

ONE DECISION

How to Redefine Your Life and Love What You Do

Daylin Van Zandt

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Dedicated to my Mom and Dad for raising me to care for others and my beautiful wife
Vina for always believing in my crazy ideas.

“Declare who you are. Whatever choice in life you make, you can make the best of it.”

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INTRODUCTION

If you're going through a career or life change, and want to start living your best life but not sure where to start, begin by getting clear about what you want to create in your life!

Believe it or not, this can be the perfect time to wipe the slate clean as you close one chapter and start a new one!

The only difference is that YOU get to be the author of this new chapter, and decide, design, and create whatever you choose to have in your life.

So take a few minutes, read the following and write down your answers to each one:

- ✓ What are the top 5 values in your life?(In other words, what are the 5 things you consider to be the most important aspects of your life? 5 things you're willing to pay anything for, to stand up for, to fight for? e.g. health, love, faith, courage, integrity, trust, happiness, joy, etc.)
- ✓ Write down the 3 most important goals or objectives in your life in 30 seconds or less!
- ✓ What would you do if you won millions in the lottery today? (What's the first thing you're going to? what changes would you make in your life? If time & money were no object what would you choose to do with your life? What would you dream to do?)
- ✓ If you only had 6 months to live, how would you spend your time? (What would you do? who would you spend your time with? where would you go? what would you do more of? What would you do less of? What would you start doing? What would you stop doing?)
- ✓ What have you always wanted to do but have been afraid to do?
- ✓ What type of activities, situations or things give you your greatest feeling of importance, satisfaction, contribution, self-esteem, and self-worth?
- ✓ Imagine you can receive ONE wish from a genie in a bottle! Knowing that whatever you wish for you will have ultimate success with, what would you ask for?

Look at your answers, and based on what you came up with, write down the one thing you want to have and create in your life in the next 6 months. It's very important to keep this goal to yourself for now, or only share it with people who you know will be supportive of you and it!

Now get excited about living your best life; create a plan to achieve this goal; and focus on it every single day by taking some kind of action towards it.

GET A FRESH START

Life can be sweet and enjoyable especially when everything is going according to plans. It can however turn sour with time when goals cannot be accomplished and family and peer pressure keep pushing us on all fronts. To some individuals, such unfavorable situations evoke a certain level of anger, anguish and eventually defeat.

When faced with apparent failure, defeat and mounting pressure, there are certain steps one can take to ensure a fresh start in the journey of life. These steps may not be easy to implement, but they are solid platform upon which we can build back our broken foundations.

Remember how it feels when you look at a blank page upon which you plan to create something. It's both exciting and challenging. You don't know what will show up but you're excited to see it, maybe nervous. You may even be scared. But getting a fresh start in life to build a formidable business for yourself is achievable.

Here are some of the things to note and follow:

Forget About The Past

When you have tried all the best to ensure you succeed in a given venture, and yet failure shows up unannounced, it can be so frustrating. To some, it is better they forget about trying and give up on that precious dream. The truth however, is that you cannot recover from your past failure when you keep looking back at the mistakes of yesterday. Yesterday has gone, and there are thousands of opportunities ahead of you waiting to be exploited. The sooner we realize the futility of looking behind and the need to look ahead, the better we become.

Failure Is Not Final

One of the best ways to ensure we get a fresh start to life after a major failure is to realize that failure is not final. The fact that you have previously failed does not imply that you are a total failure. There are numerous examples of brilliant individuals who had false starts in life, but they picked up the pieces of their life and transformed their bitter experience into a success story. If you failed in achieving your set goals in the past, there is always an opportunity to make amends from now on.

Make Changes Where Necessary To Ensure A Fresh Start

Life is dynamic, and so we must be dynamic if we must succeed in whatever we do. After a major setback in life, it may be expedient that we analyze the cause of such failure and make necessary changes where applicable. It may be necessary for you to change environment or job to gain a better perspective of life.

When a football club with so much potential keeps performing poorly against the expectation of both management and fans, it sometimes results to drastic changes in the coaching crew. Underperforming players are sacked and better ones are recruited to give the club a fresh start.

Likewise, we must look inward and start making proactive changes in our life if ever we desire success. It may not be easy to implement, but it is worth the pains. The road to success is after all not smooth, but bumpy and filled with lots of obstacles, which can be frustrating.

Change What You Have Been Doing Out Of Habit

There's nothing like packing up everything you own to take you away from your desk and your routine. It is possible that you do have to create a good

sized length of time to not do what you've been doing in order to be aware of what you have been doing unconsciously.

To reassemble your life, question everything in your life. Ask yourself questions like:

“What do I want to do more of?”

“If I had my business look any way I wanted what would it look like?”

“Who do I want in my life?”

You can also list what you don't want in your life and take steps to free yourself of those people or activities. Question everything you do, every television program you watch out of habit or boredom, everything you eat out of stress or tension, every person you try to please rather than yourself.

Listen To What Is Asked Of You

We each have a unique place of service and we find that place by listening to what other people ask of us. You may be asked for advice a lot, or to organize things, or come up with creative ideas. Those are your gifts and should be the foundation of your business. Make a list right now of six things people ask you to do for them. Then circle the two you like to do best. See how you can incorporate those into your business.

Listen To Your Core

When we are still, when we stop our mind and simply are, there is an inner knowing of what is right for us that becomes evident. Whether you journal, or meditate, or simply talk your ideas over with a good friend, allow space for the Universe to speak to you and offer guidance.

Then follow your heart and make a fresh start.

GENERATE YOUR IDEA

So where do new ideas come from? Sorry to disappoint you, but there are NO NEW IDEAS. Wait! There are no new ideas, BUT, there are splendid combinations of old ideas. Things that look new will be coming and going for the rest of time but truly they are a dynamic new combination of OLD things.

So how do you do it? Come up with 'new' ideas, those precious combinations of old things made to be new. Most people will say "oh, but I'm not creative!"

"Not Creative?" I say "That is absolutely not true! Human beings are all inherently creative. YOU ARE CREATIVE! In fact, there is a process you can follow to generate ideas as much as you want. The process is simple and based on the principle that ALL new ideas are merely combinations of old ideas. If you take the children's game tic-tac-toes and replace the tic-tac-toes with a number from 1 to 9 the total number of potential combinations is 362,880. Imagine how many ideas must be available to you!

The process of getting ideas is not dissimilar to stories of the sudden appearance of islands in the South Seas. There, according to ancient mariners, in spots where the charts showed only deep blue sea-there would suddenly appear a lovely atoll above the surface of the waters. An air of magic hung about it. And so it is with ideas. They appear just as suddenly above the surface of the mind; and with that same air of magic and unaccountability. But the scientist knows that the South Sea atoll is the work of countless, unseen coral builders, working below the surface of the sea. So how do we set our mind's 'builders' to work?

Purpose

State what you are trying to achieve, are you trying to come up with a new marketing angle, a great game for a kids' party or a new and dynamic way to feed the world's poor?

Write down what your purpose is. Really, write it down, with a pen and paper. I repeat this because it makes a BIG difference having a written objective for idea generation. It ensures that you have a clearly stated objective and it articulates it in a manner where you can return to it again and again to get it bedded down in your subconscious mind.

After you have your purpose written down, make a guess as to what it is going to 'cost' you to achieve your purpose. Will it cost you a lot of time? Will you need to spend some money? Work out the time costs and dollar costs and then write those down too. Now is a good time to ask yourself, 'Is this what I really want? Is this worth the investment of time and money?'

If the answer is 'Yes', go right ahead and set yourself a timeframe in which to achieve your stated objective. We all know that 90% of homework gets done the night before it is due, so give yourself a due date and stick to it.

You have decided that this idea generating project is worthy of your time, so it is time to begin to:

Gather Information

If you are dealing with a specific problem or searching for a specific idea, begin to gather the appropriate information. In fact, at all times, be gathering information. Develop a childlike curiosity. Begin to ask 'why?' of yourself and of others. Search out information with passion. Use your

notebook to record interesting ideas, facts and tid-bits. Glue articles into a scrap book and keep a file. Become a voracious new knowledge consumer.

You may remember, the famous scrapbooks which appear throughout Sherlock Holmes stories, and how the famous detective spent his spare time indexing and cross-indexing the odd bits of material he gathered there.

Force yourself to learn new things that are outside your usual area of interest. Learn how to paint, learn something about quantum physics or child raising. Pick up a book at your local library that your friends will think is strange that you are reading.

Say it with me now: "I am a naturally curious person."

So when we are looking to solve a problem or come up with a new idea we gather all the information on the topic and start to draw and re-draw great whopping mind maps on the topic. This gathers our information and draws other information out of the dark corners of our mind. Then when you think you have all the information gathered together (and depending on the scope of the subject this could be many-many books) gather a little more information.

The information gathering process is the most often neglected part of idea generation. I cannot stress it enough; you need to have the raw materials of ideas (information) before you can start building an amazing new idea. You would never expect a builder to begin construction on your house with no materials.

Now that you are confident that you have more information than you need we can move on to step three...

Chew Over The Topic Repeatedly

Assuming that you really did a diligent job of the information gathering stage then you may have already begun this stage inadvertently. This part of the process is the most difficult to explain because it all happens inside your head.

What you do is to take the different bits of material which you have gathered and feel them, float them around in your mind. You take one fact, and turn it this way and that way, look at it in different lights, and feel for the meaning of it. You bring two facts together and see how they fit.

What you are looking for here is the relationship, a synthesis where everything will come together in a neat combination, like a jig-saw puzzle.

I know that what I am about to say sounds like a paradox but experience shows that it works. Facts sometimes display their meaning quicker when you do not scan them too directly, too literally. You remember those magic eye pictures where you have to look 'past' the picture to see the 3D illusion? It is like that. In fact, it is almost like listening for the meaning instead of looking for it. When creative people are in this stage of the process they get their reputation for absent-mindedness.

As you go through this part of the process two things will happen:

First, little tentative or partial ideas will come to you. Scribble these down on paper. It doesn't matter how crazy or incomplete they seem: get them down. These are foreshadowing's of the real idea that is to come, and expressing these in words speeds up the process.

The second thing that will happen is that you will inevitably get very tired of trying to fit your puzzle together. Don't quit yet! Keep at it! The mind, too, has a second wind. Keep bashing away at the idea even after you are past tired and get this second layer of mental energy in the process. Keep trying to get one or more partial thoughts into your notebook.

But after a while you will reach the hopeless stage. Everything is a jumble in your mind, with no clear insight anywhere. When you reach this point, if you have first really persisted in efforts to fit your puzzle together, then the third stage in the whole process is completed, and you are ready for the fourth one.

Incubation

In this third stage you make absolutely no direct effort. You drop the whole subject, and put the problem out of your mind as completely as you can.

It is important to realize that this is just as definite and just as necessary a stage in the process as the previous three. What you have to do at this time is to turn the problem over to your subconscious mind, and let it work while you sleep. You have a massive processing powerhouse on the 'back end' of your mind, one that we don't experience consciously but it unquestionably exists.

Completely ignoring the task at hand at this stage will force the unconscious mind into action because the problem remains unsolved and the unconscious mind does not sit well with unfinished problems.

You may remember the old Sherlock Holmes books, he used to stop right in the middle of a big case, and drag Watson off to a concert. This sent practical and literal-minded Watson round the twist but Conan Doyle (the author) was a creator himself and knew the creative process. So when you reach this third stage in the production of an idea, drop the problem completely, and, turn to whatever stimulates your emotions. Listen to music, go for a walk, read poetry or take a long hot bath.

In the first stage, you have planted your seed. In the second stage, you have gathered your food. In the third stage, you have chewed it up well. Now the digestive process is on. Leave it alone and let the gastric juices do their work. But be on your guard with pen and paper to...

Catch The Idea

If you have worked hard during the previous four stages then this stage is inevitable.

Out of nowhere an idea will appear.

It will come to you when you are least expecting it - while shaving, or bathing or most often when you are half awake, in the morning. It may wake you up in the middle of the night. Be ready to catch that idea and make it your prisoner. Always have a pen and paper nearby to scribble it down in your notebook where it will be trapped forever for you to milk it for all it is worth.

You can keep a little voice recorder by your bedside so that, if you have an idea when you are not fully awake, you can 'catch' the idea on tape and then write it in your notebook in the morning.

DO NOT be fooled, you will NOT remember your idea if you don't capture it somehow. It doesn't matter how dynamic an idea is. If you don't catch it, it's gone forever. In fact it seems that the subconscious mind births the most elegant of ideas at the most inconvenient of times. You MUST catch them. Good ideas are slippery little suckers and can pop out of your head just as quickly as they popped in.

Test The Idea

The final stage which you must pass through (but definitely NOT before you have completed the other five stages) is to see how your idea stand in the harsh world of reality.

When you begin to test an idea you may find that it is not the precious little child that you first expected, but in fact it has some flaws and needs some tweaking to make its place as being truly helpful. But you will be pleasantly surprised that a good idea has self-expanding qualities and possesses the elasticity to be stretched this way and that to apply to your specific needs.

Some ideas are 'gateway' ideas, they are in themselves not perfect but simply writing them down and toying with the new idea will allow your unconscious mind space to deliver the real humdinger of an idea that you are looking for.

Relax and let it happen. You have an amazing brain and, now, you know how to use it:

- ✓ State what you want to develop an idea on.
- ✓ Gather the raw materials (facts).
- ✓ Work over these materials in your mind.
- ✓ Let the idea incubate.
- ✓ Catch the idea when it pops in your head.
- ✓ Shape the idea and develop it for practical usefulness.

THINK BIG

The generation of an idea depends upon the way you think. The person who thinks big has the tendency to generate big and innovative ideas when compared to other people. The person must have the courage and ability to hold on to the big idea in order to be able to achieve big things. For example, the people with a big vision always try to think of big idea which will earn them respect and fame, and this is the reason they bring out innovative ideas which will help them to achieve big things in life. There are failures in the life of people who think big but the major point is to hold on to a vision. Failures help you to learn lots of things in order to bring out better ways to achieve your goals.

Success is a state of mind. Our tangible achievements, goals reached, certificates earned, or talents developed are the result of our thoughts. And if thoughts lead to actions, actions lead to habits, and our habits are what determine our eventual character and destiny - would this logic not suggest that in order to accomplish big things, we must first develop the ability to think big? And yet, thinking big is not enough. We also need to think differently, talk big, believe more, act big, act now, and act consistently in order to become great and accomplish our goals and dreams in life.

It is important to remember though that thinking big is not the same as dreaming big; in fact, I would argue that they are quite different. Everyone has big dreams - and these dreams are no more than merely hopes and wishes. The ability to think big, however, requires a different state of mind, mental discipline and re-programming, and actually thinking differently than the majority of the mediocre individuals we are constantly surrounded by. Thinking big entails action, changing our perspective, overcoming the voices of fear and doubt, believing in ourselves and our dreams, developing the ability to not worry what others say or think, and

establishing goals and a plan that will result in big actions that reflect our big thinking.

Thinking big, to many people, is a phrase that is only worth repeating by peak performers in business and startups of various kinds. Thinking big is an act and equally an art which is articulated, practiced and improved on by those who desire to set formidable standards. As an act and art, here are steps you can take to actually think big and make out the best deal out of it. They are:

Get Out Of Your Comfort Zone

No one dislikes comfort of any means. However, relaxing in ones comfort zone is a stumbling block to thinking big. Thus thinking big requires leaving your easily handled schedules and trying out new things. It involves facing more daunting challenges and going an extra mile in your business ventures.

Self Motivation

Around you are people who will always tell you that you have done your best. These people and events may opine that you are the available best. Albeit, you do not have to stop improving on your achievements. You have to personally set new targets, even the so called unachievable tasks. When these people may come up with opinion that such missions are impossible, you have to personally motivate and insulate yourself against all negative suggestions and keep going.

Working And Walking With Achievers

Associating with peak performers in your life time exposes you to a cross fertilization process. The process of partnering and friendship with these people allows one to synthesize their ideas and give birth to yet more novel

ideas. Thus the slogan, iron sharpens iron. Association with achievers is infectious as it makes you think and behave like them.

Do Not Back Out In The Face Of A New Challenge

Challenges are true test of peoples' visions. When faced with a great challenge, it is a set time for great promotion. Champions are known for the opponents they crushed to clinch the top spot. Challenges are moments that sharpens ones skills, those who think big fancy and accept such situations.

Trust Your Guts And Remain Positive

Common sense plays a wonderful role in thinking big. In most cases, your colleagues, friends and environment may say no to your dreams and visions. These people can never see the picture and future you are seeing. All it takes is for you to trust your guts keep moving forward. Trusting ones guts is totally responsible for major breakthrough in different areas of human affair. Big thinkers understand their body chemistry reaction towards any issue. Once they act in accordance to this body chemistry, they hit their target easily.

Make Bigger Offers And Set Tantalizing Baits

For you to achieve some extra ordinary feats, you need to set targets and make offers to workers and clients that are irresistible. The reward which acts as a motivator accounts for the continued rapid and sustained growth of bigger businesses. It expands people's coast and expose them to new techniques with mind blowing successes.

Those who think big, think differently. This accounts for their achievements both as individuals and organizations.

You are just what you think!

Do not forget, what ever one thinks about, he can achieve. The law of nature pays to anyone whatever bills they present and hold tenaciously onto.

Decide now to always think big. Establish lofty goals and specific plans to achieve and realize your dreams. Develop the ability to think differently. Never fall victim to the dominant culture of contentedness and the ease of mediocrity. Train your mind to never worry what others think or say, and learn how to eliminate the voices of fear and doubt. Commit now to doing whatever necessary - as hard and long as it may be, and despite the failures that inevitably result - in order to accomplish your goals and dreams. And always remember that in order to accomplish big things, you must always think big, talk big, and act big!

MAKE BETTER DECISIONS

Making decisions efficiently can be the difference between a thriving life and a thriving business, and stasis - circling the airport forever, instead of starting your decent and eventually landing. By making a decision, even if it's wrong, you fill the gap between where you are and where you want to be.

The learning process is in two stages. First, is making decisions. Making better decisions is part 2 of the process. In the absence of a good decision, some decision is needed, and any decision is better than none. If it's wrong, well at least you find out, which means you can back track and put it right

No decision, means no action, which means nothing happens.

In fact, we are all brilliant at making decisions. We're making decisions all day. What to have for breakfast, where to cross the road, what time to get up, whether to answer the phone or not, the way you're sitting right now. It's the decisions that seem more important that we struggle with.

What you decide to work on, what you decide to improve, which projects you decide to undertake - these decisions make all of the difference in your organization's success. Traditionally, people have often thought that if they had more data they could make better decisions.

But we're all familiar, no doubt, with the taunting acronym, "TMI" (Too Much Information!) that is commonly directed at those who "over-share" personal details. Similarly, in today's business world, the flood of data can make

many decisions more complex... and the decisions made by considering all of this data are not always better!

In fact, the decision-making process is rarely studied and improved, and in a study of 500 managers and executives it was reported that "only 2% regularly apply best practices when making decisions, and few companies have systems in place to measure and improve decision-making over time."

However, making decisions can be formulated so you can just move through each step. If you are starting to take decisions in a new environment, such as moving from being employed to run a business, then even the smallest issues appear magnified, until you get settled. This is when a formula really adds value to the process.

State Your Purpose

To make the best decision you have to know what you want precisely. And you need to have a target. Start with a clear goal and a good understanding of the problem and objectives. This step will help you refrain from starting with a compelling idea and backing into the rationale.

One solution is to complete the following statement with as broad a phrase as possible...

Determine The Best Way To _____

Here is why you need to keep this broad. Say you have too much work. You could determine the best way to get an assistant; you could determine the best way to eliminate some of the work; you could determine the best way to work faster. However, if you open this up and say you want to determine the best way to get the work done then, yes, getting an assistant, working faster and eliminating some of the work are all still options, but we also have delegation, working more efficiently, developing new systems, and so on.

Formulating a broad statement of purpose in this way helps you to distinguish between the 'Means' and the 'Ends'. The Ends are your final

outcomes whilst the Means is how you will get there. If you don't know what the ultimate end is, then your Means can be churning around forever without a real result.

Establish Criteria

To clarify your statement of purpose and set the criteria for success. You can ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ What do I want to achieve?
- ✓ What do I want to preserve?
- ✓ What do I want to avoid?

This is about developing the standards which define your purpose.

Set Priorities For The Criteria

List out your criteria and pick one which absolutely must happen, no matter what you decide. Give this a rank of 10. You can now rank the rest from 1-10 alongside your benchmark, no compromise criterion.

You should now have a list of factors that define what you want.

What Are The Alternatives?

Widen the alternatives you are considering. As the French philosopher, Emile Cartier, put it, "There is nothing more dangerous than an idea, when it is the only one you have." A single idea is dangerous because when we focus on our current option, other and quite possibly better alternatives are outside our spotlight. Yet our natural inclination once we arrive at an idea is

to stop looking for alternatives and devote our effort to convincing ourselves and others that this is the right decision.

Achieve Distance & Perspective Before Deciding

Another step to good decision-making is emotional distance. If you were the outsider, with no emotional stake in past decisions, what advice would you give yourself? Bringing in other perspectives, suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders can also help provide different perspectives on the decision to be made. Another way to gain distance is to imagine the impact of the decision one year in the future or even five or ten years.

Take A Hard Look At The Uncertainty

One way to combat uncertainty is to figure out what you do know and use that to "bookend" the decision: what would be the outcome if all the bets go against you, and what would it look like if everything fell into place. This can help you evaluate if there is more upside opportunity or downside risk. You might also test and learn from small experiments before going whole hog. Find ways to test the waters or test some key assumptions to reduce the range of uncertainty to arrive at better decisions. The greater the uncertainty and risk associated with a decision, the more valuable these small experiments will be.

Evaluate And Test Your Alternatives

If you're lucky, a clear winner will emerge but if this doesn't happen then you will need to rank the alternatives - apply a numerical value of importance to each factor. And you can do this if you are deciding if the Fiat

Fandago is a better car for you than the Fiat Whatnot. Furthermore, you can apply this to feelings.

Troubleshoot Your Decision

Ask yourself these two questions:

'What could go wrong'?

'What can I do to improve the situation'?

Just Do It

However, there are a set of decisions which are deadly, because they don't even get to the consideration stage. These are the 'not' decisions which can lead to drifting and a lack of purpose. How so? Staying in the same dead end job; filling the shopping trolley with the same packaged food every week; not taking exercise. These are the actions which lead to ill-health and a lack of fulfillment, but they tend to get washed over by the daily trifling decisions.

Learn & Improve

If you follow the steps above, your decision-making will likely improve. However, to accelerate organizational learning, write down the decision made and why. Schedule a follow-up at an appropriate time in the future to evaluate and take corrective action if necessary. In this way, you'll learn from the decision process and make your next decision will be even better.

BREAK SOME RULES

Sometimes the reason why we have been having a hard time is because we are stuck following old rules that bring no real benefit to our personal and professional lives. Some rules are just traditions that are passed down on to us. Until the rules are broken, it might be harder to have a fresh start.

To break the rules, you must know the rules. You must implement the proper due diligence. Intentionally "suspending" a rule on a whim, without knowing exactly what the rule means and why it was made, is irresponsible and could be harmful or even destructive. You may find that you only have to bend or twist the rule.

The reason you want to break, bend or twist the rules is to experience a favorable personal outcome and not to just be a wise or mean-spirited human. It's not a practical joke. People could get hurt. Overriding the rules is serious business and should be carried out with respect and a high degree of discernment.

Whew! Now, that we have done that quick "disclaimer," can we now get to the reasons why we have to break some rules? Good!

You Cannot Succeed Without Doing It:

Life's too short and success is too hard. You need that extra edge. You cannot succeed in life or in business without having the grit and common sense to break, bend or twist a rule or four. This is a given. It's an inextricable tenet of nature. Remember you don't always have to break the rules. There are two other options: Bend them or twist them.

You Didn't Make The Rule:

Why follow it? You didn't make that rule. Why should you subscribe to it? You've got to do what you've got to do. You've got your own rules and your own success quest. Follow them!

It's Fun:

As long as you know the risks and their consequences give it a shot. Start small. The sign at the register in the supermarket says "Express line 12 items or less." You have 18 items. Screw it, get on the line anyway. Make believe I'm on your shoulder whispering in your ear "You could do it. You should do it." Breaking simple rules at first will empower you and reinforce your self-confidence, not to mention the perks that come along with being a nonconformist.

The Donald Phenomenon:

This is the most powerful reason of them all. You actually could become President of the United States of America. 'Nuff said.

Here are some things you should do from now on:

Change The Way You See Yourself:

Maybe your whole life you've been the quiet one, the smart one, the fat one, the single one. Don't let the one or two traits define who you are right now or what you're capable of achieving in the future - even when they seem positive. Recognize that you are a little bit of so many attributes that make you uniquely you. When you see yourself in just one narrow way - be it positive or not - you subconsciously limit what you feel you are capable of achieving.

Don't Blindly Follow The Formulas The "Experts" Say Will Undoubtedly Work

You have likely found that there is no shortage of people, both in your personal and professional lives, who seem to know exactly what you need to do to succeed – and they also likely have a picture in their minds of what your success should look like. Create your own vision - and then go after it in a way that fits with who you are. Yes, there are times when you will have to challenge yourself and go outside your comfort zone, but that DOESN'T mean doing something that goes against your values or who you are.

Be Willing To Be Authentically Yourself:

Yes, you can pretend that you are perfect, and you can put walls up around you to supposedly protect you from getting hurt, but that may actually leave you feeling more distant and disconnected from others and more anxious as the fears rise to the surface and you worry about what other people would think of you if they knew the REAL you. So much healthier in the long run to be the best and truest version of yourself.

Go By Your Own Schedule:

There are many societal expectations about the types of career opportunities that are most highly valued and when career progressions or business success should occur. Similarly, you may have always had a framework in your mind for when you would fall in love, get married, start a family, make your first million dollars – and society may reinforce these as well.

I'm not saying that these aren't incredibly important goals. What I am saying is just that they don't always follow a standard or expected timeline or schedule. Remind yourself to have faith, put in your best efforts - and then let go of the need to control the results and the timing.

Let's break these rules together!

VISUALISE CREATIVELY

Creative visualisation dismisses the view that words of affirmation and self-actualisation tenets by themselves are powerful tools in achieving personal success, rather it supports the position that guided imagery is the fundamental element leading the path toward personal victories. This presumption sums up the concept of creative visualisation.

This ideology is not new, having been a common form of practice in spiritual and meditative exercises since ancient times. Its practices have also been a part of Vajrayana Buddhism for centuries.

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO GETTING AHEAD

The generally accepted principles of creative visualisation combine positive thinking-techniques with visualisation practices. Together they invite the use of the somatic nervous system of sight, sound, sensation, taste and smell to impact meaningful personal growth.

1. Creative visualisation and self confidence

Creative imagery allows you to mentally create pictures of events that you want manifested in your life. For example, visualise yourself achieving your goals (a promotion, new apartment, losing weight, etc.). Think of the steps that will get you there; if it involves changing deeper mental states such as improving your self-confidence then repeated affirmations along with critical thinking steps will guide your thoughts into practical solutions.

Learning creative visualisation is not easy; it comes with consistent practice and just like meditation, the technique is acquired over time. With visualisation you are engaging all your senses to deeply focus on your goal.

If losing weight is a goal then visualisation principles require you to visualise yourself in that new outfit at your new weight; to imagine the colour and how you are feeling; to imagine hearing the response from your support group acknowledging the change; in fact anything to make the vision more real. In other words you are connecting with all the senses to get a vivid grasp of your goal. Through regular training you will develop the self confidence in seeing the goal manifested.

2. Positive self-talk

Positive self-talk are words of affirmations such as "I choose to devote my life to the fulfilment of my highest purpose." By telling yourself that you are worthy, there is no fear of the future. These words and others when used often will motivate and keep you from veering off your path to success.

3. Developing mental strength

Have a clear mental picture of what your goals are. Ask yourself: is it measurable, achievable, and what time-frame do I want to accomplish them. A clear mental image of what you want and what needs changing is important in influencing a positive outcome. This is a reminder that you are the sum total of your perceptions and that they impact your view of the world around you. Developing mental strength is developing the mental muscle that will eventually transform your aspirations into reality.

4. Relaxation

Nervousness and anxiety are common emotions that plague our chances for success. Relaxation techniques are wonderful, useful tools to minimise negative emotions. Commonly used relaxation methods include meditation classes, including yoga and learning controlled deep breathing exercises. Music is also a recommend form of relaxation. Select soothing instrumentals and sounds of nature such as water-falls and chirping birds, which are natural meditative influences on the brain.

In the end visualisation is about positive reinforcement using imagery to reach your goal. It further involves exploring and changing our deepest most basic attitudes toward life to achieve intense and meaningful growth.

BE CLEAR

Let's pretend. It's the best and easiest way to learn how to use positive visualization to benefit your life. And pretending is something we often did as children when we played, so it shouldn't be that difficult to do.

If you need some inspiration, think back to how you'd pretend to be a super hero or a fireman or a rock star. Can you get there again?

Do you even remember how to pretend? How to let your imagination run wild and dream up wonderful fantasy worlds of what you want to do, what you want to be when you "grow up?" These "fantasies" were really positive visualization techniques, although we didn't know it at the time.

The power of visualization can be truly amazing, but it's a technique that seems to elude a lot of people. So, you're going to try the following positive visualization practice.

You've more than likely heard or read about it many times. However it is a wonderful way to initiate inspiring thoughts that will motivate you to begin the journey down the road to a better, more successful life.

How To Begin

"If you had \$100 million in your bank right now, what would you do with your life?"

Think about this carefully. A lot of people will start to write down what they want to HAVE in material possessions. This is not what you're after. Material possessions will come to you as needed, when they are needed, and AFTER you get clear on what you want in life.

What is important right now is what you want to DO with yourself.

What are your passions? If you could go anyplace and do anything at all because you had more than enough money to live on... what would you be DOING?

I can probably guess what your first response will be. "I'd quit my job, relax, maybe travel, but essentially, I'd want to do NOTHING."

This is a fairly typical reaction to suddenly being financially free. It's based on relief, the letting go of stress and worry on how to make a living. That's okay. Experience this relief, feel it, bask in it for a short while. Doesn't it feel really good?

However, this is also unrealistic for the long term. Can you really imagine yourself doing absolutely nothing for years and years and years? You'd be totally bored out of your mind! Your life would be completely meaningless. So, thinking of doing "nothing" is not a good use of positive visualization.

You need to move on and get to the heart of what you really want to do. What is your dream lifestyle? What holds a lot of meaning for you that you would just love to do?

Allow Visions, Ideas, Thoughts, and Desires To Flow

Don't hold back. Let those inspiring thoughts out. Write them down. Write whatever comes to mind. This is where the power of visualization comes into play.

Your vision of that lifestyle is the catalyst that can propel you into taking the steps toward bringing those secret passions into being. It's those passions, those desires that will begin to shape your reality.

It is those wants, those goals that will start to attract the opportunities, people, and things that you'll require to begin that journey down a new path. THIS is how positive visualization works.

What Positive Visualization Picture Inspires You The Most?

You now have \$100 million dollars in your bank account. You do not need to go back to that crummy job. You don't need to even find a job. You can live wherever you choose. And you can do anything that you desire to do (legally of course).

What inspiring thoughts come immediately to your mind? What will you do with your life? How will YOU make it meaningful?

MAP YOUR LIFE

OK... the analogy is incredibly simple. If I hand you a map and ask you to "draw your route," what is your first question? Of, course, "where are we going?" This is what we in personal development and self-help coaching call an "A-HA moment."

We spend a lifetime drawing maps only to get to a destination and regret that we were not somewhere else! We say things like, "I am nowhere close to where I want to be," "I should have/could have/would have done something else if I knew," and "I just never had the chance to do something I always wanted to do."

Is there something wrong with our maps? NO. Is there something wrong with the detours that inevitably occur throughout a lifetime? NO. Is there something wrong with the very thinking that we need a "plan" and that is why we are even holding a map? NO.

So... where is the breakdown? The problem is simple. We spend a lifetime drawing maps, but we never stop to ask ourselves where is it we actually want to go? (I think we just experienced another "A-HA moment!")

Think about this for a moment. If you have a big enough map, you can go anywhere in the world. To do that, you only need to know 2 pieces of information: where you are now and where you want to go. If you know the answer to those 2 questions, drawing a map becomes child's play. That is it! If you have not answered those 2 questions (honestly!), why are you drawing maps? I know... because it is what we are "supposed to do" and it is because we "should" do these things...

Now... guess who is responsible for your lack of "success" (whatever that means)? YOU! Nobody else. Now, before you say those horrific words, "YEAH, BUT," keep reading.

When you stop making excuses and step back out of your life for just a few moments, it is easier than you believe it is to get some clarity. And when you have some clarity about what you are trying to accomplish, your map draws itself! How cool is that!

So... how do you map your life right? Follow these 3 steps and never look back:

1. Get clarity:

What would you be doing right now if you could be doing something that you loved to do? Where do you find your energy? Who would you be with? Where would you be? What are you going to regret not doing in your life? Take the labels off your life and think about WHO you really are.

2. Get excited:

As a motivational speaker and coach, people often ask me to "get them motivated." I often think it must be what comedians experience when someone sees them and says, "hey, make me laugh!" My answer is simple... want to get motivated about something?

Find something that motivates you! Think about this for a moment... if you hate your job and you are always stressing about something and you do not like your financial situation and you are choosing misery over happiness... I have news for you... I CANNOT motivate YOU! YOU need to leave your stress and find your energy.

If there is something you really want to do... does someone else need to motivate you to do it? Or do you just go and do it? Of course you do! It is when we really do NOT want to do things that de-motivates us. SO... find

the things that motivate you because they have meaning for you and replace some of your stressors with them.

3. Get moving:

Knowledge without action is worthless. If there is something you want to do and there is a valid "why" you want to do it... go do it! If you are making excuses instead of taking action, you might not really want to do it. Be honest with yourself. There is no such thing as "failure" (whatever that means). The only way you can possibly "fail" is to never try something you will regret not trying.

Mark Twain said, "20 years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you did not do than by the things you did." "Failure" should never frighten you. Regret should scare the hell out of you! If you choose to do nothing to make your journey fulfilling, try not to look back... you will not like what you see.

Get clarity! Get excited! Get moving!

STAY ENERGETIC

Don't you notice that when you are happy and optimistic, you are likely to be energetic? Do you sometimes wonder how you can stay energetic throughout your day?

Studies show that the fitter one's body is, the more one's brain seems to benefit. Correct breathing, healthy eating and drinking habits, healthy body, and sports affect your success as the Roman proverb says, "A sound mind in a sound body." Therefore, it is crucial that you take care of your body and understand the benefits of health.

If your energy level is stretched to the breaking point and you feel just plain tired, it might be time to make some simple changes. I know; when you're dragging it's probably hard to believe there might be easy solutions. But there are, and they involve just six simple steps.

Follow the steps below on how to stay energetic throughout the day:

Breathing

You might know that breathing is indispensable for everyone, but do you know that the majority of people do not breathe correctly? Start from today to work on your breathing skills for around 15 minutes a day. Start by taking deep breaths slowly, hold the breath for 10 seconds, then release.

Practicing deep breathing and meditating with it can help you achieve a lot. I will talk about this in the next chapter.

Morning Exercises

Contrary to what you might think, regular exercise doesn't make you more tired; it actually keeps you energetic. That's because it raises serotonin and beta-endorphin levels, which boost energy and give you a feeling of well-being. Just a little aerobic activity can do wonders: It can smooth out your emotions, improve the way you think, sooth your nerves and lower your blood pressure!

You say you don't have time to exercise? Maybe you just need to alter what you think of as exercise: Even taking the stairs, weeding the garden or parking your car further from the mall entrance and walking qualifies.

Spend around 20-30 minutes of your morning moving your body. You could do aerobics, yoga, walking, running, stretching, push ups, or anything that you like doing. The important thing is to move, relax, and strengthen your body and muscles.

Watch Your Eating Habits

You have to make sure that you eat healthy food that is right for you as there is no health system that is good for everyone. People who are diabetic have to avoid eating lots of sweets and people who have high cholesterol must avoid eating red meat. Consult your doctor to find what kind of food is suitable for you.

You can start your day eating fruit and avoid eating fat and oily food. Make sure that you eat salad with your meals as salad provides the body with a lot of fiber which means you could lower your cholesterol, reduce your calories among other benefits.

When you're active, eating five or six small meals every day is the best way to maintain your energy level. Foods high in fiber are particularly good because they digest slowly and give you long-lasting energy. On the other side of the coin, foods with a lot of fat or protein can make you sleepy.

Drink Lots Of Water And Liquids

While you're eating those frequent fiber-filled meals, don't forget to drink lots of water. Not only do high-fiber foods digest better when well-lubricated, but sometimes energy lags are the result of dehydration. Keeping a bottle of water handy and sipping it throughout the day can help ensure you don't have a dip in energy because you're not well-hydrated.

Keep a bottle of water close to you all the time and drink water as much as possible to avoid dehydration. Drinking different kinds of juices is helpful as well. Drinking lots of water and drinking liquids are the key to stay hydrated.

Sleep

Speaking of sleep, it's common for people to require about eight hours of it every day. But sleep needs actually can vary widely from person to person, with some getting by on four hours a night and others needing as many as 12. Whatever your requirement, don't short yourself. Try to get about the same amount every night, and attempt to go to sleep and awaken at the same time every day. Because sleep restores you, getting enough on a consistent basis is critical.

Positive Thoughts

During the day, take a few minutes to clear your head from all the negative thoughts and focus only on positive thoughts and your future goals. Taking a few a minutes every day to relax and clear you head from all the negativity can do wonders. Always remember what Mark Twain said, "And what is a man without energy? Nothing – nothing at all. "

MEDITATE

Meditation means awareness. Whatever you do with awareness is meditation. 'Watching your breath' is meditation; listening to the birds is meditation. As long as these activities are free from any other distraction to the mind, it is effective meditation."

Meditate helps you to clear your mind and increase your inner peace. Meditation helps you to be aware of your thoughts. Through meditation we can have a better understanding of our life's purpose. Meditation helps to raise your positive vibration. Meditation helps you to reduce stress and improves concentration.

We can get a lot of benefits if we just meditate for just 10 to 15 minutes every day.

We live in a fast world. It seems like we don't have time anymore to do things that we want to do. We just do the things we MUST do, but what is the meaning of life if we are not enjoying what we are doing? Maybe you won't enjoy meditation the first day you try it, but I'm sure you will feel better, more relaxed, and more productive. Meditating doesn't just help you, it helps the people around you, too, because you are less reactive to things that are happening around you. You become aware of what you are doing with your life and are able to change and enjoy it.

It is very easy to meditate. Find a quiet place with fresh air (it could be outside), sit down in a comfortable position, close your eyes and relax. Release any negative emotion or feeling. Follow your breathing. Try to concentrate on just one thing at a time. It could be a candle flame, a rose or anything that brings joy to you. Let your thoughts flow, don't try to control them. You can listen to soft instrumental music. You can start with just five minutes, increasing the time every week, until you get 15 minutes (or more) every day. Don't meditate after you eat.

I delayed meditation for a long time. I could have found the time to do it if I wanted, but it seemed too boring for me. Since I began, I've found it very helpful. It helps me to be connected with my source (God), to visualize and be clearer in the things I want.

I recently discovered Intentional Meditation, and I find it very interesting, so I'm starting to practice it. Joe Vitale says, "In the Intentional Meditation (IM) method, you are focused on a specific outcome. You ARE thinking, and you are thinking with feeling. An IM is a request to the universe, through your conscious intent, to attract a particular result."

I found this process just like visualizing the results of what you want to achieve in your life. Intentional Meditation is a little more complete because you are putting together a few techniques to make your dreams come true. You need to:

Write your intention:

What do you REALLY want to achieve? Be clear - write all your DESCRIPTIVE positive affirmations about what you want and how you feel with having what you want. Writing a script could help.

Meditate for about 15 to 20 minutes every day:

Relax and focus your mind on having what you want to achieve or get.

Add feelings to your intention:

Visualize it. Feel all the feelings now. Remember, it is a big difference in confidence when you just wish to have and when you HAVE IT. How do you feel about having that thing? How you act? Who is sharing with you?

Believe that you deserve only good things. The universe is infinite. It has plenty of resources for everybody. You are placing YOUR order with a lot of faith and good feelings. Pay attention to the signals, do the right actions (inspired action) and expect great things. You are the creator of your life and you can create everything you want.

Meditate for about 15 minutes every day and YOUR life will change!

BUILD SELF CONFIDENCE

Self confidence is very important in achieving goals and targets. It is usually the deciding factor when it comes to being successful or not. It is the one deciding factor that determines whether we cross the finish line or fall by the wayside. Nothing else seems important when we are not confident that we are going to succeed. The ability to say that “I Can” and “I Will” usually goes a long way in realising our goals. The following tips should be considered when trying to build up your confidence level.

Confidence is sureness about your abilities and the expectation that those abilities will lead you to a positive outcome. Self esteem is a realistic respect for or favorable impression of oneself, a sense of self-respect. If you're like most people, your self confidence could use a boost from time to time. Often times when your self confidence is low, your self esteem may suffer too. It's in those moments when our self confidence and self esteem is at a low that we need some quick and easy strategies to boost our sagging spirits. Here are a few easy tips and quick suggestion to build up your self confidence and build up your self esteem:

Focus on Accomplishments

Everyone has something that they are proud of. Each day you can choose to focus on the things that you did right today, rather than the things that didn't go so well. Don't minimize your accomplishments, either. What may be small to you may be very huge to someone who has been struggling with that very thing.

What items (no matter how small) did you accomplish today? Ignore the 100 other things that didn't get done and give yourself a break. You're only human and you tried your best today. Give yourself pep talks throughout the day and believe that you are someone to be proud of.

Build a Strong Support System

It's very important to surround yourself with people who are there to support you when you're not feeling confident. These people can remind you terrific you really are. The more cheerleaders you have in your life, the better you'll feel about yourself. It's always great to have people who can help support us when we're feeling down and when we need a confidence boost.

Be Grateful

We all think that our circumstances are unique to us. We tell ourselves that no one knows the struggles that we're going through and that no one can understand how hard we have it. Well, believe me when I say that no matter how bad your circumstances may be, there's someone out there who has it worse than you. Look around at your community and what's happening around the world. There are a lot of people who have it much worse than you. Knowing this can put your struggles into perspective.

Complete Short-term Goals

Building self-confidence doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and is build one step at a time. Sometimes the steps are so small that you're not even aware of them. The best way to start building your self-confidence is to just decide on a task and then complete it. Everyday pick something that moves you forward to completing a project or the one thing that you need to accomplish today. Do that one thing each day and watch the stepping-stones to your self-confidence build upon each other.

Celebrate Being You

There's no one on earth who is exactly like you. Celebrate that you are unique and that you deserve to honor yourself every week. Do something

for yourself to celebrate the wonderful person who can accomplish what they want out of life. Why should we only celebrate when we accomplish great big goals? We should be celebrating the journey as well as the destination! Schedule time to celebrate your small victories as well as your big ones.

Induce positive thoughts on your mind

One of the primary reasons for the lack of self-confidence is the negative thoughts that are clouding your mind. Nothing worthwhile can come forth when you are roaming about with such an unhealthy mindset. Life is filled with successes and failures - keep appreciating the successes and keep learning from your failures. Practice this rule and you will recognize the changes occurring in your personality. Inspiration must be derived from all the success ventures undertaken by you.

Face criticisms boldly

Criticisms. They can be broadly classified into two - positive and negative criticisms. Never forget the basic human nature; they are programmed to criticize. Even when you accomplish something worthwhile, they will resort to criticize you. I do realize that this can be a major turn-off for some of the readers - the key is to ignore the inappropriate criticisms are proceeding with life. Sooner or later the ones who had rebuked you, will understand and accept their uncanny nature.

Write down your ambitions

Many renowned professionals are recommending this. If you have set a goal in life, try to break it down into simpler goals. Achieve these simpler goals and derive inspiration from these successes. Before venturing ahead with a chore, it is better to read down detailed plans for the same (plans that are cropping up in your mind). People are known to write down their goals, but tend to forget them. Keep on reading these goals to keep you motivated and focused at the chore in hand. Maintaining someone as a role model is advised, but never tend to duplicate their manners.

Recap before you retire for the day

Before sleeping, try to review the happenings of the day. Analyze the situations that occurred and crosscheck for errors. If possible, vow to never repeat those ever again. Never expect self-confidence to materialize within you in a night. This is going to be a long process for you better start preparing your mind for the ordeal. Armed with self-confidence, you will be able to accomplish any heights in your life. Reckon that life is filled with misfortunes, yet you will have to put up a fight and approach it optimistically.

Don't Fear Failure

It's definitely better to try something than to worry so much about failing that you don't even try at all. If you're going to gain self-confidence fast, then you can't afford to fear failure. Often it is this fear that holds many people back in life, so they can not achieve their full potential - all because of fear of failure. Instead of fearing failure, get out there and try something new. Even if you fail, you can try again to get it right. Don't allow that fear to keep holding you back from success and a happier life.

BUILD BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Dag Hammarskjold once said "It is nobler to give yourself completely to one individual than it is to labour for the salvation of the masses". This is a very powerful truth - it often takes more courage and strength of character to build and repair a relationship with someone really important to you than it does to work for hundreds of strangers who will never know you intimately. Understanding some of the principles behind this statement will help you to build better relationships with people who are important to you.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered today is the break up of what should be close relationships – marriages turning into divorce, dysfunctional families, and businesses torn apart by the strife between the leaders of the business. People who are unsuccessful in forming such relationships may be successful in other aspects of their lives. They may be valued members of the community, putting in endless hours to benefit a community organization. Yet they are failing when it comes to building those really critical relationships.

There are some things you must note about relationships, to help you build better ones:

Relationships First Start Within The Individual

It is impossible for you to have good relationships with people unless you have a good relationship with yourself. Ask yourself some questions. Would you like to be in a relationship with you? Would you go into a business partnership with you? Would you hire yourself for a particular job or position in a company? If you can't answer these questions with positive confident answers, then it is time to start building a better relationship with yourself first. What you present to the world will come back to you.

Marketing Is All About Building A Relationship With People

Think about this for a while and it will begin to make complete sense. Nowadays, with so many people selling everything, the last thing that people want to get in contact with is another salesperson. Relationships are what sell anything in any market. Unless that businessperson or entrepreneur builds a relationship with their potential clients and customers, they won't sell one single thing.

Finally, Building Relationships Is Essential For Success

No man succeeds without the help of other people. We all need a team of people to help us do anything in life, and it requires that we have better relationships with people. Each of us is like a drop in an ocean. Separate, we evaporate, and together we are a powerful and life changing force.

Now, how do we build a better relationship with people?

Identify The Important Relationships

What are the relationships that are important to you? Your parents, your spouse, your children, your business partner... There will be a list and it is likely to be fairly small. Once you are clear on the important relationships, you need to set aside some time for them. This can be on a daily or weekly basis, a time where you can make positive deposits into their emotional bank account. Some of the time should also be spent thinking about the quality of your relationship. Are there areas of strain? Can you foresee problems ahead?

See Problems As Opportunities

If the other person is encountering some difficulties in their own life, this could be a great opportunity for you help that person. Your help could be something as simple as just listening, it could involve offering constructive advice or it could be something even more tangible - you doing something to help out. Of course this will only really work when you are not in it for

your own gain. You must approach this with the attitude of being completely focussed on the needs of the other person.

Don't Leave Issues To Grow Into Mountains

When you find that some problem is occurring in one of your important relationships you need to resolve it with the other person. This can be one of the most difficult things you will have to do in your life. Unfortunately, because we are all individuals with different needs and approaches to life, it is something that you will almost inevitably have to do one or more times in all of your important relationships.

It is very important that you don't let the problem turn into a catastrophe. You need to find the courage in yourself to face up to the problem. Often the things that seem most frightening are the possibilities of completely losing the relationship or losing some of your own self importance. You need to approach the other person with no attachment to a specific outcome and with the attitude that, whatever happens, it's going to be OK in the long run.

Very often, you will find that the other person will welcome your approach as they have sensed the same problem. They will be pleased that you have taken the initiative. Now you both need to be prepared to invest the time to restore a better balance. Be prepared to jointly face up to the issues that are underlying the problem and work out a solution that is acceptable to both of you.

The next key point to building better relationships with people is establishing exceptional listening skills. But this is so important, I want to give it its own personal chapter. Let's go!

LISTEN ACTIVELY

Have you ever been a part of a conversation where the person you are talking with is always stepping on your words and interrupting your flow by cutting you off at every turn? How did that make you feel? Compare that experience to having a conversation with a person who is attentive, making eye contact and processing your words before responding. Active listening is a skill worth mastering for rewarding and successful relationships. You can not be successful without showing a genuine interest in relationships. You will improve your business and personal life by tuning in to each person you dialog with.

It is also important to have the right balance of ego and empathy in every relationship. Empathy enables us to step into the other person's shoes and understand at a fundamental level what they need. Keeping our ego in check helps us become better listeners. The natural tendency for most people is to jump in and compare like experiences or solve problems for people we communicate with. Imagine how different things would be if you just sat back and really absorbed the message versus competing for words and life experiences.

Here are three solid ideas guaranteed to improve your listening skills and help you build more meaningful relationships.

Stay In The Moment

Have you ever lost the train of conversation because you've been planning what you'll say next? Come on, be honest, even the best listeners are guilty of this scenario at some time. Instead of thinking about what you will say

next, relax, make eye contact, and prepare yourself to listen. By staying in the moment, you demonstrate a true interest in the person you are engaged with. If your mind starts to wander, come back to the present moment and clarify your place in the conversation. You will make a positive impact on every person you talk to when keeping this simple suggestion in mind.

Can you remember the last time somebody truly "got" you because they had an active interest in listening to what you had to say? What a fantastic feeling it is to be honored by a person with genuine interest in your story.

Repeat What You Heard

How many times have you experienced a communication breakdown in the midst of a conversation? Some times, tone of voice, loss of clarity or a simple interruption can cause a disconnect.

Try repeating what you hear a person say to reflect and demonstrate you understand them. This simple technique improves active listening and will help zero in on an obstacle or misunderstanding within the conversation. Taking time to clarify points in a conversation will improve how you communicate with everyone you touch.

Pay Attention To Body Language

Human beings give obvious clues to what they really think through their body language. A frequently asked question is, "What percent of our communication is nonverbal?" Statistics vary between 65-95% based on research from anthropologists and psychologists.

Observe body language closely to learn volumes about a person.

Leaning forward, smiling, and asking a lot of questions about a stories details are good signs that you are an active participant in the conversation.

On the other hand, if you do not maintain eye contact or have very few questions and seem to be distracted or disinterested you are not actively listening, should you find yourself in this situation, why not admit that you are distracted and schedule a better time to talk?

Partnering for success in any relationship has everything to do with active listening and complete understanding.

Remember these points:

- ✓ Stay present in your conversations
- ✓ Repeat what you hear to for clarification and reflection
- ✓ Pay close attention to non-verbal behavior

Master the art of active listening and you will build exceptional relationships!

BE CHARISMATIC

What exactly is 'Charisma', this most elusive and enigmatic of attributes, and can its secrets be taught?

Outside (though clearly including) the showbiz world of the luvvies, the term 'charismatic' is used to describe a person who has an exceptional ability to engage others; someone whose company you seek, whose presence you find hard to resist.

Crucially, a charismatic leader is someone who manifestly inspires, motivates and sometimes mesmerizes the people they lead: Bill Clinton, Jack Welch, Nicola Horlick, Tony Robbins, Meg Whitman, Anita Roddick, Jeff Skilling, Clara Furse and Tom Peters come easily to mind. To the effective leader, charisma is currency. In fact, anyone who depends on making an exceptional impression on others for their livelihood should consider the question of charisma.

We are all intrinsically and fundamentally social animals, and in the business world it has been proved time and again that successful human relationships are at the core of successful businesses. Most of us enjoy the company of others, but we enjoy the company of charismatic people even more because we simply feel good in their presence.

It is also true that charismatic individuals particularly enjoy social interaction and view each situation as a new opportunity to express and share their charisma. For them, communicating is a truly pleasurable and rewarding activity. Prime examples of this type of individual are professional entertainers whose lifeblood is the sound of their audience's joyful applause of appreciation.

It is rational to suppose that if we all had the skills and therefore the confidence to express our personal presence at a charismatic level our prime motivation in the world would surely be to communicate and positively connect with as many people as possible. In terms of business practice, this would translate into a desire to successfully engage with customers and colleagues alike. This makes establishing human contact and mutual rapport one of the prime movers in terms of the call to action in business.

Why? Because if we achieve positive feedback and recognition for doing something well, the more we want to do it. And if genuine and effective contact is made with a potential customer or client, the possibilities for future business are manifold. Sounds reasonable, but how realistic is it to assume we can all develop more charisma?

Historically, charisma has been regarded as something you can't be taught - you simply have it or you don't. Even the eminent sociologist Max Webber, who thought the subject worthy of a rigorous study, described charisma as: 'A certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.'

I'm sorry, Max, could you repeat that? Fortunately things have changed since old Max stroked his wise bearded chin and ruminated on the subject. We now understand a lot more about charisma and in fact serious attempts have been made to isolate and quantify behavioral measures for it - thereby allowing the possibility of learnable elements.

Charisma is not 'Charm'

A helpful way of understanding charisma is to begin by distinguishing it from what it is not; and what it is not is 'charm'. Charm, as distinct from charisma, is that which merely seduces, pacifies, assures and unintentionally promotes complacency. Those who possess charisma on the other hand, inspire, enliven, excite, delight and promote action.

Interestingly, this is not to deny we can sometimes find someone charismatic and yet still dislike them whereas it is much harder to dislike a charmer. 'Charming' individuals have an appeal we sometimes find irritatingly pleasant but are people we can also easily live without.

The charismatic personality conveys wisdom, beauty, sex and power, whereas the charmer merely exudes, sensuality, wit and self-assurance. But here is the defining fact: once the charmer has left the room they take with them their effect; not so with the charismatic individual.

After they have gone they create an emotional vacuum which leaves others longing to be back in their company as soon as possible. In other words their effect is long lasting. Charm may win over a table full of dinner guests but only charisma can hold the attention of a football stadium full of strangers.

The question at the beginning of this chapter was, what is charisma and can it be taught?

The answer is: Charisma is the by-product of the intelligent transmission of intense, concentrated personal energy embodied and expressed in the four dimensions of human behaviour- physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Anyone can be taught techniques to develop the capacity to increase and manage their personal energy to increase their personal impact when communicating.

Charisma is essentially intangible. In spite of this, you will always know when you are in the presence of a charismatic person, because they have the ability to engage your attention in a way that someone without that personality trait would struggle to do. Charisma is indefinable but you know when you've experienced it in action: you come away from an encounter knowing you've been with someone extraordinary and special.

In essence, they make you feel that you're the most important person in the room. Compare and contrast that with so many people you meet who seem to be looking over your shoulder to see if they're missing something on the other side of the room or if there's someone more important to talk to.

Not everyone is fortunate enough to be born charismatic, but with a bit of effort, you can develop it to a significant degree. Here are 10 tips to help you do so.

The Overwhelmingly Large Part Of Communication Is Non-Verbal

Often your body language says more than your words. Research has shown that only 7% of understanding comes from the listening part of a conversation. It is therefore absolutely essential to show positive body language. Your posture is so important - individuals who slouch or hunch their shoulders convey negative messages. Smile and look people in the eye when communicating. Nod frequently to show that you are listening and try to allow them time to finish their sentences before jumping in with what you want to say.

Develop Your Communication Skills – Speak And Write With Flair

Speaking confidently is not a gift possessed by all but can be developed by all. Tone, cadence, use of pauses, speed of speech; emphasizing certain words - sometimes repeating key words; lack of 'uhs' and 'ums' and 'you know' and avoidance of jargon; varying the number of words in successive sentences; and, not least, vocabulary – all these contribute to your style of speech, and many to your particular style of writing. Think about Barack Obama compared to John McCain. A neat handwriting can be achieved by practice and says so much about you as a person. Challenge yourself to download dictionary.com and learn a new word every day and try to use it.

Develop An Individual Style Of 'Being'

This helps to establish your 'presence factor', the impact you make on people you meet, the first impression you create. It requires being particular about everything you do, whether its ordering a particular type of tea (say Assam or Earl Grey) or coffee (double espresso macchiato rather than instant with milk), your favourite tippie (Balvenie double wood single malt rather than 'whisky'.) It means you dress with flair and style, not necessarily flash but always neat, shoes polished, hair styled, nails cleaned. For women wearing striking costume jewellery, for men an eye-catching tie, will have people remembering you.

Charismatic People Convey The Message That They Are 'Authentic'

Authentic people are more likely to be trusted. Authentic people have the courage of their convictions. To be authentic, always follow through on your promises/actions - walk the talk, don't just talk the talk. Follow-up contacts, if promised, the very next day and think of who you know who might be a useful contact for people you've just met. Always deliver more than you promise - never disappoint. Believe in your cause - believe in yourself.

Make Everyone You Meet Feel Important

Be generous with praise without being sycophantic. Be warm but be genuine. Engage with people, find a point of rapport with each and every person - make people feel good about themselves and good about you. Pick up on an accent or notice a piece of jewellery and ask a question about it - it will break the ice when you're both a little inhibited or nervous.

Sense Of Humour Is Key

Be humorous, but never at anyone else's expense. Convey an image of loving life, of being fun to be with, of being playful. Above all don't take yourself or life too seriously - life may be depressing, but it doesn't mean you have to be depressed! Don't tell jokes unless you feel very confident about your delivery and remember the punchline!

Be A Master Of Your Domain: Prepare Your Subject Thoroughly

Develop your expertise, skills and knowledge. Work to eliminate areas of weakness. Leave nothing to chance. If possible, before a meeting or event, try to find out the guestlist, see if there's anyone you know or would like to know. Find out a little about them and impress the hell out of them when you meet them and ask about one of their favourite interests or recent achievements.

Passion

Being passionate requires that you be enthusiastic, spontaneous, challenging and energetic. It is what excites you and gets your adrenalin flowing. One thing that draws a crowd and makes someone the centre of attention is a person who exhibits that kind of passion.

Persistence

Charismatic people do not take no for an answer. Like the legendary Pacman, if they cannot get round an obstacle, they go over, under or even through it. Giving up is not an option. Finding the 'tipping point' is looking for the often small 'tweak' that will take you across the threshold. Being persistent will impress the person who is being difficult or evasive.

Most Of All, Have The Courage Of Your Convictions

Be prepared to take intelligent and considered risks (within reason) to get where you want to be. Be prepared sometimes to step into the unknown - feel the fear about finding the extended you, but do it anyway. Changing your life can be so much fun, and can be so exhilarating and worthwhile!

Challenge yourself to significantly raise your charisma chart!

BE DISCIPLINED

Discipline is not enjoyable at all. It is not agreeable for your personal agenda, and it always spoils everything for you. You have to get up early in the morning to go to work even though you have been awake most of the night watching a movie. And discipline says leave the late night movie, rather go sleep and have a good night's rest.

It is inconvenient for you because you really wanted to watch that movie that was so interesting. Get up, dress up and show up they say. That is referring to your job. How are you going to manage to keep your job if you go to work when you feel like? So, discipline says control yourself and be dependable at work so that you can earn a salary and support your family.

If you were not disciplined when you were young, then you are regarded as illegitimate children. Which is quite obvious, any parent would discipline their children because they the parent loves his children. So, in what sense a parent would discipline a child if that child cannot have what it wants all the time? I think a parent would do that to teach the child responsibility, respect for others, and that the world does not revolve around the child. And a parent would keep on disciplining a child so that those children will cultivate good habits knowing that there are consequences of their actions, good or bad.

So, if you have good habits and a good discipline, then you will have good consequences. And the opposite will happen if you have bad habits. So, if your parents love you, then they will discipline you because it is for your own good. When you are young, you do not understand this concept. If you are being disciplined you regard it as punishment, and you are not sure why you are being punished. But take heart, it is not that you are being punished for nothing; your parents are disciplining you for your own good, so that you can prosper when you are older.

The best way to learn from discipline is do not fight against it. Do not rebel against your parents; they are disciplining you for your own good. Work with the whole disciplining process and do exactly what is expected of you. And do your chores willingly, and your life would be more pleasant. Above all, watch your attitude at all times.

Work willingly with discipline and it will be more bearable and pleasant for you. Work at your discipline; build a habit of keeping to the rules and regulations of your discipline. Then, your discipline will not become a discipline anymore, because you do what is expected of you by habit. Discipline is easy to live with, provided you do not fight against it. And if you rebel against your parents and their discipline, you are going to have a most miserable life. So, start early in life and cultivate a disciplined life.

What is Discipline? Does discipline have anything to do with success or motivation? Does discipline have anything to do with your everyday life? Can discipline be an effective habit?

Discipline is defined as a commitment to the most important person in the world - YOU. It means doing what you have to do, even when you don't want to do it.

Discipline is an effective habit and effective habits lead to effective results. Conversely, ineffective habits produce ineffective results. Firstly, you must discipline yourself to seek awareness and rid yourself of ineffective habits. Then, by utilizing discipline, replace those ineffective habits with useful and productive ones. By doing so, you can achieve anything you want in life.

Discipline, along with a positive attitude, is within your control. Don't allow those ineffective habits to control you and your future. Instead, discover how daily discipline will eventually alter any negative habits and change your life for the better. Go ahead and make the decision to lead a disciplined life and reap the benefits.

Discipline is 100% within your control. Take the first letter in the word Discipline - D and give it the numerical value 4. Then, take each of the following letters in DISCIPLINE and give each letter its respective numerical value. Add all the letter values and take note that the sum equals 100. If you want to increase your performance by 100%, then, put discipline in the driver's seat.

Discipline is an effective habit. Discipline is a complete process which includes personal awareness, desire, determination, recognition and reward.

Personal behaviour is a part of discipline. Once a meticulous behaviour is recognized and rewarded, it gets repeated. The process is simple. You determine the necessary behaviour or action required to achieve the goal; do it even when you don't want to; and finally, recognize and reward that behaviour so it will be repeated.

Statistics stipulate it takes 21 days to develop a habit. Rest assured, that my "Bob time" discipline and subsequent, reward is a definite habit. And that first cup of coffee tastes better than ever before.

Take the time to reflect on your most productive time of day. Once you determine that time, fully utilize one hour of your most productive time and reward yourself upon completion. In no time, you will be disciplined and will achieve the things you thought were impossible in your life.

Remember, both attitude and discipline are within your control. They are the foundation for ongoing self motivation and personal success. Recognize and reward appropriate behaviours and you will enjoy effective habits and valuable disciplines. You are well on your way to where you want to go.

ACT ON YOUR GOALS

Goal setting is an important exercise for everyone. Without goals, we just drift along and life passes us by. Goal setting allows us to be proactive vs. reactive and take charge of our life. However, goal setting isn't enough. Goal setting is just the first step to achievement. Goals must have strategies and actions to complete.

Say your goal is to lose weight. Goals need to be specific if you're going to have any chance of success. Let's say you want to lose 20 pounds and weigh 150 pounds by a date set four months from now. Four months is the recommended time for success. Time passes. Four months later, you get on the scale. Are you surprised to discover that you haven't lost any weight?

Try this proactive and measurable Goal Setting formula. It works if you are committed.

Try this formula:

I will be 20 lbs lighter by January 1, 2018 or add some punch- I will be happily standing on my bathroom scale weighing 150 on January 1, 2018. In each case you say what you will do by when.

Now its time to add strategies to accomplish your goals. The Goal is like the Title of your book, the Strategies are the Chapters-the actions are what happen in those chapters to bring about the final result.

Goal-Strategy-Actions-Execute-Celebrate

To get started try these 8 general strategies:

- 1- Create a Vision
- 2- Identify where you are now
- 3- Evaluate Your Resources
- 4- Identify Support Structures
- 5- Plan How to Get There (what are the actions you will take to reach your goal list at least 8 for each goal)
- 6- Go for it-Execute the plan.
- 7- Monitor and Adjust
- 8- Celebrate Your Success.

Without a goal setting strategy, and series of actions to achieve your goal, your chances of success are limited. To be successful, you need to make things happen, not just let things happen.

Now get going.

Write your goals write as SMART goals

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Rewarding, Time based. Use a 4 month window of time. For example, suppose that you want to increase sales. When you're setting this goal, don't just write, "I will increase sales." This goal is too general. Be specific "I will increase sales 30% December 31.

Setting a specific goal builds in the criteria you will use to evaluate your success; in this case, on August 1, 2008 you'll either have increased sales by 30 percent compared when you started this goal which we suggest a 4 month span. Every goal you set needs to follow this basic goal setting formula: I will (specific goal) by (specific date)

Develop Strategies

Use the strategies listed above to develop an action plan for reaching your goal. Remember: Strategies are high level plans you will follow to achieve

the goal. Each strategy should have several action steps to complete. Remember: Goals, Strategies, Actions, Execute, Celebrate.

In closing, if you build a brand around yourself, you create a business that is genuine and full of energy. You find your customers and create not only a loyalty to your product or service but create real friendships. Through this loyalty you can truly make a difference.

Are you **READY** to take action?

Join our support group for people interested in creating a business with their passion.