

# Personal Excellence

The Magazine of Personal Leadership

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*December 2012*

**John Stoker**  
Consultant

**Opt for  
Optimism**

**Rise Above  
Routine**

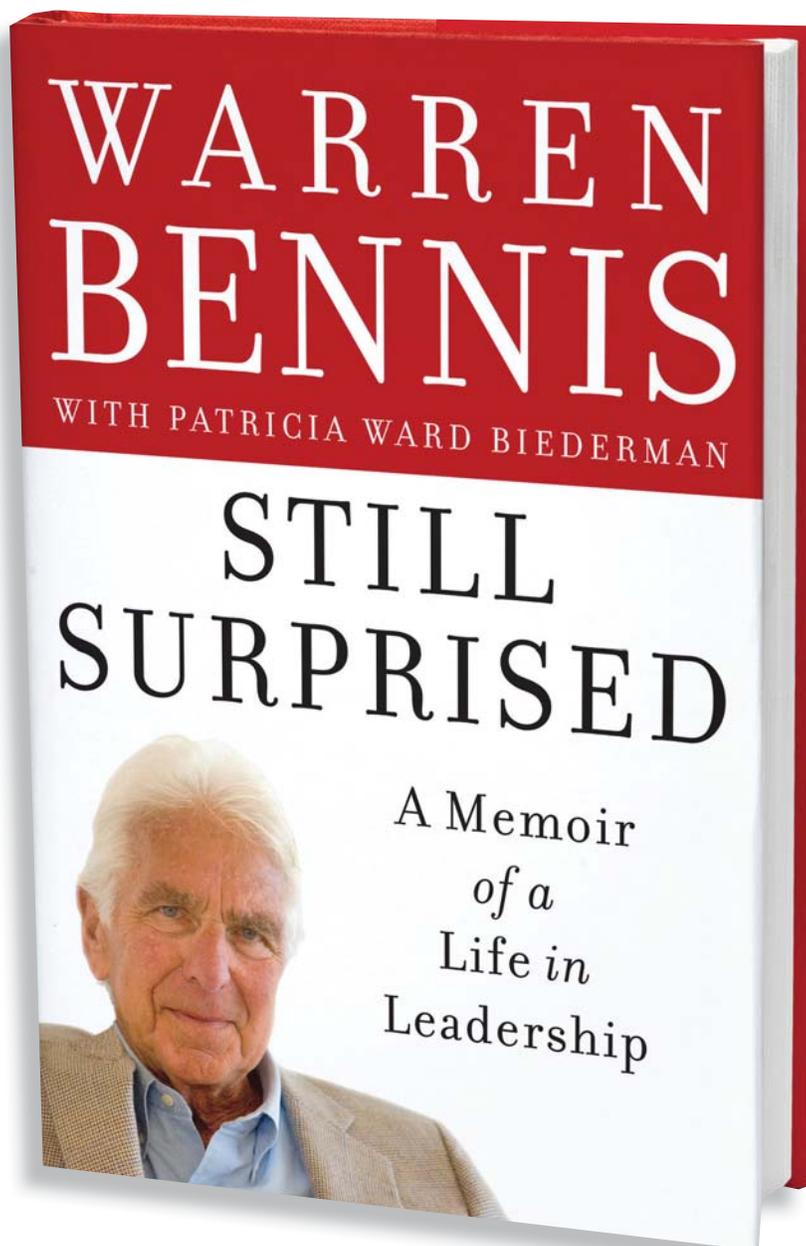
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December 2012

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INSPIRATIONAL • SUCCESS

# Life, Success, Love

If this is a game, these are the rules.

by Cherie Carter-Scott

When I first started to explore the *Rules for Success*, I felt that I had to first define what I meant by success. I thought long and hard about the word *success*. I interviewed people I knew, and approached many whom I didn't know, to get a sense of what success means to them. I then researched biographies of famous people who had lived what appear to be *successful* lives.

It was then that the first truth emerged: *success means different things to different people*. Indeed, you inevitably define *success* for yourself—by your values, your talents, and your passions. When you align all three and live your life with purpose, you achieve *fulfillment*, the *ultimate success*.

And so I then wondered, *If life, success and love is a game, what are the rules?* We all know the feeling: In the game of life, why am I the only one who seemingly doesn't know how to play? I wrote my books to teach you *the rules* so that you can conquer life's challenges and manage its unpredictable ups and downs.

### The Power of Wanting

When you want something—really want it—an internal hit goes off inside you that responds *yes*. That impulse is as strong when you are five years old reaching for a toy as it is when you are 50 reaching for your dream home. The energy unleashed in that moment of desire creates one of the most powerful and magnetic forces in the universe.

When I was 21 years old, my then-husband Bill and I knew we wanted to backpack

around the Hawaiian Islands after graduation. We both deeply wanted to take this trip, to explore the wonders of Hawaii, to live off only that which we could carry on our backs, to connect with the greater world of nature. *Real life* was upon us, and we wanted to have an experience like this before turning our attention to careers and the business of building a life.

*I wanted this adventure so much.* Despite limited funds and the disdain and protests of some family members, Bill and I strapped on our backpacks and went. The three months we spent exploring hidden caves, meeting indigenous people and learning about ancient customs, eating fruit we picked, and swimming in secluded grottos remains one of my most precious memories. I doubt, however, that it would have happened if we had operated from a sense of "it would be nice to backpack in the



Hawaiian Islands, wouldn't it?"

Think of a moment in your life when you knew *with every fiber of your being* that you *wanted* something—a trip, a relationship, or even your grandmother's cheesecake. Would you have moved the heavens to attain your wish?

*Wanting is a deep desire that emanates from within you.* It defies reason, logic. An undeniable feeling, yearning for something special emerges as a flash of how things might be. Fleeting albeit, the feeling is clearly undeniable. Whether the impulse is to redecorate your bathroom, take a trip, or close a deal, *wants* are moments of inner truth, the secrets of the soul.

*Wants whisper without license.* Out of a hidden place, a want blurs the dare-not-say secret

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tucked away from view. Flashes of desire might create adverse effects because a *want* will push you to risk. Wants ask you to move out of your comfort zone and *do something different*. A ticket to a new adventure, wants bring both challenge and change.

### Want vs. Need

My friend Adrienne once remarked how much she liked a pen I own. It is a special ergonomically designed pen that makes writing by hand more comfortable, and it's therefore slightly more expensive than ordinary ones. When I suggested to Adrienne that she get one of these pens, since she, as a journalist, often writes by hand, she recoiled and said, "but I don't need it."

"Yes," I said, "but do you *want* it? I know you don't need it, but I asked about wanting. What happens to your wants?"

Adrienne had no response, other than the one *she had been programmed to give*: if she doesn't need something, then she can't have it. Her *wants* are seen as *extraneous, unnecessary, and superfluous*.

Many people, like Adrienne, operate from a place of need.

Getting their *needs* as opposed to their *wants* met is drilled into their psyches from an early age. They receive the subtle but corrosive message that *wanting is selfish, unnecessary, indulgent and frivolous*. They come to believe that they should only fill their lives with things they need. *Wants* to them, are *extraneous luxuries* that they believe they do not deserve; they feel intense guilt when they fulfill their desires. So, when they experience feelings of desire, in order to avoid the guilt feelings, they either deprive themselves, or convince themselves that they actually need what they want. They rationalize their want and turn it into a need in order to justify getting it.

*Needs come from a place of insufficiency, whereas wants come from a place of sufficiency*. When we need something there is a distinct absence. When we want something, we reach for something to augment or complement what we already have. Needs, of course, must be met for basic survival. But wants, also, must be met when appropriate for the sake of your happiness.

When you *know what you want*, and give yourself permission to have it thereby fulfilling your desire, there is a release of delight and power that validates you as a person. This validation nourishes your self-trust, your self-confidence, your intuition, your basic belief in yourself. This reinforcement affirms your identity, your inner knowing and your reality. Each time this cycle occurs, it strengthens your authentic self.

This does not mean that you have free license to behave in unethical, immoral or illegal ways simply because you *want* some-

thing. It doesn't mean that your desires can operate freely without any checks, balances or consequences. It does mean that within the parameters of the legal system, the cultural mores and intending to do the right thing, honoring your true wants will reinforce your belief in yourself. Assuming your desires are not harmful to yourself or anyone else, and that they are aligned with good intention, there is no reason why you should have to deny yourself the feeling of wanting something. Nor should you deny yourself the opportunity to go out there and succeed in getting it.

### Learn to Love Yourself

At its core, *loving yourself* simply means *believing in your own essential worthiness*. It is nurturing a healthy sense of positive self-regard and knowing in your heart that you are a valuable link in the universal chain. Loving yourself also means actively caring for every facet of yourself. It shows up in



every action you take, from putting on a sweater to protect yourself from a chill to leaving a job that does not fulfill you. It means tuning in to your own wants and needs and honoring them the exact same way you want your partner to attend to you.

Not everyone grows up to have an innate sense of high self-esteem or worthiness. In fact, most of us need to work at it to some degree. Each person feels insufficient in one or more areas, whether physical, intellectual, financial, or in interpersonal dynamics, emotional maturity, or spiritual growth. However, respecting, nurturing, honoring, and cherishing yourself is your birthright (and something you can learn).

Loving yourself is the best way to learn *how to love*. Love is an action that requires certain understandings, skills, and capacities. By practicing loving yourself, you train yourself to advance to loving another.

Only when you have mastered taking care of your own needs can you know how to extend that same attention to others. When you respect the validity of your thoughts and feelings, you can apply that consideration to others. When you believe within yourself how valuable you are, you can then bestow authentic affection on a partner.

If your objective is to play the game of love and win, then *learning self-love is the first step you must take*. Before you can roll the dice or even place your playing piece on the board, you need to tap into the inner reaches of your heart and soul and discover all that you are worth.

PE



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**ACTION:** Seek what you truly want.

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# Neuroplasticity

Maximize your capability.



by Christine McKee

**T**O BE EFFECTIVE, VISIONARY, inspirational, and productive, you need to be aware of *why you do what you do*. You must recognize your habits, attitudes, values, judgments and assumptions you have toward yourself and others. You can make growth-based choices to *expand your potential* in the gap between *what you now do* and *the vision you hold of the most brilliant version of yourself*.

To know who and why you choose to be the person you are now, you need to understand your brain (the most magnificent thing you'll ever own)! You can be in control of it every conscious moment, with the aid of a few tips.

**You are at times a creature of habit.** You allow your brain to adopt efficient strategies for taking shortcuts when drawing conclusions about events, experiences, interactions, and relationships with different people. For example, you drive, eat, get dressed, shower, answer phone calls, and talk to people in a semi-automatic way. Once you have an interaction or two with an individual, you *sum them up*, make up your mind up about them, and bring your opinion into future interactions.

**You create shortcuts in the brain to save mental energy**—your brain wants you to create habits, automatic responses, and repetitious behaviours so you can have as much energy available at any moment in time in case you need to run for your life (flight) or fight for your life (fight). Luckily, you rarely have serious threats to your life.

**This means that you can think fresh in every moment.** You can be more creative and respond to information available to you in the moment. You can make your mind up about something or someone based on what is *real data* in this moment, instead of letting your past views, impressions, decisions, and habits guide your behaviour. How? Through *self-directed neuroplasticity*—making in-the-moment choices to rewire the neural pathways in your brain.

**Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change based on new learning and thinking.** All you need to do is *choose what you want to focus on and then pay attention to it repetitively*. As a child,

you learned new skills (such as walking, using cutlery, doing puzzles) through repetition. This is no different. You can choose what characteristics, traits, attitudes, communication styles, leadership styles you admire and put your energy into giving them a *pulse*. Breathe life into these things through your *focused attention on being the way you want*, through your intentions, thoughts, feelings, words, and actions.

I suggest that you *be in the moment*, every moment, and make fresh choices that will lead to the best result for you and others you interact with or influence—be it team members, colleagues, peers, or family. If your old habits lead to mediocre results, choose a different thought, emotional response, behaviour or words that will create great outcomes for all. Do this repetitively and you'll rewire your brain. To create new habits in situations where you're getting poor results, **take three steps**:

**1. Pause.** When you *pause to consider* what quality outcomes you desire, you gain the power to alter any habitual behaviour, like procrastination or lack of mental focus, and you create better results. When you pause, you create the space to catch yourself in old thought patterns, habits, and beliefs that don't generate successful outcomes. You are then in a position to change the way you lead and conduct your life, moment by moment.

**2. Set clear intentions.** Setting intentions are simple—state what you want. Suppose you need to have a performance discussion with someone, and you have found this to be challenging in the past. You need to set a clear intention for the outcome you desire. You may intend to *have a respectful conversation with the person, where you transparently discuss the performance issues together and reach an agreeable outcome*. Notice how the intention is **clear and specific: respectful conversation, transparently discuss performance issues, and reach an agreeable outcome**.

The old perception is that these conversations are challenging. To change

the neural pathway of *conducting performance conversations* to a more positive belief, you need to shake your brain up and make it work for you. To do this, **ask open-ended questions that relate to the intention you have set**. This will ensure your *attention* is lined up with your *intention*, maximizing the potential for your success in creating a new *performance management* habit. Once you ask yourself related questions, your brain will put energy into exploring all of the ways to get answers. Examples include: What is the best possible outcome for all parties in this situation? What might this person need that I



have not listened to until now? Do I have all of the relevant facts and data before having the conversation? What else could be going on that I'm not aware of, that has stopped a resolution in the past? Okay, so you have *paused, set your intention* and asked rich questions to stimulate healthy leadership behaviour, now all

that remains is to:

**3. Take action.** Think thoughts, speak words, and choose behaviors that lead to getting awesome results. Unlimited possibilities are available to you. This is where you pay attention to your choice through action. When creating new ways of being, *you need to be consistent*. Your brain needs *repetition* to strengthen the neural pathways of your new, more effective choices. *Pause* and identify an area within your capability that you would like to become more skilled in. Then create one clear *intention*. Identify at least five open-ended questions to get your brain focused on achieving what you want. Decide what *action* you will take to bring your intention to life.

**Break free of habits and beliefs that hold you back to create a new and better you.** Realize your goals, using a **four-phase process**: 1) *Awareness*—learning the reasons behind what you think, feel, say, and do; 2) *Focus*—identifying and setting specific intentions for progress; 3) *Maximizing potential*—recognizing opportunity in relationships and life situations; and 4) *Choices*—fine-tuning your skills to make progressive decisions in the future.

Develop the confidence to *empower your own life*, at your pace. **PE**

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**ACTION: Take these three steps.**

# Rise above Routine

Live the Conscious Lifestyle.



by Deepak Chopra

**R**OUTINE IS THE MOST COMMON obstacle to being conscious. There is comfort and safety in following your daily routine, and routines permeate your work and life. That is an obstacle to living consciously for several reasons:

**Routine activity conditions the brain to follow old, familiar neural circuits.** Over time, new input has a harder time registering, because *the course of least resistance is to follow the same ingrained patterns.* Routine dulls the mind by making you go on *automatic pilot.* Hours can be filled keeping busy without thinking. Routine makes you less active and more reactive. You find yourself in a reactive rut when your day is organized around e-mails, meetings, and planned activity.

Some routines—keeping regular hours, going to bed at the same time every night, and maintaining a regular health diet—are good for the body. The problem is *in the mind*, the seat of consciousness. Daily your mind controls a feedback loop where you can choose the input to be processed. You can't pursue your dreams and fulfill yourself at a deep level unless you participate in a rich, evolving, fully alive feedback loop.

**Look at your daily routine.** The input that fits a conscious lifestyle is *fresh, unexpected, surprising, delightful, challenging, inspiring, heartfelt, spontaneous, curious, creative, vital, selfless, and expansive.*

If your daily routine leads toward unconsciousness, then these words apply: *repetitive, predictable, conformist, unadventurous, automatic, re-active, dull, boring, exhausting, unchallenging, numb, uninspired, selfish, mechanical.*

**Honestly confront how you spend your day** by examining where boredom, dullness, and mechanical repetition have set in. At the same time, examine the best aspects of your routine, which are fresh, challenging, and spontaneous. Learn to minimize the downside of routine and maximize the upside. Don't take the false path of distraction. Most people who are caught in a reactive rut divide their lives in half, managing to get through the boring part of their routine because they have something totally separate that they actually enjoy, whether it's a hobby, fantasy football, video games, or hours of TV.

Routine is your psychological foe and a drag on your brain. One great hindrance is low expectations, and *nothing traps you in low expectations like dull routine.* By rising above routine, you can build a life that feels alert and alive *every moment.* The tool for building such a life is *self-awareness or consciousness.*

**Consciousness is on the move.** By contrast, routine is static and repetitive in an unconscious way. When faced with *the same old routine*—even if it's a high level of routine—the mind falls into a predictable groove. There is pressure to stay in the groove (to not to *rock the boat*).

**When you are conscious, there are no grooves.** Constantly you multi-task mentally. You can digest food, secrete hormones, talk about politics, worry about the impression you are making, and have a flickering sexual impulse at

the same time. Most of this multi-tasking goes on unconsciously. Even semi-conscious functions like breathing, emotional arousal, and mood basically run on automatic pilot.

**The brain, being a creature of routine, easily succumbs to inertia.** Most thoughts you have today are the same as your thoughts yesterday. The brain only displays its hidden potential if you intervene. You are a conscious agent. It is up to you to lead, inspire, and use your brain as optimally as you can.

**Creative gestures call on new possibilities.** *Use it or lose it* applies to brain functions like memory. Mental functions atrophy unless they are exercised. **PE**

*Deepak Chopra, M.D., is the author of 65 books, including numerous NYT bestsellers. Visit [www.chopra.com](http://www.chopra.com).*

**ACTION:** Rise above mental routines.

MENTAL • OPTIMISM

# Opt for Optimism

It can make you a better leader.



by Marshall Goldsmith

**T**HINKING OF CHALLENGES as opportunities and maintaining optimism can propel you forward. When you initiate a campaign to improve yourself—for example, shed a bad habit, exercise more, be nicer to your co-workers, learn a new language, elevate your spirit—there is *high probability* that you will fail. At some point, early in the game or near the finish line, you'll likely abandon your campaign to get better altogether.

**You tend to give up on your goals for these six reasons:**

1) *Improvement* takes longer than you think—and your need for *instant gratification* trumps patience and discipline; 2) the improvement is more difficult to make than we think; 3) You have other things to do—and distractions take your eyes off the ball; 4) You don't get the expected reward or recognition (no public victory), and this creates frustration rather than inspiration to persist; 5) You declare victory too soon—when you lose a few pounds, you order pizza; and 6) You have to do it forever—and maintenance over time is tough.

You rarely articulate these reasons; you simply accept defeat and vow to do better next time. This isn't a *failure of discipline*, or an *unrealistic vision* of your future, or *being overwhelmed* by distract-

tions—it is a *crisis of optimism.*

After the first wave of success, when improvement gets harder, your efforts can seem more hopeless than hopeful. You lose your initial burst of enthusiasm and optimism, and optimism is the fuel that drives the engine of change.

**Optimism is a form of thinking and behaving that guides everything you do.** It can be self-fulfilling, and contagious. *People pick up on optimism and gravitate toward it.* Optimism is more attractive than pessimism. *Contagious Optimism* is inspired by David Mezzapelle's idea of *positive forward thinking*—finding the *silver lining* in every cloud, no matter how difficult yesterday or today may be.

**I'm not suggesting you abandon realism—**just the opposite. When some factor derails your *goal achievement*, realize *such challenges are normal.* You can then maintain optimism and achieve your goals.

I acknowledge that it's difficult to remain optimistic and focused. Without a positive attitude, you will likely succumb to one of the many obstacles to happiness and joy. You can easily get caught in a *poor me* cycle if you dwell on the negative aspects of your life.

When you experience difficulties, seek inspiration and uplifting messages—on goals, relationships, finance, careers, health—from real people sharing real solutions to real problems. I assure you: It is possible to experience meaning and happiness and improve your life, outlook, and behaviors. **PE**

*Marshall Goldsmith is author of What Got You Here Won't Get You There. Visit [www.marshallgoldsmith.com](http://www.marshallgoldsmith.com).*

**ACTION:** Choose to be optimistic in outlook.



# REAL Conversations

What keeps you up at night?



by John R. Stoker

**Y**OU CLIMB INTO BED AND suddenly *your normal life* reasserts itself. Whether it's sick and crying children, flu pandemics, an ornery boss, higher taxes, a nagging recession, an angry ex-spouse, the prospect of losing your job, not being able to retire, or troubled and puzzling relationships, frustrations play out on the stage of your mind as you lie in bed.

**What's keeping you awake at night?** Your answer likely centers on *one core concern: I'm not getting the results I want!*

Your concern may be with a surly teenager, financial reversals, a difficult boss, an impossible task, or a crazed coworker. Most concerns deal with *violated expectations*. As much as you want to resolve these concerns, you avoid talking about them. And so you continue to experience *violated expectations* and *poor results*. All your frustrations deal with your *interactions* and *relationships* with others—and you contribute to your frustrations.

Yes, you want better *results!* You want to achieve your goals, enjoy your work, have positive *relationships*, and gain the *respect* of associates. When you come up short, sleep can be incredibly elusive.

**You can't talk about improving results without considering the impact that your relationships have on results.**

When *respect* is strengthened, your *relationships* improve, and *results* follow. So, the next time you can't sleep, look at the *results* you have, the *relationships* you are in, and the *respect* you bring to or receive in any conversation. You can't improve *results* without addressing *respect* and *relationships*. These 3 Rs are part of every conversation you hold.

**Your conversations affect your results.** Indeed, your *result* is the conversation; the *respect* you experience is the conversation; and your *relationship* with everyone you interact with is the conversation. You are at the core of every conversation you hold—you are responsible for *what you get*. You are the only one who has control over *you*, your relationships, the respect you bring to those relation-

ships, and the results you achieve. If you're not realizing the results you want, you need to fix what isn't working. So, before you explain to the Cosmos that your problems are someone else's fault—know that while you may be right, *you're also dead wrong*.

If you're part of the relationship, you're part of the conversation. And if the relationship isn't working, you can *likely* change the way you're engaging in the conversations to positive effect. What you do or don't do contributes to every conversation that you hold. You just can't let yourself off of the hook.

Have you ever been in a prickly situation where you just don't know how to talk about what really matters, so you don't bring up the tough issue? Or how about those times when everyone nods in agreement during a conversation that seems to go great, but then the expected outcome never materializes? Then there are times when you try your best, but somehow you (or the person



you're talking with) make a mess of it. Such scenarios are what I call *counterfeit conversations* or *fake talk*. Such conversations can be about any topic: changing, improving, requesting, or correcting something. The conversation seems to go well, but nothing happens! *Counterfeit conversation* never produces desired results!

We've all held these conversations and then ended up mystified when performance or behavior remains the same, accountability or responsibility never improve, problems aren't solved, customers aren't satisfied, quality and safety continue to be at risk, and change challenges go unaddressed. We think we share our message, but we don't learn until later, *after not getting expected results*, that the conversation went awry.

Sometimes *fake talk* occurs because we expect people to read our minds. So, our listeners keep doing what they've always done. People who engage in *fake talk* tend to beat around the bush or are so vague that we easily misinterpret what is being said, and have no clue how to perform up to expectations or be accountable for results.

*Fake talk* is also marked by a rise in frustration. Such conversations can be so filled with emotion, aggression, and disrespect. People are too busy *fighting* or *flighting* to understand what is really being said. *Fake talk* is vague, manipulative, covert, shortsighted, problematic, disrespectful, accusatory, non-complementary or an outright lie. Such conversation can be passive, aggressive, or *both*.

## Hold REAL Conversations

Instead of *counterfeit conversations*, we should be holding **REAL conversation**.

**REAL** is an acronym for **four skills** used in all effective conversation:

- Recognize and suspend judgments
- Express thoughts, feelings, experience, or opinions without creating resistance
- Ask questions to understand
- Listen and attend to messages that others express verbally and nonverbally.

**These four skills greatly improve the quality of your conversations and help you to talk about anything, anytime, with anyone.** *REAL conversations* achieve results, increase respect, and build relationships. The parties to *REAL conversations* come away feeling understood, valued and respected. The behavior and relationship of the parties are changed for the positive, and things get done.

*REAL conversations* are *specific, direct, open, insightful, solution-oriented, respectful, and encouraging* or *complimentary*. To assess the quality of your conversations, answer **three questions**: How do my conversations impact my *results*? How would I describe the quality of my *relationships*? Is *respect* a hallmark of how I treat others and how they treat me?

If you answer *No* to these questions, you're likely engaging in *fake talk*. The greatest opportunities for holding *REAL Conversations* come when no one agrees with your view, you don't get what you want, or others repeatedly violate your expectations. *The quality of all you receive* reflects *the quality of your conversations*. When you engage in *fake talk*, you put *results, respect* and *relationships* in jeopardy.

To achieve the results that you seek, stop engaging in *fake talk*; instead, hold *REAL conversations*. Learn how to talk about what matters most. Engage in conversations that express what you truly think, feel, or want—and give people what they need to succeed.

Holding *REAL conversations* requires courage, but the results—and *the good night's sleep*—will be worth it. **PE**

John R. Stoker is Founder and president, Light Storm Consulting Inc. and DialogueWORKS Inc. Visit [www.lightstormconsulting.com](http://www.lightstormconsulting.com).

**ACTION: Conduct REAL conversations.**

## Joy in the Journey

Wrong choices inhibit your joy.



by Clancy Cross

ARE JOY AND HAPPINESS THE same thing? We tend to use these words interchangeably, yet they're very different. *Happiness* is a good feeling that rises and falls in response to events and occurrences. So, *happiness* is a relatively short-term emotional state based on *personal gratification*—how events make us feel. Other events drive away happiness, making *happiness* a volatile emotion. Whatever makes us feel good brings happiness. What makes us feel bad produces sadness.

"Happiness is finding a pencil. Pizza with sausage. Telling the time. Happiness is learning to whistle. Tying your shoe for the very first time."—"Happiness" by Clark Gesner, *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

Joy is linked to our personal relationships and can be stronger, more enduring, and more stable than happiness. Joy is rooted in the positive feelings we have toward others, increasing as the quality of our relationships increase. It inspires our most unselfish desires. Joy redirects our inward focus toward others.

"Who is the happiest of men? He who can appreciate another's merit, and can enjoy another's pleasure as if it were his own."—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Since joy is rooted in relationships, I suggest that Goethe was describing joy. Happiness and joy are entwined. While happiness can come from joy, joy does not always arise out of happiness—nor does it rely on happiness. This is why sadness and joy can coexist during the most disappointing and emotionally-challenging times like sickness, layoffs, and funerals. Joy allows us to see these situations in context of a bigger picture.

"Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." Bible, James 1:2-4

I've observed the paradox of laughter and smiles at funerals or during grief.

"That bells should joyful ring to tell, A soul had gone to heaven, Would seem to me the proper way A good news should be given."—Emily Dickinson

My grandmother's and grandfather's funerals were bittersweet. Stories, tears and laughter were evident at both. At Grandpa's service, we jogged our memories using words like *burnt toast* and

*Chumley* that had special significance, prompting many smiles. The smiles were not signs of happiness (proof of this were the tears of grief)—they were evidence of *joy from treasured relationships*.

**We choose joy by choosing our values, our purpose, and our relationships.**

Joy is the fruit of a positive attitude, good character, professionalism, and healthy relationships. Joy, as well as happiness, depends on these and other choices made consistently over time.

"We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them."—Kahlil Gibran.

Right choices lead to joy; wrong ones inhibit joy. You choose your friends, your thoughts, your destinations, and your behaviors. These *routine choices* impact your attitudes, intentions, and joy.

"The excursion is the same when you go looking for your sorrow as when you go

looking for your joy."—Eudora Welty

**Pleasure is an even poorer substitute for joy than happiness.** In fact, it can be so alluring that *the desire for joy* gets lost. Like happiness, pleasure should be a companion of joy, not a replacement.

"I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for joy."—C.S. Lewis

**Joy measures the integrity of your relationships.** The quality of your relationships determines the depth of your joy. Joy is meant to be shared.

"A joy shared is a joy doubled."

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Think of *happiness* as your pleasure and comfort barometer. Think of *joy* as your relationship barometer. PE

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**ACTION: Experience more joy in your journey.**

## SOCIAL • CIVILITY

### Our Uncivil War

Can civility be restored?



by Christine Chen

WE'VE ALL EXPERIENCED incivility, rage or rudeness. You're driving on the freeway when suddenly *Road Rage Ralph* comes barreling upon you with lights flashing and horn honking indicating you'd better speed up or get out of the way. Then, there's *Megaphone Mike* talking on the cell about his last big deal as you try to finish your proposal. Then *Pushy Peggy* bolts past an elderly man to secure the last seat on the subway. Yes, this list could go on—*uncivil behavior is everywhere*.

Many of us encounter rude behavior and incivility daily. Perhaps we need to reevaluate our actions from the other person's perspective: show some empathy, understanding, respect. After all, most major cities are culturally diverse, and standards for social interactions such as body language, eye contact, greetings, and personal space vary depending on cultural backgrounds. Add to this the strain on our social interactions due to technology and an overly connected and yet disconnected society, and we have a real problem.

**Several factors contribute to the decline of positive social interactions.**

We once enjoyed dinner around the kitchen table with family and friends. Now we grab a bag of burgers and fries

and chow down in the car. We once played board games with family and friends. Now we sit in solitude playing *Angry Birds*. We once attended seminars with colleagues and friends. Now we sit alone attending webinars. We once used the telephone and shared experiences with family and friends. Now, we text, tweet, blog, or e-mail. We once went to parties where we enjoyed friends. Now we go to parties and text or talk on the cell. We once shared personal experiences with family and close friends who cared. Now we share them on social media with 500 friends who don't care. We once built relationships with our bank teller and retailers. Now we use ATM's, Ebay and Amazon.

What has happened to family? Friends? Colleagues?

Robert Fulghum writes, "Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody."

Imagine what it would be like if we all practiced these basic rules of life.

Even amid the honking, pushing, and yelling, some people still uphold the *Golden Rule*. Recently, as my friend lost his iPad on the metro and didn't detect it until he got home. With little hope, he called the metro's *lost and found*. Miraculously, someone found his iPad and turned it in, and a kind WMATA employee remained after hours to give it to him in person! PE

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**ACTION: Restore civility in your own life.**

# Optimal Performance

Take into account your personality.



by Ken Keis

**W**HY DO YOU STRUGGLE TO optimize your performance and realize your potential? Focusing on one item, assessment, or strategy is not enough—you must be holistic, patient and persistent.

**Personality** is the totality of who you are. Parts of your personality change with learning and experience. **Personal Style** is the part of your personality that does not change. This allows personality to have both *flexibility* and *stability*.

Performance optimization requires time and dedication and a framework—like our *Personality Development Factors Model*—for developing the whole person.

**1. Personal style preferences.** Our *Personal Style Indicator* enables you to determine and confirm your natural style preferences for engaging whatever you encounter, the way you consistently react to your surroundings. Your preferences are reflected in your needs, wants, and values. *Personal Style* is your natural predisposition to perceive, approach, and interact with the environment, which includes time, people, tasks, and situations. To optimize your performance and realize your potential, you need to be aware of your *Personal Style*. Style is more important than education, age, IQ/intelligence, profession, or job level. Self-aware people achieve more of their goals and enjoy higher satisfaction.

**2. Biophysical influences.** This factor includes all biological and physical influences on the personality and body. In our *Stress Indicator and Health Planner*, we benchmark stress in five categories. Even if your personality wants to be active, energetic, and engaging, it is not possible with a lifestyle and biophysical condition that isn't healthy. With extra weight comes a decrease in mental acuity and cognitive function. Memory loss, dementia, and Alzheimer's are linked to high-carb, grain, and gluten-based diets. You can't boost performance until you take care of your biophysical condition.

**3. Self-worth levels.** *Self-worth is key to healthy development.* High self-worth provides flexibility, strength, and regenerative capacity. It relates to better mental health, success, and happiness. Low self-worth undermines all human interactions, reduces a resilience, and stunts

psychological and emotional growth. Self-worth determines personal value, since it evaluates our behavior, appearance, feelings, thoughts, and abilities. It also determines the appreciation we have for ourselves and the way we feel about our inherent worth—what we believe we need to be or do to have value as a person. High self-worth is a source of motivation and personal energy to engage life, and self-worth reveals areas of psychological vulnerability.

Nathaniel Branden writes: *Self-worth provides the experience of being able to cope with challenges of life and being worthy of happiness. It consists of two components: 1) Self-efficacy: confidence in our ability to think, learn, choose, and make appropriate decisions; and 2) Self-respect: confidence in our right to be happy and the belief that*



*achievement, success, friendship, respect, love, and fulfillment are appropriate to us.*

The basic challenges of life include earning a living, taking independent care of ourselves, forming mutually satisfying relationships, and having the resilience to bounce back from adversity and persevere. In *Learned Optimism*, Martin Seligman confirms that our responses to failure and success predict our future results. If you have a *pessimistic* response and outlook on life, you'll struggle to realize your potential. When Optimists fail, they don't blame themselves—they acknowledge they did their best and move on. They limit that failure to the event and time and don't project it to other parts of their life or to the future. When Optimists succeed, they take credit for the success, project the achievement into other areas of their lives and believe their success will prevail into the future. *Self-worth* is learned—and can be unlearned. Shifting your self-worth from the negative to positive can help you embrace your individuality and boost contributions.

**4. Environmental systems.** This includes stimulus that you receive from the environment—the influences you experience from being a member of social, cultural, and ethnic groups. Examples include families of origin, geographic settings, cultures, organizations, communities, workplaces, religions. Even within countries, regional differences can be significant. To optimize performance, take into account the *experiences* and *backgrounds*; seek an environment where you can act on your strengths and operate with no oppression or fear. Remove the cultural restraints and other environmental barriers so that you can *play to your strengths*.

**5. Social teachers.** Much of how you behave daily is learned from watching and imitating other people's behavior. Often that learning occurs indirectly and without awareness. A social teacher has a positive or negative influence on the way you perceive, approach, or interact with the environment. Social teachers can be video games, social media, music, media, and the people who raised you from birth—in most cases your parents—and other family members, peers, teachers, pastors, coaches, historical figures, authors, celebrities, and employers. Core values influence performance. When incentives are aligned with your core values (what motivates you), you achieve more: *Performance optimization requires values alignment.*

**6. Emotional anchors.** These include all experiences that cause an emotional response, positive or negative. The memory of those events penetrates into your subconscious mind, leaving you *different*. After you have a strong emotional experience, your personality and behavior change in some way. To optimize performance, *you must let go of any past experiences that hinder you.* People who take emotional baggage to work can become toxic and harm a team. One individual with negative energy can disrupt an entire workplace.

Your beliefs and spiritual perspectives highly influence your behavior, choices, values, and life satisfaction. Seek to discover your true *purpose* and meaning in life—your core beliefs that underpin everything you are and do. Your beliefs influence what you will and won't do. Your productivity, peace, and performance depend in part on being clear about *your purpose*.

*Are you willing to do the work to live a more fulfilling and productive life?* PE

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**ACTION:** Develop yourself as a whole person.

## Success Principles

Observe five to achieve goals.



by Matthew B. James

**S**UCCESSFUL PEOPLE CREATE lives many people only dream of because they know they have the power to transform their lives. They realize the truth that *we create our experience through our thoughts, words and actions*, and they take responsibility for the results they achieve.

**So how do you transform your life to achieve your goals?** Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) is a proven method used by many of the world's most successful people. NLP is a behavioral technology—a set of guiding principles, attitudes, and techniques—that empowers you to change and adapt, adopt or eliminate behaviors, and choose mental, emotional, and physical states that further positive outcomes. To achieve your goals, practice five NLP principles:

**1. Know your outcome.** Have goals, a plan, and outcomes in mind from the start. This sounds so basic, but it is surprising how many people overlook this crucial step. If you were planting a garden, you would first choose what kinds of flowers and vegetables you wanted to end up with, then till and prepare the soil before planting. It is the same with any goal you want to achieve. Start with the end result you desire and plan all the steps necessary to achieve your goal.

**2. Take action consistent with the outcome you want to achieve.** We tend to get caught up in actions that do not get us where we want to be. Perhaps you have many things to achieve in a day but you get sidetracked by phone calls and email. Ask yourself: *Does this move me toward my desired outcome?* List actions that move toward your outcome and list things to avoid that get in the way of doing what you need to do. Then focus more of your time on the actions that achieve desired outcomes.

**3. Develop sensory acuity.** How you see, hear, taste, smell, and experience your world so you can determine when a shift has occurred. Most people favor one sense (sight, sound, touch) in how they learn about and experience the world. Work on developing the other senses. For instance, if you are primarily a visual learner, try developing your auditory acuity. If you tend to experience the world through sound or touch, practice honing your visual acuity. Pay

attention to how you experience what is going on around you so you can constantly monitor your progress toward your desired outcome.

**4. Practice behavioral flexibility.** As you work to achieve a goal, whether it is to lose weight, start a successful business or make a million dollars, allow yourself the *flexibility* to be pulled toward your outcome. Don't get stuck in the details of your work. Take the time to step back and ask if there is an easier and better way to achieve the task. Seek innovative ways of achieving results with greater ease and efficiency.

**5. Operate from a physiology and psychology of excellence.** Your thoughts affect your physiology, and your physiology affects your thoughts. So a shift in your physiology will show up in outcomes. Have you ever noticed how suc-

cessful people hold themselves physically, how they speak and how they shake hands and make eye contact? *How they behave physically informs their outcomes, and their outcomes guide their physiology.*

Imagine a goal you want to achieve, like getting a promotion or a new job. Think of sights, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells associated with achieving the outcome, and how you would respond physically. Then adopt that physiology *as if you have already achieved your goal.*

NLP teaches you how to *do your best with all the resources you have*, and provides steps so your thoughts, words and actions move you *toward your goals.* **PE**

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**ACTION:** Use these principles to achieve goals.

## PHYSICAL • WEIGHT

### Lasting Weight Loss

It requires a personalized plan.



by Stan Spencer

**A**LL YOU HAVE TO DO TO lose weight is to *restrict calories* for a few days (what most diets do). However, most diets are so unpleasant, inconvenient, boring, complex, or expensive that you can't stick with it. You soon quit the diet, fall back into old habits, and weight returns.

**Permanent weight loss requires permanent changes in habits.** And this requires you to *create your own weight loss plan*—one aimed at your habits and customized to fit your needs, abilities, preferences. You become *naturally thin* by reshaping habits that cause excess weight. Your weight loss plan should have **nine elements**:

**1. Heed your personal preferences.** You need not make yourself miserable. Eating yogurt can help you lose weight, but if you don't like yogurt, don't include it in your plan. You can do many other things to lose weight naturally.

**2. Make changes you can live with.** Include only *those things you want to make lifelong habits*. Giving up desserts for a month may help, but *the weight will return* when you start eating desserts again. So, try limiting yourself to one dessert a day, and make it a lifelong habit.

**3. Control emotional eating.** You often eat for emotional comfort. Learn to regulate your emotions in other ways: get more social interaction, think in a more

healthy way, or try meditation or mindfulness to calm your emotions.

**4. Calm your cravings.** Cravings for junk food can crush your resolve and wreck your attempts to lose weight. The key is making the cravings weaker so your willpower does the job. For example, taking a brisk, short walk helps reduce chocolate cravings.

**5. Try simple weight loss recipes.** Prepare natural weight loss foods. Make a yogurt parfait or hot whole-grain cereal for breakfast. Simple, natural meals need not be difficult or time-consuming.

**6. Remove temptations.** It's easier to *remove temptations* than to *resist them*.

Get rid of junk food. Avoid places that tempt you to over-eat. Stock your refrigerator with weight-loss foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, yogurt, nuts and whole grains.

**7. Do smarter exercise.** Stop doing *exercises you hate*. Get exercise that you enjoy. And, exercise with someone else.

You'll stick with it longer. Do exercises that build muscle, not just burn calories directly. New muscle will boost your metabolism so you burn more calories.

**8. Make easy changes in habits first.** Don't try to develop all of your weight loss habits at once. Start with the easy ones. Once you reap rewards, you'll be motivated to tackle habits that require more effort. After three weeks, *the new habit will feel natural, and you'll be thinner.*

**9. Go for gradual weight loss.** It's better to lose 20 pounds over a year than 20 pounds in a month—*then gain it back.* **PE**

*Stan Spencer, Ph.D., author of The Diet Dropout's Guide to Natural Weight Loss: Find Your Easiest Path to Naturally Thin (Fine Life Books). Visit [www.fatlossscience.org](http://www.fatlossscience.org).*

**ACTION:** Make a new plan for the new year.



# Virtual Effectiveness

*The new leadership competence.*



by Camille Preston

AS YOU READ THIS ARTICLE, you likely have already responded to emails, listened to voice messages, skimmed the web, and sent a text or Facebook update. As you read, you *will be* distracted. You'll get emails, and *i-mails* (personal messages or to-dos) from internal dialogue.

Technology is changing how, where and with whom you can interact, not always for the better. Business is happening *everywhere*—at all times of the day and night. You're living *always on, always connected, overwired*. As devices consolidate your needs, it also becomes harder to unplug and step away. When your camera is your watch is your GPS is your phone is your web access, *unplugging takes new skills*—and discipline.

**Technology is neurologically addictive.** You are wired to seek out newness. Each time you notice something novel, you're rewarded with the feel good neurochemical, dopamine. If *newness* quickly equates to *feeling good*, you are drawn to check email, surf the web, and scan Facebook. *Newness abounds. Dopamine follows. The addiction begins.*

The technology that you bought to *improve the quality of your life* is now driving your life. Effectiveness in the virtual world requires emotional intelligence.

**Virtual effectiveness is the ability to know and to regulate yourself in the face of technology**—the capacity to know and manage yourself so well that you can work seamlessly from anywhere, with anyone, and at anytime. To do this well over time, we need to create new self-awareness, systems, and discipline.

Your willpower is finite. If you spend all day resisting checking your email, you will have less willpower to go to the gym or to resist the frozen yogurt in the freezer. You must know yourself: what matters most, your strengths, your weaknesses. You must build systems to support yourself, your lifestyle, your commitments, and your values.

Exercising more discipline for longer time, in more situations with more neurochemical challenge requires the discipline to: 1) turn off all technology and be fully engaged; 2) close email and listen; 3) build systems; 4) know what matters most; and 5) do one thing at a

time. This is more difficult since we are living always on, always connected, *overwired* as technology becomes more consolidated and more portable, enabling us to work from more places, with more people, worldwide.

When you're overwired, you have two modes—frenzied activity of *Doing, Doing, Doing* or complete exhaustion of *Done*. Why? Your new heightened awareness of everything that needs to be done combined with how little time you have often results in multitasking. Doing multiple things simultaneously is cognitively impossible. By shifting between tasks—often *second to second*—you drain your most precious resource, your brain. Tasks take 25 percent longer, quality plummets, innovation



flags, retention diminishes, and you waste your most precious resource.

Given our neurological, biological addiction to being *overwired*, you must:

**1. Know what it means to be overwired.** What are the consequences of being always on, always connected? What are the health consequences, the short- and long-term impact of living with perpetual stress and excess adrenaline? What new strategies can you implement to change your overwired life? What is this costing you personally and professionally? What triggers you to be overwired? What is your role in establishing an unspoken culture? Look at both short and long term costs, and direct and indirect implications.

When living overextended, you are shifting gears, doing multiple things at once, responding to crises, and draining your cognitive resources. At the end of the day, you are so exhausted that you just want to numb out. As a result, you spend too much time online or watch too much television or overeat, overdrink, or overshop.

**2. Unplug, literally so that you can**

**Unwire.** You may need to get off the fast-paced *dance floor of life*, and onto the balcony for perspective. On the balcony, you can see what is and is not working; where priorities are aligned; what direction forward would be most effective. Overwired you're constantly stimulated and often distracted from what matters most. You need *balcony time*, unplugged.

What ways can you step away from technology? Generate options for short- and long-time periods and in different settings. The more options and agility you have, the more effective you will be.

Start unplugging in small ways, for small periods. What changes physically, mentally and emotionally? **Unwiring has three phases:** 1) *biological*—literally shifting the chemistry in your brain (this can feel like withdrawal without sustained dopamine); 2) *mental*—finding stillness to think more clearly and to reconnect to what matters most; and 3) *emotional*—reengaging with yourself, with your values, with *what matters most*.

When you're overextended, you must unplug so that you can optimize. *Unplugging* can happen over a six-month sabbatical or in seconds with practice. The personal and professional rewards are immense, and can be sustained. When you unplug from technology, you replug into what matters most.

**3. Discover your rewired rhythm.** Leverage technology to work for you and make explicit your success strategies. Consider **the 6 F's**.

1. With so much more incoming information, where do you need to build **Fences** or boundaries?

2. What systems will help you **Filter** incoming information so that you have the right information when you need it, and not at other times?

3. What strategies will optimize your capacity to **Focus** on what matters most?

4. Since you become like the five people you spend the most time with, what **Friends** will support you in finding your rewired rhythm?

5. What **fuel** do you need to be your best? (exercise, sleep, nutrition, hydration). What do you consume? Where are you unnecessarily expending energy?

6. Given the speed of change, what do you need to foster even more agility and **flexibility**?

Leaders who know their *Rewired Rhythm* will be positioned for sustained Virtual Effectiveness. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Focus on what matters most.

## Transform Your Life

Use the power of conscious creation.



by Gregory Malouf

**I**F YOU'RE LIKE MOST PEOPLE, *seeing is believing*, but your perspective of what you see and experience often separates you from your true reality and ultimate potential. "There are two ways to live: you can live as if nothing is a miracle or you can live as if everything is a miracle."—Albert Einstein.

The circumstances and opportunities you envision in your mind's eye are a direct result of how your thoughts are conditioned to react and interpret them. When you accept these perceptions as true or untrue, you act as though you are told or taught. You don't believe you can have something and rejoice in it until you have it. Your misperceptions create a distorted worldview.

The way to rebuild a faulty belief system is to enact the law of conscious creation—you must *be it* before you receive it. Simply do the things you would do as if you had them already, and, with conviction and faith, know that it's within your grasp.

Conscious creation is about belief and faith, with no expectation or determination of the outcome. Expectation is control. Control is resistance, and often leads to disappointment.

### The 'Be, Do, Have' Principle

Creation is constantly taking place in your life: *every positive and negative thought becomes your reality*. You can choose to consciously create your life in three ways: 1) believe in the outcome you desire *before* you achieve it; 2) have a positive mental attitude and act as if the outcome desired is already here—*before you attain it*; and 3) have faith that the outcome is created at the conception of desire. Rejoice in it, and be grateful for it. Have no expectation. Just have faith!

If you wish to simplify your life, remove anxiety and concern and accept and appreciate your creative power. In essence, doing far less achieves far more. The world you see is a world where you fight for your survival, separate from everything and everyone. You do not tolerate the weak nor heed the homeless and underprivileged for fear of becoming like them. You conform to the law of scarcity. Fear is the order you follow, and a way of life that privileges the few at the expense of the many.

Your thoughts, words, and behaviors tend to cater to the mentalities that tell you to *think and grow rich, survive at all cost, fight for every step, and take all you can*. So, you react and conform to much of life. Your words, thoughts and actions are often *reactions*. You allow other self-absorbed, unlightened people to use words and behavior to validate themselves at the expense of your needs.

You are not connected to your inner Self—you are connected to everything outside the Self. You might be *reacting* to life mechanically through thoughts, words, and actions based on *scarcity, survival, manipulation, control, and expectations*. When you aren't connected within, you can't resolve problems within. Instead you constantly look outward—where the answer can never be found.

You need to craft a new reality based

on conscious creation through heightened awareness and innovative thinking. You know the outcome is certain because the present is not invested in either the past or future. Your power comes from the deep inner Self—the place of silence, stillness, and high vibrational energy that sparks focus, engagement, and enjoyment in the inspired activity.

You need *clarity* on what you desire in life and *commitment* to stay on track. This is the work of the soul. You can't be disappointed when the thing you desire doesn't manifest exactly as you think it will. By using your *intuition*, you will know that *the power lies within you to change your reality*. PE

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**ACTION:** Engage in conscious creation.

## Re-energize Yourself

You can thrive in hard times.



by Shani L. Harmon

**L**ET'S FACE IT, YOU'RE TIRED and burned out. That restorative vacation left you contemplating whether you'll be able to afford one next year.

How can you sustain commitment and energy in the face of challenging economic times? Economic contractions have a big impact: The focus shifts from innovation to survival, a sense of urgency dominates, driving sometimes frenzied activity. Everyone is asked to do a lot more with a lot less, tolerance for errors slips to zero, creating a high sense of personal risk.

Your natural *fight or flight* response kicks in and makes *survival* your priority. If you don't find a way to snap out of this *reactivity*, your anxiety will take on a life of its own and create a toxic climate. Soon, it'll be New Year's Eve and you'll have nothing to show for last year but an exhausted team and a steep hill to climb the first of the year.

How can you create a culture of *expansion and possibility* in the face of a sustained recession? Here are **four ideas**:

- **Work less, not more.** You may have accepted *overload* as a reality. Yes, some people drown themselves in committees, meetings and uncoordinated initiatives, but *the problem* here isn't the work necessarily—it's the quality and

essentiality of the work versus the time spent. Lightening your load by *focusing on what really matters* will pick you up emotionally and physically.

- **Don't outsource engagement.** Create connection and meaning between what you are trying to accomplish and your beliefs and actions. *You can't outsource your own engagement*. Create connection for yourself by aligning *where you're headed with what you value*. Be vocal about priorities and be visible—people need to see you, hear you, and *feel connected to you* to believe in what you say.

- **Invest in your team.** Everyone knows it's austerity time, but don't fall prey to *short-sightedness*. The economy will turn around, and you need a team with *commitment, know-how, and collaborative skills*. So, find work you can eliminate. Skip the fancy hotels and exotic locations and invest in well-framed and productive dialogues about what you're facing and how you can meet the challenge.

- **Invest in yourself.** You are the emotional center of gravity for your team. How you manage your reactions and responses to challenging times will set the tone for everyone else. Thus, *your self-renewal should be a high priority*. Reflect on *your beliefs* about what's happening. If you *believe* that you can thrive, you will find opportunities!

The choice is yours. Pull the blinds and wait out the year or kick it into high gear. Enthusiasm is contagious (as is malaise). Which do you stand for? PE

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**ACTION:** Re-energize yourself for the New Year.

# Realize the Dream

By taking the Magical Path.



by Marc Allen

**Y**OU CAN DO SOMETHING TO create a better life for yourself—and a world that works for all. Even if you lack time or money, you can still pick up trash, recycle, treat people nicely, and work well in partnerships. You can *do* something—so do something, now.

The *Great Work* ahead of us is replacing the model of domination, based on fear and control, with a new way of living, a new model of partnership, based on love and respect for all people and all creation. We need to house, feed, and educate everyone; provide security and basic human rights; and bring an end to war. Too many people are impoverished, hungry, homeless, hopeless, and dying from wars and diseases that can be avoided. It's a big challenge, but doable. We have the technology and the vision: *We can create a world that works for all by taking the magical path.*

*The magical path is the direct path to success*—as you choose to define *success*. You work with the creative forces of the universe, so that the life you picture and focus on in your imagination quickly becomes your life in full, three-dimensional reality. This is *real magic*. I use the word *magic* to describe the mystery and wonder of life—the vast intelligences that design and create this universe. Successful people use magic in their creative work, whether they're aware of it or not, by applying the *laws of manifestation* or *magical creation* in their lives.

This magical, mysterious process of creation begins in the inner world of the mind. It begins with a thought, a dream—something ephemeral, fleeting, as light and vulnerable as a tiny seed blown in the wind. By focusing on that thought, that dream, you can discover how to create it in your life and create something out of apparently nothing.

*The magical, mystical, and spiritual sides of success all are interlinked.* When *magical practice* connects with *spiritual power*, the results can be startling—that's why it's a short path.

You can set this creative process in motion—it just takes a moment—and then sit back in wonder at the mystery and beauty of it all. You have all the tools you need to create the life of your

dreams. Use this *five-step process* to make major changes in your life and major changes in the world.

**1. Dare to dream of a world that works for all—imagine the possibilities.** Start with a dream. Few people dare to dream of a better world. And yet that's exactly what is needed—a vision of a world that works for all. Always keep in mind the dream, the vision: It is possible to create *a world that works for all.*

**2. Imagine how you can achieve your dream.** Brainstorm, make lists of *What If's*. Discuss different possibilities. Meditate on your dream. These are methods by which the dynamic nature of the subconscious can be stimulated so you become a powerful magnet attracting to yourself whatever you truly desire or is necessary for your welfare.



**3. Affirm the dream with the power of the spoken and written word.** Try affirming: *This, or something better, is now manifesting in totally satisfying and harmonious ways, for the highest good of all.* This simple little affirmation keeps you on the right track. Or try this affirmation: *I close my eyes and see a field of light and I feel that light, and life, in every cell of my body, nurturing and healing every cell. And I know that light, and life, and love, is who and what I am, now and forever.* Or, try this: *I have everything I need—a miraculous body, a phenomenal brain, and a vast and powerful subconscious mind. Now it's just a matter of focusing my mind in the right direction.*

**4. Set clear goals and make plans to reach them.** You have the tools you need to move yourself and others up Maslow's pyramid. At each level, you have different needs—and are at a different level of consciousness as a result. At the bottom of the pyramid, you need food and shelter. You next seek security and health, then the wonderful, expansive worlds of education.

This is where you learn to do your magic, where you gain the tools to reach the top of the pyramid of human consciousness—*self-actualization* or fulfillment of your highest potential, self-realization.

**5. Take the first small steps in front of you.** A primary purpose of government is to take care of its people, so that everyone has food, housing, security, and education. The only way this can be achieved is for governments to work in partnership with their people. But how do we find solutions to the world's problems? Einstein reminds us that *the level of thinking that created the problems is incapable of solving them.* Solutions come from a higher level of thinking—from the model of partnership, built on *respect* for one another. The single key to creating a world that works for all is to work in partnership with *everyone*. It's that simple. Problems are caused by domination and exploitation, with the underlying fear and need to control. Solutions are found by working in partnership, with respect for each other—working together to dream of a world that works for all, taking *one small step at a time.*

**6. Realize the dream by taking committed action.** "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has," said Margaret Mead. When you take the direct path to changing the world for the better, change happens quickly. And the only skills you need are to dream, imagine, read, and write. You don't have to believe in the *magic*—just try these exercises with an open mind and see the amazing results.

*Examine your beliefs about time and money*—and realize that those beliefs are not necessarily true in themselves, but they become true in your experience if you believe them. Once you realize this, you can learn to change beliefs that are not helping you to master time and money.

The tools you use to set in motion the mysterious process of creation are simply your dreams and imagination. All creation starts with a *spiritual impulse*, then becomes a thought, then an emotion. When thought and emotion are focused, physical creation is the result.

You are a *unique creative genius*, capable of realizing your most expansive dreams in life and fulfilling your true purpose, moving up, and helping others move up, the pyramid of consciousness to self-actualization and fulfillment. **PE**

Marc Allen is a seminar leader, entrepreneur, composer, co-founder of New World Library, and author of *The Magical Path* (New World Library). Visit [www.newworldlibrary.com](http://www.newworldlibrary.com) or [www.MarcAllen.com](http://www.MarcAllen.com).

**ACTION:** Realize your financial dreams.

## Wish Lists and Risks

Answer these 10 questions.



by David X Martin

**Y**OU NATURALLY MAKE LISTS. From the time you learn to name things, you make lists of your *likes* and *dislikes*: You like one color, not another. You like this taste, not that one; this shape, not the other.

As you gain experience, you start to list the things you've done, and things you haven't. And those two lists naturally lead you to list *things you'd still like to do*, and *things you can do without*.

Once you list all important things you'd still like to do, you naturally divide that list in two: 1) things you'll likely never do (you see them as pipe dreams), and 2) things you might still do with a little luck and a lot of hard work.

With that last *wish list* in hand, you can weigh risks you must take to achieve your dreams—and risk that you'd regret not having *tried* to achieve them.

That brings us to my list of the 10 questions you need to answer to create a viable *personal risk management strategy*—one that will enable you to reach your goals, and reduce the associated risks.

**1. Do you set goals?** Managing risk is impossible unless you first set goals. Then, by plotting a course from *where you are now* to *where you want to be*, you can identify the risks you must take, and manage them accordingly. If you've never sat down and drawn up a list of things you want to do, now is the time.

**2. Have you put your goals in a specific time frame?** Deciding to arrange your affairs so that you can retire at 65 is one thing if you're 30-years-old, and another thing if you're 62. *Goals are meaningless without a time frame*. The more time you have to reach your goals, the less risk you have to take to do it.

**3. Have you described your approach to risk?** Do you thrive on excitement, or prefer to play things safe? What kind of risks can you take and still sleep well at night? If you can't face risk, you'll have trouble mapping out a strategy that doesn't include antidepressants.

**4. Are your strategies designed with your goals, time frame, and risk approach in mind?** Once you know *what you want*, when you'd like to have it, and can face the risks involved, you can design a *risk management strategy* you can stick with until you reach your goals.

**5. Are your strategies consistent, or do**

*they change constantly?* Once you create a strategy and put it into action, do you stick to it, or change approach often? Conditions may change constantly, making *staying the course* more important.

**6. Do you know what you don't know?** You know what you want, when you want it, and you know the risks you'll have to take to get it. But does your strategy presume that you have all the information you'll ever need, or does it include the unknowns that should be considered when you make your plans?

**7. Is it better to make a bad decision, or make no decision at all?** If you are so worried about making mistakes that you never make any decisions, be aware that deciding to do nothing is a decision—and rarely a good one.

**8. Do you have more than one exit strategy?** Recognizing what you want,

when you want it, and what you'll risk to get it enables you to make plans. But when conditions change and you must change plans, do you have an *exit strategy* or two, so you can *change course quickly*?

**9. Do you try to predict the future, or to create it?** Do you spend hours every day trying to figure out what will happen next, or do you decide what you're going to do next? Make the future—don't just wait for it.

**10. Do you fear risk, or embrace it?** The old phrase *nothing risked, nothing gained* is true today. Those who reach their goals don't just get over their fear of taking risks—they learn to *embrace risk* as the means to an end. PE

David X Martin is founding Chairman of the Investment Company Institute's Risk Committee and author of *The Nature of Risk*. Visit [www.davidxmartin.com](http://www.davidxmartin.com).

**ACTION:** Answer these 10 questions for yourself.

## FINANCIAL • DECISIONS

### Life Planning

Design your own destiny.



by Mary A. Molloy

**T**O SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE'S choices, you need to achieve a proper work/life balance. *Earning a living is hard*. Whether you work for someone else or are your own boss, you face times when *more hours* simply do not translate into *more income*. Even the most dedicated and brilliant person will experience diminishing returns and a loss of productivity unless they can create and maintain a proper work life balance.

Once you see your potential and gain a sense of how to reach your *goals* and *dreams*, you need to tackle the challenges of establishing a proper work life balance head on.

*Your life is most happy and fruitful when you are in balance*. Even if you work very hard at your business, it's crucial that you not neglect your relationships and personal life. You do this best by creating a roadmap to your life—a life plan that helps you take the right steps and avoid the potholes you encounter along the way.

#### Are You Out of Balance?

Having done hundreds of life plans for people of all walks of life, I was able to boil down the most common actions people identify that they need to address in order to restore work/life balance. They can be grouped into four

main areas: Intellectual, Physical, Spiritual and Emotional.

Once you identify the areas that you want to improve in your life so that you achieve the balance you seek, what do you do next?

#### Make Decisions the Smart Way

One powerful technique for *designing your own destiny* is to evaluate the choices you make by using a Ben Franklin *T Chart*. This enables you to get specific and see the forest through the trees.

**Try doing four things:** 1) Write down the problem and the specific option; 2) Identify the specific pros and cons for that option; 3) Identify what you need to know; and 4) Identify the action needed to get you all the information you need to know to make a wise decision.

#### An On-Going Challenge Balancing work-life balance is an ongoing challenge.

As soon as you make one decision, the balance shifts and may force you to adjust in other areas. You get to go from where you are now to where you want to go. Carefully identifying the areas you want to change and using vision and clarity will help you improve your business life and your personal life as well. Create a personal life plan that takes all the important factors of your life into account. PE

Mary A. Molloy is a speaker, life coach, and author of *Design Your Own Destiny* (TRB Press). She co-authored *The Buck Starts Here* with Michael K. Molloy. Call 603-236-4067, email [mary@maryamolloy.com](mailto:mary@maryamolloy.com) or visit [www.maryamolloy.com](http://www.maryamolloy.com).

**ACTION:** Plan and design your own destiny.

# Lessons Learned in Africa

*Engage/empower the next generation.*



by J. Dale Dawson

THE FUTURE OF A HEALTHY, vibrant, and innovative private sector rests in the hands of the next generation. I've seen this truth in action: as a national partner at KPMG, as a leader at a private investment bank, as CEO of a truck parts company, and as CEO of Bridge2Rwanda, an NGO dedicated to fostering education, entrepreneurship, and servant leadership in Rwanda. In this role, I've identified *four lessons from Africa*.

**Lesson 1: It's all about developing people.** Over the past 60 years, more than \$1 trillion in aid to Africa from the West has done little or nothing to reduce poverty, eradicate disease, and improve the wellbeing of people. In Rwanda, which 18 years ago was ravaged by genocide, a different model of development has emerged, de-emphasizing aid and focusing instead on developing a healthy private sector to create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunity wherein individuals have the freedom and motivation to build businesses that provide for themselves and others.

Fostering future leaders matters, because leadership determines the effectiveness of people and organizations. *We must find a way to unleash the ambitions and creativity of people.* Dissatisfaction with employee-development efforts contributes to early job departures by the most desirable young professionals.

*We are creating leadership opportunities in Rwanda*, where the median age is 19. Tony Blair's *Africa Governance Initiative* and my firm *Bridge2Rwanda*, among others, are dedicated to developing the next generation of leaders. The private sector needs to engage and empower young people who can elevate a country—or an organization.

**Lesson 2: Feed the hunger for knowledge and the drive to succeed.** A conference room in a new multipurpose tower in Kigali, capital of Rwanda, was packed to capacity for five days last November with 70 of the most talented, ambitious, and promising financial and accounting professionals in the country. They came together for financial analyst training from New York-based *Training the Street* (with a grant from JPMorgan Chase). *The program was oversubscribed*, showing

the hunger for advanced knowledge in a country that needs to develop capacity among managers. Rwandans value *education as the means to upward mobility* (annual GDP growth of 8 percent has helped to lift a million people out of poverty in the past five years).

In the private sector, ambitious people can be found at every level, including those with the least education. In 1991, I became CEO of TruckPro, a truck parts distribution business in need of a turnaround. Entry-level employees were untrained delivery drivers; they suffered from low morale and high turnover. Yet, several store managers and talented salespeople had emerged out of this unpromising talent pool. They considered it a badge of honor to have endured such a tough rise up the



ranks with no training or development, and they weren't about to change the rules to make it easier for anyone else.

What those managers failed to see, however, was our drivers had the most face-to-face contact with customers, and yet they lacked the knowledge to address customer needs. When I initiated training for delivery drivers, my managers pushed back, saying it was a waste of time. Eventually I forced the issue by mandating that they couldn't pay drivers less than \$10 an hour (twice the minimum wage at the time). That forced the managers to recruit more capable people and develop them. Not surprisingly, sales and profitability improved, and the company grew.

**The hunger to learn and the drive to succeed exist everywhere.** Organizations that provide opportunities will reap the benefits for years to come.

**Lesson 3: Identify the social impact.** Companies are taking *corporate social responsibility* seriously these days—not because of the watchdogs and critics, but in response to the demands of

employees and customers. Among employees, the younger generation wants to contribute their time and talent to more than the bottom line—they need to know that what they do makes a difference. Use this motivation to create more engaged, productive employees.

At Bridge2Rwanda, we are blessed with *borrowed talent* from the United States: bright graduates from high-caliber universities and young professionals who left promising careers to devote a few years of their lives to a bigger purpose—helping to eradicate poverty by fostering private sector development in Rwanda. The same spirit can be found in corporate America, even on Wall Street where alliances with organizations such as *Teach For America* help recruit desirable young employees.

**Commitment to serve a higher purpose also attracts consumers** who seek products and companies with a social impact. *Corporate social responsibility* is becoming integrated with marketing and branding functions. The more companies can tap into *intrinsic rewards*, the more they can align corporate goals with socially responsible ones.

**Lesson 4: Make a difference for the many by focusing on the few.** I'm often asked how a small NGO organization can make a difference in Rwanda: a tiny country with a population of 11 million. The answer is by *focusing on the few who can do more for the many*. As Margaret Mead observed, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

In Rwanda, *the few* include the country's 325 Presidential Scholars with the highest scores on national examinations and the 40 or so Bridge2Rwanda scholars with proven academic potential. These intelligent and motivated young people are being groomed for admission to U.S. universities on scholarship in fields such as engineering, IT, science, and business. When they return to Rwanda, they'll make a big difference.

To spark innovation and change, identify your superior talent. Focus time, attention, and resources on a small group of the most talented. Their motivation needs to be channeled in ways that can make a difference for the many.

What moves the needle, socially and organizationally, is development of young talent. Identify top young performers who have a vision and give them opportunities to grow. PE

J. Dale Dawson is founder and CEO of Bridge2Rwanda. Visit [www.bridge2rwanda.org](http://www.bridge2rwanda.org).

**ACTION:** Apply these lessons in your service.

## Savor the Holidays

Seven tips for staying sane.



by Marla Tomazin

**Y**EAR-END HOLIDAYS ARE A hectic time. You rush around, trying to fit in many events, activities, and responsibilities. Although you look forward to this special season, you often stretch yourself too thin. You need to take care of *yourself*—as well as taking care of everyone else—to avoid becoming exhausted, overwhelmed, or sick. With planning and prioritizing, you can enjoy and cherish things most important to you without having to run on fumes to make it through New Year's Eve!

When you decide to have *yourself* a merry little Christmas, you'll make more memories to cherish, be a more valuable help to your family, and enter the new year on a roll. So, take these *seven take-care-of-you tips*:

**1. Make a list and check it twice.**

Since you can focus only on one or two big goals at a time, decide what is most important to you this season, and prioritize those things. If spending time with your family is at the top of your list, put them first and make sure that other things remain on the back burner. Or if eating well and guarding your health is a primary goal, plan a strategy so that you won't be blindsided by bounty.

**2. Give yourself the gift of health.**

When you're busy and stressed, it's easy to become run down. It's also cold and flu season—so take care of your physical needs. Get in some light exercise, at least a short walk a few days a week. Drink lots of water, eat healthy foods, avoid gorging on treats, and get enough sleep so you can enter the New Year healthy. You won't have to start over January 2<sup>nd</sup> and make new *lose weight and live healthier* resolutions.

**3. Go on a date—with yourself.** Even when it comes to family and friends, you can have too much of a good thing. To ensure you don't become socially drained, do something *by yourself* every now and then. When you unwind and take a breather, your perspective will clear and stress becomes manageable.

**4. Plan ahead.** To avoid being overwhelmed and overbooked or caught by surprise by the holidays, look at your calendar now. Schedule social engagements when you become aware of them. Give yourself time to fulfill responsibilities so that you aren't frantically gluing

tinsel on your daughter's pageant costume at 2 a.m. Then you can *enjoy* seasonal events instead of just *survive* them.

**5. Let yourself off the hook, and be okay with that.** You'll never have a picture-perfect holiday season. To save your sanity, realize that you might forget to buy a gift for Great-Aunt Maude, that the dog might break a few ornaments, and that you can't make all the recipes you've collected. Keep focused on who and what's important. You'll be *less tense and harried—and more resilient!*

**6. Say no.** You likely have trouble saying *no*: You don't want to let others down, or be seen as weak, or refuse. However, until you say *no* when you need to, you'll never lead your own life.

Decide *ahead of time* what's most important to you and prioritize those things. Then feel okay about saying *no* to the rest.

**7. Give yourself a gift (or two).** As you choose presents for your spouse, kids, and friends, don't forget yourself! It's both okay and healthy to invest in yourself. You might get a pedicure or a plush new robe, or even buy that fabulous dress and wear it to your parties.

By knowing what you find most meaningful and by valuing your own health and sanity, you'll find that this is *the most wonderful time of the year!* **PE**

*Marla Tomazin is a Certified Image Consultant in the fashion industry. Visit [www.marlatomazin.com](http://www.marlatomazin.com).*

**ACTION:** Do yourself some service this season.

## SERVICE • LISTENING

### Creative Listening

How to make it not about you.



by Sheila Murphy

**M**Y FATHER WAS A demanding teacher.

Before I recognized my aspirations to follow his footsteps, he guided me. At one stage I admitted that I had difficulty remembering people's names. His words, though harsh, gave me a resounding (and repeated) wake-up call. "If you don't remember someone's name, it is because you are thinking of *yourself*."

His comment stung me, but I knew that he was right. His advice revealed to me a simple, sure-fire approach that I could implement: *Think about the other person. Think hard. Try to gain understanding of the person's message, feelings, and situation.* In effect, I *changed my major from me to them.*



#### Five Easy Steps

Over the years, I've learned the value of *thinking about the other person*. And thinking about *the other* becomes more rewarding. It grows into a comfortable habit. There is so much to learn by simply paying attention to another person, rather than growing increasingly antsy about your own next lines. To achieve this, take these *five simple steps*:

**1. Treat the other person's message as new information.** Don't try to *short cut* what is being said into something you've already heard. Avoid trying to determine reasons behind the message. Simply listen and absorb it (gain a clear sense of

the message, grasp it accurately, and resolve not to contest it).

**2. Remain undeterred by peripheral distractions.** Ignore any distractions in the room. If necessary, move to a different location, where you find it easier to focus and understand.

**3. Hold yourself accountable for gaining a clear view of what is said.** Never approach the message with skepticism or cynicism. Give a fair hearing, *without argumentative response*. Your task at this point is to hear the points, and repeat them accurately.

**4. Check with the other person for your complete understanding.** Say, "Let me make sure I understand what you have shared with me." Then put the

message in your own, neutral words. Do not separate yourself from the person or message. Simply *restate* it and *ask*, "Do I have that correct?"

**5. Do not think about yourself.** The conversation is *not* about you. It's *their conversation*. It's *their opportunity* to let you know something important from *their perspective*.

**Listening creatively is an act of genius.**

When you are a skilled listener, you gain *creative new perspectives* on issues, challenges, and possible solutions.

As you hear new information, *integrate it*. Hone your capacity for shifting analysis and designing methods of performance improvement. Having the flexibility to shift thinking can shift an entire equation, versus demonstrating a needlessly obdurate view.

The best leaders are the best and most compassionate perceivers. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Think about the other person.



# GOAL GETTERS



**Relationships are ruined every day because of lies. The most damaging lies are those you tell yourself.**

While it may seem obvious that *personal well-being* is largely based on *self-determination*, you may forget that you have the power to change—and tell yourself lies that impede your progress. The best resource you have in affecting change in your life is yourself.

No one wakes up and says, “I want a miserable, unfulfilled and unhealthy life.” What then prompts people to continue dysfunctional and toxic, limiting, self-destructive behaviors? Bring this self-sabotaging behavior to the surface through a journey of self-discovery and self-improvement. You risk and lose much when you pretend not to know what you know, in fact, is true. To be truly happy and successful, you’ve got to stop pretending—stop lying to yourself.

—Cathy Holloway Hill, [www.chollowayhill.com](http://www.chollowayhill.com)



**While you are still young, spend only on the things that you need and save money for your future.**

You made and earn money from hard work. That is why you should be *your own boss when it comes to managing your money*. Practice some simple ways to save for your future and retirement. *Saving* means *setting aside your money for later use*. It takes time, effort, determination, and sacrifice for you to save money from your earnings. And if you are really thinking of ways to save for your retirement, you should have a clear vision where to put your money that will benefit you most in the long run.

**Be a wise spender.** One way for you to save is to *use cash* for everything you need so that you can control what you want to spend and avoid getting yourself into debt. Don’t use credit cards, it will only put you into trouble, charging you high interest rates that will lead you to debt. Protecting your life with an insurance policy is another way for you to save for retirement. While you are still working and earning, think of

ways to protect yourself, like with a pension life insurance policy. Hard work is not enough for you to earn money and to be secured in life.

What you planted yesterday will surely reap good harvest in the future. So avoid spending for unnecessary expenses and sacrifice paying for this in exchange for good rewards for your financial future. Set aside an emergency fund from your monthly earnings so that by the time you retire, you will have a budget that is already set aside for your medical needs and other financial expenses for your old age.

Now that you know some ways to save for retirement, remember to first start with a budget and realize how much money you will set aside for this savings that is within your limits.

—Kris Miller, [readyforretirement.com](http://readyforretirement.com)



**The problem with most presentations is turning information into communication.** Connecting with people to push them to act or to decide takes a very different mindset and skill than doling out data.

Speaking with confidence before a group involves six key steps: 1) Analyze your audience and determine your purpose; 2) Research and collect your information; 3) Organize your ideas and information; 4) Add the “finishing touches” to the content and structure; 5) Prepare any supporting visuals; and 6) Practice your delivery, including interactivity and questions and answers.

Often speakers start with Step 5. Then with a deadline looming large, they try to mold the audience and the rest of the content around the visuals. Practice happens only in their head with a mental walk-through before they *wing it* for real before a group that can make or break their career—or give input to crucial decisions or projects. Bad move.

The best approach: Consider your audience first—their needs, knowledge, and interests—and let that be the driver of all else.

—Diana Booher, [www.Booher.com](http://www.Booher.com)

# PersonalCOACH



## Toughest Decisions

*Deal with what not to do.*

by John Mariotti

**YOU MIGHT THINK THE TOUGHEST DECISIONS** are about what to do and in what order. Yes, you must make a plan, then execute that plan. But the toughest decisions you must make is what NOT to do, what NOT to work on, which things NOT to pursue. There is never enough time, money or talent to do everything. Priorities demand that tough, smart choices be made about where to spend three scarce, valuable resources: time, money and talent. When there is not enough time to do everything the plan called for, hoped for and planned on—what do you stop doing? What do you sacrifice for the greater good?

It’s easy to say *work on what matters most*, but sometimes all of *what matters most* can’t be achieved with available resources. Thus, *setting priorities* and *maintaining focus* are critical. When there are many moving parts and activity, it’s easy to confuse *action* with *results*, and lose focus on what is most important.

A common mistake is to assign the best people to work on pressing problems. That’s a bad idea. As Peter Drucker pointed out: “*The job of a manager is to utilize the best resources (usually people) on the greatest opportunities.*” No amount of problem solving exploits the big opportunities. The problems may get fixed, but scarce resources are consumed.

The worst decisions are ones that create wasteful, insidious complexity. *Proliferation*—spreading across too many fronts, into too many areas—is a mistake usually made with the best of intentions. Complexity seldom manifests itself until the mistakes that created it are in the past, and it has spread like a mutant virus, entangling people and wasting resources. Progress might be made on many fronts, but without achieving key objectives. Complexity can so entangle the organization that progress turns negative. Unintended consequences keep popping up, each requiring its own remediation, wasting more time and money—and talent. Choose the right priorities, and maintain focus on the goals, and the right path to achieving them, while deciding wisely what NOT to do, what temptations to resist, while avoiding crippling complexity.

Decisions about what to do, how to do it, what not to do, are vital, but nothing happens until action is taken on those decisions. So, prioritize, focus, decide, and take action. **PE**

John L. Mariotti is CEO of The Enterprise Group. Visit [www.shape-shifters.com](http://www.shape-shifters.com).

**ACTION:** Make the tough decisions.

## Religion Meets Jediism

The mix makes both much stronger.



by Eli Just

FOR CENTURIES, RELIGION has influenced culture—visual arts, music, theater, and architecture. Where would society be without the Gutenberg printing press, created to make the Bible available to everyone? The press led to exponential growth in European literacy, kick-starting future intellectual discovery and accelerating the progress of civilization.

Gutenberg's press also kindled the Protestant Reformation. The combination of technology and culture led to a new understanding of Christianity, fragmenting the continental reach of the Vatican, an institution that has mastered the use of *branding via artistic expression*. Culture and religion have always had a symbiotic relationship, promoting both purposes in a unified form.

The cultural-religious connection's newest evolution is *Jediism*, a religious movement made official in 2000, based on the ideas of characters in the *Star Wars* film series. Just as Protestantism did not destroy Christianity, neither will *The Force*—a religious tenet in *Jediism*—steal traditional religions' thunder. However, it may make religion again relevant to more than just a handful of geeks.

Organized religion is trending downward: Since the 1970s, Americans' confidence in organized religion has steadily decreased. This year, the trend has hit its lowest point; only 44 percent of Americans have *great confidence* in organized religion. While many young people identify less with the denominations they are born into, most teens and 20-somethings consider themselves *spiritual*.

There's a growing market of young and spiritual people who are hungry for direction. Is *Jediism* the answer? *Jediism* incorporates ideas from Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Stoicism, and Shintoism. Although the new religion is mostly based on George Lucas' vision, there is no founder or central structure.

A common belief in *Jediism* is the *Jedi Code*: *There is no emotion; there is peace. There is no ignorance; there is knowledge. There is no passion; there is serenity. There is no chaos; there is harmony. There is no death; there is The Force.*

More people are self-identifying as *nondenominational* (one in five Americans check *nothing in particular*, or *atheist* or *agnostic*, for *religious belief*, the highest

percentage of *nonreligious people* ever surveyed in this country).

Just as *culture* and *artistic expression* have always informed *religion*, it's time for religious people to embrace how *science* informs our understanding of the universe. Unlike the great astronomer Carl Sagan, who said religious and scientific disagreements can be solved by understanding each as "*non-overlapping magisterial*"—many believe religion, culture and science are three peas in the same pod. They are three essential, distinctive yet related fields to the same end, which is *the struggle to grasp truth*.

Authorities on both sides are dipping their toes in the water with oddball, stranger-than-fiction scientific posits such as *String Theory*, which says that there are more dimensions to reality

than we can perceive, and that there may be activity from another universe occurring right in front of us, but we are not *tuned in* for those dimensions. We may have a *doppelganger* living next to us, in a parallel universe. In comparison with *Jediism*, which is the stranger belief? I'm reminded of a J.B.S. Haldane quote: "My suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we *can* suppose. I suspect that there are more things in heaven and earth that are dreamed of, or can be dreamed of, in any philosophy."

Pop culture's cross-pollination with traditional faith makes both stronger. PE

*Eli Just is the author of several books including the popular Manny Jones series of Supernatural thrillers and The Eddy. Visit [www.elijust.net](http://www.elijust.net).*

**ACTION:** *Keep the faith and use the force.*

## Building Character

Prepare teens for challenges.



by James G. Wellborn

PARENTS TODAY CONTEND not only with yesterday's worries—drug abuse, bullying, teenage sex, delinquency—but new challenges. The digital age has introduced adult predators and other online hazards, and body-altering decorating, such as tattoos and piercings.

Teenage is a unique, in-between period from childhood to adulthood, and problems during this time are normal. But teens still require guidance, encouragement and good ideas to see them through to adulthood.

A universally admired trait, spanning all cultures, religion and philosophy, is *compassion*. A truly compassionate teen will have a host of other positive qualities, including

patience, understanding, sensitivity, tolerance, and intuition. Parents can encourage compassion in six ways:

**1. Model it.** Compassion is largely learned, so be aware of how you act around your children. How did you respond to the request for money from that panhandler? What comment did you make behind his back, in the presence of your kid? What did you say about the *idiot driver* who just cut you off in traffic? Teens watch and listen.

**2. Notice it.** Point out examples of compassion that occur around you. It comes in many forms. Relevant to our

daily lives are the people who quietly, and without recognition, help others in need, including volunteers. Make a game of identifying instances of compassionate deeds you've witnessed.

**3. Teach it.** Provide direct instruction on how your teen needs to think and act in order to develop compassion. One key component is empathy. If your teens can't see things from another's perspective, they can't appreciate what that person is going through. Help them learn to *walk a mile in their shoes*.

**4. Anticipate it.** Character can be fostered by projecting moral strength into their future. In this way, you will be subtly shaping the adult they are working to become. Say things like: "By the time you're an adult, you will be such a person of strong *character*."

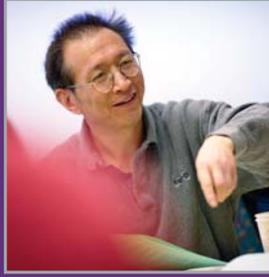
**5. Guilt it.** A personal value system serves as a means of accountability to yourself (family and community). It begins with the value system parents promote in their kids. If they fulfill the promise of personal values, it is a source of justifiable pride. Violating personal values should result in guilt for not doing what's right and shame for letting other people down.

**6. Repeat it.** Find opportunities to work *character issues* into conversations. Using all six ways, you can work *character* into situations in myriad ways. You need to mention *character* so often—at least once every couple of days—and in so many different forms that they are *sick of hearing about it* by the time they graduate from high school. PE

*Jim Wellborn, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and author of Raising Teens in the 21st Century: A Practical Guide to Effective Parenting. Visit [www.drjameswellborn.com](http://www.drjameswellborn.com).*

**ACTION:** *Build character in your children.*

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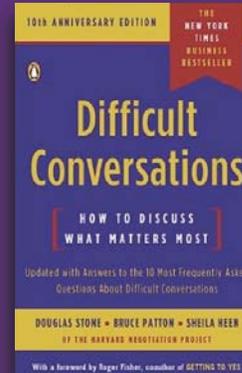
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