

THE 22 MOST
**IMPORTANT
THINGS**

FOR CREATING A
THRIVING
CAREER & LIFE

RANDY KAY

The 22 Most Important Things for Creating a Thriving Career & Life
by Randy Kay

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TO MY WIFE RENEE—THE MAGIC IN MY LIFE.

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO thrive, anyway? Thriving refers to continuous development and growth. “Thrive” derives from an ancient Norse word, “thrifa,” meaning to seize or grasp. “Thriving” has become a contemporary buzzword, as we often hear the question, “Are you just surviving ... or are you thriving?” The history of the word clarifies its meaning, because in this context, we can rephrase the question: are you just surviving in your life, by letting life happen to you ... or are you seizing your life, grasping opportunities, and being purposeful?

I lead a strategic and talent development firm, and we had to find the answer for many if not most people, by asking several people what makes them thrive. Then we looked for common themes—“a happy family,” “making a significant contribution in life,” “raising well-adjusted children,” “making others happy,” “having a successful career,” “finding balance in life,” “loving and being loved.” Most answers related to significance, loving relationships, enjoyment, satisfaction, and contributions.

People who rated themselves as joyful or content viewed the world and its challenges as opportunities. Seeing life’s events as opportunities served as the standard viewpoint for these people who

answered in the affirmative as to whether they considered themselves as thriving.

Their standard viewpoint was then contrasted to how they lived—whether they were financially secure, whether they had a satisfactory home, whether they felt supported by loving relationships. Again, those who expressed themselves as happy, content, and/or thriving rated their living conditions as very good or excellent. Finally we viewed their personal pleasures—like hobbies, vacationing, dining out, or anything that gave them pleasure. Those who felt their life has meaning and fulfillment also stated that their personal pleasures were met or exceeded.

All three areas were important to the thriving individual: viewpoint, lifestyle, and personal pleasures. Can you guess which one of these three was ranked most important to a thriving life? If you guessed viewpoint, you would be correct. In fact, some of the respondents who exhibited the highest level of wellbeing lived lifestyles that some might consider poor, with personal pleasures some would consider mundane.

In fact, once individuals reached a level of subsistence, at or beyond the point at which they could support themselves, advances in their lifestyle or personal pleasures did not significantly affect their level of satisfaction in life, as long as they maintained their hopeful viewpoint. How they viewed their own lives as well as life in general mattered most. And of course, those who viewed their life and conditions as full of potential rated themselves as thriving the most.

So the greatest influencers for a thriving life are proportional, based on the importance rated by those who considered themselves as “generally satisfied.” By weighting the responses, one’s viewpoint determines 56% of a thriving potential, lifestyle amounts to 22% of a thriving potential, and personal pleasures relate to 16% of one’s thriving potential. The remaining 6% of all factors relate to various responses that didn’t seem to fit any of these categories.

Viewpoint is largely influenced by resilience—optimism, self-regulation of emotions, and hope, but not entirely. A new understanding of thriving is emerging that suggests that a positive viewpoint derives from a number of factors. The good news is that all of them can be learned.

Gratification and peace of mind play central roles. Peace of mind is a mental state achieved by a sense of hope, faith, and love—trusting in the future, having faith beyond our finite limitations, and a genuinely caring attitude. No small feat. That's why it's called a "daily lifestyle." Remaining focused on what's most important declutters the mind, relieves stress, and opens possibilities to the here-to-fore unknown.

Thus begins the healing process to scattered thinking. By practicing the most important things, even for a relatively short time (e.g., 45 days), unlearning bad habits in favor of positive ones has been shown to engage a cascade of beneficial physical, neurological, and mental benefits.

Our peace of mind depends on focused concentration. Physical science, behavioral science, and psychotherapy support the strong theory that only a few important factors ("things") influence our general approach to life. Indeed, epigenetic research now demonstrates the role of both negative and positive viewpoints on gene expression. Nobel laureate Elizabeth Blackburn and other scientists found that a focused approach to life might slow the rate of cellular aging and extend life expectancy. People can thrive despite even the most traumatic situations if the mind is stilled long enough to decompress; and, if those same people feel purposeful and successful.

Of course, a thriving career and life is dynamic. An opportunity-based outlook can change over time. Just as our bodies can get sick and recover, so can our state of mind causing us to survive, strive, or thrive. So we need to attend to our wellbeing as diligently as we attend to our health.

Generally speaking, there are six areas that will determine our ability to thrive in life based on our satisfaction with each of these categories:

- **Career** (where you work),
- **Social** (relationships)
- **Spiritual** (spiritual connectedness or faith)
- **Community** (where you live)
- **Financial** (the ability to meet your financial needs)
- **Physical** (your overall health)

Would you like to know your current state of thriving? Think of each of these categories and rate your level of satisfaction with each from one to ten, with one being the lowest level of satisfaction, and ten being the highest level of satisfaction. Now average your level of satisfaction in all of these areas by adding your scores for each and dividing by six. How did you score?

First, one caveat: these are only general assessments, and should not be viewed as “gospel.” If your average score was seven or above, then you are thriving. If you average between five and six, you are striving in life. If you scored four or below you are struggling, and perhaps you should seriously consider making some changes, and seeking help. Again, because life is dynamic even a low score may not be cause for alarm.

Still, each of us can improve our thriving nature by focusing on those areas in life that give us the least satisfaction. By asking ourselves why, we begin the first step toward a more thriving life. What people, factors, qualities, or missing pieces must change in order to get back to a healthy level of wellbeing?

Next comes the fun part, and it gives a solution many are seeking: ‘the magic pill’ for thriving. Regardless of your state of thriving, there are in fact ways in which you can elevate yourself to a state of thriving. Specifically, there are 22 ways as we discovered in our research.

The people with whom I've worked helped me to formulate the top 22 things for changing anyone's viewpoint to a thriving mindset and approach to life. This book represents over 30 years of learning about what makes people thrive, including input from psychotherapists, scientists, success gurus, physicians, scholars, and industry experts. Just considering my personal training and experiences, and from my best estimates I've trained over half a million leaders, and I've learned from some of the greats in leadership development. I've also had the pleasure of leading or participating with some fantastic organizations demonstrating thriving cultures.

At my strategic firm, TenorCorp, we used volumes of research and content and condensed them into the "best of the best" ways to achieve a thriving career and life. The process was quite lengthy over several years. We took over 1,000 articles and selected the most impactful ones from the standpoint of exceptional practices as evaluated by our team. Then we synthesized all of the validated success factors, research, principles, models, and courses generally taught over the past by leading instructors, and picked only the ones that have made the most impact in the world of business and life. This selection was based on how many teachings were actually practiced in successful organizations for more than ten years. In other words, they had "staying power."

Next, we processed much of the existing data about thriving that was available in the public domain. We then condensed these into consistent themes. Then we evaluated common practices and approaches in real world settings, like in employee surveys (e.g., Glassdoor) used to evaluate cultures; and, from the 30-year study of exceptional leaders others want to follow (as documented in my book, *The Power to Thrive*).

The final stage was to add personal stories and highlights that would make complex understandings clear and enjoyable to read. Hence, I give you *The 22 Most Important Things*. After authoring *The Power to Thrive*, I learned a lot about what makes people thrive. We

discovered in this research the four foundations of leaders others want to follow: Purpose, Attitude, Connection, and Energy. Great leaders excel in these areas. The research for this comprehensive book, and the 365 success factors published in my book, *Daily Keys to Success*, served as invaluable resources for assessing the most important skills, abilities, experiences and mindsets found in people who thrive in their careers and lives.

I profoundly hope you will benefit from these 22 Most Important Things. Think of it as a dose of nutrients for the mind and soul. Besides, life is just better when you're thriving!

—Randy Kay

THING ONE

Let Go of Your Balloon—8 Signs That It's Time to Move on

"The amount of happiness that you have depends on the amount of freedom you have in your heart." —Thich Nhat Hanh

ISABELLE LEFT A VOICE MAIL on her friend's answering machine. "I need to talk! I am in trouble!" After retrieving the message, her friend ran down the backstairs of their apartment complex and pounded on Isabelle's door. Isabelle pulled the door open and smiled, a drift of cinnamon wafted from the mouth of the coffee cup in her hand.

"What's the crisis?" her breathless friend asked.

"I saw a picture of Martin and it triggered every hurtful emotion," Isabelle answered.

"That was three years ago!" her friend said, not a little perturbed.

What do you think is Isabelle's problem? It's not the loss of Martin. It is the fact that she can't move on. Moving past a failed relationship or a lost job requires that we let go of the hating, the "what ifs," the wondering about what they are doing or whom they are with. Determine to move to the other side of the relationship or job. Be

ready to take on new challenges and new relationships. Get away to a quiet place to actively engage in forgiving those who have hurt you—including yourself.

Brain scientists suggest nearly twenty percent of us suffer from “complicated grief,” or an inaccurate romantic view of a lost relationship or failed job. Tell yourself the truth: *it wasn't that good. In fact, it probably was pretty bad.* Any loss must be healed through the grieving process, but issues that linger longer than a year indicate you are harboring resentment. You're cheating your future by holding onto those hurts.

Maybe you're holding onto something that is hurting you now without you even recognizing it. Psychologists equate this type of “holding on too long phobia” as like a balloon that starts to rise with you holding onto it, and you get lifted six inches into the air thinking, ‘Oh, that's no big deal, I can just let go if I need to.’ Then before you know it you're at eight feet, and you worry, ‘I could break a leg, I'd better hang on and wait until it gets lower.’ Then you're at fifty feet, and if you jump you're going to indeed break that leg. But if you don't jump . . .

This is the mental trap of hanging on too long: hoping that a bad situation or relationship will get better, without contemplating the potentially fatal outcome that will result if it doesn't.

When my daughter Annie was six, she loved balloons just like most kids. On a bright and breezy day she ran across Crissy Field, an open field of grass framed by the San Francisco Bay and the picturesque Golden Gate Bridge in the background. In her tight clutch was this bright blue balloon. She held onto it as though her life depended on possessing that dancing balloon—tossed to and fro from the Pacific Ocean winds that raged through the Golden Gate.

Then something terribly wonderful happened. A gust of wind blew so strong that Annie lost her grip. The blue balloon ascended as my little girl's mouth stretched with horror. She had lost her prized possession. It took not a minute before that big balloon faded into a

frolicking blue bubble, barely visible and yet strikingly apparent. Annie's face changed. Suddenly her frown turned upward and a big Cheshire grin spread across her face as she marveled at the ascendancy of her former toy. The possessive mindset that caused her so much anxiety, fearing its loss, disappeared.

Annie no longer felt responsible. "Daddy," she said, "I can't believe that I sent my balloon to heaven—I hope God likes it." Annie's head turned up—chin to the sky as she glided across the open field with the abandonment of her dancing balloon. She let go of her balloon.

Consider this...are you trying to decide whether it's time to move on from something— maybe you're contemplating a move regarding a job or a relationship? Maybe you're holding onto something that is secretly killing your joy, even if you falsely think it is the cause of your happiness. Most of us have been in that balloon example at some point in our lives. But knowing when it's time to move on or let go can be difficult. These eight signs might be an indication:

- 1) *You've run out of steam.* Burning out is reaching epidemic proportions in the work-world, and when it affects relationships we feel like being with someone else. So many of us are just emotionally and physically exhausted. People or work can suck the life out of us. Psychologists say that lack of control in work is a common drain, as are insufficient rewards. Feeling unfairness in a job or relationship causes conflict, and tends to cause burnout. If you're feeling burned out, it's time to seriously consider some alternative. And if you're feeling like being alone is better than being with that 'special person,' you're probably best being without that person.
- 2) *You're turning into someone else.* Are you constantly trying to make yourself more "pleasing" for someone else? That may be natural to a point, but you shouldn't feel that way all the time. Don't diminish who you are to make someone else

feel comfortable, or to appease that person. A friend of mine once confided in me that his girlfriend wanted to end their relationship to pursue a career in another state. In a desperate attempt to try to save their relationship, my friend offered to go with his girlfriend. After moving with his girlfriend, my friend became disillusioned. His usually positive nature turned sour. He ended up realizing that his relationship had turned toxic, causing him to become someone he disliked. Thankfully he left his girlfriend to become the person he'd always been.

- 3) *You've matured beyond what the job or relationship can offer.* Do you feel stuck or stalled? If so, it may be time to ask yourself what you need beyond what the current situation or person offers. Consider what you really want from a job or relationship. Closing a chapter doesn't necessarily mean the end of your story—it simply means that the end has not yet arrived because you haven't discovered the answer yet. Consider your job this way—if your learning curve has flattened out or you're really not feeling challenged, this may signal a need to move on. In each position you should be improving upon your core skills and picking up new ones. You may need to take the initiative to learn new things, of course—asking to be involved in a new project, for example. But if these possibilities don't exist at your current job, it's a sign that the company is not serious about investing in your career development. A similar dynamic in relationships is also true: growth in relationship means you're being nourished by it with energy, whereas lack of growth usually means emotional starvation.
- 4) *There is a conflict in what's most important to you.* Our work and our closest relationships consume most of our time. So it makes sense to ensure that a job or a relationship partner

aligns with your most important values. A conflict in values will eventually wear you down. Ask yourself if your company or partner walks the talk. Does the company actually practice those values stated in its mission on the wall? Is your significant other transparent enough to admit mistakes, and correct them? If for example, you value family time and your job requires 80% travel, what impact is that having on your family? If your boyfriend says that he values trust but lies to you about where he went the other night, what does that say about his trustworthiness?

- 5) *You're just living the status quo.* If you've been at the same company and position without any advancement or promotion for the past three years—and you want to continue moving your career forward—it's time to look elsewhere. Even in a large organization where promotions are few and far between, you should be able to make some sort of upward movement within a reasonable period. The same principle applies to relationships—you're either striving or thriving based on the freedom each gives to the other to grow as a human being. Striving relationships usually reflect too much control. Thriving ones want what's best for the other, and are willing to let go if it's best for the other person.
- 6) *Your trust is continually broken.* It's been said that trust means giving someone the chance to hurt you. When you completely trust someone you'll realize one of two results—a lasting relationship or a lesson for developing greater wisdom. A positive outcome happens either way. Either you confirm that the person or company cares about you, or you gain the wisdom to eliminate either to make room for a relationship that merits your trust. No relationship can exist in the long term without trust, and no trust can exist

without the vulnerability to test whether a relationship is true or not. Pay attention. A person's actions will tell you more than their words.

- 7) *Constant change has been the norm.* If your company is regularly announcing a re-org or shuffling management around, this may indicate leadership issues or an unstable strategic direction. The same applies to a close friend or partner who can't seem to hold onto a stable relationship for longer than a year. Re-orgs and revolving door relationships more often than not signal a fundamental flaw, whether it be in an unstable foundation or an inability to commit. And more importantly, they create a challenging environment for both your career development (on the job side) and your need for lasting relationship. Over time your priorities, focus, and satisfaction will inevitably be impacted by a lack of stability.
- 8) *It just feels like it's time to leave.* Beyond all of the above warning signs, please don't ignore what your instinct is telling you. No one knows you better than yourself. And if you get the sense that you might be better off somewhere else or with someone else, heed that inner voice. That still, quiet, inner voice can teach you who to avoid, how and when to take the right steps toward something better, and also when to say goodbye to a relationship. Whichever you choose, know this: your intuition usually doesn't lie and it doesn't mislead.

Finally understand that the longer you've been working somewhere, or the longer you've been with someone, or practiced a habit, the harder it becomes to change. Our brain often works against us, providing lots of evidence for, and reasons why, it makes sense to stay—hey, it's comfortable to stay in familiar territory. But if one or more of the above

factors is going on in your life, it's time for a serious pause and some much-needed reflection.

Find yourself a counselor if needed and force yourself to dwell on possibilities that may never have occurred if you were still at that place, or with that person. Rekindle lost relationships. Appreciate your current position, or network to find a new one. Realize that nothing lasts forever. Immerse yourself in the present, cherry pick the past, and be thankful. And if needed, let go of your balloon. A better future waits!

THING TWO

The Most Essential Attribute Needed for Success and 9 Ways to Get It

“Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.” —Dale Carnegie

DEBRA SAT BEFORE HER MANAGER in tears. After almost two weeks of sales training, she could no longer bear the pressures. Debra passed her tests, she even excelled at some presentations, but she didn't participate much with the class, and worst of all, after she stood outside an Operating Room to witness a procedure, she nearly fainted. Her apparent frailties portended poorly for her potential success as a surgical sales representative in one of the most challenging territories in the U.S.—New York City.

“Maybe this is not the right fit for you,” her manager said.

“I can do this,” Debra responded. So with reservations Debra's company allowed her to continue on a probationary status.

Fast-forward twelve years. Debra won every major sales award offered by the company and became one of the most successful sales persons in its history. Ask Debra the key to her success and she will

say, “I never give up, and when someone tells me to give it up, I try even harder.” That is the mantra of a successful person, and it’s spelled p-e-r-s-e-v-e-r-a-n-c-e.

No personal success, achievement, or goal can be realized without the self-discipline to persevere. It is without question the most important attribute needed to achieve any type of personal excellence. Take note of every great leader, of each outstanding contributor, and you will find perseverance in the face of trials as their surest mark of authentication. They never give up.

Winston Churchill’s famous “Never give up, never give in...” speech at the Harrow School in 1941 preceded Germany’s failed attempt to bomb England—a turning point in World War II—by three years. Faith in oneself and in God, as Churchill demonstrated, leads to a moral conviction that can override seeming defeat in pursuit of a fixed goal.

Psychologists suggest that people trying to develop perseverance must think positively. Failure is not an option. That requires self-control when doubts arise in order to maintain a view of the horizon through the din of others declaring defeat. Perseverance is a mindset that must be trained through sheer resolve.

An assimilation of several studies now proves that we can accomplish this form of self-discipline in order to develop perseverance through these nine (9) validated ways:

- 1) Practice humility, otherwise known as self-denial. Learn to say no to some of your feelings and impulses. Train yourself to do what you know to be right, even if you don’t feel like doing it. Skip a favorite TV program once in a while to do something more worthwhile. Pass over that dessert on occasion. Resist the urge to scream at someone who has angered you. Ask forgiveness when you fail someone, even though you don’t feel like it. Pause and consider the consequences. When you

practice self-control, it helps you develop the habit of keeping on track toward loftier goals.

- 2) Engage in some form of activity, exercise, or hobby. A regular regime like a sports activity or learning to play a musical instrument helps develop the self-discipline to persevere when you'd rather do something leisurely, like sitting in front of the computer or fiddling with your smart phone. Doing something that challenges your ability trains you to tackle stretch goals, and focuses your mind onto something with a fixed point of attainability. Participating in a routine like exercise creates a situation where you learn to work diligently, and it integrates a disciplined thought processes that can translate into your everyday life.
- 3) Finish what you start. Finishing is indeed an art. We have to fight distractions, perfectionism, and what Steve Pressfield calls "the Resistance." Whatever you choose to do, the art is to get it done. Establish deadlines. Keep yourself accountable and ask others to help you be accountable. Wrap your finished plans up and send them out completed. The legendary basketball player, Michael Jordan, was cut from the varsity squad in high school, yet he persevered. He always maintained that his greatness as a basketball player came as much from his willingness to work hard at his craft, as it did his talent, by always completing his practice schedule.
- 4) Visualize the rewards. Few things are as gratifying as accomplishing your goals. We can attain our goals by practicing the technique that top athletes and other high achievers use. Project yourself into the future. Visualize your desired outcome. Mentally place yourself at the end of your goal and feel the reward and the many benefits you will enjoy. Athletes do this all the time. They see the result they want clearly and rehearse

it over and over again. This breaks through doubt and develops the confidence to succeed. Visualization constructs an inevitable knowing that your success will occur.

- 5) Take full responsibility. Once you take 100 percent responsibility for your outcomes, you overcome the inevitable frustrations and you empower yourself as the leader of your own life. Notice great leaders: they rarely if ever make excuses. Leaders know they have more to gain by admitting their mistake and moving forward to correct it than they do from dwelling, blaming and wasting time.
- 6) Don't major in the minors. Focus on what's most important—don't focus on the things that don't matter. Only focus on what brings you the greater return. Center yourself on the 10% of what's most critical first, before doing anything else. For example: if you're a sales person, the most important thing is maintaining your customers and developing new ones. All the recreational activities like Facebook chatting or blogging won't return anything of lasting value unless you make those sales calls, first.
- 7) Limit bad stress and take advantage of good stress. Bad stress is actually distress, and manifests itself in a chronic or ongoing stress that begins to hinder your everyday life and stops you from completing necessary tasks. Good stress is not debilitating; rather, it inspires and propels you to complete a given task or goal, thereby improving your brain's cognitive ability. Important to understand is that good stress *only* manifests itself for a *short period*, like participating in a sports competition or making that important presentation. Practice the good kind of stress and dispense with the bad kind whenever possible.
- 8) Just do it. Sitting around the house all day and doing nothing leads to nowhere. You can't achieve anything lying down except

catch up on your required sleep. The same goes for waiting too long. Many people go from analysis to paralysis by over thinking their way to success. They prevent themselves from achieving by succumbing to fear, and end up doing nothing. Sometimes, we need to override our brain, put on our clothes, and just do it! If that's a problem, and you're caught in paralysis mode, try noting the benefits you will receive from taking action, and keep those benefits top of mind as you persevere toward the finish line.

- g) Expect only the best. Refuse to give attention to disparaging thoughts. Think positively. Refuse to engage in those masochistic thoughts that portend a bad outcome. These negative thoughts drain you, cause bad stress, and prevent you from moving forward. When this happens, focus on the present moment. Think with a fresh attitude through a beginner's mindset by focusing on the here and now. Try a little humor to feel good by laughing, smiling, and remembering pleasant times. By focusing on those good thoughts inspiration will begin to bubble-up again. And this will reinvigorate your motivation.

When all else fails, and circumstance say "give-up," draw on your faith and declare: "I'm getting up to give it one more try!" The world often tells us to stop and just wait for a better day. However, that better day can start now. Each time you conquer a fear or an obstacle it makes you stronger. Sometimes you just need to take a baby step—accomplish something small and grow from there. Taking small steps turns into bigger steps, creating a momentum of success that eventually builds great things. Consider the giant trees that tower over our heads—they all started from small seeds. Your greatness starts with persevering through the small things.

THING THREE

Stop Trying to Impress Others

“A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval.” —Mark Twain

WHEN YOU MEET PEOPLE FOR the first time, what’s the first thing you do? Is it to evaluate the people and think, “Hmm, he looks unfriendly” or “She doesn’t like my type” or “That group is out of my league, I’d better avoid them.” If you think this way, then you’re judging people based on personal bias, not necessarily reality. The same applies to how we judge our own appearance.

If you shop for clothes by designer label, go out to be seen in the hottest places in town, drive the latest status car—you’re spending money to impress people. Is it worth it? I’m guessing you know the answer to that question. Being genuine means presenting your image in the same way for anyone, regardless of status or position.

Harder said than done, you might say? If so you’d be correct. Many of us would choose status over reason. A well-known study about behavior showed that if given a choice between earning \$50,000 a year with everyone else earning \$25,000, or earning \$100,000 while others earned \$200,000, the majority of people would choose the former.

The same preference works with an impressive title—most chose the title over the income. Further studies confirm that any form of status, whether it be the make of car driven or the reputation of a community, status trumps almost every other want—including the desire for happiness.

The self-esteem movement in the late 20th Century didn't help matters. Self-esteem has been linked to narcissism, prejudice, and hostility towards those who threaten our sense of self-worth. For example, we've heard of the proverbial bully who beats up on others to showcase his or her superiority; or, the self-righteous person who insists his or her way is the only way and discriminates against anyone with an alternative opinion.

Of course, low self-esteem doesn't work either, but there is recent research that suggests a more healthful alternative: forgiveness. Forgiveness and its mindful state, mercy, involves giving ourselves permission to fail, which opens us to greater introspection. Rather than being overly self-critical, it recognizes that we are all flawed human beings so that we feel empathy toward others when we fail or they fail. It also involves acceptance of others and us. Rather than suppressing our insecurities, we see our situation and ourselves as entirely safe from outside influences.

Whereas self-esteem refers to the degree to which we evaluate ourselves in comparison with others, mercy is not subject to harsh criticisms. It allows us to better relate to people in general through a more compassionate perspective. Other people don't feel judged because they are equally forgiven, not because they are privileged, rather they feel bonded through a shared sense of vulnerability. This means that with mercy, you don't have to constantly prove yourself to feel good about yourself. Mercy also offers more emotional stability because you will always have a 'get out of jail free' card.

Research indicates that mercy offers superior benefits to self-esteem (less anxiety, greater joy, etc.) without the downsides. In a significant survey conducted with over 1,000 people across all cultural

and socioeconomic statuses, it was found that mercy was associated with greater stability and self-confidence than the more selfish form of self-esteem. Mercy gives permission to fail, which opens up greater chances for risk taking and thus achievement. That's the power of forgiving yourself and others.

Indeed, when we free ourselves to be human, we tend to feel more comfortable. Conversely people are generally most comfortable with those who aren't trying to artificially impress them. That's not to say you shouldn't dress or behave appropriately for an interview or social function, it simply means you should always represent the real you—who you are on the inside. However, that's not so easy to do in a world of appearances, where subjectivity often overrules authenticity.

One of the greatest teachers of success, Dale Carnegie, wrote an overnight success considered even today as one of the all-time best for its teachings on dealing with people—it's entitled, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. He wrote about how to make people like you, and ways to win people over to your thinking. But, his pervasive theme is that none of the lessons will work if the intent is manipulation.

The word “genuine” appears throughout his writings as the foundation for winning over people. The takeaway is that only with honesty and authenticity will we be able to influence people over the long haul. Most people are pretty adept at detecting if someone is genuine or if they are ‘fake’—meaning that they are behaving unnaturally. Unfortunately, most phony people don't realize that others can recognize their fake behavior. Carnegie said that the best way to be likeable is to be interested in the other person. The famous sales trainer Zig Ziglar said it this way: “Stop selling and start helping.” In other words, get real!

The challenge is that early in life, we form approval-seeking habits. We want to be liked, so we do what we think will impress the audience we want to be liked by. This causes us to size-up those who

might influence our success. When we pre-judge people, we cause unnecessary stress and it can create a cycle of negative thoughts that automatically sets us up for failure.

We don't want people to judge us without knowing us, however we do this almost all of the time. Key to overcoming this tendency is to stop judging and stay focused on the moment with a beginner's mind. A beginner's mind starts fresh, with no preconceived expectations, and considers that everyone has inherent value beyond what we see at first glance. When we do this, the added benefit is that we feel less obligated to impress others.

Maybe you've heard something like, "People make-up their mind about you in the first 30 seconds after meeting you," or "There's no second chance for making a first impression." This way of thinking places a lot of unnecessary pressure on you. To get over this pressure-cooker mindset, try considering how you feel when others try to impress you. Most likely, their contrived behavior made you feel they were faking it because they were trying too hard, or it made you feel they were perhaps hiding something. Your preference would be for that person to relax and just be natural. Now turn that perspective around for yourself. If you try too hard to impress others, most likely you won't. If you relax and just be yourself, you will better attract the people who you want to attract. But, first you need to overcome some bias.

Overcoming our human tendency to think the worst, by believing someone may not like us, requires a more positive outlook. The truth is, you may feel you don't have someone's approval when really you do. Just because a person hasn't said anything or appears negative doesn't tell all. Maybe that person is just having a bad day. You may be reading something into the person or situation via the false narrative that naturally plays in our minds.

The temptation can be to start dwelling on what hidden motives a person might possess. For example, if someone doesn't speak with you at first, your false narrative may cause you to think, "They're

avoiding me because they don't like me." That probably isn't true. Try instead to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. In most situations where we expect a favorable encounter with someone...voila—one happens! That's because our interpretations of what we visualize or hear from people tend to be much more negative or frightening than what people actually believe or think. So we need to stop projecting our negative bias onto others.

The good news is that what you think is completely your own concern, and under your control. What someone else thinks is their own concern, and outside of your control. You wouldn't want someone else telling you what to think, so why would you try to control other people's opinion of you? They're allowed to think whatever they want, even if it's contrary to what you want. That's their privilege. Just as it's your privilege to maintain your opinion. So, the simple solution is don't worry about what others think, just respect their opinion. You don't have to agree with it, just respect that they're entitled to their own thoughts and leave it at that.

When you're consumed about what someone is thinking, then you become distracted from what really matters. As soon as you start saying things like, "He didn't treat me fairly", "She doesn't respect me enough," or "He isn't concerned with what's most important," your mind turns away from what matters most to you. The big relief happens when your focus returns to what you can control. Other people can have their own opinions, but your opinion really matters most to you. And, the freeing effect of just considering your own opinion allows others to relate more genuinely to you as a result.

So, the next time you start thinking, "He didn't treat me fairly", remind yourself to stay focused on your own cares and then ask yourself, "What's the most important thing I need to do?" The answer will probably be something like, "I'm in control of me and what I do." It's quite freeing to stay focused on your own issues without needing to control the other person, or to interpret someone else's thoughts.

Too often we ignore our own needs to either impress others, which in a sense is an attempt to control the thoughts of others. By focusing on only what we can control, ourselves, we actually gain approval from others because they see us as confident and in control. Those perceived as 'comfortable in their own skin' embrace their authenticity, their quirkiness, their all—because they've already determined what's most important to them, and the rest doesn't matter much. People tend to respect those who know what they want and need. Conversely, those who continually seek approval usually elicit the opposite effect.

This includes trying to be overly polite to others. Instead of being perceived as considerate, oftentimes people interpret obsequious politeness as a forced way of making a better impression. Still worse are those who make excuses. Even though it wasn't your fault that a report was late, any excessive attempt to make excuses can be perceived as a contrived attempt to manage your self-image. It's best to earn respect through an honest portrayal of the truth, regardless of the consequences, and to question the need for making excuses.

Our approval seeking habits must be broken to relieve us of a terrible burden. Once accomplished, we can simply enjoy another person's company, without feeling stressed to be quick-witted or entertaining. We won't be tempted to interrupt others, and instead we can focus on what they're saying. There'll be no need to make unnecessary apologies or excuses. Stress will begin to decline because you no longer need approval from others.

Your success will rise as well as your joy. So, let the burden go. You don't need anyone else's approval because only your approval of you matters. And, this paradigm shift will make life so much more enjoyable. By giving yourself permission to be you, you are free to live in the moment. Focus on your own intentions, without sizing up others around you, and you'll do fine. There's no need to be overly polite, overly apologetic, or defensive. Once you develop the habit of concentrating on your needs and just accept others for who they are, you'll relieve yourself of a tremendous burden. You really don't need anyone else's approval!

THING FOUR

The Difference Between Defeat and Victory Is a Growth Mindset

“You become what you think about most of the time.” —Brian Tracy

HAVE YOU EVER MISPERCEIVED A situation because you were too stressed, angry with someone, or felt some bias from others? Of course, we all have felt this way at one time or another. Such factors can cloud our thinking and rob us of our happiness. The good news is we can train ourselves to think rationally, clearly, and positively, no matter the situation.

The problem usually occurs when feeling overwhelmed, causing our self-confidence to suffer. We become less positive. We constantly communicate with ourselves through self-talk, and when we doubt our abilities, we set ourselves up for failure, and this invariably hurts our performance. Getting stuck in that place of defeatism can now be tracked to how our mind functions.

Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck found that some people have a “fixed mindset” and believe that they cannot change their capabilities. Other people have a “growth mindset.” The growers believe they can work toward improving themselves. Dweck and her colleagues studied

373 students and tracked their academic performance from the beginning of seventh grade through the end of the eighth. They found that those with a growth mindset thought, "I can make this better"—which led to a rise in grade point average, while those with a fixed mindset remained the same. The thriving students thought this way: *I never lose . . . either I win or I learn.*

The key to a growth mindset is to consider our ability as increasing, not static. Consider a study that confirmed that if, before taking an IQ test, people read an article saying that IQ is changeable instead of fixed based on genes, their IQ scores improve. This and other research validates the theory that simply believing change is possible makes change possible.

However, the world around us tends to counter this attitude with peoples' opinions that state otherwise. Those around us and the media we hear are brimming over with stories of failure. Around the water cooler at work—we talk about the failures and flaws of others. In our jobs, we function from a limited perspective based on a negativity bias. These negative thoughts impose a greater effect on one's psychological state and processes than do neutral or positive things. In other words, something very positive will generally have less of an impact on our behavior and cognition than something equally emotional but negative.

This kind of negativity bias may be comforting when shared with others of similar opinions, but it doesn't constitute leadership. Leadership requires much more. It starts with taking on a growth mindset in figuring out what should be done—to make things better.

I once worked with Aaron, a vice president of a healthcare company, who was faced with a performance problem, and he was trying to make sense of what had gone wrong. Aaron had been working on the launch of a new pharmaceutical for his company. He was the lead member of a multifunctional launch team. The team was charged with developing a launch plan to primary care physicians and managed care markets. This new drug was vital to Aaron's company, because

the market share of several of its core pharmaceuticals was eroding due to patent expirations.

Each member of the launch team was assigned one aspect of the new pharmaceutical and its execution to the market. Aaron's primary responsibility was to focus on getting the drug on formulary with key customer groups. After several weeks of work, he came up with a detailed plan for making the drug available to managed care markets, drugstores, and physicians.

The project team met once a week, with each member of the team reporting on his or her area of responsibility. Aaron's supervisor, the division president, wanted each team member to learn about each other's assignments, and thereby produce a more effective launch strategy. Aaron, on the other hand, wanted to ensure that he was doing things right from the perspective of the company's leadership, which to him meant: "Make no mistakes."

Initially after creating an execution plan, Aaron was very pleased with his work on the launch project saying to me, "I thought I did a very good job." However, when Aaron was tasked with presenting his plan to the Board of Directors, several members of the Board roundly criticized his proposal. They felt his team's plan did not adequately target the most important customers who might benefit from the new drug.

Aaron was shaken. After the meeting, the division president took him aside and asked Aaron how much he really understood about the new pharmaceutical being launched. "I've done my research," Aaron replied, "and I've listened to our science team." If that was true, the president asked, how could he be so out of alignment with the leadership team regarding the drug's positioning?

Aaron maintained his stance that he had done everything possible to create an effective plan, which exasperated his supervisor all the more. As Aaron's coach, I urged him to think about how he could adopt a growth mindset in order to make the project a success. He called me a few days later to say, "I should have owned my

responsibility instead of making excuses, and then move forward by expanding the team's scope to do more than what our competitors' had already done in the marketplace—to make this launch better than any we had ever done."

Aaron proceeded to interview his team members and other key stakeholders within the company, and then applied his broad skills and talents to think through every aspect of the drug's positioning. He even conducted some of his own research with key opinion leaders within the industry, uncovering how competitive drugs were being positioned, and what would make physicians change their prescribing habits. After doing all this work, Aaron began to realize that his initial recommendations were from a fixed mindset, based on traditional approaches the company had used with less than stellar results in times past.

Aaron realized that he had learned something valuable from this experience. His success was confirmed when his supervisor told him, "Aaron, now you're acting like the leader we all expected you to be. Define your job broadly, rather than narrowly."

Aaron promised himself that in the future, he wouldn't think like a narrow functionary, but instead approach his work from a growth perspective. Aaron's new growth mindset helped expand his ability to breakthrough existing paradigms through a new prism for assessing his thinking. And, the net result was the company's most successful launch ever thanks to Aaron's renewed approach with the task force.

Many people limit themselves through a fear-based approach that defines future results based on past convictions. Having a negative bias they fail to take into account key considerations that are crucial to making a good decision for fear of failure. Each of us has blind spots, may be prone to ideological points of view, or may be unaware of our own subtle biases. As a result, we each need to view success as an inevitable outcome, overcoming our bias to consider alternative ideas while growing forward, better than before.

For many of us we've been taught that we need to climb the proverbial corporate ladder. This oftentimes represents a fixed mindset that success equates to just getting ahead, which can translate into a belief that any other option represents failure. But climbing that ladder sometimes just leads to another rung. More important than just climbing higher in the hierarchy is getting closer to your personal best. That's a growth mindset.

The greatest leaders seek opportunity, not status. When asked for the best advice ever given to him, IBM CEO and Chairman Sam Palmisano answered: "The best advice was from a former boss who told me, 'Don't view your career as a linear progression.' He advised me to take horizontal rather than vertical steps; to try out situations that are unstructured, to learn different ways of working, and to get outside of headquarters and experience different cultures."

Some of the most successful people never rose to the ranks of CEO or President, however they did expand their limited abilities to break through boundaries in achieving something greater than themselves. They became satisfied through achievement, not status. So becoming victorious had less to do with position and more to do with possibilities.

A new growth mindset paradigm for getting ahead focuses on incremental personal and collective growth versus attaining rank. In his breakthrough reasoning for human motivation called *Theory Z*, Abraham Maslow attempted to assimilate the entrepreneurial spirit of the American worker with the dedication of the Japanese worker by theorizing that higher productivity and satisfaction could be achieved through less frequent promotions and a greater commitment to advancing the entire organization. In other words, working for us versus just for me. As personal status becomes more irrelevant, it frees the individual to seek areas of greater challenge minus the burden of just getting ahead.

The term "intrapreneur" was coined in the 1980s for someone who displays the same characteristics as an entrepreneur, but remains

with an organization as an employee. In today's workplace, organizations that encourage intrapreneurship (i.e., risk takers, innovators) foster a culture that harvests potential by tapping into the positive energy of workers, instead of tacitly condoning political maneuvering which can damage moral and stifle productivity.

When people within an organization start overriding their desires to simply get ahead with an earnest desire to learn, create, and contribute to the organization, both the employee and company thrive. Success is not a position—it's a contribution—and a mindset.

So allow me to ask you this question: "What areas of your life do you need to move from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset?" One approach to counteract any self-doubt is to consciously note your thoughts—either physically write them down or make mental records of how you talk to yourself. Then look for habits of thought, repetitive stories, or words that feed into a negative narrative.

Assess the validity of the narrative. Is it rational or imagined? Ask for feedback from others to confirm or refute questions about performance. If your negative thoughts tell you that you are not up to the job or an undertaking, then benchmark against others who are in similar positions, or who have succeeded in ways similar to what you expect of yourself, and compare your qualifications to the actual standards required of the job or task.

Sometimes your personal bias may inflate your impression of others, so clarify the (measurable) requirements of whatever needs to be accomplished. If they are not met, adjust the performance. If they are being met or are tracking toward completion, that's success!

If you've established clear requirements, and you are doing your best to meet them, then anyone with a fair perspective should view your work and life positively. If not, those naysayers are being unfair and you need to accept that as their bias, not as your reality. You need to keep telling yourself the truth to turn your negative thoughts into positive ones.

For irrational feelings of failure, you can tell yourself things like, “I am competent at this. I have worked diligently to meet the requirements. I will succeed.” If someone or something outside of your control feeds into the negative narrative, you can tell yourself things like, “Fair people will recognize my success. I am not going to believe irrational criticism.”

Positive assertions turn our self-speak into a positive narrative, enabling us to succeed because of ourselves—and, that's a growth mindset!

THING FIVE

Failure Is Inevitable, Resilience Is Indispensable

"If you learn something from a defeat it isn't a loss." —Autumn Worcester

A GREY MOUSE LIVED IN the attic of a house. He made a little hole in the ceiling through which he could watch and hear what was going on in the room below. One day the mother of the family living in the house went to the grocery store and returned. She started unpacking all the food. The mouse watched, marveling at all the good foods to eat. Suddenly a mousetrap fell out of the bag onto the floor. This shocked and frightened the grey mouse, so he scrambled to tell the other mice in the attic.

A speckled mouse he approached was not at all worried about the mousetrap. "What can that mousetrap do to me?" she said. "I just want the food in the kitchen," she said to the grey mouse.

The grey mouse just shook his head. Meanwhile, the speckled mouse darted through a hole in the roof that connected to a hole leading to the kitchen. The grey mouse went over to look through the hole in the ceiling. To his amazement the speckled mouse had raced over to a piece of cheese that had been placed in the mousetrap.

The grey mouse wanted to yell “stop” but didn’t dare say anything should he be caught. Just then he heard a snap! The speckled mouse’s tail had been caught in the mousetrap. But then something even more amazing happened. The speckled mouse began eating the cheese, and smiled with delight while the grey mouse ran back to his little corner to hide.

What’s the point of this story? Once you’re caught in a mousetrap, just eat the cheese. Such is the story of resilience, that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes.

Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make someone resilient, among them optimism, a positive attitude, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback. Even after misfortune, resilient people are equipped with such an outlook that they are able to change course and move on.

Results are usually not perfect the first time you try something. In a world with shifting goals and expectations, people are often forced to get the job done with less than adequate preparation. If you’re the type of person who feels uncomfortable when you can’t be your best at something or when things don’t go according to plan, you’ll always be subject to feeling disappointed when situations fall out of your control.

According to experts, one of the best ways to deal with life’s disappointments and the anxiety they cause is to adapt to challenging circumstances, much like the speckled mouse, which is the very definition of resilience. When you are resilient, your confidence is not dependent on your performance. You can play a lousy game of golf, shooting well over one hundred—someone who is not resilient might feel she’s not a great player.

But if you’re resilient, you can still get enthused by how much you learned from those mistakes and how you are improving your abilities.

You can also appreciate how much value the game brings to you regardless of your score. That's a very freeing attitude to adopt.

Unfortunately we've been taught to strive for greatness while missing the benefits of just enjoying and learning the "game." The irony is that a resilient attitude actually leads to greatness—as a byproduct, not a motivation. The key is to acknowledge that one—or even a hundred—screw-ups do not define you.

Resilient people are consumed with the journey as much if not more than the destination, and that journey is about learning and growing. They are curious about life and eager to embrace new challenges because their expectations are not self-limiting, not solely dependent on others, and they are not bound by the game's scorecard.

Here are some tips to develop your resilience:

Expect What's Bad to Get Better

If you lose your job, you may not feel happy the next day. Or even the next month. But eventually with time, some positive turn of events will begin to enter your life. If you want to fully recover, you must expect that good things will happen, says Phyllis Zilkha, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Manhattan. "If you're expecting only bad things to happen, how resilient can you be? Why push on? What's the difference?" Optimism, Zilkha says, is the greatest factor for recovering from adversity. It's what makes some of us seek out solutions instead of hiding in the corner like that little grey mouse.

Think About Other Things

The looping memory of bad situations just naturally happens, but we need an escape to short-circuit that looping hardship. Taking on a new hobby or going on a vacation can help bridge to some new, more pleasant experiences—a change of habit shifts your focus from yourself to other experiences and may even help you see your troubles

in a more positive light. One study at Vanderbilt University found that volunteering reduces depression and enhances happiness, physical health, self-esteem, and our overall sense of control. Try jumping into a hobby that you can lose yourself in. Moments of escape can focus our attention on fresh possibilities.

Use a Sense of Humor

Dr. Sarah Charman, of the University of Portsmouth's Institute of Criminal Justice Studies, examined the role of humor in the workplace of ambulance crews and police officers and found it provides comfort and creates a bond that crosses the occupational divide. She said: "Emergency workers frequently find themselves in unpleasant and unpredictable situations at odds with the heroic status and image presented in television dramas. They regularly deal with death or near-death. They face messy and mortifying situations the rest of us never have to encounter."

Humor dampens down our natural fight-or-flight reaction to negative events and lowers our stress hormones. It also shifts our perception of a difficult situation from an emergency to a less distressing issue, so we can calm down, look at it from different angles and cope with it better. When you feel that you have done the best you can in addressing questions like 'Why did this happen to me?', take a break and experience something that makes you laugh.

Maintain an Attitude of Gratitude

Studies have shown that people who actively list the things they are grateful for on a regular basis felt better about their lives and are more optimistic about their future. The joy-maximizing benefits of gratitude or thankfulness even helped people living with life-threatening illnesses. To paraphrase a famous line in *Mary Poppins*, "a spoon full of sugar (or gratefulness) helps the medicine go down."

Think: This Too Shall Pass

Think of some of the worst situations you've experienced. Did you get through them? How? When we consider that we've overcome trials before, and how, we develop confidence that we can do it again. Because it's true! Everything in life is dynamic and ever changing, including bad times. Nothing bad lasts forever. Even if you've been diagnosed with a terrible illness, that feeling will subside a little when you learn about treatments and start working toward improving your health.

You may feel adrift with panic in the midst of a trial, but the good news is that trials end—always. A bad event may not turn out wonderful, but things can be better and in the process you will have gained new knowledge and learned new skills for making the next situation better.

All said, when things don't go according to plan allow yourself some flexibility to improvise. Reward yourself for just trying instead of criticizing yourself for not being the best, or even close. This attitude will allow you to try and try again—to face the next challenge with greater self-confidence and have a lot more fun in the process.

THING SIX

Discover Who You Were Created to Be

“A sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply going on.” — C.S. Lewis

DURING SOME DAYS, DO YOU feel that there's something deeper you could be a doing? Do you feel the pull towards something but you can't exactly pin it down—it eludes you and frustrates you?

You've probably heard stories from people who have lived out their calling; the Steve Jobs of the world who jumped headfirst into his purpose to pioneer the microcomputer revolution of the 1970s. Deep down you wish you had this “knowing” to pull you forward.

Honestly, you do: it just takes a little digging to uncover the truth. Think of uncovering your purpose like the work of a master sculptor, slowly chipping away the block of stone to reveal a masterpiece underneath. Your life's purpose is this masterpiece, simply waiting beneath the surface to be revealed.

The fastest way to uncovering your life's purpose is through the art of introspection: diving into the deeper passion that pulls you onto a roadway that leads to a dream, and then a calling. Think of your life's

purpose as a street sign leading to your holy grail; for some, that street sign comes in the form of a certain career or profession, while for others it looks like a way of being or expression, and for many it takes the form of volunteering to help others.

Your passions and talents direct you to your calling, but there is another step needed to uncover the sign directing you to your purpose in life. You must discover the problem(s) you are tailored to solve. There is something in the world that really bothers you. It's not a mere annoyance, but a grating, gnawing problem that eats away at your ability to enjoy life. Perhaps it's some terrible injustice, like world hunger, or disease, the lack of good education in high schools, a corrupt work environment, or elder abuse.

Mother Teresa walked the streets of Calcutta and became increasingly disturbed by the neglected people in poverty. So she began feeding the hungry and caring for the sick. In 1948 she left her Catholic order of nuns to serve the poor full-time. She found an abandoned building to house the sick living on the streets, and eventually founded the Missionaries of Charity and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. Mother Teresa found a solution to her deep sorrow.

Everyone with a purpose (that's you and me) needs to undo what bothers us the most. A truly inspired oncologist must eradicate the problem of cancer whenever possible. A dedicated criminal attorney must work to ensure that people are not treated unjustly. An inspired children's caseworker must prevent the problem of abuse. A devoted librarian must solve the problem of illiteracy. A business leader must fill a missing public need for a product or service. These problems relate directly to helping others, and the process for addressing them points the way to our purpose.

The process begins with questions. Questions unlock doors of opportunity for us, by asking questions about every kind of situation, and every kind of problem. And then listening for the answers begins the learning process. The first question you must ask yourself is this: "How can I add value for others?" If you can eliminate the distractions

long enough to the answer from within yourself, you will begin to understand your why. Achieving a life of significance happens from the ability to add value to others through a soul-searching endeavor to uncover a solution. Try nurturing that idea while learning to ask that important "why" question.

One way to discover your why is to focus on your dreams and aspirations, and see what grows from that. In his book *Aspire!* Kevin Hall writes, "The first thing I do when I'm coaching someone who aspires to stretch, grow and go higher in life is to have that person select the one word that best describes him or her. Once a person does that, it's as if he or she has turned to a page in a book and highlighted one word. Instead of seeing three hundred different words on the page, the person's attention, and intention, is focused immediately on that single word, that single gift. What the individual focuses on expands."

What is your one word? What best describes you? That single word may inspire you, focus your attention, and help you to understand your why. Where will that one word take you? How does it relate to adding value to others? Will it solve that insufferable dilemma? Why is it significant? Keep that one word in your mind as you go about your day in the coming weeks and see where it leads you. That one word is like a flashing light that says "go." And it speaks beyond merely your wants to a compulsion that cannot be ignored, to a place even beyond your passion.

Your passion leads you to your vocation, whereas answering the why, and that one word that describes you, as well as identifying that intolerable problem you can no longer endure leads you toward your mission in life. You need not dedicate your career toward solving that problem. You may instead volunteer or do something else without receiving an income. Your mission may even turn into a career. But you *must* do it, or else not heeding the why of your existence will cause despair. Working to add value to others in response to that gnawing problem will cause you to thrive.

You were indeed created to solve a problem, to answer the why of your existence, and your satisfaction in life depends on your success in finding that significant problem and solving it. Most successful people look outside of themselves and find a problem, which eventually defines their life. Rather than developing themselves first and then leading a life, they are called by a problem, and that calling gradually forms their development.

Sometimes it's a tragedy. A family member may have been the victim of a violent crime, which compelled a relative to become a police officer. A mentally ill loved one may be the impetus for creating a support group. After my daughter was violently attacked she started The Defense Shop (www.thedefenseshop.com) which provides self-defense and survival products. Now she helps protect men and women from the possibility of similar attacks.

When a problem becomes a blood-fueled living force that boils over into consistent anger or frustration, not solving it would be tantamount to being disloyal to you. In one case, Dr. Phil Johnson has worked to find a cure for Mitochondrial disease, a group of disorders that is caused by dysfunctional mitochondria, that part of the cell that generates its energy. His young son Kyle eventually died, most likely because of this disease (at the time of Kyle's death little was known about the human genome). Recalls Dr. Johnson about his son, "I will never forget his beautiful blue eyes, his blond hair, him not wanting the oxygen tube on and holding his gentle hand. He would look at me with assurance because his dad was with him as he always had been. It wasn't long before Kyle passed away. Despite the fact that he was on a ventilator, in my mind's eye I remember hearing him say bye bye while waving his hand to me. He was then gone."

During those moments of deep suffering, Dr. Johnson found the problem he was created to solve. Perhaps he was destined to solve the problem that caused his son's death. As of this writing Dr. Johnson is working to cure Mitochondrial disease. He started by asking why his

son was suffering, and then he made a conscious decision to find a solution for future sufferers.

So answering the why of your life begins with a question, and that answer leads you toward finding your intolerable problem and making it your life's work to solve that problem so that you can add value to others. Living with intention is the best way toward satisfying the purpose for which you were created, and for thriving in life.

THING SEVEN

Use Integrity Intelligence

"The reputation of a thousand years may be determined by the conduct of one hour." —Japanese Proverb

IN MY TRAINING ORGANIZATION, *PACESETTERS* (www.pacesetters.training), we surveyed over 200 professionals from various companies across a broad spectrum, from around the world, this simple question was posed: "Has integrity stayed the same, increased, or decreased over the past ten years?" Over 80% in this group answered that integrity has "decreased." Time and again we find that the general consensus believes society's character and integrity are waning in favor of expediency.

We only have to look at daily news headlines to see how integrity, once applauded and highly valued, has become degraded and devalued at an alarming rate. Compromises in character and integrity have become more commonplace; causing many to expect it, if not accept it. Instead of thriving they expect to just survive or strive through the milieu of low expectations.

We appear to be on a slippery slope that is steadily leading to a cultural shift in values. This alarming trend begs more questions as to

why and how this happened—and is there a solution to the world's "crisis of integrity?"

Almost everyone in our PACEsetters' surveyed group agreed that integrity is a personal choice, an unyielding commitment to demonstrate moral and ethical principles. Most of us can agree that these virtues serve the common good of society. However, when evaluating integrity overall, an essential factor seems to be lacking. That internal drive that guides persons towards making moral and ethical choices has become less focused on social influences, and more on selfish rewards.

Maybe that's because most of our responses are largely visceral and often predetermined by our behavioral and personality types, in combination with our life experiences. Our family, our teachers, our culture, our spiritual mentors, and the context of history in which we live, on the other hand, largely shape our character. When these powerful influences turn negative, we need to offset them to choose a path that will ultimately lead to the common good. In essence, we need to take the "antidote" to selfishness.

This antidote is comprised of several essential character traits that nurture integrity—empathy/transparency/honesty/faith/compassion/fairness/self-control/honor. Factors such as fear, insecurity, unbridled ambition, workaholism, anger, lack of spirituality, and ignorance can change people's personalities and the values by which they live; distorting reality and ultimately leading to the tragic loss of both personal and professional integrity.

To raise the level of one's integrity, a person must consistently monitor his or her honesty by assessing the key character traits necessary to make sure that one's personal and professional choices demonstrate integrity. In the course of our research, the following traits were deemed most important in developing integrity. Those that practice these "Laws of Integrity" exhibit a high degree of what we now term, "**Integrity Intelligence**" (II):

- 1) Tell the truth ALL of the time—no 'white lies,' no fudging the truth to appease someone, by saying something like, "you're doing a great job," when you really don't believe so. That doesn't mean offending someone with the truth, it just means being truthful in everything (in a tactful and caring way). High II people are first and foremost, truth-seekers and truth-tellers.
- 2) When you say "yes" or commit to something, do it. As an example, the other day someone told me he would call me back the next day. He did not, so that counts as a lie from someone exhibiting low II.
- 3) Do not allow your self-esteem to rise and fall with the opinion of others. An insecure person will be swayed by every change in public opinion. Persons with low self-esteem tend to exhibit low integrity (low II).
- 4) Do not mislead someone by agreeing to do something that is not realistic or within your control, like saying you will change a situation when someone else controls the outcome. High II people understand their limits of control.
- 5) Persons with high II avoid gossip like the plague, by communicating any sensitive or potentially negative information first with the individual directly affected by this information, without needing to share it with others. The only exception would be if the information sharer feels threatened, in which case he/she would share this information with a position directly responsible for the matter (e.g., a supervisor). There's an old adage that supports this type of communication: "Don't say anything about a person that you would not be comfortable sharing face to face with that person."

- 6) Set realistic expectations, by trying to under promise and over deliver. For example, a potential customer shouldn't lead-on a sales person by saying "I'll think about it" when that customer has no intention of buying the sales person's service or product. High II persons establish expectations upfront.
- 7) Demonstrate empathy by placing yourself in the other person's position, especially when you dislike that person. Ask yourself what caused that person to behave the way he/she did? And, how would you react if you were in that person's 'skin?' Persons with high empathy skills tend to also have II.
- 8) Don't hide things. Especially if you're keeping unnecessary secrets, like being silent about a piece of information because you want a 'leg-up' or advantage over someone. A person with a high level of II builds collaboration, not silos.
- 9) Be kind and considerate to everyone in your family, workplace, and wherever you go (like store clerks, service attendants, reservationists, etc.). Treat everyone with the same respect, irrespective of position or influence. People with low II tend to display false flattery and readily dismiss those deemed "insignificant."
- 10) Instead of being judgmental, try leading with understanding, like considering why someone acted badly (maybe he/she received some tragic news or that person was just having a bad day). Try also to objectively consider alternative viewpoints. High II persons have low confirmation bias.
- 11) On a scale of one to five, rate your level of fairness in each situation. Were you unprejudiced and even-handed? Do this routinely and you will change poor habits of unfairness and increase your II.

- 12) Ask others for feedback, and thank them for candid evaluations, because sometimes other people will let you know that something you did, or are about to do, is not right—thus aiding your personal growth. Accountability groups increase II.
- 13) Do not make too many compromises. Remain open to new ways of doing something, but without trying to please everyone. Low II people tend to be 'people pleasers.'
- 14) For any problem, share your responsibility when appropriate, and confess your mistakes. Transparency builds trust and II.
- 15) Learn how to be assertive so that you can defend an ethical position from a point of conviction, without becoming hostile or aggressive. High II practitioners use "tactful assertiveness."
- 16) Surround yourself with people of high integrity (II), and they will uplift you and support you in your quest for personal improvement.
- 17) Do not obsess over minor details, and do not create unnecessary deadlines, especially those that are not realistic. We tend to view high II persons as 'real,' open-minded, and adaptable.
- 18) Resist the temptation to do something purely for your own interest, without considering the implications on others. An 'others-focus' increases II.
- 19) Know the difference between humor and hostility by discerning whether a joke makes light of a situation, or is attacking the character of someone—the former is fine, the latter is unacceptable. High II people tend to use more self-deprecating type humor.

- 20) Resist being tempted by the need for positive reinforcement or rewards that exclude others. High II persons consider helping others as a reward in itself.
- 21) Avoid seeming cocky when acting with integrity, by remaining humble and trying to protect others' reputations as well as your own reputation. Humility is one of the most observed characteristics of high II persons.
- 22) Keep the rules set by society and your employer, unless these rules violate your moral conscious (e.g., discrimination, harassment, cheating). When rules violate morality, be open and willing to endure the consequences of being a contrarian or whistleblower. High II people like Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa broke through social barriers with II.

It's critical that we withstand the pressures that can compromise our integrity by consistently practicing these traits that increase Integrity Intelligence. Just saying "I'm going to do these things" probably won't suffice. Normal situations don't really test our integrity. Crises do. But when a crisis comes, it's often too late to fix what's wrong. Too often the damage happens before we can react. So the solution is to prepare yourself in advance of the crisis, by establishing your moral absolutes (e.g., values) that must remain immutable.

As the world becomes more relativistic, it also becomes more difficult to maintain personal integrity. Ethical truths in a relativistic world depend on circumstances, and if your values are continually changing in response to events, there can be no personal integrity. That's why personal integrity seems to be disappearing in our world.

Try asking yourself these three questions to clarify your values:

- Are you certain something is true and not just a fabrication of your confirmation bias?
- Is what you are doing essential in producing a positive outcome, or is it just to make yourself look better?
- Is the way you are treating people kind and considerate rather than discourteous and unfeeling?

Ideally, your behavior and thinking will reflect all three of these test filters. At times, in order to protect your personal integrity, you may feel it necessary to say or do something that you know to be true, but it doesn't seem very kind. In these situations, it's usually best to examine your intent—is it coming from a place of genuine caring or a desire for the greater good? And if you do decide to express your sentiment, do it with a caring attitude with respect for the other person's situation, and in consideration of their point of view.

When we live with integrity, we respect others and ourselves equally, by living in a manner that is consistent with our values, purpose and mission. These factors should govern each decision that we make, thus making success a shared outcome with others.

Unlike natural intelligence, Integrity Intelligence must be kept continuously top-of-mind, lest we fall into the temptation of compromise. By always focusing on developing relationships built on mutual trust and respect, we all win. Living with integrity brings clarity and peace to our lives, allowing us to make clear decisions, and ensuring that only what matters most gets done. When we live with integrity, there is a looping process of success that says: "I am at peace with myself and others." And we call that—living with integrity!

THING EIGHT

To Thrive, Choose Your Friends Carefully

“The best advisor is one who can be your ally, advocate, and adversary when he or she needs to be.” —Carol M. Roberts.

STAYING THE RIGHT COURSE REQUIRES choosing wise counselors and accountability partners. George Washington surrounded himself with a close circle of friends like Hamilton and Jefferson to help him weigh decisions. Only after heeding his mother’s advice and that of his close circle of friends like Jefferson and Hamilton did Washington decide not to follow his childhood dream of joining the British navy, and instead went on to become commander in chief of the entire military forces of the United States of America. Throughout history, people who made a difference have done so not by themselves but through the counsel of others.

The people with whom we spend the most time often influence us the most. It is often said that you are the average of the five people that surround you. With whom we associate will determine whether we rise to the heights of the solution-makers or sink to the depths of the naysayers. That, coupled with constant learning, determines

success, and who better to learn from than those whose present skills and experiences are superior (or at least different) to our own?

Surround ourselves with the people we want to be like, and we will become more like them. It's really that simple if we want to develop ourselves. Are you looking to grow in your professional and personal life? If "yes," then ask yourself—from whom are you learning, and which persons comprise your networking group? For your personal relationships, does your circle of friends include those that support you, love you for who you are, including your imperfections? Do you feel that they would be there for you through even the darkest of times?

Having an honest and committed accountability group or partner can be the single greatest asset for life and career. A team of three-to-five accountability partners who meet at least once a month will invariably strengthen your abilities, especially if at least one of them acts as a mentor/coach willing to interact more frequently with you.

Ad hoc members of our advisory team should also include respected authors/speakers whose books or tapes we've gone through. Networking groups such as clubs, seminars, and Internet groups are great ways to stay plugged in with others to seek advice. Diversity, as with people outside our own company or profession, also adds different perspectives. For personal challenges, such as getting in shape or competing, accountability partners help push us to the finish line.

A former coaching session I completed for a struggling executive reinforced for me the need to maintain quality people in our life. This executive had fallen into the temptation of a sexual relationship that proved devastating to his team and company. His supporters abandoned him, and he found himself as a pariah in the organization. My suggestion for this fallen leader was to develop a tight-knit, small inner circle of people to positively lift him up in his personal and professional life, and to relinquish his former group that had enabled his destructive behaviors. I'm pleased to report that at the time of this

writing, this executive accepted my challenge and is now on a positive pathway toward restoration.

Now, I encourage you to evaluate those within your inner circle. Determine the closest five people that surround you, and ask yourself if they do the following for you:

- Inspire you to be the best version of you.
- Are loyal to you through both the best of times and the challenging times in your life.
- Demonstrate integrity by challenging you to do what's best, and by following through with their commitments.
- Make you feel like you have what it takes to achieve your dreams.
- Energize you after spending time with them.
- Teach you something positive through their wisdom and experience.
- Care for you despite all of your imperfections.

It's in our DNA to want to be around people with whom we agree, but we also need healthy conflict and differing perspectives to determine the truth, and to spark creativity. If everyone in your group has a similar point of view, your professional life will suffer from confirmation bias, rarely breaking through repetitive failures, and not providing the growth that can lead to success.

So take a fresh look at your network. Are your "groupies" the same ones you've had for years? Are they all in the same industry and have the same ideologies? Do they agree with your point of view on almost everything? It may be time to shake things up and get uncomfortable. As a leader, it can be challenging to create an environment in which people will freely express dissension, but healthy conflict produces **betterment, not "bitterment."**

Here are five tips for engaging people who will expand your abilities and increase your success:

- 1) Identify your common habits by asking others for feedback, and **break at least one bad habit** by creating a new one that can foster greater success. *Practice that new habit for at least 30 days in order to make it a normal pattern of behavior.* Then check-in with your accountability partner(s) to see if they notice a difference.
- 2) Actively **seek out those who will challenge your existing paradigms**. Be careful to find only people who are committed to your success, not just those trying to criticize you. *Start by encouraging your current network to help you identify your blind spots.*
- 3) **Develop empathy** for those different from you by imagining yourself in their position, or simply by spending time with them in order to better understand their perspective. *Empathy develops through an objective desire to learn from others who do not share our commonalities.* Try finding someone with whom you have a problem, and invite that person to coffee or lunch saying something like, "I want to learn more about you, so that I can glean from your experiences and perspectives."
- 4) **Celebrate successes (and failures) with gratitude**. The purpose of growing through committed relationships is to achieve success for everyone in your circle. This includes sharing key learnings with an "attitude of gratitude" for failures as well as successes. *We learn from our successes, but we grow from our failures.* Celebrating both creates a positive shift and momentum for *moving forward*.

- 5) **Be vulnerable.** When we confess our shortcomings, it creates "psychological air" for others to open themselves to us. Trust is built on the field of transparency. By admitting failures and sharing success we all thrive. That's because *failures shared lesson failure, whereas successes shared increase success!*

In order to grow, you must surround yourself with those who grow you toward who you wish to become. Being the best of who you can be takes from the best of who others have become!

THING NINE

Master the Instincts of Persuasion

“Who speaks to the instincts speaks to the deepest in mankind, and finds the readiest response.” —Amos Bronson Alcott

EVER HEARD OF A REAL estate or car sales person say that someone else is interested in purchasing that house or car you’re looking at, and if you don’t buy it now you may lose it? How about a politician who frames a debate by explaining his position as “pro-life” or “pro-choice” because the word “pro” is more positive than the word “anti”?

These are techniques for persuading others to buy-in by creating a sense of urgency and desire—albeit stealthily. Truth be told, persuasion is about influencing our deepest instincts, like the common social instinct of reciprocity that involves our obligation to return favors done by others. Or priming, our instinct caused by stimuli that affects how we perceive short-term thoughts and actions. An example of priming would be noticing other cars just like the one you bought; or eating a piece of candy and desiring a second piece of candy even more than the first piece.

A study entitled "An Attribution Analysis of Communicator Characteristics on Opinion Change: the Case of Communicator

Attractiveness” examined the effects of attractiveness and message content on persuasion. They surveyed undergraduate students on communicators’ attractiveness and whether or not they were persuaded to take the speaker’s position on a topic, whether desirable or undesirable. The results showed that participants were more likely to agree with attractive speakers in general.

Social psychologist and author Robert Cialdini PhD explains in his book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (HarperBusiness, 2006) that all of us have certain “fixed-action patterns” that trigger automatic responses without us even realizing them. The example of the car sales person is what Cialdini calls the principle of *scarcity*—“buy it now or lose it.”

Another proven principle of what’s called fixed-action human behavior states that when we ask someone to do a favor for us, we’ll be more successful if we provide a reason, using the word “because.” Connecting words like “instead of” or “or else” actually dissuade buy-in. The most persuasive words in the English language are: because, free, new, you, and instantly. Another example of a fixed-action pattern is that most people associate higher prices with better quality, which has propelled high priced car imports to record levels in America.

Cialdini also mentions the “contrast principle,” which is how we compare two things presented one after another. If you are shown an attractive piece of jewelry followed by one that is less attractive than the first, the second will strike you as less attractive than it really is. This explains why many clothing sales persons are instructed to sell their most expensive items first.

Cialdini further explains the “reciprocation principle,” as when a person feels obligated to repay what another person has provided us, even if we don’t want the added bonus. If a salesperson offers you a free refreshment, for example, you may feel more obligated to buy something from that person, whether you want it or not. When people do you a favor, you probably feel an almost overwhelming obligation

to return the favor in kind. This is known as the "norm of reciprocity," a social obligation to do something for someone else because they first did something for you.

Another persuasion principle is the rule of "commitment and consistency." You sign a petition and now you instinctively feel obligated to be consistent with your original stand, even if you feel less than enthused about it. In other words, the goal is to get it in writing. Those petitioners that stand outside the grocery store use this technique successfully to influence voter behavior. Sales people that gain signed agreements from their customers are twice as likely to maintain customer loyalty than those who do not, according to our own TenorCorp research. And, this research revealed the same positive influence regardless of the industry in which the sales person worked.

Mirroring someone's movement or body language is known as "the chameleon effect" used in persuasion. Also social influence—what's called "herd behavior"—causes us to follow someone we see as an authority. When we are unsure of ourselves, we are more likely to accept the actions of others as correct. This explains why the most vocal person in a meeting often gains her or his objective over those who exhibit more tacit behavior.

A key persuasion technique, "the anchoring bias," is a subtle cognitive bias that can have a dramatic influence on negotiations. When trying to arrive at a decision, the first offer increases the tendency to become an anchoring point for all future negotiations. So if you are trying to negotiate a price reduction, being the first person to suggest a number, even if that number is a little low, can help influence the future negotiations in your favor. That first number hence becomes the starting point. While you might not get that amount, starting low might lead to a lower sell price from the supplier.

Strangely enough, research tells us that people become fonder of people who eat with them. That simple social connection tends to make a formal relationship—such as that established in a meeting

room or office—into an informal one. And, that relaxed shift then eases that relationship into the "friend category" instead of the "business category." People become more trusting over a meal versus how they feel in a formal meeting environment. So it's actually a benefit to sales people if they can get a potential client to join them for lunch, dinner, or even a coffee.

One method of persuasion involves creating a need or reinforcing a previously existing need. This type of persuasion appeals to a person's fundamental needs for self-esteem, shelter, love, autonomy and self-fulfillment. Marketers often use this strategy to sell their products. Consider, for example, how many advertisements suggest that people need to purchase a particular product in order to be safe, loved, empowered or admired.

Another approach that is often effective in getting people to comply with a request is known as the "foot-in-the-door" technique. This persuasion strategy involves getting a person to agree to a small request, like asking that person to purchase a small item, followed by making a significantly larger request. By getting the person to agree to the small initial favor, the requester already has their "foot in the door," making the individual more likely to comply with the larger request.

For example, a sales person asks you to trial a product. Once you agree to the smaller request, she then asks if you can commit to a long-term agreement. Since you have already agreed to the smaller request, you might feel a sense of obligation to also agree to the larger request. This is a great example of what psychologists refer to as the rule of commitment, and marketers often use this strategy to encourage consumers to buy products and services. Successful sales people use this technique to foster full adoptions of their product portfolios, by starting small, and building upon these commitments.

Another approach is the opposite of the foot-in-the-door approach. A salesperson will begin by making an unrealistic request. The potential customer responds by saying "no," seemingly closing any chance for success. The salesperson responds by making a much

smaller request, which often appears conciliatory. The potential customer then feels obligated to respond to this offer. Since they refused that initial request, people often feel compelled to help the salesperson by accepting the smaller request.

Here are some general tips for persuading people to your point of view:

- *Show respect for the other person's opinions by never saying "you're wrong"*
- *Be the first to smile at another person (just returning a smile doesn't persuade)*
- *Confess your wrongs openly and as quickly as possible*
- *Present opening questions that lead to a "yes" from the other person*
- *Try earnestly to understand situations from the other person's point of view*
- *Listen more than talk with another person*
- *When someone brings up a topic do not just move onto the next subject; ask follow-up questions such as, "So how did that make you feel?"*
- *Persuade yourself/someone to do the right thing*
- *Use word pictures or stories to win people to your way of thinking*
- *After someone thanks you is the best time to ask for a favor*
- *Find similarities or parallels about the other person to cause familiarity*
- *Be specific, clear, accurate, concise, courteous and direct when speaking*
- *Identify a need and attempt to drive acceptance with a sense of urgency*
- *Keep your arms unfolded and point your body in the direction of the other person*

- *Mirror another person's body movements without appearing too obvious*
- *Use "we" instead of "I" when speaking, as well as "and" instead of "but"*

All of these techniques are artful—some might even say they are manipulative. However, as a thriving individual it's never the less important to know how to use them, or how to spot them if someone or some advertiser is using them on you. The art of persuasion is a vital skill in business—and in everyday life. When I coach individuals or organizations on how to influence others, we invariably discuss these types of techniques.

You might be surprised at how many sales and marketing people cannot "close the deal" because they don't understand the psychology of commitment. I've also coached married couples on how to persuade each other more effectively, in order to avoid unnecessary conflict. People who thrive practice the art of persuasion for the benefit of all concerned in any given situation. The art of persuasion just makes life a little more, well, agreeable!

THING TEN

Leadership and the Boiling Frog Syndrome

“We cannot become what we want to be by remaining what we are.”
—Max DePree

***I**F YOU DROP A FROG in a pot of boiling water, it will instantly try to climb out. However . . . if you gently place it in a pot of lukewarm water and turn the heat on low, it will float there calmly. As the water gradually heats up, the frog is unaware of its deadly changing environment and before long it boils to death.*

Many of us have been like that boiling frog—too afraid to jump out of a bad situation. So we simmer until we eventually succumb to a toxic environment.

One of my biggest regrets in my corporate career was staying in a position too long. At this time, I was part of a leadership team where the CEO had just recently promoted someone with whom he was having an affair. He began hiring executives all around him with low competence but high loyalty in order to protect his fiefdom from those who might not condone his unethical behaviors.

This created a politically charged work environment. We fell behind our competition in market share. We had major quality issues

that made our customers unhappy. Employee morale was low. There was a general lack of trust within the leadership team as each of the departments fought to get their budgets approved and to protect their own status within the organization.

As I look back on my career, one of the bigger mistakes I made is not speaking out against the dysfunction. My confidence suffered from being new to the company. I felt like I could insulate my own department from the toxicity surrounding it. At one point, the trust was so low, I fell into that horrible 20% “actively disengaged” category of workers that a Gallup survey uncovered. My work and my health suffered. I was that boiling frog.

The frog story is a metaphor for the inability of people to react to detrimental changes that occur gradually. In leadership or life in general, earthquakes are easily noticed. A sudden takeover or huge turnover is obvious. But what about the small but incessant shake-ups? Before too long the foundation has turned to quicksand and we start sinking without noticing it.

The reason behind our inability to notice small, detrimental changes, could be fear or neglect. However, the foundation of leadership is standing on a firm foundation of doing what's best for the entire organization; rising up and preventing the foundation from crumbling.

Great leaders must not only notice the erosion of what makes the organization healthy, they must intervene before the damage moves to a point of no return.

Yet all too often, leadership tries to project an image of command and control, assuring their followers that reverberations from failures are just temporary. That leadership knows better. Indeed; that is the death knell of a boiled frog.

Combined, small indifferences and indulgences are causing major shifts. Perhaps like our earth, the work environment is getting hotter; ethical erosions destabilize fragile ecosystems; and desserts from lack of productivity and innovation are expanding, causing the

environment to fracture. Futile change initiatives such as reorganizations are simply our desperate scramble to save our souls. Sadly, only a few strong leaders realize that disaster is around the corner.

Many people and organizations are like the boiling frog, too comfortable in their setting to realize that to remain there means gradual harm or death. In life, some who remain in an abusive relationship allow it to continue until the abuse becomes accepted and rationalized as the abuses intensifies, until the abused person becomes resigned to the hopelessness of their reality.

The same dynamic happens in an unsatisfying job—we can get slowly “cooked to death” while complacently or fearfully just getting by...until retirement if we can make it that long. The 'boiling frog syndrome' even impacts those who live a sedentary life because they resent the time or energy required to exercise, gradually sacrificing their health.

Some who pass over an opportunity because it appears too threatening can eventually succumb to boredom or regret that will lead to an unsatisfying life. And then there's the boiling frog syndrome that affects fast food eaters, whose poor diets can clog their arteries because they just don't want to hassle with preparing or eating healthful foods.

Our body and soul requires movement in order to thrive, just as a healthy lifestyle includes mixing things up once in a while, by trying something new like piano lessons once a month or cooking a new recipe. Even small modifications to the daily routine can eventually lead to a more healthful norm. Finding a friend or accountability partner can bolster our resolve, like an exercise partner, or a mentor.

Each barrier crossed in trying something new sets-up greater confidence to take on even greater challenges. It's important to remember our victories along the way, and if we've failed a time or two or more, simply begin again, try a different path, or start

something completely new. A stagnant or fearful life can breed disease, just as a vibrant and confident life often leads to vitality.

Good habits are comforting in a positive way and should not be confused with becoming too comfortable with bad habits. The healthy life requires a mix of both new and old.

Our job as leaders is to face problems with solutions, not acquiescence. If the environment is toxic either change it or leave it. There really is no alternative. The easy way just gets us all "cooked." I hope this inspires you to make a difference and save some boiling frogs in the process.

THING ELEVEN

Be a Change Agent

*“Sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together.” —
Marilyn Monroe*

UNSETTLEDNESS NATURALLY FOLLOWS CHANGE, AND we begin asking saying something like, “Did I make the right decision?” or “This isn’t what I wanted.” Emotions fluctuate between excitement and fear, between joy and unhappiness. All of these reactions only prove that we are human. Change has become the norm today, and a human response is exactly what’s needed to produce effective change leadership into the future.

You would think that by now we would have perfected the art of change. Yet according to a 2013 Strategy&/Katzenbach Center survey of global senior executives on culture and change management, the success rate of major change initiatives is only 54 percent. The high failure rate can be attributed in large part to an excessive focus on the process side of change management, rather than an appropriate attention to the human impact.

The costs are high when change efforts fail—not only financially but also in decreased morale and lost opportunity. After employees

endure the emotional upheaval due to an initiative first announced with fanfare, they see it fade away and cynicism sets in.

Leading change is what makes the difference between thriving and just acceptance. That translates into fostering that "human factor" within each organization we call culture. Lou Gerstner, who as chief executive of IBM led one of the most successful business transformations in history, said the most important lesson he learned from the experience was that "culture is everything." In a Katzenbach Center survey, 84 percent said that the organization's culture was critical to the success of change management, and 64 percent saw it as more critical than strategy or the operating model.

So unless culture, or the human-side of change is paramount to any change leadership, expect problems. But first as a leader each of us must practice that age-old proverb: 'physician heal thyself,' meaning that you must first address the personal affect change has on you. Resigning yourself to uncertainty must be the first step. Set reasonable expectations with the understanding that nothing lasts forever. By not marrying yourself to the result you can remain flexible as to the outcome.

Choosing to manage only the controllable aspects of a change must also occur in tandem with reflecting on your own core values and purpose in order to remain centered. Successful change leaders persevere without surrendering to inevitable obstacles through an adaptable attitude that continually seeks innovative solutions. They maintain a positive can-do approach by dwelling on future possibilities rather than current challenges.

These leaders also see things as they can be by visualizing the big picture and adjusting their direction as needed. Adaptability doesn't always mean just going with the flow; it also involves helping to redirect the flow when necessary. There's something about making a commitment and putting yourself in the way of change that invites success. Consider R. H. Macy, the founder of the large department

store chain. He started seven failed businesses before finally hitting it big with his store in New York City.

Those who view failure as a stepping stone toward learning how to be more successful "next time" invariably succeed more often than those who maintain a static view of life. Those with a static view see failure as a form of punishment. "This didn't work, so I need to quit before this turns into a disaster," they say. On the flip side, those with a thriving mindset view the inevitable changes that must occur (because of failure) as a positive step toward reaching the desired outcome.

However, when leadership tries to force positive attitudes about change in the workplace their efforts often fail. Many employees say that when management wants a change in structure, processes, people and so forth, they present inspirational sayings such as, "Change will help us to develop new skills and new ways of doing things" or "It's an opportunity for you" or "Change can be good." But for whom, really? Truth be told, many employees do not see change as positive. They frequently feel disempowered or at worst violated.

The good news is you as a thriving person and leader can minimize or avoid potentially negative aspects of change by following the "PACE Formula" for effective change management. At PACEsetters we studied 64 successful change leadership cases, from behemoths like Apple, Google, and PayPal to smaller organizations like Pearson and Atlassian. Each demonstrated some common success factors for effectively dealing with change, by addressing these four foundations: purpose, attitude, connection, and energy --

1. Purpose:

For much of its early life, Google struggled with its core purpose. As Wired co-founding editor John Battelle explains in his book *The Search*, Google was once a maddeningly unprofitable company, fumbling left and right for a stable revenue source. After struggling to sell search appliances to businesses and its own search technology to

other search engines, Google dramatically changed course by repurposing its direction. In 2003, the company launched its AdWords program which allowed businesses to advertise to people searching for things on Google.com. Almost overnight, Google's newly purposed organization transitioned from being a popular search tool to an advertising powerhouse.

So how does that translate into your role as purpose-driven leader? First, realize that a compelling purpose provides direction and a way for everyone to see how they connect to the larger whole. When people understand how they fit into the organization and what their role is, you create a new sense of engagement. In the case of Google everyone in the organization understood the purpose for the company's new direction and their role in it. A workforce motivated by a strong sense of higher purpose is essential to engagement, and that starts with perception.

How do others perceive you, the change process, and the end result? You may believe that everything is moving along smoothly, that people understand and accept the change and its implication, but those are your perceptions. Have you confirmed your reality with the reality of your colleagues and others involved in the change? Do other people perceive that you are an effective change agent and that the change will actually benefit them?

Ask yourself and others the most important question: Is there a perceived need for change? If the answer is "no," then your most critical task is either to persuade people of the need or to create a need. Otherwise, without a recognized need for change, the entire change process is doomed to failure.

Next, as a change agent, you need to ask yourself these questions: Who will benefit from it, and who will not? Is the change worth it? Does the change align with my values and mission?

2. Attitude:

Zappos has become almost as well known for its culture as it is for the shoes that it sells online. So how did they do it? It started with a 'cultural fit interview,' which carries 50% of the decision making process of whether the candidate is hired. New employees are offered \$2,000 to quit after the first week of training if they decide the job isn't for them. Ten core values are instilled in every team member. Employee raises come from workers who pass skills tests and exhibit increased capability, not from office politics. Portions of the budget are dedicated to employee team building and culture promotion.

Fantastic benefits and a workplace that is fun and committed to making customers happy all fit in with the Zappos approach to company culture—when you put culture first, great customer service and a great business results will happen on its own. Leadership at Zappos realizes that employee attitude comes first, profits second, because motivation is the fuel for success. How workers feel about their work tells more than what management says. So how did Zappo handle the changes of their rocket growth?

They looked at the people within their organization who were affected by the change. Was their attitude one of commitment or resistance? Sometimes people resist change because they don't have the needed skills to succeed in the change process, so the leader must empower them with new skills. Some are simply risk adverse, so their attitude must be adjusted by presenting a positive view of what the final outcome will look like by saying something similar to this—"Here's how we will look when all is said and done..." Don't 'sugar coat' the situation by saying everything will be easy—it will not. People who clearly understand the benefits versus the challenges are much more apt to buy into the change.

Use statements like, "I am hopeful," or, "We will find a resolution" throughout the change process. The words you use when you talk have a major impact on your attitude and that attitude will directly

influence the outlook of others. Next, ask yourself this question: Are you changing attitudes or just dispensing information? The truth is, most of us just don't care about changing attitudes... unless, and of course that change affects us personally. So make change personal, because the attitude of those around you will be reflected back on your works.

By attitude we mean: confidence, empowerment, resiliency, hopefulness, responsibility, etc. In other words, attitudes are what a person expresses based on their interpretation of reality. Your goal as a leader is to nudge someone's viewpoint toward a positive interpretation. Aristotle once suggested that people can change their attitude by first changing their behavior..."we become just by the practice of our actions, we control ourselves by exercising self-control, and become courageous by performing acts of courage."

Fast-forward to today, and social psychologist Timothy Wilson explains this as, "Do Good, Be Good." In other words, people's behavior shapes the personal narratives they develop. If they act with a can-do approach, they begin to see themselves as being able to achieve whatever they set their minds to accomplish, and the more they view themselves as the master of their success, the more likely they are to welcome change as a means to accomplish their goals—thereby changing their viewpoint (that change is bad) to a new narrative that change provides them with an opportunity to do good.

So as a thriving leader, change peoples' attitudes by getting them to act like leaders of positive change, and voila—they will feel enabled to create a new pathway toward positive change.

3. Connection:

"Building relationships is one of the strongest skills sets related to leadership effectiveness," says Jean Leslie, a researcher at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)." Leaders with experience building relationships are seen as more effective, she says. That statement emerges from a comprehensive research study undertaken by CCL

involving more than 438,000 respondents. Two thirds of respondents said that "building and maintaining relationships is a critical competency." Indeed, our case studies of successful change companies revealed similar statistics, in that the leaders within these organizations put the "people element" of building their business first, and did so in a collaborative way.

Here's how many of them built these strong connections. Before initiating a change, they asked questions first. Ask questions that will help people explain what they're looking for. Uncover their sincerest and sometimes hidden motivation. Once you know that information, it's much simpler to show how the change can satisfy that person's needs. Asking questions is fundamental to relationship building, and the more skilled you are at utilizing questions that force the other person to think deeply, the stronger the relationship you will be able to create. True connection begins with understanding.

Most people are resistant to change or uncomfortable with impending change, so it's important to acknowledge their feelings. Those who avoid these emotions by not listening to others disconnect from people. When you acknowledge your emotions and those of others, you accept change as if to say, "we're in this together and this isn't as bad as you might imagine it to be." Empathy evokes a license to enact change. By openly and sincerely preparing yourself and others for the new situation, and then identifying some ways that everyone involved can learn more about what they will be facing, connection occurs.

The key is to decrease anxiety around change by acknowledging that you are in a transition and that change is inevitable and sometimes hard. And then to continue the connection by saying something like, "I accept that change is occurring, and it's up to each of us as to how you and I *together* will handle it. Know that I am committed to your success and that you are a valuable partner in creating something great."

That's how one successful change leader made things happen. Rick Wagoner took over a dying General Motors (GM) and freed the company of hierarchical management practices to empower and engage all of the employees. He brought in fresh talent and gave the newcomers free reign to develop new products. Wagoner by nature was collaborative in allowing decision-makers to decide. This one simple change broke through stifling silos and created better connections throughout the organization.

4. Energy:

Some of our best-practice companies had "renewal rooms" or time-off periods where people could routinely go to relax and reenergize. A group at Ernst & Young successfully went through this process of allowing employees to refuel at the height of tax season. With the permission of their leaders, they practiced defusing negative emotions by breathing or telling themselves different stories, and alternated highly focused periods of work with renewal breaks. Most people in the group reported that this busy season was the least stressful they'd ever experienced, and most productive.

At the root of failed change leadership is the flawed understanding that by working longer hours more gets done. Time is a finite resource. Not so for energy, which can be renewed and produces far better results than simply putting in those longer, often tedious hours.

For most people, the greatest good they could do for themselves is to change their energy. Without momentum most changes will fail. Your emotions give off energy that can be positive or negative. It's a common experience to walk into a room during a change and feel tension in the air, as opposed to a room of engaged change agents where the atmosphere is joyous and relaxed. We tend to assume that energy is physical, but two people can eat the same meal yet produce completely different energy. One person may be angry, unsettled and confused, while the other is grateful, comfortable and focused.

The first thing to realize is that you are in control of your own energy, and your energy invariably infuses others with the same energy. The second is to realize that your emotions do not define you, and in fact you can change your emotions by immersing yourself in several energy boosters—the kind that comes from caring relationships, taking a break, and relying on your faith. All these sources of energy are available to you anytime. They connect you to a form of renewable energy that others can plug into.

Change typically induces stress, with the antidote being to take a break and appreciate the positives. Relaxation can help decrease stress and increase emotional health. Practice progressive muscle relaxation by slowing down your breathing, inhaling deeply and slowly exhaling. Next, tense your fists for a few seconds, then release. Continue this tense and release method throughout your body, including your back, neck, face, chest, quads, calves, ankles, feet, and toes.

Stress in the midst of change runs counter to productive energy. Studies show that it reduces responsiveness and diminishes mental acuity over time. Just as relaxation can reduce stress, an equally effective energy booster is exercise. Aim to exercise for 30 minutes each day on most days, with aerobic exercise at least three times a week. Exercise and other physical activities produce endorphins—chemicals in the brain that act as natural painkillers—and it also improves the ability to sleep, which in turn reduces stress.

Despite any positive turn of events from leading change and adapting to a dynamic world, none of it matters unless you remain committed to your physical and spiritual health. Many experts view faith as the most important stabilizing factor to help us go through change, followed by good eating habits and regular exercise.

Remaining faithful to what is most important will balance an otherwise unstable environment. Look to your faith, loved ones, purpose, and values, which should always remain constant. They serve as your anchor when the waves of change become too rough. Because

only those who enthusiastically embrace change can effectively motivate others to do the same.

To effectively reenergize our loved ones and our teams through change, as leaders we need to shift our emphasis from getting more out of people to investing more in them, so they are motivated—and capable—to bring their full potential to whatever lies ahead each day.

To recharge ourselves, we need to recognize the costs of energy-depleting behaviors and then take responsibility for changing them. That's the human side of business and life, and the best outcomes can't happen without fully realizing the human potential to do good.

THING TWELVE

12 Powerful Ways to Boost Your Self-Confidence

"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence." —Helen Keller

OTHERS ADMIRE SELF-CONFIDENT PEOPLE, AND yet many of us struggle with staying confident in a negative world. Unlike those who succumb to disparagement, self-confident persons confront their fears and rejections straightaway. They tend to be risk takers. They understand that no matter what obstacles may arise, they have the ability to overcome them. Self-confident people tend to think with a positive, can-do attitude even when confronted with unexpected challenges.

Now, who wouldn't want that kind of self-confidence each day? If you don't fit that description, the good news is you can learn to be self-confident. Self-confidence can be developed through learning and practice—just like any other skill. Once you master the skills of self-confidence, your life will invariably get better.

It can all be summed-up in this one important question: If you don't believe in yourself, why should anyone else be expected to believe in you either?

If, like most people, you struggle at times with the how-tos of believing in yourself, these “things” I’ve written about presents some proven ways to make that happen. Take them seriously through a commitment to practice these tips routinely, starting now. At first you might need to “fake it until you make it”—through a forced appearance of self-confidence, but through daily discipline you will become the image of self-confidence that you admire in others.

In a nutshell, self-confidence is mostly exhibited in body posture, how you speak, the words you use, and your overall behavior. It’s standing up to what you believe is right, taking risks, owning-up to your failures, being gracious in accepting praise as well as criticism, remaining positive and optimistic, and admitting your mistakes with a forward-thinking attitude.

You start developing confidence when you believe in your ability to achieve goals that are important to you, with the conviction that if you work diligently toward those goals, you will succeed. Invariably, challenges will arise. However, your confidence building happens when you understand that you can overcome these difficulties, that you can handle anything that comes your way, and that you have a right to a fulfilling and successful life.

Approval from others may not be within your control, but self-confidence comes from a belief that your best is enough, that you are capable of doing what needs to be done, and that you can master any task if you dedicate yourself to it. One of the best ways to accomplish this attitude is to take notice of your past achievements as evidence of your future potential. Notice what strengths you and others have observed about you that led to your successes.

Set yourself up for success by establishing goals that are optimally suited to your strengths—start small and work-up from there—and celebrate your successes along the way. Be cognizant of what actions, thoughts, and influences went into your achievement of these goals, and fix those pictures into a positive mental image of what you can achieve.

Here's a list of proven techniques that can make this happen:

1. Take a self-confidence inventory.

You can't repair something you don't know is broken. To build self-confidence you have to spend a fair amount of time identifying irrational thoughts from reality.

To simply generalize and say, "I'm really terrible at this" or "I'm a bad person" is to essentially tell yourself a lie—you're better than that. The solution to self-doubt isn't to wallow in your failures, but to acknowledge them and move on.

So get a piece of paper. Draw a line down the middle of it. On the right-hand side, write: "Strengths" and on the left-hand side write: "Weaknesses." List five (5) of each. Ask others whom you trust for feedback if you'd like.

When finished this serves as your *Confidence Inventory*. It lets you know all the things you already tell yourself. Some of the weaknesses you may be able to change, if only you work on them one at a time, over the course of a month or even a year. You can always build on your strengths as well. Remember, nobody changes things overnight—so don't become frustrated if this takes a while.

2. Deny those negative tendencies and focus on the positives by making some changes.

It may be time to make some difficult decisions by distancing yourself from those situations and persons that demean you and strip your confidence. Even temporary breaks from these disparaging persons and energy draining situations can make a big difference. Then start focusing on the positives in your life. And instead of just identifying the problems, spend most of your time on the solutions and what your life will look like having eliminated these problems.

As foreign as this may be to you, find a friend or family member and ask them “What do you like about me?” “What are my strengths?” Most value other people’s opinions more than our own. We tend to dwell on things we’ve not done well, and we are equally prone to overlook what we’ve done well. Hearing from another person about our strengths and positive qualities helps to build a more positive image of us.

3. Create a strong image through confident body language and presentation.

We are more likely to be persuaded by someone who appears self-confident, stands straight, holds her chin up, speaks crisply, who answers questions without any hint of doubt, and who is forthright in admitting she doesn’t have an answer. Your posture, like smiling, slow speaking, and eye contact goes a long way. Even the basic move of pulling your shoulders back gives others the impression that you are a confident person. And smiling not only makes you feel better, but it also makes others feel more at ease being around you.

As to appearance, when you look better you typically feel better. A nicely groomed person who dresses well will cause others to perceive that person as successful and self-confident. That may seem superficial, but it’s none-the-less true. If you choose clothing and accessories that fit you well, suit your industry and lifestyle, are comfortable and make you feel good, this will automatically boost your confidence. And don’t be afraid to let your personality shine in your accessories. A colorful tie or bold jewelry can be a focal point and a good conversation starter.

4. Speak assertively.

Notice how great speakers deliver speeches. They speak confidently and in a rhythmic and steady tone. Instead of the “ums” and “ahs” that interrupt flow, they use pauses to emphasize ideas.

Good speakers use an assertive but not aggressive style. As one of these speakers you'll want to avoid sounding high-pitched or jittery. Fidgeting and nervous chatter or silly giggles can weaken an otherwise strong presentation. People tend to hear what we sound like more than what we say. In other words, a confident speaker who says little resonates better than an unsure speaker who says much.

5. Never throw in the towel

Confident persons rarely give-in. Neither should we accept failure as an option. There is a solution to just about everything. Indeed persevering through great adversity serves as a huge confidence booster.

As someone once said, never throw in the towel, but instead use it to wipe off the sweat. Then keep going. Speaking of his grueling practice schedule after failing to qualify for the varsity basketball team in high school, Michael Jordan said, "I'm not out there sweating for three hours every day just to find out what it feels to sweat." No matter how many times you fall, the key is to get up again.

6. Get rid of those doubting thoughts.

Low self-confidence is often caused by those negative thoughts that routinely loop within our minds. If you are constantly criticizing yourself and saying you're not attractive enough or good enough, you are creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. So the next time you hear that looping negativity

within your mind, overlay those thoughts with positive affirmations and accept those as your reality.

Place these affirmations on your computer screen, write them down and store them in your wallet—so that each day you look at your affirmations and say something like "I'm successful," "No one and nothing can keep me down," and "I am destined to succeed."

7. Consider what you've already achieved as validation that you can do it again.

Think about the five best things you've achieved in life, and then spend a few minutes each day remembering these. Also consider what your friends and family members say are your strengths. Display items that remind you of your achievements, or of the special times and people in your life. Your past successes are proof of your inevitable future successes.

On the flip side, learn to handle failure. Accept that mistakes happen especially when you're trying something new. If you can get into the habit of treating mistakes as learning experiences, you will develop the mindset of getting stronger, better.

Try this—make three lists: one of your strengths, one of your achievements, and one of the things that you admire about yourself. Try to get a friend or relative to help you with these lists. Keep these lists in a safe place and read them regularly.

8. Set easily achievable goals; and once these are reached, establish harder goals and so forth.

Confidence arrives from successful goal achievements, but sometimes our goals are unrealistic, or even too easy. Establish goals that exploit your strengths and minimize your weaknesses. They should be attainable with a little stretch to keep you

feeling challenged. Make sure your first step is small, and then increase the level of difficulty each time you achieve a goal. Get into the habit of achieving your goals, and then make sure to celebrate them!

Your place of confidence exists at the end of a road we call—*goal achieved!* Make a habit of lining your pathway in life with attainable, challenging, and worthy goals.

9. Maintain balance in your self-perception.

It's important to not be overly confident just as it's important not to underestimate yourself. If you are under-confident, you'll avoid taking risks and stretching your abilities. And if you're over-confident, you may take on too much risk, stretching yourself too far, which leads to burnout or failure.

Overly optimistic persons sometimes don't try hard enough to succeed because they fail to comprehend the challenges around them. True self-confidence is rooted in reality and in your authentic ability. Self-confident people take on informed risks while stretching themselves—but not beyond their own abilities.

10. Accumulate the knowledge you need to succeed

Once you've identified your stretch goals, identify the skills you'll need to achieve them. Look for training or a course that fully equips you to achieve what you want to achieve. If it involves a degree or certificate to qualify you for a job, then make it happen. Learn everything you can about your industry, your subject matter, your goals and what drives you towards success.

Then find someone who possesses the expertise to teach you how to apply your knowledge practically. Mentors serve

this role magnificently. If you don't have one, get one. They can be found at work, online, or in your community.

11. Help someone.

One of the most important steps to finding self-confidence is to give of yourself to others. Serving another person almost always results in the healthy realization that you are important in this world, that you have something to offer, and that the world is better because of your presence. See a need around you? Whether it be a need for time, resources or a listening ear, meet it now. Indeed, the life you change just may be your own.

12. Fake it "til you make it.

Self-confident people practice the "platinum rule" that *others will treat you as if you are*, even if they need to fake it for a while. To "fake it" means to act as if you are already confident despite your insecurities and reservations about yourself or about your predicament. **It means acting with confidence until you generate the necessary confidence you need to succeed.** Just keep in mind that faking confidence isn't real confidence. However, real confidence takes time, patience and effort to develop; and sometimes we just don't have that luxury especially when we suddenly find ourselves in unfamiliar situations. In these situations, it's helpful to understand that *faking it* in order to get over that initial hump will help you create the momentum you need to perform at the highest level possible to obtain your desired result.

When you fake confidence what you are doing is essentially practicing the change you desire to make in advance. You may initially lack self-belief, yet faking it during that initial period of self-doubt actually shifts how you think about yourself and about your predicament. These slight shifts should be enough to help you "act as if it is" which elicits the

positive feedback from others to reinforce your self-belief. Over time, you will assume the mindset of that confident role you've consistently reinforced with practice.



In summary, two main things contribute to self-confidence: self-sufficiency and self-worth. Don't be overconfident or under-confident. Be honest and simply fill in your knowledge and skill gaps, and build upon your strengths. The more you *gradually* stretch yourself, the more self-confidence you will build. Self-confidence is a process of setting realistic and increasingly challenging goals that leave a trail of achievements along the way. It's acquired by doing, learning, accomplishing, and persisting.

Your self-confidence is just that—*yours*. No one can give it to you but yourself, and no one but you can take it away.

THING THIRTEEN

Embrace the Unknown

*“Ask yourself this question: ‘Will this matter a year from now?’” —
Richard Carlson, *Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff* (Hyperion, 1997)*

A CITIZEN IN ENGLAND DURING the 18th century committed a crime. He was sent to the king for his punishment. The king told him he had a choice of two punishments. He could be hung by a rope or take what was behind a large, dark iron door. The citizen instinctively decided on the rope. As the noose was being slipped on him, he turned to the king and asked. “By the way, what’s behind that door?” The king said: “Strangely, I have offered several accused individuals the same choice, and nearly everyone chooses the rope.” “So,” said the citizen, “Pray tell. What’s behind the door?” The king paused before answering, “Freedom, but it seems most people are so afraid of the unknown that they immediately take the rope.”

Such is the nature of the unknown. We often fear it so much that we would abandon our own reasoning in favor of what’s tangible or in our midst. Some of us might even choose certain extinction than risk an uncertain future.

If given the chance, would you wish to know the future? Keep in mind that all the inevitable accidents, the failures, the sickness, and the losses ahead of you would come with that revelation. Now suppose that, after knowing the future, you could change it. Understand that besides not repeating some mistakes or avoiding devastating accidents, you would also miss the benefits of the trials that lay ahead of you.

Perhaps you wouldn't have taken that job if you had known it would end so abruptly, or you might have refused that relationship that caused so much heartache. In doing so you also might have failed to gain some wisdom about how to choose a better job, having not learned from the former one. You might not know the joys and the pitfalls that could have benefited you from the failed relationship you passed over, ensuring the next relationship would be more fulfilling.

The future is shielded from us for a reason. Given the chance, most of us would avoid everything painful in our lives. If so, we would deny the growth that inevitably comes with trials, unable to overcome many of life's challenges. Trials serve to strengthen us and help us develop wisdom. Still, in the midst of them questions arise as to "why," and even the hope of survival can be lost.

Perhaps you are just too stressed to worry about the future. With all the chaos at work and life, maybe the question of how to deal with life's uncertainty and the encroaching responsibilities of paying expenses, taking care of family, etc. have affected your relationships and even compromised your health. I know.

There was a time when I was in a spiral of anxiety over thinking about everything, constantly worrying about the future. But over time I was able to train myself to overcome the pitfall of worrying about all of the uncertainties in my career and life. It started by embracing the unknown.

This means facing the future without reservation by managing 'worries' effectively. Here are three ways to stop worrying about the future that often accompanies uncertainty, which I found helpful in

preventing the "paralysis of worry" that can keep anyone from moving forward...and I hope they can help you:

1) *Face the good and the bad with equal thankfulness.*

Our most genuine worries typically are not imagined or planned; they are the kind that blindsides us, like a three a.m. call—and then worry makes it three a.m. over and over again. Since we cannot plan our lives to filter out all trials, we must allow life to happen to us. The key is to face the good and the bad with equal thankfulness, since both serve to complete us.

The main cause of most stress is that frightening feeling deep inside that you just don't know what's going to happen next. Compounding this problem is that life has become more unpredictable today because of the complexity within our world.

So accept that both the good and the bad have equal value in producing a full life. Stop wasting time thinking about what can happen and start spending your time in the moment, with what you have in front of you and in your midst. Accept the unknown by centering your attention on where you are and leave the future to the future.

2) *Only control the "controllables."*

We can plan for the future, but most of the variables that can change our plans in the future are unpredictable, so focus instead on what you can control. Personally, I like to control things, but when it comes to people and situations beyond my control I have to let go. Stuff happens.

Destroy the root cause of worry by realizing that you can only control your actions and behavior, and no one else's. It's also not possible to totally control your life when you are so interdependent with your sphere of influences. So deal with the uncertainty of an unknown future by focusing your efforts on

only the things you *can* control, which are: Your *thoughts*, your *behavior*, and the *actions* you take in response to any given situation. Indeed, even our bodies and brains are sometimes outside of our control, but our thoughts (e.g., how we deal with a situation or person) are totally within our control.

Most of the thoughts stored in our brain are not totally true, outright false or not applicable. If you have set up, ahead of time, criteria to judge a thought, you have the ability to discern, distinguish and judge a thought. Once you realize that imagined fears are baseless (which is the 1st test), then you understand there is no immediate need for action on your part, and you can choose to consider the thought further and select it or deselect it.

3) *The mind tends to think of the worst—so counter it with positive thoughts.*

Since most of the thoughts stored in our brain are skewed, we need to create a health-producing filter to accept or reject each thought. If you have already prejudged the criteria for assessing a thought, by expecting a positive outcome, you then have the ability to discern, distinguish and judge a thought from a perspective of hope.

Since the mind has a negativity bias, once you realize that there is no chance of ultimate failure, you can choose to consider the thought further and select it or deselect it in favor of a positive expectation. In order to reduce the power of outside influences and thoughts on your life, you need to be aware of the thoughts and desires that enter your mind, and ask yourself, whether you really like them, and if you are willing to accept them into your life.

You do not have to accept each and every thought that enters your mind. Find out whether it is your own thought, or someone else's thought. Also, decide whether the thought is

useful for you, and if it is for your own good to follow. This will lead to more control over your thinking process.

Stop worrying about the future because oftentimes the worst is not as bad as you think. Our minds play tricks on us by confusing fact with fiction, creating a causation of low expectations. One thought leads to another and then to somewhere else until we've concocted a bad dream. And then the next thing you know, stress makes your head ache and ultimately physical sickness happens.

As I went through my own struggles with uncertainty, my faith in God and the promise that all things will work out for good in the end taught me to embrace the unknown, and I realized that when you look back at what happens in life—it all works out. And, if it isn't good, it just isn't the end yet. But if you have to worry...then just worry about now and what you can do with it. Have a cup of coffee and a cookie to make you feel better.

Just remember, the path of least resistance is also the path of least growth. When confronted with the unplanned, dive into it, and don't always take the easiest way out. If crisis arrives, just get through the moment, and then the day, and then the next day after that, and so forth. Remember that the memory is kind. It often assuages the harshness of pain and loss over time as the past forms a mosaic that eventually blends into a future that includes a stronger you.

We cannot dwell on future possibilities without losing the hope of today. Your destiny begins with your willingness to accept the unknown future enthusiastically. It's your journey—anticipate a life that will leave you stronger and wiser—and better!

THING FOURTEEN

Make Yourself Indispensable

“Make yourself indispensable, and you will move up. Act as though you are indispensable, and you will move out.” —Jules Ormont

THE OLD ADAGE IS THAT nobody is indispensable. While it's true that organizations often downsize, and sometimes eliminate positions irrespective of talent, those performers who continually develop their skills while going above and beyond expectations tend to be more irreplaceable. With 24 hours allocated to each human being, maximizing their use depends on the importance of each deliverable produced. Dedicating time to the most important tasks requires a prioritization of responsibilities based on stakeholder (i.e., management) input and the potential return on investment. In other words, do *not* major in the minors—by making wise decisions that impact what's most important given the current situation and foreseeable future.

I also means tailoring opportunities. Each person needs to identify his or her strengths and use them effectively. Too often people try to force their role into a position that is not right for their unique skills or interests. When I worked at Procter & Gamble fresh out of

Northwestern University, I succumbed to this behavior and tried to force myself down a path that ill-fitted to my talents and abilities.

I began my career in marketing because I thought that was simply what you did when you graduated with a degree in business. I focused on pioneering a new model for introducing P&G to the healthcare industry. I learned volumes, but I was ill fitted to retail marketing. The retail business wasn't something interesting to me, and I knew little about channel marketing at the time.

Eventually I left that job and joined the top healthcare company in the industry, Johnson & Johnson. In my role I enjoyed making strategic decisions that created a marketing and sales plan, and I was good at it. By capitalizing on my strengths, rather than forcing myself into a position not suited to my interests and abilities, I took the first step toward becoming an indispensable employee.

Making wise decisions involves the ability to invest in those areas with the highest visible return—ones that will command notice—while exhibiting behaviors that are valuable to others. Research completed by the authors of *The Adventures of Carmen Senz*, Judy Free and Traci Maddox revealed behaviors considered the most valuable in the workplace, in the view of executives, supervisors, and coworkers. Employees who practice these behaviors distinguish themselves with a reputation deemed necessary within the organization.

Free and Maddox developed an acronym for these behaviors: R.E.A.C.H. It stands for:

- **Results**—meet or exceed measurable goals, communicate routinely with your supervisor and others involved in the project, and let your successes be known
- **Enthusiasm**—a positive “can-do” approach will not only make others enjoy your company, but it also signals to supervisors that you are committed to the success of the organization

- **Attitude**—when things go wrong—and they will—focus on the positives and the possibilities—helping and encouraging others elevates the mood within the workplace and also expresses your gratitude for your job
- **Cooperation**—volunteering to help others, being accountable, thanking those who help you, taking ownership for successes as well as failures, and giving credit to those who deserve it demonstrates the essential quality of good teamwork
- **Honor**—allow your values to be your constant in an ever-changing environment, so others can see that in the shifting nature of things, your solid moral foundation stands strong—worthy of respect—and indispensable!

Once you are comfortable practicing the REACH behaviors, the next step is to develop skills beyond just those that are core to your position. For example, a computer technician typically spends the majority of his or her time learning new technologies, but it is also important that he or she develops the communication skills for managing internal and external constituents.

While working on an acquisition team for a new medical device, I discovered that developing a comprehensive strategic plan happened almost intuitively. However, I also realized that if I couldn't sell the plan to my executive team, my hard work would go for naught. By focusing on developing my communication skills I was able to become an indispensable part of the organization.

Employees become indispensable when they are well suited to their strengths, practice positive behaviors, focus on their talents, and master the skills necessary to excel within the organization.

In my book, *THE POWER TO THRIVE*, I write how finding purpose, demonstrating a healthy attitude, developing strong connections, and maintaining a high energy level matter far more than natural ability. As an executive I preferred people who always developed themselves

and went above and beyond the 'call of duty' over those with just natural ability. These people not only have long-term job security; they have the ability to chart their own course.

Being indispensable may be an illusive dream in our changing world of business needs and human potential, but it remains a noble goal for those who wish to lead their own destiny. The gist of over 30 years of success research is that the most highly rewarded contributors remain committed to their own personal development, and to the success of others through a well-defined strategy for remaining significant and valued. That translates into turning potential into opportunity and seeing challenges as a means toward something better.

THING FIFTEEN

Beyond Work-Life Balance: Integrate

“I’ve learned that you can’t have everything and do everything at the same time.”—Oprah Winfrey

THE ENTIRE CONCEPT OF BALANCE in life appears elusive or even unattainable—like nailing pudding to a wall. The days of decompressing after a long day at work are as evaporating as mist on a hot summer day. We are now living in a 24/7 world, constantly connected to people at home and work. Company expectations are that you are accessible when you leave work or when you go on vacation. In the 20th Century and well into this one, nearly everyone talked about the importance of work life balance, but that discussion has shifted in this emerging 21st Century.

Today, the new phrase is “**work life integration**,” where workers blend what they do personally and professionally in order to make both thriving. Millennials, those reaching young adulthood around the year 2000, are increasingly insisting on careers tailored to their specific lifestyles. They’re on social media talking to their friends at work and answering emails about work when they leave the office, which is almost the polar opposite of the boomer experience.

Because we're constantly connected via technology and multiple demands coming from all directions, anxiety and its related physical maladies are increasing. Studies in America show panic attacks are on the rise and that unhappiness especially among young people is growing. A number of studies discovered poor balance is significantly linked to an increased risk of injuries. Study after study confirms poor life balance is directly related to both physical and mental sickness and unhappiness.

Ben Franklin encouraged people to burn the midnight oil because it demonstrated a person's persistence and character, and as a result, a person's value. However, Franklin later admitted in his autobiography that burning the midnight oil was all for appearances because it gave a certain impression of a good work ethic. Indeed we now understand that work fatigue invariably leads to being less efficient. Objective research now confirms the value of working smarter rather than working harder. But now there's an alternative to the largely debunked work-life balance that consumed our attention in the late 20th Century. The solution is to work in a more integrated way.

Common thought in work-life balance was that time dedicated to work is compensated by an equal amount of time dedicated to all other activities and relationships outside of work. This concept was birthed from the idea that work demands encroach upon family relationships, recreation, and other personal concerns. Said another way, work and the rest of life compete against each other. Research now reveals that work-life integration, not work-life separation, leads to a more satisfying life.

Essentially there exists four types of individuals as they relate to work and life, and these persons can be classified:

- *Work First*—they place career consistently as the top priority regardless
- *Family First*—they place family (and other key relationships) as the top priority regardless

- *Dividers*—they compartmentalize work and personal life into distinctly separate chunks of time
- *Alternators*—they substitute one form of work with personal life, and visa-versa on a regular basis

A vital aspect of integrating work-life involves the extent to which we are willing to blend work and personal tasks. People who see life as *Work First* permit work to interfere with personal life. The *Family First* crowd, on the other hand, allows personal life to infringe on work. Then there are the *Dividers*, who separate the tasks for work and personal life into clearly divided schedules. Finally, there are the *Alternators*, who schedule time between work and personal life by switching back and forth, such as seasonal workers.

The beginning point of integrating work-life is to discover your style. If you prefer a job that doesn't require you to take any work home, you are probably a *Divider*, someone who prefers a scheduled work environment. A *Family First* person may feel that an onsite day care center is important, or one that permits time-off for important family events. As a *Work First* person you probably do not want personal demands to get in the way of career, so you might look to build relationships directly related to work, while being clear to others that you consider career as your top priority. And as an *Alternator*, your ideal would be a hybrid type of work-life, such as being a project manager or consultant—jobs with a defined start and end point.

Don't think in terms of balancing life with work, which can never be fully achieved. Instead think of integrating the two, by negotiating or finding positions you can control to best fit your style, such as a virtual work environment for *Family First* persons or an office position for the *Work First* person. *Family First* employees typically become frustrated when work demands constantly encroach on family time, so for these types a position that provides flexibility, day care, and/or sensitivity to spending time with family serves as motivation for excelling at work.

If you are ill fitted to a position now, for example as an *Alternator* working 50 hours in an office, try negotiating some accommodation such as a sabbatical or by working on a project. As a *Divider*, you thrive in dynamic environments, so seek lateral moves that will test your ability to learn new skills. The key is to not allow yourself to become trapped in a place that doesn't permit you to be yourself. A fulfilled life achieves the proper amount of control to fit one's work-life integration by creating an environment that meets its primary needs.

The next level of importance is using tactful assertiveness to offload those energy drains that sap energy. This relates to all four-work styles. For example, has anyone ever tried to give you a responsibility they should have kept for themselves? Awhile ago a coworker asked me teach him Excel. Instead of spending hours teaching him the program, I suggested he look for an online training course, and offered my advice only if the course required it. I saved hours of time that I could dedicate to more important matters, and my coworker learned how to use Excel as well if not before than if I had taught him. This method of placing the responsibility back on someone is called 'keeping the monkey off your back'—what some call delegating or relegating.

If you can control your environment to integrate your needs, and keep unnecessary tasks to a minimum, you will find greater satisfaction.

THING SIXTEEN

Love What You Do

“I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: ‘If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?’ And whenever the answer has been ‘No’ for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.” —Steve Jobs

DOING WHAT YOU LOVE TO do is complicated. Not all passionate endeavors lead to a paycheck. Sometimes delayed gratification must be practiced first. Even Einstein had moments when he wanted to enjoy his love of sailing right away but told himself that he should finish what he was working on first.

Finding a job you love is ancient advice. No doubt you’ve heard that quote from Confucius, “Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” It’s been repeated ad-nauseam throughout history. I prefer the opposite approach—telling people to *love what they do*. Consider what Steve Jobs said, “The only way to do great work is to love what you do.”

Loving what you do is much easier than finding a job you love; however, it requires a paradigm shift. It begins with changing your common view of doing work for someone else, or a company. That

perspective feeds into a fatalist perspective that can be demotivating when others disappoint you, or when the job becomes less satisfying. Think of your work as a journey to develop your skills and relationships. So the journey is not about finding your next job; it's about realizing how all your efforts create a mosaic of experiences that make you a richer human being. This way your title or occupation does not define you.

Consider instead how you want to spend your time. What skill do you want to develop, what kinds of people will teach you something, what work instills within you the desire to do more? Sometimes you can grow opportunities in your current position. There's a quote from the movie *The Peaceful Warrior* (DEJ Productions, 2006) that speaks to loving what you do: "A warrior does not give up what he loves. He finds the love in what he does." You may compromise your passion for a while waiting to find a new experience that will rekindle your dream with deeper understanding.

Another approach is making a difference for *others*. Research shows that great work (award-winning work) is produced when people focus on doing something *important for others*. Employees who remain focused on the *recipient* of their efforts—their customer, their leader who depends on them, their interdependent colleagues, the community who benefits from their support, or others who can be helped.

There's the well-known example of Steve Jobs, disappointed with boot time of the Macintosh. So he walked into the cubicle of Larry Kenyon, who explained why it took as long as it did—but Jobs cut him off. "If it could save a person's life, would you find a way to shave ten seconds off the boot time?" Kenyon ended-up finding the time—he shaved not ten but 28 seconds off the boot time. Kenyon's motivation changed when his intrinsic view of what's important to others changed, and so it must be for each of us to find the love in anything of value.

The point is, loving your job is sometimes hard—the activities and responsibilities you have on a day-to day basis can be draining. But loving the impact your job has on another person is quite different. If you start getting frustrated or bored with your job, try changing your mindset: notice how others are responding to your work. See how it benefits them, a customer, a smile on a coworkers face, or how your boss responds with enthusiasm when you turn in that report early. Loving what you do is quite simply about being focused on others.

Discover the love of what you do in all aspects of your life while keeping in mind opportunities for the next adventure. Experiment with new ideas and insights, and push your physical and mental limits. Keep learning until your brain hurts. Surround yourself with people who've accomplished what you admire. Notice how your work is positively affecting others. This way your journey can evolve into something truly inspiring.

In the workplace people can feel trapped, and the only alternative is to do what you can to succeed with where and what you're given. 'To grow where you are planted,' as the saying goes. No matter where you are, with whom you share your life, what you do, or what your age, we all need to make the best of our situation. Growing where you're planted means giving your best in the here and now. Stay focused. Grow your abilities to do more and be more and to reach new heights of success. There will be a better place for you in the future. It starts with what happens inside of you now.

THING SEVENTEEN

Think Like a Child

"It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child." —Pablo Picasso

A SEMI LOADED WITH BOXES traveled along a highway going from San Jose to Los Angeles. As the driver entered the city, he was confronted with a low-arching overpass and began worrying about the clearance. The truck driver decided to go under the overpass, and his truck got stuck. He quickly tried to go in reverse after failing to move forward, but to no avail—his truck was completely wedged between the road and the overpass. He then lit some flares to deter any other vehicles from rear-ending the truck. When emergency vehicles arrived, the workers tried almost everything to dislodge the truck. They could not remove any of the tightly banded boxes from the truck to reduce its height.

After seeing the commotion caused by the problem, a mother pulled to the side of the highway, allowing her frenzied seven-year-old son to run up to the workers along the side shouting, "I've got it! I've got it!" "Got what?" asked one of the emergency workers. The child answered, "Let the air out of the truck's tires, move it past the

overpass, and then pump up the tires again!" Aha. The workers did just that—problem solved!

Leave it to a child. Some of the most brilliant scholars (like Einstein) have long advocated this philosophy: it is productive and sometimes essential for people to think like children to achieve success as adults. Old habits of thinking and commonly accepted patterns of behavior clog our ability to accept free-flowing ideas. Sometimes we need to view things from a fresh perspective, unfettered by age.

"Children are designed by evolution to be extremely good learners—to be able to think about anything that's interesting and important in the world around them," says Alison Gopnik, a professor of psychology and an affiliate professor at the University of California, Berkley. "When you look at their brains, they're extremely flexible, so they can change what they think based on new evidence very quickly and easily."

She further explains that as adults we tend to focus only on the things that are most relevant to us, making us more close-minded and unable or unwilling to consider the broadest possible range of opportunities. Gopnik suggests adopting more of the inquisitive approach to things that adults tend to lack by becoming more hesitant to ask questions. Asking why, and sometimes more importantly "why not" can override a fixed problem with a variable solution. Childlike thinking does that, by connecting familiar issues with unfamiliar associations.

This according to Stephanie M. Carlson, who is Professor and Director of Research at the Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, the #1-ranked department for developmental psychology (U.S. News & World Report). Dr. Carlson explains that self-control is the *modus operandi* for most adults. She further concludes that creativity and self-control are not necessarily mutually exclusive, saying that practice in pretending helps you come up with alternative ways of being—and of seeing an issue—and results in more creativity and better problem-solving.

Professional thinking (normally found with business people) typically functions with controlled processing, which allows professionals to do things like not blurt out something inappropriate when it occurs to them, or to wait at a stoplight without getting overly frustrated, or to listen to instructions before acting, or to conform their actions when the rules change.

As you might deduce, professional thinking is not well developed in children. Indeed, the pre-frontal cortex (or area of the brain responsible for much of executive function) is not fully developed until well into the teenage years, according to Dr. Carlson. As a result of her extensive study in adult versus child thinking, Dr. Carlson concludes: creativity and professional thinking are not at all contradictory in childhood development. In fact, they work in collaboration, and correlate with each other in development. In order to pretend, you have to hold things in mind—and inhibit reality and the way you normally act on reality. For example, if you're pretending a pen is a rocket, you have to remember that the pen is a rocket, and you have to resist the inclination to put the pen in your mouth. This is exercising your professional thinking.

So both forms of thinking, professional and childlike, are necessary in order to function properly. However, as adults our tendency toward self-control often gets in the way of innovative (more childlike or "free-flowing") thinking. Dr. Carlson's conclusion is that practice in pretending helps us come up with alternative ways of being—and of seeing an issue—and results in more creativity and better problem-solving.

Einstein perceived this when he said we need to be child-like to be creative, also saying, "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration." Keeping an open mind and releasing preconceptions is key to not prejudging a problem with prejudiced answers. Hence, forming new solutions for old problems.

To spark your childlike esprit, try forming a potential negative and turning it into a positive—which engages right brain (creative)

stimulation with left brain (logical) associations. For example, think of an idea excited by the word chemicals when picturing children playing in the field with these chemicals. The experience fosters greater out-of-the-box thinking—by providing a potential negative and turning it into a positive—which engages right brain stimulation with left-brain associations. Provocative questions provoke creative thinking by focusing concepts onto seemingly disparate words or ideas.

Spontaneous childlike inspirations that challenge paradigms trigger the mind to go places seemingly unrelated to a challenge, and then force a way to funnel these ideas into a practical concept. Think of associations that seem totally unrelated, such as the words stars to vacuums, or oranges to cars. Most of the time when presented with outrageous links, you will become energized with a type of playful exuberance to place the randomness together. Try starting with a negative association, like death is to sickness, and turn it into a positive, like life is to sickness.

Consciously eliminate the filters of your thinking to begin considering the ridiculous or what may seem incorrect. Afterwards you can mold it into something more practical. The key is to circumvent your programmed way of thinking in order to conceptualize something new and fresh. This is how we spark new ways of thinking to thrive in those areas prompting failure.

So, next time you're facing a challenge or an issue that you need to solve, let go of some of your self-control, and allow your child-like imagination to reign for a while. Pretend a pen is a rocket ship destined to an ideal planet, or pretend that you are a superhero who will conquer your greatest problem. Now look at your problem with this childlike perspective, and you'll discover more creative possibilities. Try it—because it really works if you'll only believe with the faith of a child.

When researchers at North Dakota State University asked two sets of college students what they would do with a day off, they primed one group to think like a seven year old first. They did this

experiment with hundreds of students and the results were consistent. The groups that were told to think like a child regularly came up with better, more creative answers.

Indeed children have fewer inhibitions. Just watch how children frolic in public. They don't seem to care who is watching or what others think about them. But as they age, these grown human beings erect barriers. As adults we confine ourselves to certain behaviors and hyper-focus about what others think.

Scientists recently discovered that when musicians improvise, they turn off an area of their brains linked to self-censorship and inhibition. In other words, to make better music, they turn off the inhibitions of their mind by thinking like children.

Maybe it's time to turn off our adult mindsets and free us to think like children again. So the next time you pass an empty playground and no one is using that swing—go for it!

THING EIGHTEEN

Develop an Internal Locus of Control

“Not to have control over the senses is like sailing in a rudderless ship, bound to break to pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock.” —Mahatma Gandhi

PSYCHOLOGIST JULIAN ROTTER FIRST INTRODUCED the term locus of control in the 1950s. It refers to a person's foundational belief system about the influences that affect their life's outcome. According to Rotter's theory, there are two classifications of people: those with internal locus of control and those with external locus of control.

The most successful people tend to be internal, whereas those with an external locus of control tend to be more negative about the world and their standing in it. Those with an internal locus of control believe they are essentially responsible for the outcomes in their lives. They display the characteristic of self-reliance and believe that no external influence can prevent their success. Only they can do that.

More recent research reveals that people with an internal locus of control tend to be more successful because they remain committed to a goal while earnestly believing they will attain it. These studies also

show that people with high self-confidence tend to be more internally focused, and that people tend to become more internally focused as they age. This translates into a stronger internal locus of control. These are the people often referred to as steadfast and optimistic. They also tend to be less stressed and happier.

On the flip side, those with an external locus of control believe that influences outside of themselves invariably affect their ability to succeed. These people tend to believe their future depends on arbitrary influences such as luck, providence, or society. Because those with an external locus of control believe they have very little control over their future, they tend to place less effort into their work and projects. Therefore, as the research confirms, they perform less successfully in their career and in school than those with an internal locus of control. People with a strong internal locus of control tend to be very achievement-oriented.

To develop an internal locus of control, recognize that you always have a choice. Set goals for yourself and take note that achieving these goals allows you to control what happens in your life, which builds self-confidence. Make a concerted effort to be more decisive, and to improve your problem solving skills in order to build confidence that you can control what happens. Be careful not to say to yourself things like, "There's nothing I can do" or "I have no choice." Remind yourself that you do have a choice, and that you have control in making your own choices regardless of what others do.

Here Are Some Practical Ways to Increase Your Internal Locus of Control:

- Realize that you can choose to alter your situation. Even if your choices appear limited, you can still change your attitude by remembering your previous successes as an assurance that you can succeed again.

- If you feel bound by others' actions, make a list of all possible alternatives. Simply jot down possibilities to eventually, if not now, change your circumstances.
- Consult with others to gain further insight into what you can do. Thoughtfully consider these possibilities without judging them.
- Check your self-talk. If you tend to speak in absolutes, consider a more open-minded approach. If your self-talk is often negative, consider speaking to yourself like you speak to others. For example, you would not tell someone else, "You're a failure," however as humans we think that kind of self-talk is OK when we fail. It is not!
- Eliminate thoughts such as, 'I am stuck', and, 'I can't do this...' Success comes in 'cans,' failure comes in 'cannots.' Each of us has choices—we just need to muster the courage to use them.

Researchers are not sure if our locus of control orientation is learned or inherited, or a combination thereof. However, the most confirmed research indicates that it's most likely not as fixed as other personality characteristics like introversion or extroversion, so we can change our locus of control with practice.

A disciplined practice of the above tips over a period of at least three-four weeks can instill new habits of focusing internally. Testing your limits, expanding your horizons (as in embarking on a new adventure), and trying new things have been demonstrated to increase self-sufficiency. As long as we adopt a commitment to continuous improvement, we invariably adopt a stronger internal locus of control.

THING NINETEEN

Prepare for Seminal Moments

“Miss the moment (for opportunity) and you never get a chance again.” —Aidan Chambers

JACKIE'S LIFE CHANGED DRAMATICALLY SIX years ago when she was fired from her job. Now he looks back on her former life as a depressed and overweight person, feeling sorry for the old Jackie. Seminal events by their very definition influence later developments. Things like getting fired, turning a certain age, the diagnosis of a serious illness, or a lost relationship cause us to pause and reflect: “What am I going to do now?”

After Jackie got fired, her contemplations led her to branch out on his own. After fifteen years in one field, she became as a small business owner in a totally new industry. Today, Jackie owns a small jewelry store and loves it. When Jackie turned forty, she faced another seminal event. She asked herself what the heck she was doing in life. That serious, moment-stopping question led Jackie to lose over 20 pounds. She jogs three miles a day, and lives with twice the energy she had in his early thirties.

What about you? What seminal events have shaped your life? Do you have any regrets? Are there any turning points that made things better? After all, it's your life and only you can live it. Seminal events force us to reflect, to reconsider the path we're on. Though sometimes beyond our control, they're to be welcomed rather than dreaded. They make you more capable of any change that comes your way.

Deb Sanders faced her seminal moment as she considered her 70-year-old widowed father. "He always wanted to visit Paris," she said. "So one day I thought, 'he's not going to be around forever,' so why not take him to Paris *now*!" The next month she did just that, explaining the trip as the highlight of his 'old age,' according to her father. What she could never have known is that her father would die from a cardiac arrest two months after their idyllic trip. Looking back, Deb views that trip as a "God-send." She left no regrets, and that is the signature of the person who plans and executes their seminal events.

What seminal moment do you need to prepare for now? Are there any unsettled desires you've left on the back burner for too long? Perhaps you want to achieve something greater. What person doesn't wish to be more?

Maybe you're going through that seminal shock now. If so, be careful. When the occasion to grow arrives by way of a shock or a dramatic turn of events, our human tendency is to go back to what's most comfortable. In our desire for a better future, we give way to yesterday's habits. But, the truth is we can never go back to sameness.

The key to fulfilling the desires you construct in your mind is to alter your response to seminal events. You know they're going to happen. They always do. They can turn the impossible into inevitable decision points that force us to think: "Why not?" In so doing you may be able to turn sorrows into opportunities.

Consider planning these events in advance. That's right—plan the shock. What if you were diagnosed with a terminal illness today? How would you handle it? What if you were fired—then what? If you lost your closest loved one today, how would you reroute your life? Face

your fear over a dramatic change, so that you can turn your attention to the future that may happen as a result.

Seminal moments often occur in a crisis that invites chaos. Many have discovered they can counter the inevitable shock by preparing for potential crises in advance of the crisis. Hospital emergency workers and combat soldiers are trained in the skill of advanced preparedness, so that in a crisis they can set aside their feelings and thoughts to focus on the moment and what is the most important next step. The time to start preparing for a crisis is well before the crisis—so start planning for those seminal moments now.

The truth is, these seminal events can quickly turn wishes into reality if we don't fall back into the rut of looking for another replacement. And going through the cathartic process of making a change in advance of a seminal shock may just cause you to do something you've only dreamed about.

Sameness is truthfully never really the same. We can never fully go back. Awaken yourself to a new perceptual reality of what you can do if the foundation underneath you suddenly evaporates. These seminal events are finite. Don't waste them. Prepare for them, maybe even do something in advance of a life-changing event—because you can.

THING TWENTY

Build Great Relationships

“People don’t mind being challenged to do better if they know the request is coming from a caring heart.” –Ken Blanchard

THE GIST OF 50 YEARS of research on happiness reveals that strong and positive relationships cause joy more than any other factor. Unlike happiness, which is an emotion and therefore dependent on something pleasant happening, joy is on an attitude of the heart; and, nothing effects the heart as much as relationship.

According to Gallup, people who have a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be engaged in their jobs. And it doesn't have to be a great friend: Gallup found that people who simply had a friend in the workplace are more likely to be satisfied. The same principle applies to relationships at home. A study in Australia showed that strong social networks could lengthen survival in elderly men and women, with good friends being even more likely to increase longevity than close family members.

As human beings, we simply crave friendship and positive relationships, just as we do any of the other basic necessities of life, like food and water. So it makes sense that the better our relationships

are in our career and life, the more joyful and successful we're going to be.

But sustaining a healthy relationship is hard. According to The National Center for Health Statistics there is a divorce in America approximately every 36 seconds. The million (or billion) dollar questions are why so many relationships fail, and how can we turn inevitable conflicts into stronger relationships? Usually this occurs due to one major reason, as the following story illustrates:

Carrie and Tom met in high school as the cheerleader and the football team's star quarterback, respectively. They married in their early 20's because of their intense physical attraction to each other. Carrie was just Tom's second girlfriend before marrying, and it didn't take long before Tom lamented his lack of freedom. You probably see where this is going—and it doesn't look good

Tom worked long hours as a budding marketing associate at his company while Carrie stayed at home with their young children. As Tom's stardom rose within the company, Carrie's influence in his life began to fall. Tom would join his coworkers after work for drinks and attended nightclubs during overnight conferences. After a long period apart, Carrie helped Tom unpack from his trip and discovered a love note in his suitcase. While Tom slept she checked her husband's cell phone and found text messages from the same woman expressing her "loving" adoration for Tom.

When confronted the next morning, Tom denied having an affair, at first expressing feigned anger. "She just has a crush on me—nothing more," he said. But then one day Carrie checked the "other woman's" Facebook page to find that she left several messages stating that she'd found the "love of her life," and a reply from Tom saying, "I love you and want to be together forever." When confronted again with the Facebook posts, Tom became contrite, his face drawn and he pleaded with Carrie to forgive him saying that he would "never see her again."

In that moment Tom realized that he might lose his best friend, and Carrie felt like she perhaps had never really known Tom. They

attended marriage counseling, but Carrie constantly worried each time Tom traveled out of town, and she would drill him each time he returned. Their arguments would sometimes result in days without speaking to each other.

Having lost trust in Tom, there was no going back. They were mired in a mud pit of doubts and disillusionment. The story is true, the names have been changed.

Suffice it to say that trust is the foundation that makes relationships work, whether at home or at work. It is the fundamental process of staying true to one's promises and commitments. When trust vanishes, so do feelings of respect, reliability, confidence, safety, love and friendship; and, in their place come overriding expressions of resentment, insecurity, and fear. The violated person becomes like a detective trying to uncover more reasons for distrusting the violator.

Building (or rebuilding) trust can take months—sometimes years—to make happen; and it may seem that it can never be truly rebuilt. Though restoration invariably takes a long time, it can be lost overnight. Trust is built on proving reliability over time, and doing what's right—a huge factor in determining success. In any relationship, being considered trustworthy builds respect and commitment, as well as a supportive and stress free environment.

We build trust one-step at a time, by proving our dependability and honesty along the way, until eventually our level of trust reaches the point where we can completely let down our guard with another person. Some people are more trusting than others. Others need to observe what you do. Do you keep your word? Are you on time for meetings? Do you follow through on commitments? Do you own up to your mistakes?

If you're in a new relationship, or in a situation where you need to rebuild trust, there are certain steps that will get you there more quickly. The first is obvious: be honest. Do what you say and say what you mean. There's no such thing as a "little white lie"—they are all just lies. Don't cheat on expense reports; don't say things you don't mean.

Second, be transparent while using good judgment. Have you ever experienced a conversation where someone shared something with you by saying, “just between us”? These kinds of secret conversations damage trust, as do unnecessarily harsh and unsolicited criticisms, even if they are followed with an apology.

If a violation of trust occurs, consider that the damage has already been done. So begin the healing by sharing things about yourself, including the parts you may not like. To be trusted you need to be candid enough to appear vulnerable and authentic to the other person. By revealing your defects, you are laying the groundwork for the other person to be more trusting, since you’ve gone first. You’re saying in essence, “I’m sharing some sensitive things about me, because I trust you enough to accept me as I am.” Almost always the other person will return the favor, thus taking the relationship to a deeper level of trust.

I’ve been asked in counseling sessions, as with those involving Carrie and Tom, whether trust can ever be regained once it’s been lost. My answer is “yes,” but it takes a while, and some tears and hard work. The first step is to confess, which is like chiropractic for the soul. Next involves taking full responsibility for any misdeed, followed by forgiveness. Too often people think that forgiveness is a feeling—it is not. It’s a choice we make in response to an openness to be transparent with each other.

Depending on the size of the breach of trust, forgiveness may be a lengthy process, but it isn’t an option. If you let your anger take control the other person cannot hear what you have to say. Of course Carrie became outraged after she saw the love note in Tom’s suitcase, but over time she came to realize that he’d been forthright in many things, and that he became truly repentant; and, not only that but the ‘other woman’ noted on Facebook had been blocked from messaging Tom. Know that you’re on a healing journey with many twists and turns, and you need to be transparent, but you must also set

realistic expectations about how the relationship will change in the future.

The first step of restoring any relationship is uncovering the root cause of what triggered an offense, and then weighing the risk of breaking the relationship with the hope of it becoming even stronger. Asking questions to uncover what caused the initial misdeed starts the process, and then each person needs to get help. Staying focused on what brought you together in the first place will help to reset your frame of mind. If there is a sexual addiction problem like pornography, be willing to attend sexual addiction meetings or see a counselor. If there is loneliness in the relationship, take the initiative to make an appointment with a counselor.

Talking about your feelings is the best way to connect in any relationship, but always know that the risk of opening up your heart again to disappointment is possible. However, if both parties are sincere, humble, contrite, and committed to making the relationship stronger, the hope of building a future together outweighs the risk of more disappointment.

Asking open and sincere questions is important for any developing relationship. As difficult as it was for Tom to share about his infidelity, Carrie noticed how hard her husband worked to reestablish his integrity in their relationship. Tom committed to answer every question Carrie asked. Sometimes he needed to answer the same questions over and over again so that Carrie could address each angle of her concerns. Still neither became exasperated by Carrie's need to know. Said Carrie, "He never asked me to stop, but he did sometimes ask when we could put things behind us."

Now this couple is five years distant from the fallout, yet questions still arise, but these occur less and less frequently. And Tom answers each one with the patience and empathy he must to keep the relationship going. They've learned to ask healthy questions like, "How did that make you feel?" or "You seem uncomfortable. What's going on inside your head and heart?" These questions create a

feeling of being understood, and that's perhaps the most essential component of any healthy relationship. Questions reveal secrets and establish a foundation of trust if asked and answered with a genuine desire to know what the other person needs.

In any relationship, professional or person, when trust is broken the process of healing is painful for both persons in different ways, and mutual respect is vital. The one who broke trust needs to respect the betrayed person's emotions. Tom described it as putting himself in Carrie's mind by saying, "I had to realize that while my transgressions were feeding my ego, I was setting my best friend and the love of my life up for a huge crash. I had to resist my defensive posture to dismiss her feelings, and consider how I might feel if she did this to me."

Carrie learned that, even as the betrayed spouse, she needed to express her respect for Tom in the language he could understand. When someone becomes untrustworthy, a sense of guilt naturally accompanies what that person knows is wrong. Tom already felt guilty. So as they worked to heal their marriage, Carrie empathetically used the right words and tone that wouldn't punish him further. Throughout the healing process, they both had to resist the urge to react to one another in their hurt, responding instead with respect and humility.

For Carrie and Tom, what seemed at first like the end of their marriage turned into a new beginning of trust, accountability, and deeper understandings. Because they talked about the situation immediately and with an open mind and heart, they were able to reckon with each other. Leaving anger and resentments unsettled for too long can have the opposite effect—divorce.

If you are hurting from another person's failure, or you are doing something that might be hurting someone you care about, know that you are not alone. Many people are hurting or are on the verge of being hurt by actions that will destroy trust.

Keeping a mutually advantageous attitude toward one another is key. This means being willing to share your knowledge, your concerns,

even your privileged information without any hidden agendas. Whether you believe this or not, giving without expecting anything in return almost always builds trust. Because it opens the heart of the other person by saying you care enough to risk being harmed. Though we often tend to hurt the ones we love, it's the process of rebuilding trust that ultimately leads to a richer life—hopefully together, but always stronger than before.

Besides Trust, the 2nd Most Important Thing for Building Great Relationships

As a relationship counselor, I often ask people if they'd rather be right or joyful. Almost everyone says they would rather be joyful, but few are willing to give up their insistence on being right. On the surface that may seem absurd. Yet it's almost instinctual that people choose to win an argument at the cost of damaging their relationships. Our confirmation bias factors into virtually any communication. Consider the last time you heard either a Democrat or Republican pause to reflect an opposing viewpoint during a debate. Even the most open minded people hold some prejudices despite how inane a belief may appear. For example, consider your favorite color. Now, is there anyway I could change your preference for that color? Probably not because it's so fixed in your mind that any form of convincing your otherwise would prove futile.

When tightly held beliefs are challenged, our overriding need to win an argument always prevents actively listening. Enforcing our being right by making the other person wrong shuts down receptivity. Doesn't that sound like the antithesis of a healthy relationship? This compulsion to be right ruins relationships and thus our joy and ability to grow.

Growing in relationship is paramount to long-term success. The collective research of hundreds of relationship experts point to just a few absolutely critical needs for growing healthy connections, whether in the professional or personal environment. Besides giving up the need

to always be right, here are the most important foundations that make up healthy relationships in anyone's career and life:

- **Trust**—As the true story of Carrie and Tom evidenced, trust is essential in every good relationship. When you trust someone or a team, you form a thriving union that fosters healthful communication. If you trust people, you can be transparent with them and you don't have to question their motives. Trust means not second-guessing the motives of the other person. As a leader in work and life, it's important that you set an example. Show your loved ones or team how critical trust is to you by demonstrating your trust in them, as well as in others. It's especially important in the work world to get to know someone's interests, family, and important experiences; and, in a team setting make an effort to help everyone get to know each other on a personal level. Encourage conversations about family, values, family, or other personal interests. Finally, in a work setting discourage cliques or favoritism the same way you would discourage gossip in a personal relationship.
- **Mutual Support**—This means wanting what's best for the other person, and welcoming that person's feedback and ideas. In a study of couples married for over 30 years (conducted by our research firm, TenorCorp) each individual in the relationship was willing to give more than he or she received. Interestingly, those who gave 50-50 to each other succeeded less than those couples that mutually agreed to give more to the other. Partners in the healthiest relationships gave 40-60, with each agreeing to accept 40% from the other. Of course, this only works if each partner or person in a relationship agrees to give more than they receive. Mutual support means sharing responsibility for successes, which makes successes greater, and for failures, which lessons failures. It means wanting what's best for the other person or team members, and genuinely believing in their goodness.

- **Investing in Others**—At work and in social settings, pay it forward by supporting and developing your colleagues and friends. You can begin with showing genuine interest in their lives, asking them for opinions and caring about them. Then invest yourself in their success. According to Keith Ferazzi, the author of “Never Eat Alone,” helping others succeed is the best way to ensure your own success. Thanks to the law of reciprocity, your investment in others will likely pay off down the road with a network of people who want to support and develop your career. The key is to never keep score and just know it will eventually be your turn.
- **Showing Respect**—This means taking responsibility for your words and actions, and taking the time to consider what the other person says. Actively listening to someone with an open mind is the most powerful way to show respect. A good listener is someone who hears more than the words being spoken. He or she can pick up on the emotional overtones and undertones in what is being said. Most people listen with the intent to be heard, but those who show genuine respect listen with the intent to understand. So the next time someone says something to you, instead of immediately responding ask a follow-up question such as “Tell me more,” or “How did that make you feel?”
- **Controlling Negative Emotions**—When we are regularly undone by our emotions, we become victims of damaged relationships. When someone feels offended by another person—that causes negative emotions, so try regulating your emotions well before a negative provoking situation even occurs. By preparing yourself ahead of time, you’ll find that the problematic emotion goes away before it interferes with your life. Sometimes that means avoiding circumstances that

trigger unwanted emotions. Another technique is changing your thoughts through cognitive reappraisal, by replacing thoughts that lead to unhappiness with thoughts that lead to joy. For example, a person may have been rejected several times by people and thus thinks negatively about his or her likeability in meeting someone new. The possible solution would be to think about a positive relationship that worked, and use that to reset expectation for the next one by dwelling on previous successes.

- **Transparent Communication** –All healthy relationships depend on open, honest communication. This means confessing personal shortcomings, which opens the other person to share openly, and by affirming the other person's strengths more than criticizing that person. When conflicts arise respond by acknowledging the other person's feelings first. Before expressing your needs say something like, "I heard what you said," or "I understand that it hurt you." The best way to let someone know you are concerned is to ask how she or he "feels" about a situation. Offer acknowledgments and affirmations from time-to-time to demonstrate you are engaged with what is being said.
- **Understanding each other's differences.** One of the biggest challenges we experience in relationships is that we are all different. Our most common behaviors generally fit into four styles: analytical, amiable, driver and expressive. Analyticals thrive with verifiable facts and enjoy gathering and reviewing data. They are generally more controlling and inquisitive. Amiables are highly supportive and thrive in strong relationships and teamwork. They are more apt to express their feelings and check-in (ask questions) to assure others. Drivers are results oriented people driven by goals. They are prone to tell others what to do in order to control situations.

Expressives see the big picture and thrive in negotiating with others, often finding creative solutions. They tend to be expressive and anxious to present their ideas and experiences. Each style brings with it advantages and challenges, and the key in understanding each other's differences is to understand the other person's preferred style and his or her preferences in order to modify your behavior to make the other person more comfortable. For example, talking facts and figures with an Analytical, encouraging positive relationships and teamwork with the Amiable, allowing Drivers to formulate their own decisions, and showing interest in an Expressive's ideas while frequently complimenting them. Accepting and celebrating our differences is a great starting point. The end point is treating people the way they want to be treated. Recognizing people for who they are and giving them what they need is the cornerstone of building stronger relationships in our personal and professional lives.

- **Developing empathy.** There is a great expression: *"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."* Empathy is genuinely understanding why people feel the way they do. It is a state of perceiving and relating to another person's feelings and needs without blaming, giving advice, or trying to fix the situation. Empathy also means understanding another person's inner state and interpreting it in a way that will help the other person and offer support and develop mutual trust. Each relationship we experience can teach us something, and by building positive relationships with others we will be happier and more fulfilled and feel more supported, supportive, and connected. So the next time you interact with someone, try practicing (internally) putting yourself in their position, and if the other individual's perspective is opposite to yours try taking

that person's opposing view point. Seek commonalities. Temporarily suspend your judgment. Be curious about the other person's situation and background. Don't go with your default reaction immediately. Remain hyper-focused on a person's inner state. Start on the side of the other person and work your way back.

About Workplace Relationships

In the workplace, developing good relationships with key stakeholders in your organization is important. These are the people who have a stake in your success or failure. Forming a bond with these people will help you ensure that your career stays on track. Supervisors always appreciate staying informed and knowing that what's requested is delivered on time and meets or exceeds expectations. Genuinely wanting what's best for the supervisor and 'big dogs' builds career security.

Clients and customers are another group who deserve extra attention. Think of the last time you had to deal with an unhappy customer. It was probably challenging and draining. Although you may not be able to keep everyone happy 100 percent of the time, maintaining honest, trusting relationships with your customers can help you ensure that if things do go wrong, damage is kept to a minimum. Good relationships with clients and customers can also lead to extra sales, career advancement, and a more rewarding life.

The differences between personal relationships at home and those at work really are not that much different. Central to all relationship development is that we should treat others the way they would like to be treated. If you keep that in mind, you will most likely succeed in building relationships that will bring you much joy!

THING TWENTY-ONE

Take a Leap of Faith

“The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because he loves us.” —C.S. Lewis

EACH DAY JIMMY’S MOTHER WOULD take him to swimming lessons and Jimmy would refuse to jump in the pool. No matter what his mother or instructor told him, the red headed little boy would just sit in the poolside chair with his head securely rested on his clenched knuckles. Jimmy, like most of us, feared failure. One day his dad went to lessons with Jimmy. The dad said, “I have a fear of water too, Jimmy, but if you jump, I’ll jump with you.” The five-year-old looked up to the top of his dad’s 6’3” frame and said, “OK.” Jimmy and his dad jumped into the pool hand-in-hand.

In the end, we all have to take a leap of faith into the unknown. People who achieve their dreams must reach beyond their own reasoning ability to grab onto something greater. If you believe in God, there is no uncertainty, because he has control over all things and he will always accomplish his good purpose. If you don’t believe in God, simply understanding your emotions guards against the anxiety felt

upon walking in faith, by helping you understand that anxiety is irrelevant to your decision.

Said another way, if you decide to reach into the unknown, you will have already (subconsciously or otherwise) thought through your most fearful emotions and the rest is simply downhill—easier. People who expect to fail don't take risks. People who expect to learn or succeed when launching into the new always succeed in doing so. It's a conviction that the experience is worth the potential downside because each experience is learning, and leads to progress.

Faith is an expression of hope for a better future. More than just a hope, it's more like a belief. It's a belief rooted in the soul. It imparts a sense of doing what is right that intensifies our purpose.

We practice faith as the evidence of things not seen. No one knows what the future holds, yet people continue to look forward to tomorrow. No one can see the billions of stars in the sky, but we know they are out there. Faith speaks of something greater than our awareness. Faith finds itself as an expression of hope that reaches beyond rationalization to complete trust in potency.

If you're feeling downtrodden or drained, faith may be the solution. Faith helps us overcome our feelings of inadequacy. It also aids in driving us toward success. Faith in ourselves speaks of the inevitability of triumph, sometimes because of setbacks, and not just instead of them, because with faith each step brings us closer to the goal.

Belief in a higher power has been demonstrated to boost that success even more. Maybe this is because people of faith desire to merit God's wholehearted love, in the same way that children of loving parents tend to want to please their parents, or they make an effort to live up to their parents' confidence in their abilities. Regardless, faith instantly reaches the subconscious mind by producing an autosuggestion that we will achieve that for which we ask, if followed with the plans for achieving that which we desire. So in a sense faith serves as the impetus that gives life and action to the stimulus of thought.

Faith also gives us an inherited value beyond our own perceived abilities. We can have faith and hope in a bigger plan for our life. Belief in the unseen or unknown produces a heartfelt assurance and a resolute conviction that we have what we desire and hope for despite personal failures. Hope arises simply by believing that there is someone or something greater than our limited comprehension helping us, desiring our well-being, and caring for us all of the time.

Helen Keller, the renowned blind and deaf author and lecturer, explained it this way: "I know that faith made my life possible and that of many others like me...Reason hardly warranted Anne Sullivan's attempt to transform a little half-human, half-animal, deaf-blind child into a complete human being. Neither science nor philosophy had set such a goal, but faith, the eye of love did. I did not know I had a soul. Then the God in a wise heart drew me out of nothingness with cords of human love and the life belt of language, and lo, I found myself. In my doubly shadowed world faith gives me a reason for trying to draw harmony out of a marred instrument. Faith is not a cushion for me to fall back upon; it is my working energy" (excerpts from *Let Us Have Faith*, 1940, pp. 9-11).

Napoleon Hill, one of the great writers on success, said this, "Faith is woven into every principle of the philosophy of achievement; faith is the essence of every great achievement, no matter what its nature or purpose. Neglecting your faith while carrying out your definite major purpose would be like trying to study astronomy without referring to the stars...the power of faith is inexhaustible. It is the ultimate renewable resource, a reflection of the Creator's desire that we use it in every way possible."

At my research company TenorCorp, we searched for the strongest evidence of faith that caused people to thrive. No better example surfaced than an organization that specializes in resurrecting the lives of people deadened by the effects of alcohol and drugs. Perhaps the most successful and one of the longest lasting recovery program of all-time, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), now has 1,800

groups with more than 90,000 members and an influence well beyond its membership. AA is a spiritual movement, a faith cure for alcoholism. Many in AA follow “Step Three” (belief in a “higher power”) to find that they have been trying to live without God, and they then discover how to live with God. That gives a different approach to hope. Or, as one expressed it, “my mind has grasped new hope in a world I’d always wished for.”

It’s a leap of faith to be able to believe that there is a God personal to oneself, but surrender to the Higher Power is not difficult for most alcoholics and drug addicts, because for years they have surrendered to a lower power. Alcohol and drugs have a power, an intoxicating power. They provide an escape, a high, and a cessation from fear and worry. In time, however, there is the craving, hangovers, loss of memory, and sickness. In devotion to this fiendish habit alcoholics and drug addicts will surrender reason, money, health, loved ones, and their career. To surrender to the higher power means no greater a demand than the surrender they have made to alcohol or drugs.

Some of the bravest PACEsetters I’ve known came from AA and organizations like them, including my aunt Mildred Deutschmann, who was sober for over sixty years until her death at 93. She was like a second mother to me. Mildred taught me that everything will turn out good in the end, and if it isn’t good yet it isn’t the end. Later I found a verse in the Bible that reinforced this as a promise: “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them” (Romans 8:28).

Another faith-based group, Teen Challenge, is a residential service with over 1,000 programs in almost 100 countries. Teen Challenge serves those struggling with life-controlling addictions. Independent reports confirm that Teen Challenge has one of the highest success recovery rates of any such program in the world. In a Northwestern University study of 154 former residents whose lives were completely transformed for good, when asked to name what helped most, the

faith-based aspects of the program were mentioned most frequently. These graduates testified of a faith beyond themselves that caused them to thrive. Given that those with the least power found faith as their reason for succeeding, it makes sense that those who do not suffer addictions can also find encouragement from the power of faith.

Most of us desire a personal relationship with God. That's because, according to some scientists, our brains are wired to believe in a deity. MRI's have demonstrated that certain areas of the brain light up when people pray or think about God. Perhaps that's because we gain satisfaction from faith in a perfect creator who knows all and can do all.

The vast majority of people in the world, almost 90% by most surveys, practice some form of religion, with Christianity representing 34% of the world's population followed by Islam at 22%. Only 11% classify themselves as non-religious (9.42%) or atheist (2%).

Whether you are a believer or not, suffice it to say that faith can lead to a more vital life because of the assurances that it provides. A respected study conducted among 4,000 elder persons (those 65 years and over) asked respondents about their health problems and whether they prayed, meditated or read the Bible. According to a Garnett News Service article, researchers discovered that those seniors who said they rarely or never prayed ran about a 50% greater risk of dying during a six-year study compared with seniors who prayed at least once month. While this study is not in and of itself conclusive, other studies confirm that faith and prayer lead to a more thriving life.

Some would say that when Jesus said, "Seek the kingdom of Heaven within," he was pointing to our conscious ability to see things as we believe them, which is faith. To the skeptic, this may seem like self-hypnosis. The programmed mind thinks that unless something can be seen, as in being tangible, it cannot exist. If so, then things like love, which is not tangible, cannot be believed. And without love, one cannot begin to seek a thriving life. In one of his books, Russian novelist Dostoyevsky depicts a conversation between two of his

characters discussing hell. "Hell," says one of them "must be the inability to love." Amen to that!

In support of our need to keep believing and therefore to practice love, we must reach beyond the bounds of mere reason. By believing we open ourselves to greater possibilities, and an ideal beyond the limits of our own potentiality. Perfection realized and knowable through faith opens the door to possibilities beyond our imagination. It invigorates us with the notion that an entity or belief far greater than any limitation has things in control, and that feels good. Knowing that the power of love exists beyond our ability to comprehend its fullness makes even the worst situations miniscule in comparison to love's infinite ability to make it right. And that gives us the hope to continue forward, and the thriving life that invariably comes with being hopeful.

The bottom line is that you can do it, and you will do it, if only you believe! Or as J.M. Barrie wrote in the story of Peter Pan, "The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease for ever to be able to do it."

THING TWENTY-TWO

Declare War on Your Thoughts

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” —Winston Churchill

YOU’VE RECEIVED A MOSTLY POSITIVE review, with one criticism that ruins your day and sticks with you months later. Sound familiar? As humans, we tend to accentuate the negatives. Psychologists call it negativity bias. Our selective memory harbors negative encounters more than positive ones because they provoke more intense reactions, which makes us more timid and less willing to take risks. Thankfully, we can take steps to overcome our negative propensity so we can escape the disease of pessimism without having to ascribe to that worn-out axiom of believing the “glass half full.”

Have you ever tried renewing your mind by declaring war on your thinking? Maybe or maybe not, but perhaps it’s time to do so. It starts with remaining hopeful, which tends to attract resources for fulfilling your hope. Oftentimes increased hope signifies that the renewing of the mind is working.

Several experts suggest that we review our past accomplishments to remind of us of how we are capable of accomplishing much. So

remember what you've done well in the past to give hope for the future. Second, being grateful impresses a powerful influence on your thinking. It not only makes you feel better, but it reverses your focus on the positive.

There's no need to ignore all of the problems around you, but if you can think of them as challenges or better yet opportunities, your brain will subconsciously replace the paradigm of failure, which the word "problem" evokes, and replace it with a more encouraging outlook. Psychologists have also found that humor and just being silly can replace negative impulses with a more childlike optimism.

Can you re-think of your obstacles as opportunities, even laugh at them as in, "Here goes another one—been there, done that!" It is not that easy, is it—especially in the heat of the moment, but when we begin to trivialize problems, even laugh at them (even if we don't feel like joking about the problem), our brain accepts that dismissive attitude as acceptable. And the more we laugh at our problems, the more capable we become to perceive the solution. That's because our mind will start viewing challenges as insignificant in comparison to our ability to find a better way. When we get serious about determining a better approach, and trivialize the problem, only the answer seems relevant. One depressed businessman I know decided to join a comedy club and discovered that his disposition changed dramatically in the process. Another friend of mine is a teacher who dresses up as a clown and entertains kids.

Positive awareness can be like a game in which you make a habit of actively searching for the positive side in everything. Looking for the here-to-fore unseen good around you can awaken you to the reasons for being optimistic by moving attention from the dark side of life. Also use more positive speech, by replacing words like "things will *never* get better," to "it will be better *tomorrow*." If you act like an optimistic person, your mind will accept that as your reality. Also, people will be attracted to your brighter outlook in life and will

respond with more encouragement back to you. Our attitude toward life determines others' attitude toward us.



Another way of declaring war on our thoughts is reframing. It starts with a thought: Most of the disappointments we worry about are baseless, as amusingly expressed in a quote from Mark Twain, "My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened." Our minds imagined them due to negative self-speak. Those trials that did actually occur made us stronger. Had we used a powerful renewal technique for those imagined or real disappointments, our attitude would have been transformed. That technique, *reframing*, involves identifying our destructive thoughts and replacing them with adaptive ones. Positive reframing means trying to reconsider things in a positive light, and it is a powerful way to transform our thinking.

Seeing a problem as a place to shine requires that we place it in a different setting. Look at setbacks as times to learn and change direction. Out of the box thinking challenges assumptions, but it also reframes ideas to consider them in a new way, and it uses lateral thinking to look at problems from many angles instead of tackling it head-on.

A situation might include someone who is **procrastinator** saying, "I never have time to eat breakfast," and reframing it as, "I can wake-up a little earlier to eat something." Or an **overgeneralizer** might stub her toe and say, "I can never get a break," and then thoughtfully reframe the mishap as, "This is just a little fluke; usually I'm free of pain, and this is not the end of the world." **Overachievers** often need to reframe their high expectations that "I need to do more" with something like, "I'm not always perfect, but I accomplish a lot and I'm always trying." Those who are **poor self-esteemers** often misread situations as with, "My friend hasn't called me in forever—she must not like me

anymore,” and reframe those thoughts with a view such as, “Maybe she feels that I’m too busy with all of my work, so I’ll just call her to check-in and see if she’s OK.”

Self-pityers are often saying, “Nobody cares about me”; the reframing would be to think something like, “I need to be more vulnerable with others so that they can be more open with me.” And then there are the **clairvoyants**, who can predict the future by saying, “I know he’s going to reject me”; they can respond with a positive future-focused statement as “I can’t predict the outcome, but if he doesn’t like me, he’s obviously not the one for me, and I’ll eventually find the right person.”

If you are afraid to do something new, try reframing your resistance to the situation by remembering how good you felt after getting something else accomplished that was once daunting. Think of the task as enjoyable, and you’re more likely to do it. Also, try reframing the cause of your stress with a more positive perspective, such as looking at that traffic jam as a time to think through things and listen to some good music. Think long-term—is this really something that will be important in a month or year? If what causes you stress is something you need to live with, such as an illness or a job loss, just try to accept it and look for the silver lining, share your feelings with others, learn to move on, and find time for relaxation.

You can reframe literally any thought you ever experience into something more positive. Self-critical thoughts that limit our potential, such as “I’m not good enough for the job,” can be reframed by first understanding that situations do not have any intrinsic meaning. They can only be internalized once we interpret a situation as having meaning. As humans we tend to second-guess ourselves, as in that meeting seemed to go well, but then we start remembering all the things we could have said or done to make it better. To reframe the event, we need to understand that our interpretation of a failure is only because of the way we look at it.

This is not to say that our emotions are not valid—they certainly are! However, we can interpret even a bad situation as having a good meaning. For example, it may be raining outside which can spoil an outdoor event, but reframing this as an opportunity to go to the gym in order to meet your weight loss goal gives the rainy outcome a positive meaning.

Each thought carries with it a frame of mind—our underlying beliefs and assumptions implied by that thought. For example, when you think, “I never do well taking tests because I get too nervous,” the frame is that nervousness causes people to fail at tests. In reality, most people get nervous taking tests, so the opportunity may be to limit that nervousness through a more disciplined study process.

Behind each negative thought lies some positive purpose. That negative speak has deceived you into thinking that it will help. By finding the positive purposes behind this inner speak, you can retrain your mind to uncover a positive reframe. So don’t ridicule yourself for those negative thoughts; rather, turn them around. Journaling can be an effective way for reframing thoughts by noting consistently negative thought patterns that you can turn around.

Words matter. So try to soften some negatives by using accurate descriptions of how they make you feel rather than making general indictments; like, instead of saying “I can’t stand pushy people,” you might say something like, “When people keep telling me to do something more than once, it makes me feel like they don’t trust me to do whatever they’re requesting.” Maintain a forward focus toward some resolution, such as, “In the future, I’m going to confirm what others tell me so that they know that I am hearing them.” By practicing a forward thinking solutions approach, people tend to feel that they are growing as in, “I can see if this new approach makes a positive difference.”

As humans, we invariably make assumptions, but through reframing we can challenge these assumptions by changing our perspective about any situation to give it a more positive meaning.

Turning assumptions into forward thinking solutions helps us provide meaning to situations that have no intrinsic meaning. Opportunity happens when we replace our negative thoughts with more positive ones by challenging them.



The final way of declaring war on our thoughts is to think with an abundant attitude. Many societies operate from an attitude of scarcity. It's an attitude that says there is a deficit of possibilities in life that the potential for more than what environment, abilities, and fortune can provide are close to nil. Our world economies are constructed mostly from a perspective based on the "Law of Scarcity," which states that there exists seemingly unlimited human wants in a world of limited resources. If everyone got what they wanted and needed, those resources required to fill these demands would eventually dry up. Advertisers play off of this belief in scarcity, implying through their ads that "We can only offer so much, so you had better buy our product before it runs out," which drives demand and cost.

From an early age, teachers and institutions, instead of encouraging the student to establish learning goals in relationship to life goals, teach us the law of scarcity as students vie for limited opportunities within an educational system where goals are established for them. However, new research now confirms that self-directed learners, or "autodidacts," will be the most successful persons in the 21st century and beyond. In an article published in *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science*, researchers Todd Gurecki and Douglas Markant discovered that self-directed learning exposes people to information they wouldn't normally learn through traditional means. Hence, autodidacts tend to assimilate information better than conventional students. In addition, they develop a more optimistic attitude because their primary

interests and training fuel them in the direction of their genuine vocational choices, and that tends to make them more motivated and successful.

On the other hand, people who are “spoon-fed” information often view their possibilities from a narrowed perspective. They see their opportunities in comparison to others, versus through the lenses of their unique composition. Scarcity says that we all need to be made proficient through the same limited resources. Only advanced degrees, for example, qualify a person for a high-level position, when in fact, studies have shown that competency is better advanced out of an abundant perspective that qualifies candidates based on what they know, rather than what they are taught.

The attitude of scarcity teaches us that possibilities are always restricted by time, opportunity and potential. An attitude of optimism encourages the individual to search out their uniqueness, and then to tailor their opportunities based on unlimited resources available to them. That we must all drink from the same proverbial pool in order to succeed can be quite painful for the individual, and creates a lot of unnecessary fear, anxiety and desperation.

An attitude of optimism, on the other hand, tells you that there are always new chances and opportunities. This relieves much of the pressure someone may feel if they have a scarcity attitude that makes them think that they’ve only got one path toward success and one shot at success right now. Or an attitude of scarcity can make them feel like a complete failure just because they temporarily failed and something didn’t work out. An attitude of optimism can help anyone improve their success since with it you’re seeing the boundless possibilities that can be gained through learning to adjust one’s approach.

Here are a few ideas to create and reinforce your own attitude of optimism:

1. **Identify an attitude of scarcity.** If you are continually stressed, controlled and pressured, chances are your attitude is one of scarcity. You may consider failure as the end, rather than seeing it as a stepping-stone to your goal. An attitude of scarcity may cause you to lose sleep over an important event, like a test, a presentation, an interview, or a meeting. Develop an attitude of optimism by reminding yourself that regardless of whether you succeed or fail, all that you've learned will inspire your next journey, and the possibilities to continue your growth and contributions are endless.
2. **Focus on possibilities, not probabilities.** Possibilities evoke a future-focus within our mind that triggers unencumbered thoughts of what can be that here-to-fore seemed unattainable. Probabilities, on the flip side, factor in past experiences that create a cause-and-effect mentality that discounts previously untapped realities. What we focus on will determine how we view our options, and if our options are innumerable, we often stop limiting our prejudiced responses from a perspective of simply "what worked and didn't work," to "what might work that we've never tried before."
3. **Be thankful.** An attitude of scarcity sees what we do not have, while an optimistic attitude looks at what we have as being a treasure to invest into something even greater. Being thankful frees us from a sense of feeling that enough is never enough, to a feeling that what exists, in terms of our relationships, possessions and our overall being is quite enough—for now. Being content wherein we stand creates a springboard toward possibilities that will benefit us through our sure footing. If

we cannot be thankful in even the small things, then how can we expect to be happy when bigger opportunities arise? Being thankful in all things frees us to expect a deeper appreciation for the next big thing.

4. **Greet everyone you meet with optimism.** There's a common thread of behavior that when people respond to us with an optimistic attitude, in saying something like, "I am confident that you'll succeed," or "I know in the end that we'll prevail," we feel empowered. The same happens when we express optimism about a situation to others. In fact, others will perceive us in a more positive light as well. It's a well-known fact that people like hanging around optimistic people, because that attitude is contagious. Even if you don't feel optimistic, try faking it. That's right, even if you fake optimism, as we've learned through several studies, we will begin developing a stronger attitude of optimism. And if your present circle of friends is typically comprised of naysayers, consider hanging around some more optimistic people to help offset those other negative influences.
5. **Give.** An optimist cannot be out-given, because the optimist's source of abundance never can be exhausted. Even with limited resources, there's a principle of giving that has been proven to increase one's wealth. At a Family Philanthropy Conference in San Diego, Arthur C. Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute and author of the book *Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth about Compassionate Conservatism*, shared extensive research, which shows that giving leads to happiness and to more wealth. He found that even a 1% increase in charitable giving leads to more than a 200% return. As to how giving feels, studies show that giving releases endorphins that makes us happier. What's more, those who give their resources and time to help others are generally perceived as leaders, and leaders attract success.

6. **Look for the win-win.** People with a scarcity attitude continually perceive choices as either a win or a loss, and relationships as either give or take. An optimistic attitude looks for the win-win, by creating a possibility well-beyond what the present situation affords—such as instead of allotting less money to growing teams in order to budget what's in the bank, investing that money into growth funds so that everyone can be given more money. People with an optimistic attitude seek a collaborative relationship that shares success, as well as failures. They expand possibilities by seeking to expand resources rather than allocate limited resources.
7. **Overcome losses by releasing yourself to think anew.** After losing a loved one, or a job, or a relationship, instead of grieving over the loss for long periods of time, or worse yet, resenting what happened, look to fulfill those dreams that had been dormant. For example, a broken relationship may free you to find the person of your dreams. The loss of a job may free you to move to your ideal home—perhaps even to a resort location. A crisis that robs you of your wealth may open the door to a new entrepreneurial endeavor, or to get closer to supportive family and friends. Use the opportunity of a loss to find the time, space, and freedom to consider what might never have been possible before.

A FINAL NOTE:

MY TRAUMATIC STORY OF SURVIVING TO THRIVING

THERE'S AN ACRID SMELL IN hospitals. It's that wafting smell of disinfectants mixed with sickness. When I was lying on my back with intravenous lines stuck from underneath my skin into a machine, I felt disconnected from my life while breathing in those hospital odors. The patient next to me tried interjecting some dark humor after I complained. "It's just the smell of death," he said. "You'll get over it tomorrow."

I wondered if I'd even have a life the next day or more realistically, the next hour. Several blood clots blocked the blood flow from my leg all the way to my lungs, such that when the doctor tried sticking another line into a vein within my arm he couldn't draw any blood. My jammed corpuscles had formed a major traffic jam in my bloodstream, a condition called hypercoagulability.

The crisis started during a long flight after failing to drink enough fluids and falling asleep on the long plane ride following a tortuous day interviewing for a job. Almost a year prior to that flight, I had invested in a failed company acquisition thanks to the previous owner failing to disclose the loss of the majority of the company's clientele. I lost tens of thousands in the deal and thousands in attorney fees would be required to clean up the mess.

So I needed an income, hence the interview with the largest healthcare company in the world, Johnson & Johnson. It would be a well-paying job, but the prospect of getting it paled in comparison to my life-threatening condition—pulmonary embolism with multiple other emboli—the third leading cause of death in America. Compounding my angst was hearing that a 27-year-old surfer had died from the same condition just hours before in the Emergency Room. I was 46 with two young mouths to feed and an already overworked wife.

“God if this is it take care of them,” I thought. Breathing was hard. I was suffocating slowly because little air could pass through my pulmonary artery. My asthma compounded the problem. *Could it get any worse?*

Only weeks before my wife and I were sitting in a local coffee shop lamenting our challenges as I questioned whether God had taken a “vacation” from us. “At least we have our health,” I said to my wife in the coffee shop.

Now lying in a hospital bed even that was gone. Ah . . . that acrid hospital smell again. Weird ponderings crossed my mind. *Do smells line up with our thinking? If I were happy would I smell lavender, my favorite fragrance?*

I fell asleep or in a coma—whatever you want to call it. The strangest vision happened in that dark period. As though my spiritual eyes opened I indeed smelled lavender; other fragrant flowers too. My vision was more like a transcendent state of mind—peace. Peace, joy, and an overwhelming sense of goodness. *God, was I having a near death experience? If so, bring it on!*

I eventually woke up to a change in perspective. I was grateful for my vision and thankful to have a second chance at life. Some have asked if I met Jesus. It’s too personal really for me to answer without tears. The short answer is I believe so. Don’t ask me how to describe him because there are no words—at least they are not in my limited

vocabulary. I do remember the senses though. They were diametrically opposite to that acrid hospital smell.

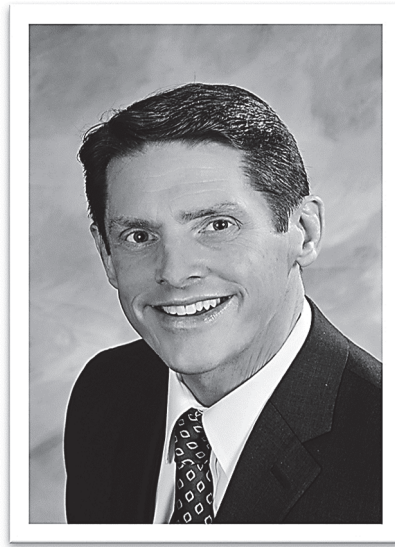
I finally recovered with some damage to the valves in my veins and other stuff. I also got the job for which I interviewed, which turned out to be one of the best experiences in my career. It took months to solidly walk. Today I can run several miles.

Life is good as I finish this book, but not all together because of my circumstances. Don't get me wrong; I have much for which to be thankful. Rather, my thriving life is because of my mindset.

Our lives involve good and bad. It's how we respond to both that matters most. I sincerely believe that bad times teach us more than good times. Trials build stamina whereas good times provide a respite. It's a little like swallowing a glass of yucky vegetable juice immediately followed by a chunk of delicious chocolate. The vegetable juice nourishes the body while the chocolate smooths over the bitter taste.

I hope that at least in a small way you've experienced nourishment for your career and life after reading *The 22 Most Important Things*. Now that you've had your mental vegetables, go out and have a chunk of chocolate or whatever makes you feel wonderful. Life is a series of choices that add up to now. Take the plunge. Enter into your future with an expectation that your best is yet to come. Thrive. You deserve it!

—Randy Kay



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RANDY KAY IS A BUSINESS leader, entrepreneur, trainer, speaker, author and coach who as an executive and advisor to start-ups and several Fortune 500 companies has contributed to the success of thousands of top performers. He is also the author of *Daily Keys to Success*, a compendium of 366 success factors and *The Power to Thrive: Building the Foundations of a Thriving Career & Life*.

His numerous promotions and attainment of the highest accolades within each of the organizations in which Kay has participated speak to his career success, while his leadership in charitable organizations and strong family life give voice to Kay's personal success.

As Chief Executive Officer of the strategic development and human resources company, TenorCorp, Kay counsels and supports market leading organizations all over the world. Formally, Kay has been a CEO of three companies, including a biotech, an executive with companies such as Johnson & Johnson, and a board member for more than 20

different organizations. He has lectured at several companies and teaching institutions such as at his alma mater, Northwestern University, as well as at several religious institutions following his ordination as a minister. Kay's writings and teaching are changing the way professionals and contributors of all kinds define and work toward success.

Find out more at www.pacesetters.training.

THANKS FOR READING *The 22 Most Important Things*

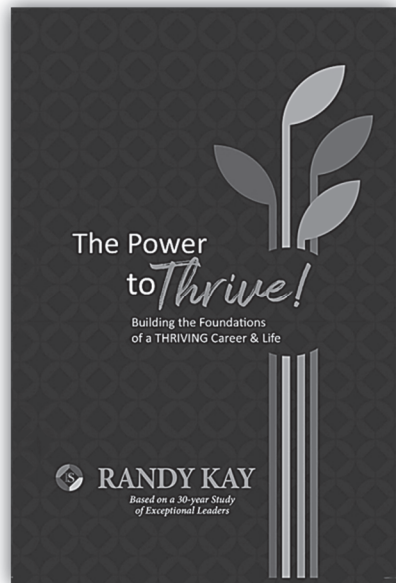
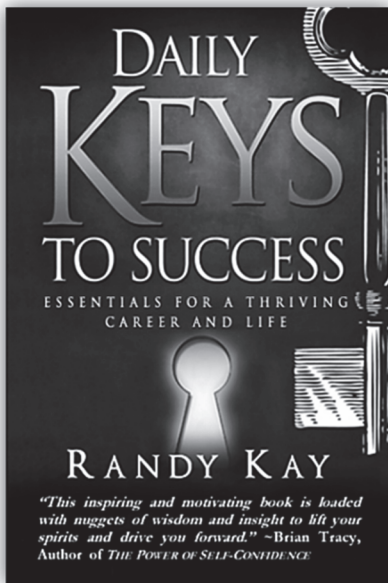
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