ 1950) wrote "Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh."

'H' stands for HEALTH. Laughter detaches us from our problems and releases negative emotions; it is the best medicine.

'T' stands for TRANSFORM. Laughter transforms our thoughts, which in turn transforms our feelings for the better.

'E' stands for EXUBERANCE, which is the zest that laughter brings to our lives.

And 'R' stands for the RESILIENCE we acquire by learning to deal with hardship and pain, for humor is the strongest weapon against adversity. **Summarizing**, a good sense of humor keeps us lighthearted, and hopeful. Like Thomas Edison (1847 ~ 1931), we'll be able to say, "When down in the mouth, remember Jonah. He came out OK." As long as we maintain our sense of humor, we'll never be poor. How will you know if you have a good sense of humor? Frank Tyger explains, "The ultimate test of whether you possess a sense of humor is your reaction when someone tells you you don't."

Happy, Healthy, Wealthy and Wise By Rob McBride

All we really want in life is to be happy! As stunning as this astounding discovery may seem, what is not quite as obvious is how to attain this worthy ideal.

Everything we do is related in some way, shape or form to our search for happiness. The mate we choose, the job we select, our desire to have children or not and the people we choose to be around. Along the way these decisions frequently seem to be errors in judgment and instead of bringing us happiness, instead they bring anxiety and anguish.

What happened? Did we really make a mistake or some other dynamic taking control? It is not "things" or "people" who make us "unhappy," rather our perception of what is happening. Notwithstanding, there are three things which can lead us to be happier regardless of the circumstances. We can all do our best to internalize the following characteristics.

HEALTH: It's much easier for someone in good physical shape to be happy. While it is possible for an unhealthy person to be happy, physical well-being makes it much easier. When we eat well and exercise regularly, our energy and drive instantly change for the positive. To achieve our goals and desires, it's fundamental we have the resources necessary. While some of these things are "beyond" our control, many are "within" our control. Taking care of our body as if it were a sacred temple rather than a wrecked ruin gives us vitality, strength and enthusiasm to achieve all we desire.

WEALTH: If we have the option to choose between being "wealthy" or "poor," it is obvious we would choose prosperity. Let's look at different types of wealth. To the chagrin of many, material wealth is important. Anyone who says money is not important hasn't been to the supermarket lately. We need money and other kinds of material wealth to fully enjoy this marvelous journey we call life. Equally important is inner wealth and this type of prosperity has no limits. In this instant, we can all become "wealthier" by simply giving thanks for all we have rather than lamenting what we don't have. Prosperity is measured as much by

the number of zero's in our bank account as by the richness of our emotional bank account.

WISDOM: People who are wise have problems like anyone else. What sets them apart from the rest is their ability to see the world from a different perspective. Beginning with our very first breath, challenge lurks around every corner. Those who see obstacles as a norm are able to flow and grow. Those who continually strive to know more about our world and themselves discover quickly it is a never ending search. What we do not know will always be greater than what we know. Yet the power and value of a single idea has no limit. When we are willing to continually grow, life turns into an adventure to enjoy rather than a chore to endure.

Being happy is a decision, not an obligation. When we are Healthy, Wealthy and Wise, happiness becomes the rule rather than the exception. ###

Rob McBride is an International Public Speaker who motivates, inspires and trains people. His keynotes, seminars and workshops enhance effectiveness and increase corporate productivity with concrete, dynamic tools which enable people to take control of their professional direction and destiny.

Visit his website at: <http://www.inspire.com.ve/rhm/>

Committed Relationships—Use Them to Grow Towards Self-Understanding and True Love

By Gabriella Kortsch, Ph.D.

Society generally considers that relationships owe us happiness and bliss ever after. While happy couples do exist, divorce statistics indicate a great majority simply is not happy after the first glow dims.

Relationships Free of Dependence

This less appealing reality actually holds the key for a true loving relationship that is *free of dependence on the other*. Jung wrote: “*The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.*” In a nutshell, *transformation* is what relationships are all about. We remain in relationships while the going is good, but often break off at the first sign of trouble. If the person we love turns out differently than our initial estimation of them, we feel they led us to believe something about their character that was not true, or, that we simply can not trust our judgment.

Relationships Based on Complementarity Rather Than on Need

But the crux of the matter is quite different. It is precisely at this problematic point in the relationship that we have the chance of creating a relationship based on mutual complementarity rather than on need; a free relationship between two people who **want** to be together, rather than two people who **need** to be together.

So how do we get there?

Awareness

A very important step in this process is becoming aware of ourselves; gaining insight into ourselves. Another step involves filling our own “holes”, our needs, rather than hoping to fill them through others. Clearly this is easier said than done. *It literally means growing into wholeness* – a lifelong process.

Filling Our Needs

Our needs get us into most relationship problems. We seek out people, consciously or unconsciously, that fulfill our needs, rather than filling our needs ourselves. Whenever we obsess about someone, feeling that we can not live without them, we should examine what it is that is missing in us very carefully, what we feel others are “giving” us, and *why* we feel that we need them for our very survival. This element is being shown to us through the relationship, the obsession, the need, the desire to control and possess. If we could only become aware of this, we might still suffer, but we would have finally found the real road to freedom from this kind of dependent need.

Jungian Transformation Motifs

A. The Shadow

Most individuals are unaware of the *shadow*, an unconscious part of the psyche which has not been lived out. C.G. Jung believed that the more people truly know themselves by looking into themselves, the more society as a whole becomes conscious. Children are often taught not to show – or even *feel* - their objectionable and aggressive urges. Although they must be taught not to act out these urges, they often wind up repressing all conscious knowledge of these negative aspects *until they are buried so deep that they manage to forget their existence*. Thus, they believe their chosen conscious attitude is who they really are.

But the negative aspects have not disappeared – they have moved into the unconscious where they can cause all kinds of trouble when the shadow forces its way into outer behavior. You might, for example, say the opposite of what you meant to say. Often, unrecognized aspects of the self are what you notice in other people: these are projections.

The best clue to the existence of shadow aspects is the level of emotion you have about another person’s behavior. Until the content of the projection becomes conscious, projections continue to occur in a compulsive manner accompanied by intense emotion. But of course as long as it is a projection, you feel that the problem lies with the other person, never realizing that precisely because of your strong emotional reaction to the other person, the problem – or issue to be resolved – lies

with you (whether or not the other person's behavior is acceptable is immaterial to this).

B. The Anima and Animus

Jung felt that everyone has a psychological contrasexual reality represented by the opposite sex. The *anima* (Latin term for soul or spirit), the feminine figure in a man's psyche, represents unconscious qualities. The flesh and blood women in his real life are a source of information for a man about those things for which he has no eyes.

The *animus* is the masculine figure in a woman's psyche, symbolizing new creativity or potential within, as well as – on the negative side - rigidity, obstinacy, absolute convictions, or a sense of personal worthlessness.

Projection

We are *always* attracted to an outer man or woman who somehow embodies *not yet lived out or realized* (and therefore projected) aspects of our own anima or animus. We actually fall in love with ourselves via the projection, i.e. with bits of ourselves we have not yet seen, and so *we feel we need the other person because they are able to express what we cannot.*

Since all of this is unconscious, it generally takes a falling away of the rosy glasses and a return to reality to force us into pain and frustration, making us begin the process of self-awareness, understanding, and thereby the process of growth towards the *incorporation of these needs and then to fulfill them ourselves, and move towards a degree of wholeness from whence we can approach relationships very differently, and with a far greater measure of inner freedom.*

Eight Suggestions for Improving Your Relationships: A Plan to Follow

1. Realize that attraction, love, chemistry, and emotion, come about *due to the psycho-emotional and spiritual makeup of your inner*

man or woman precisely in order that you may work on these and develop further. It is your psyche's way of helping to make you whole. That is why relationships are of such enormous importance in personal growth and development.

2. Always watch any kind of "affect" (emotion, both negative and positive) ... it gives strong clues to where you need to work on something (even if it proves the other person is a heel). But if you were "whole", your affect would not get involved.
3. Analyze arguments, NOT from the point of view of how egotistical, horrible, jealous, or domineering, etc. your partner is, but from the point of view of *what* the argument is telling you about YOURSELF. The other may indeed be all those things, but it is much less important to dwell on their failings than on your own possibility for growth by *observing your reactions to whatever is occurring.*
4. Use that knowledge to change, grow, and learn that you *always have a choice in your reaction to any situation.*
5. Become very aware of yourself at ALL times...watch the times you would like to prevaricate, or at least, tell things in a way that is not 100% the real way, and try to discover why...are you afraid you will not be accepted or loved if you show your real self?
6. Particularly watch those relationships that have an imbalance of power ... if you are top dog ... ask yourself what you get out of it ... if you are on the bottom ... why you are willing to be there ... the answer to all of this serves your growth ... remember, it takes two to tango!
7. Develop a sense of self by filling your own needs rather than by trying to fill them through others. Love yourself first!
8. Observe yourself in a love relationship on the basis of this article.

Get in Trouble on Purpose

By Keith Varnum

Why would someone want to get in trouble on purpose?

Well, if you were a masochist? Or an idiot? Or crazy? Or all of the above?

No, it's more like someone who's decided to "play with trouble" as a lifestyle choice!

I learned this edgy approach to life from my unusual parents. As many of you, I grew up with major contradictions in my upbringing. My parents were a bastion of stability, a bedrock of Midwestern family values, and defenders of the Establishment. My father was the mayor of our city, a distinguished lawyer, and sat on almost every board in town (church, school, city council). My mother was a court reporter and was on every other board (mental health, hospital, PTA) that my father couldn't attend because there are only five week nights in a week!

Yet, my folks had a very unique and curious approach to raising me. They embodied a motto they publicly announced with pride far and wide. Their guiding maxim was, "We never say 'No' to our son! We always say 'Yes!'"

And I can't recall a time when they didn't adhere to this radical strategy of child-rearing. They never once said "No" to me.

If they had a strong preference as to the smartest choice, the most they'd ever say was, "Well, you do what you feel is best. We would strongly advise this particular choice. But you decide. It's your life." And they would back me up in whatever rash or ill-advised course of action I took.

You see, my parents wanted me to develop my own ability to make smart choices in life. They knew that wise decision-making is a person's greatest ally in life. So they felt that the more opportunities I had to make my own choices, the more experience I'd have in discovering the true consequences of my personal choices. They wanted to give me as

many chances as possible to experience the fun—and not-so-fun—consequences of wise—and not-so-wise—life choices.

And they felt it was most loving of them to give me the opportunity to explore choices and consequences while they were still around to help me out when I made not-so-smart choices.

When parents limit personal life choices for their kids with strict rules and boundaries, they limit their kids' opportunities for choice. These kids don't get much experience in choosing their own fate in life—and learning about the consequences that go with their choices.

In one very real sense, you could say that my folks encouraged me to get in trouble while I still lived at home, so they were still around to help me get out of trouble!

And I took maximum advantage of this parenting style! I stayed out late at night, took the family car out in blizzard conditions, and hung out with the "wrong" kind of friends. I got in one kind of trouble or another on a regular basis. And my folks helped me clean up the messes I made. I'll be forever grateful for their unwavering support in my follies!

I feel that their parenting strategy worked! Sine the day I escaped my hometown, I've made fairly wise life choices. And when I haven't, I've known from experience how to make things right—or at least repaired to some degree.

Like Parents, Like Mentor

Not so coincidentally, my first spiritual teacher had the exact same mentoring approach as my parents. His name was George Ohsawa. He was fond of saying:

"If you truly want to grow and become truly happy, go out into the world, get in trouble, and then get yourself out of trouble—over and over and over again—until it's fun and easy!"

Ohsawa was born in Japan into a samurai family. So he came from the stock and soul of the ancient Spiritual Warrior.

Ohsawa began his spiritual awakening at the same age as I did. He cured himself of "incurable" tuberculosis at age 19 using what he knew about the ancient Chinese concepts of yin-yang. I cured myself of "incurable" blindness at age 19 using what I knew of the ancient Chinese concepts of yin-yang.

And "coincidentally" I learned these concepts from no less than George Ohsawa's main U.S. disciple, Michio Kushi!

After Ohsawa healed himself, he travelled to Europe where he started to spread his philosophy. In Paris he adopted his pen name "Ohsawa" from the French phrase "Oh, ça va!" —which means "all right!" or "I'm doing fine!" or "It's all good!" as a reply to the question "How are you doing?" He wanted his name to express his approach to life!

In the same spirit my parents would say to me, "Do whatever you choose. It's all right. It's all fine. It's all good!"

Then George Ohsawa traveled throughout the Third World and deliberately contracted the worst diseases (considered "incurable" by Western and Eastern experts) so that he could see if he could cure himself of any disease. He did!

In my life, I've also developed many severe ailments. Although I didn't deliberately seek out these sicknesses as Ohsawa; nonetheless, I cured myself of them all as well!

As you might expect, all my later spiritual teachers also practice a similar wild and trusting world view: a Hawaiian Kahuna, a Hopi medicine man, and Matrix Energetic's Richard Bartlett. Why are you not surprised!

The River Flows Through It

I enjoy discovering the "common threads" that weave through the tapestry of a person's life. I delight in finding the "common themes" that unite a person's seemingly chaotic path. I seek to sense the "river that runs through it all."

In my own instance, I marvel at the continuity of spirit from my parents to my later chosen teachers to the life I now lead. You too can uncover the river of intention flowing through your journey. If you look deeply—beneath the surface, behind asserted beliefs—into the words and actions of the most important people in your life, you'll find an undercurrent of common focus connecting all your dearest mentors.

For example, at surface glance, my folks were as dire and solemn as you could get. They stated publicly for the record that life was a sober and crucial affair of serious struggle and survival. Yet, when I listened carefully—especially in times of crisis—I could hear them mumble aloud to themselves, "You know, it really doesn't matter."

This is the message I chose to hear from my parents, from my mentors, and from life itself:

It really doesn't matter the way we think it matters, the way our mind insists that it matters. After all, what we think is solid matter in life really isn't solid or matter. Quantum physics has proven that in its essence, every seemingly solid thing in life is actually energy. All objects and so-called physical bodies are essentially moving energy—and therefore, they are infinitely fluid, malleable and changeable.

You can replay your life in order to uncover the truth behind the scenes. Listen with your heart as you recall times of heightened urgency in your life. In times of crisis and emergency, what did your parents, family, friends and teachers speak softly to themselves and to others in need of help and truth?

You can choose anew. You can choose now. What messages do you choose to hear from the important people in your life?

... The socially correct clichés they mechanically expressed publicly?

... Or the true whispers of their hearts expressed through words and actions beneath the radar of the collective mind?

It's your choice! Your life! Your hell or your heaven!

Who is Keith Varnum?

For 30 years, Keith Varnum has focused his unique spirit on helping people explore, enjoy and embrace the adventure of life. From the wisdom of native tribal cultures and ancient spiritual traditions, Keith shares his distillation of the underlying principles of all healing and transformation.

After curing himself of blindness, he has applied his approach to human dynamics in a practical way as a wilderness vision quest guide, life strategy coach, international seminar leader, author, acupuncturist, filmmaker, gardener, radio talk show host, owner-chef of two gourmet natural foods restaurants and vice president of the country's largest natural food company.

When not exploring consciousness in the canyons of Arizona (see www.SedonaVisionQuest.com), Keith travels around the world assisting people to open to life's wonders and surprises in his Dream Workshops (see www.TheDream.com)

Acting in the Day — Not Troubled for Tomorrow Steve Wickham

What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

~**James 4:14b-17** (NIV).

We, of course, must plan our lives, and certainly to that end to live in eternity, and not least of which now, extending until our last breath is taken - of which we don't know when that is.

Perhaps what James is saying is our plans should always be mindfully prefaced in the coming of the Lord and in the fact of our imminent demise, whichever comes first. Where we do not do this - and it is not generally our custom to bear it continually in mind - we sin; for, the plans we make try to delude God of what is his.

And, still, we are the ones deluding ourselves, and we don't just do it on a personal or interpersonal scale. We do it organisationally too, for instance, in our church planning or in our mission activities. The secular world, certainly, thrives on it.

We Should Still Plan

Our planning should always be commended to God as being provisional on his bequest of life. We should still plan. But what we shouldn't do is plan as if there will be no end, for there is a rapid end for every one of us, and that day is steadily approaching. Not that that's a depressing reality by any means!

If we believe God is good - and he is - then we'll have faith that he will see us through the good works we do for him now, seeing them through to completion.

Yet, even that is an inexplicable wish of our hearts. Just because we might fall short of the time required to achieve 'our mission for God'

wouldn't mean that God is not a good God. We ran our race. We just don't know the full story, that's all.

Boasting and Evil

Why is the boasting in the James passage above, evil?

It deludes, living a lie, and it leaves God out of the equation.

Imagine not paying our rent or the monthly payments on our mortgage, and what's more, not bothering to tell the bank or the landlord. It is the same when we make detailed plans without prefacing them in, "If it is the Lord's will." Like the landlord, God knows we're defrauding him.

If we do this consciously - and just about all of us don't; we do it subconsciously - we sin. Now that we know the truth about our plans for tomorrow, a thing we'll never have - as we only have today, it is important that we try and instill the habit of recognition for our planning, with God at the forefront.

Even More Reason

Because we're all so very apt at setting our expectations upon the achievement of our plans, this imperative from James is even more important. It defuses the self-inflated importance of our plans; those without God in view.

We can easily see here that our best God-blessed position is to see every perceptible eventuality before we set our mind, and our heart-of-hearts, on one particular plan coming to pass.

Being that this would actually be impossible - to perceive every possible outcome - we're best keeping an open mind and heart on such things, and always holding out - and wishing - for God's will to become apparent, and then to have the power and volition to carry it out.

The Master Key System

Part Thirteen

By Charles F. Haanel

The Master Key System teaches the laws at the very foundation of all attainment and success. Whatever you desire, *The Master Key System* will teach you how to bring it into your life. **Cultivate Life! magazine** is presenting the full twenty-four part course material on a fortnightly basis. In this way you will have time to work through the text and exercises as they were originally designed to be studied by the author, Charles F. Haanel.

Part Thirteen

Physical science is responsible for the marvelous age of invention in which we are now living, but spiritual science is now setting out on a career whose possibilities no one can foretell.

Spiritual science has previously been the football of the uneducated, the superstitious, the mystical, but men are now interested in definite methods and demonstrated facts only.

We have come to know that thinking is a spiritual process, that vision and imagination preceded action and event, that the day of the dreamer has come.

The following lines by Mr. Herbert Kaufman are interesting in this connection.

"They are the architects of greatness, their vision lies within their souls, they peer beyond the veils and mists of doubt and pierce the walls of unborn Time. The belted wheel, the trail of steel, the churning screw, are shuttles in the loom on which they weave their magic tapestries. Makers of Empire, they have fought for bigger things than crowns and higher seats than thrones. Your homes are set upon the land a dreamer found. The pictures on its walls are visions from a dreamer's soul. They are the chose few — the blazers of the way. Walls crumble and Empires fall, the tidal wave sweeps from the sea and tears a fortress from its rocks. The rotting nations drop off from Time's bough, and only things the

dreamer's make live on."

Part Thirteen which follows tells why the dreams of the dreamer come true. It explains the law of causation by which dreamers, inventors, authors, financiers, bring about the realization of their desires. It explains the law by which the thing pictured upon our mind eventually becomes our own.

PART THIRTEEN

1. It has been the tendency, and, as might be proved, a necessity for science to seek the explanation of everyday facts by a generalization of those others which are less frequent and form the exception. Thus does the eruption of the volcano manifest the heat which is continually at work in the interior of the earth and to which the latter owes much of her configuration.

2. Thus does the lightning reveal a subtle power constantly busy to produce changes in the inorganic world, and, as dead languages now seldom heard were once ruling among the nations, so does a giant tooth in Siberia, or a fossil in the depth of the earth, not only bear record of the evolution of past ages, but thereby explains to us the origin of the hills and valleys which we inhabit today.

3. In this way a generalization of facts which are rare, strange, or form the exception, has been the magnetic needle guiding to all the discoveries of inductive science.

4. This method is founded upon reason and experience and thereby destroyed superstition, precedent and conventionality.

5. It is almost three-hundred years since Lord Bacon recommended this method of study, to which the civilized nations owe the greater part of their prosperity and the more valuable part of their knowledge; purging the mind from narrow prejudices, denominated theories, more effectually than by the keenest irony; calling the attention of men from heaven to earth more successfully by surprising experiments than by the most forcible demonstration of their ignorance; educating the inventive faculties more powerfully by the near prospect of useful discoveries

thrown open to all, than by talk of bringing to light the innate laws of our mind.

6. The method of Bacon has seized the spirit and aim of the great philosophers of Greece and carried them into effect by the new means of observation which another age offered; thus gradually revealing a wondrous field of knowledge in the infinite space of astronomy, in the microscopic egg of embryology, and the dim age of geology; disclosing an order of the pulse which the logic of Aristotle could never have unveiled, and analyzing into formerly unknown elements the material combinations which no dialectic of the scholastics could force apart.

7. It has lengthened life; it has mitigated pain; it has extinguished diseases; it has increased the fertility of the soil; it has given new securities to the mariner; it has spanned great rivers with bridges of form unknown to our fathers; it has guided the thunderbolt from heaven to earth; it has lighted up night with the splendor of day; it has extended the range of human vision; it has multiplied the power of the human muscles; it has accelerated motion; it has annihilated distance; it has facilitated intercourse, correspondence, all friendly offices, all dispatch of business; it has enabled men to descend into the depths of the sea, to soar into the air, to penetrate securely into the noxious recesses of the earth.

8. This then is the true nature and scope of induction. But the greater the success which men have achieved in the inductive science, the more does the whole tenor of their teachings and example impress us with the necessity of observing carefully, patiently, accurately, with all the instruments and resources at our command the individual facts before venturing upon a statement of general laws.

9. To ascertain the bearing of the spark drawn from the electric machine under every variety of circumstances, that we thus may be emboldened with Franklin to address, in the form of a kite, the question to the cloud about the nature of the lightning. To assure ourselves of the manner in which bodies fall with the exactness of a Galileo, that with Newton we may dare to ask the moon about the force that fastens it to the earth.

10. In short, by the value we set upon truth, by our hope in a steady and

universal progress, not to permit a tyrannical prejudice to neglect or mutilate unwelcome facts, but to rear the superstructure of science upon the broad and unchangeable basis, of full attention paid to the most isolated as well as the most frequent phenomena.

11. An ever-increasing material may be collected by observation, but the accumulated facts are of very different value for the explanation of nature, and as we esteem most highly those useful qualities of men which are of the rarest occurrence, so does natural philosophy sift the facts and attach a pre-eminent importance to that striking class which cannot be accounted for by the usual and daily observation of life.

12. If then, we find that certain persons seem to possess unusual power, what are we to conclude? First, we may say, it is not so, which is simply an acknowledgment of our lack of information because every honest investigator admits that there are many strange and previously unaccountable phenomena constantly taking place. Those, however, who become acquainted with the creative power of thought, will no longer consider them unaccountable.

13. Second, we may say that they are the result of supernatural interference, but a scientific understanding of Natural Laws will convince us that there is nothing supernatural. Every phenomenon is the result of an accurate definite cause, and the cause is an immutable law or principle, which operates with invariable precision, whether the law is put into operation consciously or unconsciously.

14. Third, we may say that we are on "forbidden ground," that there are some things which we should not know. This objection was used against every advance in human knowledge. Every individual who ever advanced a new idea, whether a Columbus, a Darwin, a Galileo, a Fulton or an Emerson, was subjected to ridicule or persecution; so that this objection should receive no serious consideration; but, on the contrary, we should carefully consider every fact which is brought to our attention; by doing this we will more readily ascertain the law upon which it is based.

15. It will be found that the creative power of thought will explain every possible condition or experience, whether physical, mental or spiritual.

16. Thought will bring about conditions in correspondence with the predominant mental attitude. Therefore, if we fear disaster, as fear is a powerful form of thought, disaster will be the certain result of our thinking. It is this form of thought which frequently sweeps away the result of many years of toil and effort.

17. If we think of some form of material wealth we may secure it. By concentrated thought the required conditions will be brought about, and the proper effort put forth, which will result in bringing about the circumstances necessary to realize our desires; but we often find that when we secure the things we thought we wanted, they do not have the effect we expected. That is, the satisfaction is only temporary, or possibly is the reverse of what we expected.

18. What, then, is the proper method of procedure? What are we to think in order to secure what we really desire? What you and I desire, what we all desire, what every one is seeking, is Happiness and Harmony. If we can be truly happy we shall have everything the world can give. If we are happy ourselves we can make others happy.

19. But we cannot be happy unless we have, health, strength, congenial friends, pleasant environment, sufficient supply, not only to take care of our necessities but to provide for those comforts and luxuries to which we are entitled.

20. The old orthodox way of thinking was to be "a worm," to be satisfied with our portion whatever it is; but the modern idea is to know that we are entitled to the best of everything, that the "Father and I are one" and that the "Father" is the Universal Mind, the Creator, the Original Substance from which all things proceed.

21. Now admitting that this is all true in theory, and it has been taught for two thousand years, and is the essence of every system of Philosophy or Religion, how are we to make it practical in our lives? How are we to get the actual, tangible results here and now?

22. In the first place, we must put our knowledge into practice. Nothing can be accomplished in any other way. The athlete may read books and

lessons on physical training all his life, but unless he begins to give out strength by actual work he will never receive any strength; he will eventually get exactly what he gives; but he will have to give it first. It is exactly the same with us; we will get exactly what we give, but we shall have to give it first. It will then return to us many fold, and the giving is simply a mental process, because thoughts are causes and conditions are effects; therefore in giving thoughts of courage, inspiration, health or help of any kind we are setting causes in motion which will bring about their effect.

23. Thought is a spiritual activity and is therefore creative, but make no mistake, thought will create nothing unless it is consciously, systematically, and constructively directed; and herein is the difference between idle thinking, which is simply a dissipation of effort, and constructive thinking, which means practically unlimited achievement.

24. We have found that everything we get comes to us by the Law of Attraction. A happy thought cannot exist in an unhappy consciousness; therefore the consciousness must change, and, as the consciousness changes, all conditions necessary to meet the changed consciousness must gradually change, in order to meet the requirements of the new situation.

25. In creating a Mental Image or an Ideal, we are projecting a thought into the Universal Substance from which all things are created. This Universal Substance is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient. Are we to inform the Omniscient as to the proper channel to be used to materialize our demand? Can the finite advise the Infinite? This is the cause of failure; of every failure. We recognize the Omnipresence of the Universal Substance, but we fail to appreciate the fact that this substance is not only Omnipresent, but is Omnipotent and Omniscient, and consequently will set causes in motion concerning which we may be entirely ignorant.

26. We can best conserve our interests by recognizing the Infinite Power and Infinite Wisdom of the Universal Mind, and in this way become a channel whereby the Infinite can bring about the realization of our desire. This means that recognition brings about realization, therefore

for your exercise this week make use of the principle, recognize the fact that you are a part of the whole, and that a part must be the same in kind and quality as the whole; the only difference there can possibly be, is in degree.

27. When this tremendous fact begins to permeate your consciousness, when you really come into a realization of the fact that you (not your body, but the Ego), the "I," the spirit which thinks is an integral part of the great whole, that it is the same in substance, in quality, in kind, that the Creator could create nothing different from Himself, you will also be able to say, "The Father and I are one" and you will come into an understanding of the beauty, the grandeur, the transcendental opportunities which have been placed at your disposal.

*Increase in me that wisdom Which discovers my truest interest,
Strengthen my resolution To perform that which wisdom dictates.*
—Franklin

Study Questions with Answers

121. What is the method by which natural philosophers obtain and apply their knowledge?

To observe individual facts carefully, patiently, accurately, with all the instruments and resources at their command, before venturing upon a statement of general laws.

122. How may we be certain that this method is correct?

By not permitting a tyrannical prejudice to neglect or mutilate unwelcome facts.

123. What classes of facts are esteemed most highly?

Those which cannot be accounted for by the usual daily observation of life.

124. Upon what is this principle founded?

Upon reason and experience.

125. What does it destroy?

Superstition, precedent and conventionality.

126. How have these laws been discovered?

By a generalization of facts which are uncommon, rare, strange and form the exception.

27. How may we account for much of the strange and heretofore unexplainable phenomena which is constantly taking place?

By the creative power of thought.

128. Why is this so?

Because when we learn of a fact we can be sure that it is the result of a certain definite cause and that this cause will operate with invariable precision.

129. What is the result of this knowledge?

It will explain the cause of every possible condition, whether physical, mental or spiritual.

130. How will our best interest be conserved?

By a recognition of the fact that a knowledge of the creative nature of thought puts us in touch with Infinite power.

Heart to Heart Coaching

by **Dr. Doris Jeanette**

Title: I am soft, polite and not so fashionable. What should I do to boost my confidence?

Philosophy: Life is a battle to earn things for life.

Hopes and aspirations: I want to be a successful officer who is admired by everyone. I want to make a home of my own and make my life secure and loved by my husband.

Question: I joined in a real estate firm recently as a law officer. But my sound prevents me from commanding respect from others. I have a soft voice, which is neglected by everyone, and I feel less confident. I am more polite in asking things and so nobody cares me, saying that you should be more bold and sound like an officer. I do not look fashionable and my English is not so fluent also. What should I do to boost my confidence?

Answer: Low self esteem is a universal psychological problem. Even the richest, smartest, prettiest and most popular people feel insecure. And the most secure of us, do not feel secure all the time! This is not strange because as children we learned to be quiet, sit still and not to interrupt adults. Adults taught us to "be seen and not heard" and "Parents know best." Therefore, we were conditioned to be polite and nice to adults even when they were being rude, insensitive and obnoxious to us.

Therefore, you learned to judge yourself as less valuable than others as a child and as a result you now have low self-esteem. Since you are "different, don't speak English well and don't dress like everyone else" you feel insecure. In general, the more different you are from the norm, the more likely you are to suffer from low self esteem. This means the more sensitive, creative, intuitive and emotional you are, the more likely you are to have low self-esteem.

I grew up in North Carolina, USA on a tobacco farm. I was so shy I could not greet my fellow classmates in the small town where my school was

located. To avoid my classmates, I crossed the street and walked quickly to the pick up truck where my mother was waiting for me. I was never abused, however I was trained to be quiet, good and polite. Therefore, I suffered from low self-esteem.

Consequently, I have spent the last 34 years of my life, as a licensed psychologist, unlearning many of the unhealthy conditioned responses that I was taught as a child. I am happy to report that I have also been successful in teaching many of my clients how to unlearn their low self-esteem.

First, let me define what self-confidence looks like in terms of energy, behaviors and feelings. As a holistic psychologist I think it is extremely important to use energy as the basis of any psychological definition. This is because psychological researchers often use inaccurate conditioned responses as their definition of authentic feelings and behaviors.

For example, I read an article in the New York Times a few years ago along the headlines of "Too Much Self Esteem is Bad For Children." When I looked at the study and saw how the Harvard researchers defined self-esteem, I was aghast. They were using what I call the ego, which is composed of learned responses, as their definition of self-esteem.

So in their study, a child who exhibited aggressive behavior had too much self-esteem. Thus, they concluded that too much self-esteem was bad for all children. Let me reassure you that any child with healthy self-esteem *does not* exhibit aggressive behavior. There is no such condition as too much self-esteem.

A child or adult with healthy self-esteem:

Relates equally to others, not above or below others.

Behaves assertively, not passively or aggressively.

Does not judge self or others.

Says no to things they do not want to do.

Says yes to things they do want to do.

Gets what they want in life in direct, honest ways.

Relaxes their body when alone and with others.

Behaves spontaneously, living in the moment.

Expresses their emotions in healthy ways.

Listens to their own heart for guidance.

Pays attention to their own needs and desires.

Does not seek approval from others.

Has a compassionate heart toward self and others.

A person with healthy self-confidence does not think they are better than others or less valuable than others. This is one of the major ways to tell if someone is truly self-confident or not. People with an ego or image will think they are superior or inferior to another. Puffed up chests, overweight bodies, rigid minds and lack of self-doubt are all signs of an ego.

Let me make it clear that no matter how much you have worked on your self-esteem, there will be times when you feel insecure. As a matter of fact, the more secure you are, the more you can acknowledge your insecurities with confidence!

This means you have taken the first step toward becoming more secure by admitting you have low self-esteem. The more often you admit how you really feel, the more you will be able to transform your low self esteem into more and more solid self confidence.

If you want to be effective you need to become brave and feel brave so people respect you and know they cannot ignore you. When you feel insecure this means that you are anxious and scared. The anxiety and fear is what makes you feel insecure in the first place. So your anxiety is what you need to acknowledge and reduce.

You could stand up straight and act brave but this will rarely fool people. People react to a person with anxious energy differently that they do to a person who is relaxed and solid.

Learn from nature. In the forest, a mother bear knows if you are scared of her or not. You cannot fool her. Humans are just like bears, they know if you are anxious and scared. You cannot fool them. People may not be able to put the "energy" they are sensing into words and yet they know they can push you around! Even when you try to act like you are not scared, people feel your anxious, passive energy.

One of my early clients was unable to disagree with his wife. He let her make every decision because she had a "fit" if he did not go along with her desires. He felt just like you, a "door mat," like no one valued him or cared about him. His wife could feel his passivity and took advantage of him.

Therefore, I taught him to reduce his anxiety, relax his body and be assertive. As he improved his assertiveness and relaxation skills his wife could feel the change in him. His energy became stronger, more solid and flexible. His body relaxed and he became emotionally secure. Soon, she was no longer able to manipulate him with her "fits." Their relationship improved because she began to relate to him as an equal.

Apply this information to your work situation. You need to learn to reduce your anxiety, relax and be assertive. Then people at work will feel your energy shift from anxiety to relaxation. As you work on yourself, you will change from passive to assertive. When you become assertive, people will respond to you differently. They will relate to you as an equal because you are relating to them as an equal.

Being assertive is a skill that most people need to learn due to early childhood conditioning. I was trained to teach Assertiveness Training classes during my post doctorate training at Temple Medical School in 1975 when Assertiveness Training was popular. I taught courses at many of the major universities in the area such as Swarthmore College and Jefferson Medical School.

Today it is hard to find Assertiveness Training courses. Everyone still needs AT but it is no longer popular. It is as if psychology has gone backwards instead of forward. This is one of the reasons I started the Center for the New Psychology. (Visit here to learn the difference between the New Psychology and the Old Psychology: <http://www.drjeanette.com/newpsychology.html>)

In addition to relaxation and assertiveness training, you need to unlearn the false beliefs that you learned as a child. As long as false beliefs are in place you will not be successful in your attempts to relax and become assertive

For example, if you were taught that little girls are not as good as little boys, this false belief needs to be unlearned. If you were taught that you deserved to be hit because you did not do what you were told to do, this needs to be unlearned. You need to become conscious and aware of the false beliefs that are impeding your personal growth.

One of the obvious false beliefs that you are holding on to is, "You believe life is a battle and that is what it will be until you unlearn this false belief. Some say that belief determines 80% of your results. Others, 100%! I could write a whole book on this psychological phenomenon. We know for a fact that the placebo effect occurs in scientific studies with 35-60% of the subjects. This means that if a person thinks he received a surgery or medicine he will get better even if he did not receive the surgery or medicine. So, never underestimate the power of your beliefs. Your beliefs create your subjective reality.

What this means for you is that your life will be a battle until you prove to yourself that this does not have to be true for you. You need to bury this false belief in order to improve your life.

Replace your false beliefs with reality: Your life does not have to be a battle and you are as valuable as anyone else

Action Steps to Move Forward

1. Make a list of all the natural talents you were born with and begin to believe in them. Notice what part of you is stopping you from using your innate abilities to your advantage.
2. Discover what your false beliefs are by paying attention to your thoughts, words and behaviors. I strongly suggest getting a teacher, coach or holistic psychologist to guide you and coach you to success. Just like in sports, it is a lot easier to do your best if you have a good coach by your side.
3. Learn how to reduce your anxiety and relax your body. Visit the free library at [drjeanette.com](http://www.drjeanette.com) for more anxiety information: <http://www.drjeanette.com/anxiety.html>

4. Take Assertiveness Training courses and classes. Send me information about good ones and I will share with others. For great coaching, check out the telecourse, "Assertiveness Training for Increased Self Confidence" offered by the Center for New Psychology, beginning January 11, 2011. <http://www.drjeanette.com/at.html>

Doris Jeanette, Psy. D. loves to teach people how to overcome anxiety, low self-esteem and passivity. She knows from personal experience how to "Get real. Get ready. Roar!" Join her in the natural playground of the global world by taking the Assertiveness Training Telecourse: <http://www.drjeanette.com/at.html> For more holistic psychology inspiration sign up for her free newsletter, "The Vibrant Moment" at: <http://www.drjeanette.com/aboutus.html>

Quotes of the Week

"Great masters merit emulation, not worship."

—*Alan Cohen*

"Just listen to the still voice within. This is the mind to trust. This is god consciousness speaking, not the ego that is seeking recognition."

—*Angela Walker*

"Clear, written goals have a wonderful effect on your thinking. They motivate you and galvanize you into action. They stimulate your creativity, release your energy, and help you to overcome procrastination as much as any other factor."

—*Brian Tracy*

"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

—*Nelson Mandela*

Here Comes Inspiration with **Phil Evans**

Power On

Each day we all need to recharge our spiritual battery, otherwise the light of our consciousness becomes dim, thoughts become fuzzy, and decisions are impregnated with doubt.

Power is available inside and outside.

Inside us we have a spiritual centre, at the core of our consciousness, pure radiant spiritual light.

This is what we are.

However it is now blocked by our attachments, the record of all our life experiences and many learned beliefs and perceptions.

Outside us we have the sun of spirit, the source, invisible to our physical eyes but only one second away when we are able to quieten and focus our mind.

Meditation connects us to both sources of power - that's why meditation is the way to access the real vitamins and the minerals that spirit craves.

The vitamin of pure love and the minerals of truth and wisdom.

Take time to empower yourself today.

Sit quietly and connect your mind to each source and allow yourself to recharge and renew. ###

Zen Story

The Sound of One Hand

The master of Kennin temple was Mokurai, Silent Thunder. He had a little protégé named Toyo who was only twelve years old. Toyo saw the older disciples visit the master's room each morning and evening to receive instruction in sanzen or personal guidance in which they were given koans to stop mind-wandering.

Toyo wished to do sanzen also.

"Wait a while," said Mokurai. "You are too young."

But the child insisted, so the teacher finally consented.

In the evening little Toyo went at the proper time to the threshold of Mokurai's sanzen room. He struck the gong to announce his presence, bowed respectfully three times outside the door, and went to sit before the master in respectful silence.

"You can hear the sound of two hands when they clap together," said Mokurai. "Now show me the sound of one hand."

Toyo bowed and went to his room to consider this problem. From his window he could hear the music of the geishas. "Ah, I have it!" he proclaimed.

The next evening, when his teacher asked him to illustrate the sound of one hand, Toyo began to play the music of the geishas.

"No, no," said Mokurai. "That will never do. That is not the sound of one hand. You've not got it at all."

Thinking that such music might interrupt, Toyo moved his abode to a quiet place. He meditated again. "What can the sound of one hand be?" He happened to hear some water dripping. "I have it," imagined Toyo.

When he next appeared before his teacher, he imitated dripping water.

"What is that?" asked Mokurai. "That is the sound of dripping water, but not the sound of one hand. Try again."

In vain Toyo meditated to hear the sound of one hand. He heard the sighing of the wind. But the sound was rejected.

He heard the cry of an owl. This was also refused.

The sound of one hand was not the locusts.

For more than ten times Toyo visited Mokurai with different sounds. All were wrong. For almost a year he pondered what the sound of one hand might be.

At last Toyo entered true meditation and transcended all sounds. "I could collect no more," he explained later, "so I reached the soundless sound."

Toyo had realized the sound of one hand.

100 Words

Dan Millman

Who Is Dan Millman?

Dan Millman, a former world-champion athlete, university coach, martial arts instructor, and college professor, is the author of thirteen books, including *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, *Wisdom of the Peaceful Warrior*, *Sacred Journey of the Peaceful Warrior*, *The Life You Were Born to Live*, *No Ordinary Moments*, *The Laws of Spirit*, and *The Journeys of Socrates*. His books have inspired millions of readers in twenty-nine languages. The feature film *Peaceful Warrior* is based on Dan's early life. His talks and trainings have influenced leaders in the fields of health, psychology, education, business, sports, and the arts. Married for over thirty years, Dan is the proud father of three daughters and grandfather of two grandsons. www.danmillman.com, www.peacefulwarrior.com

Books that have influenced and inspired Dan's life:

Constructive Living, David K. Reynolds
Siddhartha, Hermann Hesse
The Lord of the Rings, J. R. R. Tolkien

Insight from Dan Millman

Do we have to quiet our minds, think positive thoughts, and feel the right emotions in order to live well? I suggest another way—the peaceful warrior's way of action. We can cease our struggle to fix our insides, accept our thoughts and feelings (positive or negative), while doing constructive, purposeful action. We can behave with courage and kindness, whether or not we feel that way. We can turn what we know into what we do. Here. Now. We are, each and all, peaceful warriors in training, learning to live with a peaceful heart and a warrior spirit.

From The Shelf

Manifesting Change: It Couldn't Be Easier

By Mike Dooley

Author and international speaker Mike Dooley illuminates exactly how to move beyond the law of attraction to the next level—manifestation. In his most powerful and comprehensive work to date, Dooley reveals his master guide for following your heart and taking action on your dreams. *Manifesting Change* explains the actual mechanics behind every dream, how you fit into the equation of “Reality Creation,” and which steps you can take that will lead you to the desired end results without worrying about the details. Dooley expands upon the universal mysteries of why you are here, who you really are, and all that you deserve. It includes easy-to-understand exercises, stories, and analogies, and reveals the extraordinarily unique concept, the “Matrix” that clearly shows the flow of events that will, or will not, automatically trigger changes in your life based upon your thoughts, words, and actions.

“Having been a fan of the ‘big boys’—Anthony Robbins, Wayne Dyer, Earl Nightingale, et al.—I came away with the realization that Dooley is the most literate and professorial of them all.”

—Roger Yale, *Los Angeles Entertainment Today*

“What he has to say about employment and money is particularly apt in our nation’s current state”

—Nancy Colasurdo, FoxBusiness.com

Eastern Wisdom

“A gem is not polished without rubbing, nor a man perfected without trials.”

—Chinese Proverb

Meditation

Adversity and challenges along our journey are what sculpts us into the human beings we were created to be. Without struggles and difficulties in life our souls would decay and our life would lack meaning and purpose. Welcome every opportunity that comes your way, for these will further the evolution of your soul. Life is a continuous journey of growth and the possibilities for advancement are immeasurable. Take advantage of trials and tribulations and turn them into stepping stones toward extraordinary success.

Real Life Application

Begin to reframe the way your mind interprets or perceives difficulties and challenges in your life. If you see something as a “problem” it will certainly become a problem, however if you look upon these precious times in your life as additional ingredients for your growth and evolution that’s exactly what they become. Turn each obstacle in your life into what it truly is; a unique learning experience that will act as a catalyst in the transformation of your soul.

Conquering Your Procrastination Habit, by Dr. Linda Sapadin

Tip# 11

Recognize when you're starting to burn with indignation. Then, start thinking in a calmer manner about what might be the best course of action.

If your procrastination is fueled by defiance, pay attention to how you're thinking and feeling when you're confronted with a request or demand. Learn to recognize the signals that you may be overreacting. Does your mind start racing with reasons as to why you shouldn't do what's been asked of you? Do you clench your fists? Have a stiffened middle finger? Curse under your breath? Fantasize revenge scenarios?

Once you're aware of your personal anger signals, take a deep breath. Decide how you can negotiate with the powers to be to agree on a mutually satisfying course of action, rather than simply blow off what is expected of you.

"For additional tips, go to www.BeatProcrastinationCoach.com. Discover how *success coaching* and "*The Six Styles of Procrastination E-Program*" can empower you to reach your goals.

Ponder a Moment

Man is made or unmade by himself. In the armory of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself. He also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace.

—*William James*

A Course In Miracles, Lesson 22 plus Commentary by Allen Watson

What I see is a form of vengeance.

Today's idea accurately describes the way anyone who holds attack thoughts in his mind must see the world. Having projected his anger onto the world, he sees vengeance about to strike at him. His own attack is thus perceived as self-defense. This becomes an increasingly vicious circle until he is willing to change how he sees. Otherwise, thoughts of attack and counter-attack will preoccupy him and people his entire world. What peace of mind is possible to him then?

It is from this savage fantasy that you want to escape. Is it not joyous news to hear that it is not real? Is it not a happy discovery to find that you can escape? You made what you would destroy; everything that you hate and would attack and kill. All that you fear does not exist.

Look at the world about you at least five times today, for at least a minute each time. As your eyes move slowly from one object to another, from one body to another, say to yourself:

I see only the perishable.

I see nothing that will last.

What I see is not real. What I see is a form of vengeance.

At the end of each practice period, ask yourself:

Is this the world I really want to see?

The answer is surely obvious.

Commentary by Allen Watson

This is a lesson that I simply did not understand the first few times I went through the Workbook. I'm not entirely sure I understand it now, but it makes a certain sense to me, and to the degree that I do understand it, I'd like to share that understanding with you. Notice one thing, however, as you read through the lesson. What you are asked to actually practice with is *not* simply the thought that heads the lesson, but quite a bit more, ending with the question: "Is this the world I really want to see?". So understanding the lead thought isn't really the purpose of this lesson; rather, the purpose is to help us realize that we do not really want what we are seeing.

We are seeing it, however, because in some part of our mind, a part we have hidden from consciousness, we do want it. We always see what we want to see, and we are seeing what we are seeing because we want to see it.

You see what you believe is there, and you believe it there because you want it there. Perception has no other law than this.

If we are seeing what we are seeing because we want to see it, then if this lesson can help us learn we don't *really* want it-that we really want something else-it will help us change what we see. Change what we want, and our perception changes with it.

If we hold attack thoughts in our mind we must see the world as a vicious place, a dangerous place. It is a world of pain, and "pain is but witness to the Son's mistakes in what he thinks he is. It is a dream of fierce retaliation for a crime that could not be committed". As I said yesterday, we are angry at ourselves over what we think we have done, and as a result we are having "a dream of fierce retaliation" for our crimes. As egos we are also angry at reality for not being what we want it to be, for not supporting our wish for separation and specialness. We cannot face our own anger at ourselves, and we cannot support the guilt of our insane rage at reality, so we project it: "Having projected his anger onto the world, he sees vengeance about to strike at him".

The anger and attack we see in the world is only the reflection of the intensity of our inner rage, the rage we cannot see in ourselves *precisely because* we have denied it and projected it outward. The world I see

thus shows me what I am thinking. "What I see is a form of vengeance" because vengeance is what fills my own mind, although I am unaware of it. That I see vengeance in the world is the proof it is in my mind, because that is the law of perception.

He will attack, because what he beholds is his own fear external to himself, poised to attack, and howling to unite with him again. Mistake not the intensity of rage projected fear must spawn. It shrieks in wrath, and claws the air in frantic hope it can reach to its maker and devour him.

"It is from this savage fantasy that you want to escape". The words the Course uses-"savage fantasy," "a dream of fierce retaliation"-are so evocative! If the world looks like this-and surely it does, quite often at least-what must be the state of our minds that spawn it? "This becomes an increasingly vicious circle until he is willing to change how he sees".

We *do* want to escape from this savage fantasy. That is the goal of today's lesson, to help us become willing to change how we see. None of what we are seeing exists, and if we are willing to change how we see, we will no longer see it.

The Course's definition of "real" is "eternal, everlasting, changeless." What does not last is not real, by definition. "I see nothing that will last". Therefore none of it is real, by this definition. If it is not real, what is it? "A form of vengeance". Ken Wapnick said once that the world is simply crystallized guilt. This lesson is saying that the world is crystallized attack thoughts, vengeance solidified into a world of attack and counterattack.

Is this the world I really want to see?

The answer is surely obvious.

Bear in mind that this lesson is working at the level of motivation. It is not telling us *how* we can see something differently. It knows that if it can get us to the point of *wanting* something different the battle is over, because what we want, we will see. So if this lesson leaves you

thinking, "God! No, I don't want to see the world like this anymore, but what can I do about it?" then the lesson has been successful. The question will be answered as the lessons progress.