

# Personal Excellence

The Magazine of Personal Leadership

www.LeaderExcel.com

August 2010

Cheryl Richardson  
Life Coach

**The Little  
Things**

**Be Rich  
in Purpose**

**Overgiving Club  
Extreme Self-Care**



*"Personal Excellence is the only reading you'll need to do for continual self-improvement both personally and professionally!"*

—Sharlene Hawkes, Former Miss America, award-winning ESPN broadcaster

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Personal Excellence

August 2010

The Magazine of Life Leadership

INSPIRATIONAL • PURPOSE

# Be Rich in Purpose

You will then have energy.

by Richard J. Leider

IDENTIFYING YOUR PURPOSE WILL ENABLE YOU TO lead a richer life.

I remember when I first became clear about my purpose. I was in Africa, laboring up Mount Kilimanjaro with a group of 12 trekkers on one of my wilderness "inventures." We started discussing: "When have we been really happy?" We talked about the big events: marriages, births of children, promotions.

That evening, before the final, freezing ascent to 19,360 feet, we came up with a new way to frame the question: "When did you last feel truly alive?"

At that moment, most of us felt half dead from the affects of altitude and exhaustion. Yet, I blurted, "I know exactly the last time—*now!* This is it. I've never felt so alive!" It wasn't just about climbing the mountain, reaching the summit or having a safari adventure. When we were up there together, with no one to help but ourselves, I felt *as alive as a soul can feel*. I felt on the edge!

**Chasing that feeling of aliveness is what life is about.** And the feeling can come from exploring your edges in many areas—mind, body, emotions, and spirit.

If you feel urgency to clarify what's meaningful to you and make clear choices today—if you've had it with spending your precious time and energy on your way to somewhere else—it's *time to start living your dreams*.

Living a *more meaningful life* involves making decisions about what's essential. It boils down to where you draw the boundaries on two questions: "When do you truly feel alive?" and "How much is enough?" Knowing the

answers will help you bring your lifestyle and workstyle into balance. It can also be a key to personal fulfillment—to a life that is simpler, less cluttered, yet *rich with purpose and meaning*.

**People who have lifestyles rich in purpose have six things:** 1) a purpose larger than their own needs, wants and desires—a sense of how their lives and work fit into the larger scheme of things; 2) an internal compass which keeps them *truing* to their purpose; 3) clear boundaries around their two most precious currencies—time and money; 4) a sense of their potential talents, the limits of which have never been tested; 5) adaptability when faced with change—they simply handle it; and 6) a feeling of the presence of God within. You'd likely make a job change or take a pay cut in exchange for meaningful work. So, why aren't you living this way, creating a lifestyle *rich in purpose*?



Change happens for two reasons: 1) you confront a crisis, or 2) you see that a different way of life is more fulfilling than your present one.

The latter can happen quickly by meeting *evolutionaries*—inspiring people who show you the beauty of simpler, creative ways of living.

**The first step is to know what you want and why you want it.** Purpose is the deeper meaning you give to life, work and relationships. It is the spiritual core, and it helps you to value and to *find the aliveness in all of life's experiences*.

Often a major life change leads you to identify or rediscover your purpose. *A purpose is something you discover*. It's already there. You've lived your life by it, perhaps without realizing it. Although when you do name it, you will

### INSIDE

DAVID ALLEN <i>Be Productive</i> .....3	LAURA SCHLESSINGER <i>True Fulfillment</i> .....8	JOHN GRUBBS <i>Hunger Pains</i> .....12
JACQUELINE WALES <i>Identify Your Personality</i> .....4	SUE KNIGHT <i>Circle of Excellence</i> .....8	JOHN GRAHAM <i>Stick Your Neck Out</i> .....13
SHIRLEY DESAI <i>Seven Connections</i> .....4	ERIC MAISEL <i>Productive Obsessions</i> .....9	JAMES MAPES <i>Support Network</i> .....14
FRED BRODER <i>The Little Things</i> .....5	JOHN BAKER <i>Creative Thinking</i> .....10	JANET PFEIFFER <i>Anger Is a Choice</i> .....14
LANCE ARMSTRONG <i>I Dare You</i> .....6	HUBERT RAMPERSAD <i>Authentic Brand</i> .....10	FREEMAN MICHAELS <i>Self-defeating Behaviors</i> .....15
JIM LOEHR <i>Manage Your Energy</i> .....6	JEFFREY HULL <i>Recession Lessons</i> .....11	ALAN COHEN <i>Who Are You?</i> .....16
CHERYL RICHARDSON <i>Overtgiving Club</i> .....7	PATTI FRALIX <i>Your Life</i> .....12	JOAN MARQUES <i>Peace of Mind</i> .....16

know that you've "known" it all along. It's your lodestar, your personal compass of truth. It tells you whether you're living your life "on purpose" or not.

**A purpose is not a goal.** A goal can be reached. Purposes can be used for choosing goals, but a purpose is never achieved—it is continually expressed in each moment that you are "on purpose." Use your purpose to set your course in life. Without a clear sense of purpose, you are at the mercy of the outside world. You feel lost or out of control. Purpose helps you stay on course and stay clear about how you can make a difference. It can also make passage through a major transition experience easier.

## Discovering Your Purpose

To get a clearer sense of your life purpose, take four steps:

**1. Make a list of your talents.** Identify three talents important to you and write them down in one or two words. "Loving, caring, teaching, listening, creating." Ask friends for suggestions. For example, "My three most important talents are my listening, my creativity, and clear speaking."

**2. Jot down your interests, passions or special knowledges.** What do you obsess about, daydream about, wish you had more time to put energy into? What needs doing that you'd like to put your talents to work on? What are the main areas in which you'd like to invest your talents? For example, "My passion or focus is on the community, my work, family, church, or in helping people to discover their purpose in life."

**3. Think about "environments" that best bring out your talents and interests.** In what work and life situations are you most comfortable expressing your talents? For example, "I most often express my talents and interests in small groups, large groups, as part of a team, alone, in nature, in a studio."

**4. Now combine your answers to questions 1, 2 and 3 to make a complete sentence.** For example: "My purpose in life is . . . (answer to Q1) "to use my listening, my creativity and my clear speaking" (answer to Q2) "to help people discover their purpose" (answer to Q3). A first draft of your purpose statement could be, *My purpose in life is to use my listening, creativity, and clear speaking to help people discover their purpose and to work in a way that reflects my solitary nature.*

My purpose has evolved to two simple statements: "To help people know, feel and express their essence." "To make a real difference in one person's life every day."

## Use the Purpose Formula

Here is the *Purpose Formula*: SUM (Talents + Passions + Environments) X Vision = Lifestyle Rich In Purpose.

- **Your talents.** Skills that you enjoy expressing; abilities that come naturally, effortlessly and spontaneously; abilities you can't remember learning because you've been doing them effortlessly for so long.
- **Your passions.** Problems you strongly feel need solving; issues that you'd love to be more involved in; areas you obsess about or seek to learn more about; activities that reflect deep and consistent interests.
- **Your preferred environment.** What environment would make it easiest or more comfortable for you to express your talents and passions? All work situations are values environments that are either good or bad fits for your values, pace and style preferences. A good career fit demands *values congruence*.
- **Your vision.** How do you see yourself putting it all together? Lifestyle is an idealized image of how you see yourself living and working. A lifestyle rich in purpose reflects integration between who you are and what you're doing. People who are "on purpose" like what they do and where they are doing it. Their lifestyle fits their idealized image (or vision) of themselves.



**State your purpose in present tense.** That way it's always current. You may find that you've already been living your purpose. It helps to have *The Purpose Formula* at the forefront of your mind so that the stresses make more sense and can be connected to insights and healthy choices.

Your talents and interests are indicators of purpose—like compass readings. Use these guideposts to organize your time and structure your life.

## Taking It in Stages

Purpose evolves as interests and experiences change. Often you'll follow one purpose direction (or lifestyle) until you've fully explored it, then shift to another focus. These changes are triggered by age and by continual discovery of who you are. It is part of the process of growth and wisdom to discover new "chambers" and find new insights.

As you move through different ages and stages, the questions that dominate your growth and happiness evolve. The old chamber feels cramped and lacks room to stretch. Making a living is one thing. Making a lifestyle rich in purpose is another. When you know your purpose, it's easier to draw boundaries and choose goals.

**The acid test of any life is simply, "Did I fulfill my purpose?"** To live a lifestyle rich in purpose, act on just one purposeful activity every day, you will eventually discover the golden thread that runs through your life—your purpose. **PE**



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**ACTION: Identify and live your life purpose.**

## Volume 15 Issue 8

*Personal Excellence* is published monthly by Executive Excellence Publishing, LLC (dba Leadership Excellence), 1806 North 1120 West, Provo, UT 84604.

**Editorial Purpose:** Our mission is to promote personal and professional development based on constructive values, sound ethics, and timeless principles.

**Basic Annual Rate:**  
US \$59 one year (12 issues)  
US \$119 two years (24 issues)

**Corporate Bulk Rates**  
Call 1-877-250-1983 for pricing  
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Permission PDF: US \$50

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**Customer Service/Circulation:**  
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**Internet Address:** [www.LeaderExcel.com](http://www.LeaderExcel.com)

**Executive Excellence Publishing**  
Ken Shelton, CEO, Editor-in-Chief  
John Courtright, Circulation Manager

**Marketing Offices:**  
**Leadership Excellence**  
1806 North 1120 West  
Provo, UT 84604  
1-877-250-1983  
1-801-375-4060

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# Be Productive

Gain an extra hour a day.



by David Allen

**Y**OU CAN ACHIEVE STRESS-free efficiency and productivity and get things done with less effort by staying focused on both the *big picture* and *important details*.

Stop obsessing over the sky-is-falling doom and gloom. Get a grip. The only way to relax is to deal with what your attention is wrapped around. When you're stressed out, overwhelmed, upset, and reactive, you can't focus—and focus is the key to productivity.

**Obey the two-minute rule.** Adhering to this rule adds six months to your life. If the next action takes less than two minutes, do it straight-away. When you're overwhelmed, blitz through several two-minute actions, rapidly regaining control. If your next action depends on someone else's action, it goes on a "waiting for" list. If actions have more than one step, call them "projects." All projects should have at least one associated action. If you lack time or inclination to pursue them this year, they go on a list called, "someday maybe."

**Make information accessible.** Overhaul your filing system. Files should be swivel distance from your desk. Forget fancy categories and subdivisions. You need an A to Z reference system using folders and a labeller. Something mystical happens when you label files, folders and other things. An in-basket enables you to corral stuff so your brain can focus on one thing at a time. But it is not all just about transforming your life through labels and lists—it is what lists get you to focus on. You're getting things done because you're seeing them done. You are in control, relaxed, and inspired.

**Review regularly.** The *weekly review* captures fine details of what you need to do. Once a week, schedule a weekly review, perhaps two hours on Friday, although you might do this midweek or on the weekend. Try playing background music while you do this.

**Go on vacation with a clear conscience and a clear desk.** You tend to feel best about your job one week before a holiday because you're clearing up, cleaning up, clarifying, identifying things that would fall apart if you didn't handle them, renegotiating all

your agreements with key people in your life. I suggest you do that once a week. If you want the freedom to have fun, why reserve that for once a year?

## Ten-Step Weekly Discipline

**Weekly, work through these 10 steps:**

1. **Collect your loose papers.** Round up all scraps of paper—business cards, receipts, meeting notes—and put them in your in-tray.

2. **Process your in-basket.** Pick each item out of your in-tray in turn and make quick decisions. Is it actionable? If so, what's the next action? If not, is it something you want to keep? Then file it in the relevant list.

3. **Look over your calendar for outstanding action items** and bring them



forward if they are still important.

4. **Write down new projects,** action items, "waiting for" items.

5. **Review outcome lists.** Evaluate the status of each project, goal and outcome.

6. **Review "next action" lists.** Tick off each completed action. Look for reminders of further actions.

7. **Browse through work in progress** and update lists of new actions, completions and "waiting for" items.

8. **Review "someday maybe" lists,** looking for any projects that have become active and transfer them to the projects list. Delete any dead items.

9. **Review "waiting for" lists.** Record any follow-up actions. Check them off as you complete them.

10. **Be creative and courageous.** Add to your system any new, wonderful, harebrained, thought-provoking, risk-taking ideas that have occurred to you.

**Once you get used to this weekly discipline of organizing yourself, you have no trouble living that way.** The key is getting into the habit of once a week reviewing every loose end, every

commitment, to think about what you need to do and see everything you might have missed. Think into the future to plan ahead. Keep your eye on the details as well as the big picture.

When you do, things will occur to you—*that reminds me I ought to do so-and-so.*

**Then write it down.** Don't try to keep your list of *things to do* in your head. The problem is that as soon as you get about 10 things in your head, you lose perspective—and with it any thoughts of strategy or tactics. You need to keep everything in some objectively reviewable form outside of your head.

**Getting your act together will gain you one hour a day.** Most of this gain will come from dealing with matters as soon as they arise—for instance, answering an e-mail when it arrives rather than looking at it, putting it off, then having to deal with it later. Sorting out the big stuff will free your mind, your psychic RAM, to be creative because you stop the little nagging things from getting in the way.

**Now tie up loose ends on less-urgent matters.** Everybody has a backlog of to-do items. Shake out that list and go after the most strategic items—which ones take the least amount of effort? Is there anything you'll have to do at some point anyway? Reevaluate and potentially renegotiate your agreements with yourself, and with other people. Get with your key partners in work and in life and think hard about what matters—and what doesn't matter.

**You have more to do than you can possibly do. You just need to feel good about your choices.** You can only feel good about what you are not doing when you know what you're not doing. Creating an organizing system that captures the whims of the *outer environment* helps you do the best you can with what you've got by controlling your *inner environment*. Every decision to act is an intuitive one. The challenge is to migrate from *hoping it is the right choice to trusting that it's the right choice.*

I suggest that you **choose actions in the moment based on four criteria:** context, time, energy and priority. *Context* refers to the location, setting, and the resources available. The *time* and *energy* available determines the kind of work you're willing and able to do. And then *priority* refers to *What is the best thing for me to be doing now?* PE

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**ACTION:** Gain an extra hour a day.

## Identify Your Personality

### Make strengths work for you.



by Jacqueline Wales

**I**N 15 SECONDS, I CAN READ your personality and tell you what your skills, strengths and weaknesses are—and how to make your strengths work for you so you can bridge the gap between fear and opportunity and reach your full potential.

Reading personalities is an art form, a potent way of meaningfully connecting with people, and a powerful way to identify your greatest strengths and your weaknesses.

Once you identify your personality, you can read the personalities of other people and connect with them in a way you never thought possible.

**Try this simple exercise:** think about what shape resonates with you the strongest—a cube, pyramid, wavy line, or ball. What would be your first choice? What's your second choice? List the four shapes in the order that most appeals to you.

### What is Your Personality?

After completing this exercise, you can identify your personality type.

**The cube** is the *Systems Person*. You are an analytical person who likes to cross the T's and dot the I's. Your greatest strength is your ability to think things through, analyze in detail and avoid fatal mistakes. But your greatest weakness because you can be held back when you analyze too much. You tend to hesitate in making decisions until you have all the facts, and you refuse to take risks or act spontaneously without the facts. Making mistakes is not an option, so you limit the opportunities that come your way. You are task driven, and need to be less picky with other people so you can relax and enjoy the view.

**The pyramid** is the *Results Person*. You are driven to succeed. Results are important, and reaching your goals is number one. You want to move as quickly as possible; sometimes you push too hard and jump into the action too fast without having all the facts. This can slow you down. Try to not be so pushy. Being a control freak may help you succeed, but it won't make you the most popular person around. Learn to slow down and inhale the fresh air.

Give people more room to come on board and learn how to have more fun.

**The wavy line** is the *Idea Person*. You have great energy, excitement, and enthusiasm for life. You have a million ideas, but you rarely follow-through on them because you don't focus long enough to figure out what will work. Before you know it, you're dancing onto the next idea. Keeping up with you is hard. You need to slow down, pay attention to the details, and focus on the task at hand to get more done.

**The ball** is the *People Pleaser*. You just want to make people happy and will quickly raise your hand when someone needs help. However, your ability to take care of others doesn't extend to yourself. You quickly take on more than you can handle, which builds resentment. You are stubborn and generate a

great deal of pride, which stops you from sharing your feelings meaningfully. You need to move out of passive mode and into action so you can say *No* and mean it. Worry less about what other people do and think, and work more on the tasks at hand.

**Learn how to use your greatest strengths to overcome your greatest weakness so you can achieve what you want in life.** By analyzing your personality, you can learn how to identify the different personalities you associate with daily. This will help you connect with others and build deeper, more meaningful and profitable relationships. **PE**

*Jacqueline Wales, author of The Fearless Factor, helps you reach your potential. Visit [www.thefearfactor.com](http://www.thefearfactor.com) for her eBook Finding Success Through Understanding Personalities.*

**ACTION:** Make your strengths work for you.

## Seven Connections

### Making balanced decisions.



by Shirley Desai

**W**HAT CONSTITUTES A good decision? The best decisions in my life are ones that open me up to transformation and positive changes—decisions such as going to business school, marrying my husband, reading *Autobiography of a Yogi*, joining the local symphony as a violinist, and writing *The 7 Connections to Happiness and Harmony*.

One big obstacle to transformation is not knowing what is wrong, or right, with your life, or that you need transformation in your life.

This reminds me of a person with chronic back pain who becomes so accustomed to putting up with it that he never thinks about trying remedies to alleviate it. This physical pain is analogous to emotional pain and stress that many people endure.

The wisdom of *the seven chakras* offers us a fresh canvas for understanding our obstacles and our unique capabilities in making shifts to remedy pain and problems. The chakras are energy or intelligence centers that enable us to access information from the most physical aspects of fear and safety to the highest levels of spiritual ecstasy.

The *Seven Chakra Model* addresses the invisible yet powerful force of energy centers. It helps me see what's broken in my life and how to awaken my

higher faculties and talents. The chakras, in descending order, are: 7) *Vision and Higher Purpose (Crown)*; 6) *Analysis and Intuition*; 5) *Creativity and Self-Expression*; 4) *Love and Truth (Heart)*; 3) *Ego and Values*; 2) *Excitement, Pleasure and Change*; and 1) *Safety and Fear (Root)*.

The *lower chakras* (1 to 3) focus on the physical aspects of life governing safety, physical pleasure, and self-worth. When you feel unbalanced in these areas, it makes life unstable and inharmonious. The *higher chakras* (4 to 7) are focused on the soul's higher capabilities of *love, creativity, intuition, and spiritual purpose*. These centers require work and patience to cultivate, but they help you feel and experience greater joy and happiness.

Happiness and joy are experiences that can grow. You're not rationed a certain amount of happiness. You can experience greater happiness as you start engaging the *higher chakras* in your life. Still, your *lower chakras* need to be balanced. You need to get your internal house in order first, to embrace real joy and become fulfilled.

**The first key step is to unclog blockages or mental traps.** These traps can be fears (Chakra 1) or memories of past bad experiences; these traps can also be the ego and the importance you attach to your sense of self. Isolate areas that can be improved for more rewarding and fulfilling life experiences. As you remove these blockages, you open yourself up to greater enjoyment. **PE**

*Shirley Desai is author of The 7 Connections to Happiness and Harmony: Decision Making Made Easy With Yoga's 7 Chakras. Visit [www.shirleydesai.com](http://www.shirleydesai.com).*

**ACTION:** Make wiser decisions.



# The Little Things

*It's all about your socks.*



by Fred Broder

I'M NOT INTO PIE-IN-THE-SKY self-help, and so I wrote a practical book, *Does Your Life Need A Laxative?*, that can help you change your life for the better—improve your attitude, relationships, the decisions you make and the actions you take every day. Nothing new has come down from Mt. Sinai lately. It's the common sense things we've learned but don't tend to practice on a consistent basis that frequently cause us to miss the "Boat of Life".

I encourage you to read material that addresses your "dashboard of life"—to not love life in the abstract but to live life in concrete details, the little things, that make such a big difference in life.

## An Example from Sports

**John Wooden** was the legendary basketball coach of UCLA. His teams won 10 NCAA Championships, 88 consecutive games, and he had an 80 percent winning record. He is considered the winningest coach in sports history.

Coach Wooden had a unique style and philosophy of coaching. He focused on the *details* of winning—not on the *concept* of winning. In fact, he never told his players, "win the game."

He was known for starting each season by reviewing with his players the proper way to put on their socks. He explained, "It's the little things" that determine success and failure.

In basketball, the most common injury is blisters on players' feet caused if players don't properly put on and position their socks!

## Application of This Idea

I thought about this idea of how "the little things" in your life can determine the outcome of the "big things" in your life and leadership.

The significance of this concept hit as I was having a discussion with my daughter. She mentioned, with appreciation, how I still open the car door for my wife, how I always accompany her mom if she has to go out late at night, how I still hold my wife's hand, and send her flowers.

Wow, I thought, my daughter Shira has been paying attention to the "little

things" that contribute to a successful marriage or relationship.

She understands that being happily married is a culminating "concept" which is comprised of the accumulation of many small acts of consideration and expressions of caring. *It's really about the little things.*

## Your Life Is a Reflection

In your family or social life, the measure of love, contentment, stability and longevity is usually a reflection of how well you have attended to the "little things"—these small acts of kindness and consideration to others.

Often, you come into a relationship with a set of expectations of what you want or need from others. Assuming



these expectations are realistic and deserving, the willingness of the other party to identify and deliver on these expectations influences that relationship's "satisfaction meter". However, the real power, the neutron bomb, of doing "the little things" really impacts others when you do the unexpected.

Big deal! Anyone can send a card or gift on an occasion. Typically, you respond to a "guilt trip" perpetrated by FTD, Hallmark, and all their economic partners who remind us that there is a specific occasion (real, such as a birthday, or contrived, such as *Grandparents Day*) that warrants an obligatory act of kindness. While some argue that some kind act, regardless of its motivation, is better than none, I would opt for the "Just Because" philosophy.

The real value of sending a card or gift is *just because*—*just because* we have another day together; *just because* I love the way you smile; *just because* you make me feel complete; *just because* you are an important part of our company.

## Success Is the End Product

In a business, having a successful enterprise is the end product of many small acts of customer service, offering value and exhibiting integrity.

There is a saying that *you can determine the quality of maintenance of an airline's engines by looking at the tray tables.* If the tray tables are dirty, chipped or worn, then that tells you something about the level of attentiveness to detail, in general, that the airline practices.

*It really is about the little things.*

So, too, being healthy is the result of many small decisions and actions related to diet, exercise, and relaxation habits that logically lead to good health.

*It really is about the little things.*

**Have you been pre-occupied with the end products in your life?** Have you lost sight of the details? It's easy to lose track of and not attend to the *little things*.

Sometimes it takes effort to remember to smile, to listen, to touch, to offer support, to say "thank you" or "please".

If you are not naturally inclined to attend to the "little things", then you will only do so if you understand how they help you to achieve your end goals. If your end goals are happiness, less stress, more affection, greater commitment and results, then attention to the little things is your "admission ticket."

## Here Is Your Assignment

As you confront your mortality, it is often not the Big Things in your life that you recall, cherish, and in which you seek comfort. It's all the "little things."

**Here is your four-step assignment:**

**Step 1: Ask yourself:** "What "little thing" today can I do or give someone that would make them happy?"

**Step 2: Do it!** Do the little thing that came into your mind.

**Step 3: Ask:** "What" little thing" today would I like to receive from someone that would really make me happy?"

**Step 4: Tell them what you need or want today!**

The same foot blisters that Coach Wooden was trying to spare his players from developing (which would have prevented them from competing), are comparable to the "emotional blisters" and disappointments many of us carry in our heart and our psyche because we or people in our lives are not attending to the "little things".

**Starting Today:** Pay attention to how you put on your socks! PE

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**ACTION:** Attend to the Little Things.

# I Dare You

## To change your life.



by Lance Armstrong

**Y**OU HAVE THE POWER TO make your life better. My *LiveStrong Dares* help you take charge and commit to improve your life. Take a dare or give a dare today.

Here are a Dozen Dares to consider:

**1. Track your food daily.** You'll see results over time. No matter what your goal, when you track your food and your fitness, you'll be more accountable for your daily habits.

**2. Take a multivitamin daily.** It can be difficult for even active and healthy people to get the recommend servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Multi-vitamins offer an easy way to achieve your nutrient goals.

**3. Eat more fruits and vegetables daily.** Getting your recommended dose of fruits and vegetables can be harder than you think. Most Americans fall short of the recommended 5 to 13 servings of fruits and vegetables. They miss out on the health benefits of a diet rich in colorful fruits and vegetables because they have a "phytonutrient gap." Many phytonutrients are *powerful antioxidants* that can help fight the damage caused to our bodies, cells over time, leading to premature aging and disease. They also offer many health benefits. Phyto-nutrients can help fill that gap, leading to a healthier lifestyle and better health.

The health benefits come from the compounds that give these foods their vibrant reds, yellows, greens and other rich colors. Some phytonutrients—like *lycopen*e from tomatoes or *carotenoids* found in oranges and carrots—may sound familiar, but many others such as *lutein* found in greens, like spinach and broccoli or *allicin* found in garlic, are just being recognized.

**4. Stop binge eating.** You can establish a healthy relationship with food and maintain a healthy weight. Binge eating can be a signal you need to deal with underlying emotional issues before proceeding with a diet program.

**5. Quit smoking.** Smoking is a preventable cause of disease and premature death. Quit smoking to improve your health and increase your lifespan.

**6. Get more sleep.** Getting six to eight hours of sleep per night can put you in a positive mood, make you feel refreshed, and help you concentrate.

**7. Lose weight** so you can look great, feel better, and reduce your risk for disease. You've worked hard to make it to this point—don't add pounds back now!

**8. Exercise regularly** to boost your immune system, get fit, and improve your mental well-being. Starting an exercise routine will also help prevent disease.

**9. Walk 20 minutes a day**—about 2,000 steps. Wear a pedometer to keep track of your steps. Increase your steps by 500 each day and shoot for 10,000. Soon, you'll be walking your way into your healthy new life. To increase your steps: don't park in the closest spot; take the stairs; walk to do errands or get lunch; plan a walking meeting or date.

**10. Save money** and build a secure financial future. You may need to rearrange your finances, cut back on daily expenses or invest in a savings account.

By making small changes to daily behaviors of spending, you can save much money, eliminate debt, and avoid living check-to-check. This may require setting up a savings account, creating a financial plan, and cutting credit cards!

**11. Spend more time with your family.** Build and maintain relationships with those you love. Learn more about each other by making time for family meals and activities. Strive to be more patient.

**12. Reduce stress** to let go of anxiety and think more clearly. Practice deep breathing, working out, or pursuing a hobby. Reduce anxiety so you can *concentrate* and *maintain a positive attitude*. **PE**

*Lance Armstrong, seven-time winner of the Tour de France, is chairman of the Lance Armstrong Foundation for cancer research and support. Visit [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org).*

**ACTION:** Take and give a LiveStrong dare.

## PHYSICAL • ENERGY

## Manage Your Energy

*It's key to optimal performance.*



by Jim Loehr

**I**N DIGITAL TIME, YOUR PACE is rushed and relentless. Facing crushing workloads, you try to cram more into every day. You're wired up, but melting down. Time management is no longer a viable solution. Managing energy, not time, is the key to high performance as well as to health, happiness, and life balance.

The *number of hours in a day* is fixed, but the quantity and quality of the energy available to you is not. This insight has the power to revolutionize the way you live your life by managing your energy.

By tapping into *The Power of Full Engagement*, you can: mobilize key sources of energy, balance energy expenditure with energy renewal, expand capacity in the same way that elite athletes do, and create *positive energy management rituals*—habits of behavior that enhance energy in service of your mission—and a daily accountability system that facilitates transformation.

This gives you a *life-changing map* for becoming more fully engaged—meaning *physically energized, emotionally connected, mentally focused, and spiritually aligned*. Each of these four sources of energy is necessary; none is sufficient by itself, and each influences the others.

**One of the best ways to transform your life is to change the stories you tell**

*to and about yourself.* Stories reflect your interpretation of your experiences. The stories you tell represent the single most powerful tool you have for managing energy and achieving any mission in life. You have stories about your work, family, relationships, health, desires, and capabilities. Yet, while your stories profoundly affect how others see you and how you see yourself, you may not recognize that you're telling stories, or what they are, or that you can change them—and, in turn, transform your destiny. The most important story you will ever tell is the story about yourself that you tell to yourself.

Telling yourself stories provides structure and direction as you navigate life's challenges and opportunities, and helps you interpret your goals and skills. Stories make sense of chaos; they organize your many divergent experiences into a coherent thread; they shape your reality. But many of your stories are dysfunctional, in need of editing. *In what*

*areas of your life is it clear that you can't achieve your goals with the story you've got?* Create new, reality-based stories that inspire you to action, and take you where you want to go—in your work and personal life.

Identify your purpose—your life's mission—and create new stories aligned with your ultimate purpose. Then use a 90-day plan to guarantee that your new stories become reality. **PE**

*Jim Loehr is CEO of the Human Performance Institute and co-author of The Power of Full Engagement. Call 407-438-9911 or email [info@corporateathlete.com](mailto:info@corporateathlete.com).*

**ACTION:** Manage your energy.



# Overgiving Club

Adopt a new attitude of guilt-free self-love.



by Cheryl Richardson

WHO SAYS *SELFISH* HAS TO be a dirty word? In 1994, I decided to hire my first personal coach. My coach, Thomas, asked me to tell him a little about my life. He wanted to get a sense of who I was and how I lived. For the next 20 minutes, I talked about all the things that occupied my time. As I listened to myself talk about my schedule, I felt pretty good. A certain satisfaction comes from being needed and in demand. When I finished, Thomas was quiet and then, with a slight edge in his voice, said, “Wow, you do a great job of taking care of people. You’re such a good person.”

I smiled, thinking, *Hmm, he really gets me.* But what he said next took me by surprise: “And the truth is, Cheryl, your ‘good girl’ role is going to rob you of your life.”

I sat still for a time. My moment of triumph slowly turned to tears as his words hit home. I *was* a good girl. I was so used to playing the role of caretaker that it had become a normal way of life. It had also become my identity and how I defined my self-worth. Now, many years later, I know I wasn’t alone. So many of us, especially women, take on this “noble” role. What we don’t realize—until it’s too late—is the high price we pay for being so *generous*—a price extracted from our very bones.

## Extreme Self-Care

Thomas introduced me to the concept of *Extreme Self-Care*. The word *extreme* intrigued me. *Extreme Self-Care* meant taking my care to a new level—a level that, to me, seemed arrogant and selfish, practiced by people who had an inappropriate sense of entitlement. It meant taking radical action to improve my life *and* engaging in daily habits that allowed me to maintain this new standard of living. For example, it wasn’t enough to take a weekend off from helping others so that I could enjoy some downtime. Thomas wanted me to schedule time for myself (on my calendar, in ink) *every day* for six months.

At first I resisted the idea of *Extreme Self-Care*. Time to myself every day? I could barely find time to go to the bathroom, let alone for a walk at lunch. My

coach’s suggestions seemed idealistic, but, as I would soon discover, a great life starts with an open mind.

Maybe you’re praying that a loved one recovers from a serious illness—or that your new date calls again, or that your son gets into his top college choice. Whatever the situation, times like these challenge us to go beyond life skills like critical thinking or organization. In these cases, when you truly have no sway in the outcome, only a higher, more spiritual skill will get you through: the ability to surrender.

Knowing how to surrender reflects spiritual maturity—and it requires patience and practice. But it’s worth it. When I think about my own life, I can see that when I’m able to relinquish



my will to a higher power, things are no longer a struggle; life gets easier. I don’t waste enormous amounts of energy trying to maintain an illusion of control. Instead, I find that by releasing my grip, a power greater than myself seems to take hold to steer me where I need to go.

Our source of suffering is always related to our resistance to what is. The soul doesn’t try to control life; the ego does. When your ego is wrapped firmly around a desire, your peace of mind and happiness are held hostage by an obsessive need to control the outcome. After enough pain and suffering, you’ll eventually get the message: If you don’t learn to surrender your will, you will surrender your peace.

*It takes a leap of faith to abandon your way for the right way.* It means letting go of how you think things should be and accepting them as they are. When we surrender, it doesn’t mean that we throw our hands in the air and do nothing; it means we pay close attention to our intuition so we

can act on this wisdom. Then, once we’ve done what we can, we let go and allow grace to shine a light on a better path, one that brings about the result that ultimately serves our highest good.

## Hands Off the Wheel

Several years ago, I learned an important lesson about letting go. Things often work out for the best in ways that we can’t possibly imagine and don’t expect.

I once met a woman, Noreen, who told me: “If you could suddenly rise above your life and look behind the scenes, you’d understand why things happen the way they do,” she said. “But you can’t. Sometimes you just have to surrender.”

She spoke from experience. She’d been away with her family on vacation when she received some terrible news: Her mother, just short of her 60th birthday, had suffered a stroke and died. “During both the funeral and week of sitting shivah, I struggled to come to terms with her death,” Noreen told me. “I felt tortured about not being there when she died and not having one last chance to tell her how much she meant to me. I finally faced the reality that *there was nothing I could do to change what happened.* I needed to surrender and let my emotions run their course. Something about grieving teaches you what it really means to let go.”

Learning to surrender doesn’t require a long, drawn out series of painfully difficult steps. A simple prayer such as “Help me to accept the things I can’t change” can go a long way toward giving you the strength you need to let something go. Let your prayer be an invitation to grace, one that says, “I’ll trust my intuition, take the steps that feel right, and do my best to release my attachment to the result.” Surround yourself with reminders that will inspire you to let things go. I have two signs that hang on the wall in my office. One says, “Surrender Draws Grace” (a phrase from my friend Jerry), and the other says, “The World Is Conspiring in Your Favor” (compliments of my friend Bruce). When I’m struggling, these signs remind me to trust and let things unfold as they may. And here’s the funny thing about letting go: When we learn to surrender, we then make space for true miracles to happen. Are you ready for a miracle? **PE**

*Cheryl Richardson is a life coach and author of *Take Time for Your Life*, *Life Makeovers*, *Stand Up for Your Life*, and *The Unmistakable Touch of Grace* (Free Press). Visit [www.CherylRichardson.com](http://www.CherylRichardson.com).*

**ACTION:** Enjoy guilt-free self-love.

# True Fulfillment

You can find it at home.



by Laura Schlessinger

**M**ANY WOMEN FEEL GUILTY for yearning to stay at home and raise their children.

Some feel intimidated by a culture that doesn't value hands-on moms. The feminist movement has tried to deconstruct the family under the guise that gender isn't significant for child-rearing and marriage. Women's magazines declare that the most important thing a woman can do is make herself happy (through work), or maintain power (her own bank account), and make sure that a representative of the evil empire (a man/husband) does not oppress her.

Guess what? Women these days are less happy (missing the joys of developing and loving children) and more frenzied (trying to be and do everything).

At home, women have time to grow spiritually, intellectually, and physically. They also lose much of their feminist-trained hostility toward their husbands. They develop a deeper appreciation for how they are singularly responsible for the attitude and atmosphere of the home.

A woman once called me to complain about her resentment over "fulfilling the needs of my husband." I asked whether those needs were immoral or illegal. "No," she said, "just feels like a burden."

This sentiment of *being burdened by the needs of one's spouse* is common. How can you possibly feel burdened responding to and taking care of the needs of your beloved, when that is the exact definition of *loving* somebody? It is a blessing and a privilege to have somebody to love. *Loving someone is to be aware, sensitive, and involved in meeting that person's (reasonable) needs.* When you express resentment, it's usually because you see the person as an intrusion into what really matters: family, work, friends, and hobbies. In which case, you're taking that person for granted.

People don't *grow apart* in relationships. They simply stop taking care of each other. They stop waking up and looking at their spouse with gratitude and awe. They stop finding ways to make that person happy that they are married to each other. They stop behaving as though they love that person with their last breath. They stop being the kind of person they themselves would want to come home to.

When confronted with a major challenge, the best medicine is continuing to enjoy the love and warmth of spouse and children. Instead, injured parties often turn *on* their families instead of turning *to* them. The death of a child can break marriages up because one or both parents go into a corner to mourn. Pulling into yourself doesn't make the pain go away. In fact, it intensifies it and isolates you at a time when you need the bonding of a loved one the most. Getting through the tough parts of life can make you self-centered, which is counterproductive to feeling better, and enjoying *the quality of a marriage and peace in the home.*

**Emotional and psychological health is much within your control.** Isolation, wallowing in resentments, rehashing hurts, and finding ways to strike back at life make living a terrible agony.

Being a "fair-weather spouse" is not about love—it is a narcissistic view of relationships. Keeping an open heart to the warmth of family and friends, putting yourself out for others at a time when you feel you have nothing to give, will give you a big surprise—a better mood and a better view of life.

I'm weary of folks misusing, abusing, manipulating, and misunderstanding the concept of *forgiveness*. Some things are unforgivable. Forgiving the unforgivable is joining the evil. Showing compassion for evil shows callousness toward the innocent. To make evil-doers out to be victims, too, is our weak willingness to deny evil as a choice. **PE**

*Dr. Laura Schlessinger is a talk show host and best selling author of 12 books, including, In Praise of Stay-At-Home Moms (Harper-Collins). Visit [www.drLaura.com](http://www.drLaura.com).*

**ACTION:** Gain emotional health.

## SOCIAL • CONFIDENCE

# Circle of Excellence

You can have more confidence.



by Sue Knight

**W**HAT COULD YOU ACHIEVE if you had *more confidence when you need it*? What

positive feelings from your past would you want to re-experience if you could transfer them to your current challenge?

By taking the *five steps* in *The Circle of Excellence*, you can do just that.

**1. Relive confidence.** Think of a time when you were very confident. Relive the moment, seeing what you saw and hearing what you heard, so that your feelings are strong. Pretend you are back in the situation. Stand or sit and gesture the way you did then.

**2. Circle of Excellence.** As you feel the confidence building in you, imagine a *colored circle* around your feet. What color would you like it to be? Would you like it to have a sound like a soft hum that indicates power? When that *feeling of confidence* is at its peak, step out of the circle, leaving the confident feelings inside. Create an image of your *Circle of Excellence* that is right for you, and then attach it to confident feelings. You might step in and out of your *Circle of Excellence* several times to ensure the image of your circle becomes a trigger for your positive feelings.

**3. Selecting cues.** Now think of a time in your future when you want to feel confident. See and hear what will be



there just before you want to feel confident. The cue could be your boss's office door, your office phone, or hearing yourself being introduced before a speech. Be sure that the cues you choose are ones that you'll notice *just before* you want to have your confident feelings.

**4. Linking.** When those cues are clear in your mind, step back into the circle and feel those confident feelings again. Imagine that future situation with these confident feelings. Step into your circle as soon as you become aware of the cues, so that the positive feelings are triggered *before* you need them.

**5. Check results.** Now step out of the circle again, leaving those confident feelings in the circle. Outside the circle, think again of that future event. You'll recall those confident feelings. Now, when the event arrives, you'll naturally respond more confidently. When you make a solid connection, the cues automatically result in the positive feelings of your

*Circle of Excellence.*

When you use the *Circle of Excellence*, you take the initiative. You decide how you want to react to the events in your life. You take the feelings of confidence you've experienced in the past and attach them to a future situation that might be intimidating. You can choose to use this *Circle of Excellence* the way you want, when you want it. *In any situation, you can choose how you want to feel and respond.* You can choose to *live your life on purpose.* **PE**

*Sue Knight is a consultant specializing in NLP training and author of NLP at Work. Visit [www.sueknight.co.uk](http://www.sueknight.co.uk).*

**ACTION:** Gain confidence in the Circle of Excellence.

# Productive Obsessions

Learn to harness the power.



by Eric Maisel

**I**N WORKING WITH CLIENTS AS a creativity coach, I began to see a recurring pattern: they would quickly lose interest in activities, projects, relationships and careers that they had started with great enthusiasm. They'd even lose interest in solving their pressing problems.

Why are we burdened by this debilitating penchant for starting things with great energy and passion and allowing the fire to die out in no time?

Part of the answer revolved around the way the word *obsession* had been hijacked by the therapeutic world and turned into a negative. Therapists define all *obsessions* as *intrusive, unwanted thoughts* and such thinking prevents people from feeling comfortable getting involved with their passions and interests. If, as a culture, you say, "Watch out!" every time someone gets engrossed in something, you begin to produce a culture that loses enthusiasm quickly for whatever it starts.

*Many of our obsessions are not of our choosing and do not serve us*—that's why obsessions have gotten such a bad name. These unwanted obsessions arise because we are anxious creatures. Our unproductive thoughts keep cycling repeatedly to the beat of that anxiety and produce negative obsessions. We obsess about some trivial matter at work and, having resolved that matter, we obsess about the next trivial matter at work. We obsess about things that we want to happen, like winning the lottery, and about things that we don't want to happen, like getting wrinkles. Our mind, which ought to be ours, is stolen away by anxiety thieves.

*These unproductive obsessions* waste our time and pressure us to behave compulsively (hence the term *obsessive-compulsive*). Anxiety fuels these obsessions and the effort to relieve our anxiety leads us to pointless, questionable, or dangerous behaviors intended to quiet our nerves and banish the anxiety. Our own nervous system puts us under enormous pressure and produces all sorts of unhappy effects. No wonder psychology has taken aim at this serious human problem! But by focusing all of its attention on illness and what's

not working, psychology has missed the fact that the brain's ability to obsess can also amount to a real treasure.

*The brain can also productively obsess—and it wants to.* Consciously creating and actively nurturing productive obsessions amount to the very best solution for the problems that so many people are experiencing today—problems like getting easily distracted, starting things and then losing interest, and feeling like life is passing them by.

When you decide to elevate an interest into an obsession, these problems resolve themselves. Turning mere interests into obsessions ignites your passion and leads to self-motivation. You are happier and more efficient when you productively obsess.



*Instead of giving up on your business, your creative project, or the personal problem that you're trying to solve, you can find new motivation, new energy, and sustained interest in your own ideas and your own work.*

It is not enough to *possess* a perfectly good brain—you must also *take charge of it*; and creating *productive obsessions* is an excellent way to do that. If you don't take good charge of your brain, you'll find yourself trapped in trivialities, condemned to impulsivity, led around by anxiety, and duller and sadder than you need to be. Productively obsessing is an antidote to all that.

Don't allow yourself to worry about anything—you grow numb with distractions, wasting neurons. You stay mired in the brain equivalent of a rat race as you spend your neuronal capital on spinning hamster wheels.

*You can transform this picture by learning how to productively obsess.* The trick to creating an authentic life is taking charge of how you use your brain. Rather than thinking about a

million things, *which amounts to thinking about nothing*, you announce to your brain that you have a fine use for it and intend to move it to a higher gear. Since your brain is an engine meant to perform in high gear, it has been waiting for this exact invitation—and it will respond beautifully to your invitation.

*A productive obsession* is an idea that you choose for your own reasons and that you pursue with all of your brain's power. You take the seed of an idea and nurture it, providing it with genuine neuronal devotion.

When you live your life as a series of productive obsessions, your interest never flags and life feels genuinely worth living. If you've been reluctant to raise the bar and turn your interests into genuine productive obsessions, now is the time to unleash your brain and let it work for you beautifully.

*Unproductive obsessions* are fueled by anxiety and distorted thinking. They control you. You don't want or deserve such obsessions. They prevent you from thinking straight, and make you miserable. *Productive obsessions* act in the service of thoughts you want. They are fueled by your decisions about where you want to apply your brainpower. When you take charge of what you want to think about, and pursue trains of thought that serve you, you create productive obsessions and return your brain's power to your own control.

Devote yourself to your productive thoughts. By *productively obsessing*, you bring optimism and all of your brain's power to the problem, opportunity, or challenge. Whatever *your most pressing concern*, by focusing on the problem you give yourself the best chance to find a smart, workable solution.

**Take three tips to productively obsess:**

**1. Plan your productive obsessions.**

Choose your obsession and then fit that obsession into the rest of your life.

**2. Think through how you will manage your productive obsession.** Productive obsessions stir the mind. When you create brainstorming, you create internal lightning; but you need to control that energy so that when it's time to read your daughter a bedtime story you can effortlessly shut down your obsession.

**3. Learn how to easily switch gears between your ordinary way of thinking and your productive obsessing.** You can move efficiently from one gear to another, revving up to obsess, revving down to peel potatoes or chat with a mate. **PE**

*Eric Maisel, Ph.D., is author of Brainstorm: Harnessing the Power of Productive Obsessions (New World Library). Visit [www.newworldlibrary.com](http://www.newworldlibrary.com).*

**ACTION: Productively obsess to meet challenges.**

# Creative Thinking

Get out of your personal rut.



by John Baker

**I**F YOU HOPE TO JUMP-START creativity and stimulate innovative, outside-the-box thinking, start with a very pedestrian target: to *get out of your ruts* and unstuck from your mental and physical habits.

In a Minnesota winter, it is common to get a big, wet snowfall followed by frigid weather, resulting in ruts in the road that are hammered straight by countless commuters, cast harder than iron, and lasting into the spring thaw. Driving in the ruts is difficult, but driving outside the ruts produces an axel-busting bumpy ride. Strangely, after a while, you begin not to notice the ruts—they become facts of life. Only when the sun starts to melt the snow and ice do you realize how confining and miserable the drive to work has been.

*You may operate in ruts of your own, not made of hardened snow and ice but forged like steel through the alchemy of routine and habit.* No matter how successful you are, or how much you enjoy your work, doing the same thing every day in the same way can create a sense of disconnection, boredom, and feelings of helplessness or depression.

*All change is personal, so the barriers to innovative and creative thinking are uniquely individual.* You need to find coping mechanisms to overcome your personal barriers to change. These five steps can help you get un-stuck:

**1. Wake up.** You're operating under the numbing anesthesia of discipline and regimen. Admit that certain parts of your day are becoming drudgery and sapping your spirit. Success comes from attention to detail and consistency of performance, but these same attributes can make your job joyless and gut your initiative. Look at your calendar and ask yourself, "What do I resent doing? What hasn't changed for me in the past six months? When do I function only on auto-pilot?" For example, you might spend your time during the daily commute in a stupor. Why not use this time to learn a foreign language on CD, keep a journal, make cell calls to loved ones or business clients.

**2. Take a time out.** It takes time to think innovatively. When schedules are so tight that no external thoughts can penetrate your attention, creativity and

innovation are impossible. Take time daily for quiet contemplation. Make it a habit. Quiet time helps your brain to decompress, enabling you to access new thoughts, ideas, and connections.

**3. Step small.** No one ever loses 100 pounds or stays sober for 20 years. The secret to moving forward is to lose one pound 100 times, or stay sober one day for 20 years. Mother Theresa said, *small things done with great love can change the world.* Identify one activity you will change in your daily routine. It can be as simple as sitting outside for lunch, holding a stand-up meeting, or changing your hourly meetings to half an hour. Set the alarm for a half hour earlier and stimulate your mental health by taking a brisk morning walk.

**4. Break the cycle.** A powerful way to un-stick habitual behavior is practicing

occasional *unpredictability*. Being *irresponsible* is letting people down; being *unpredictable* is surprising people. Set a weekly goal that has nothing to do with your daily habits or responsibilities. Visit a museum, see a ballgame, go to an opera, volunteer on a committee that exposes you to new people, or take one night a week to learn how to play the guitar.

**5. MYOB.** There are things you can control, and things you can influence. Then, there are things you neither control nor influence, but still spend time and energy on. These things tend to make you feel trapped and fatalistic. Eliminate from your day those activities that you neither control nor influence. **PE**

*John Baker is the founder of READY Thinking, LLC, an organizational and leadership development firm. Email johnbaker@readythinking.com.*

**ACTION:** Get out of your personal ruts.

MENTAL • BRANDING

## Authentic Brand

Determine who you are.



by Hubert Rampersad

**A** BRAND IS COMPRISED OF the expectations, image, identity, perceptions and feelings it creates in the minds of others, when they see or hear a name, product or logo. Brands like Microsoft, Nike, Toyota, Volvo, and Coke tell us how they want us to perceive their products. *What they want our perceptions and expectations of their products to be.*

Branding is the promise that the product or service makes—a promise that must then be delivered. Volvo, for example, is differentiated by its promise of safety and security and IBM stands for dependability.

Branding isn't just for companies—*personal branding* is essential to your career because it helps define who you are, what you stand for, and what makes you unique, special, and different. People want to do business with people they know or with whom they feel some connection. If you are a familiar presence, they'll be more receptive to your offers.

*Traditional personal branding* works by communicating values, personality, and ability to produce a positive emotional response. You shape the perception of your personal brand by defining your unique strengths, values, and personality; and then sharing it in an exciting, persuasive manner continuously.

Give serious effort to *discovering your*

*genius and authentic dream*, imagining and developing yourself as a powerful, consistent, and memorable *Personal Brand*, and doing work you love.

Branding guru Tom Peters wrote: "You are a brand, CEO of your own company: Me, Inc. This requires you to grow yourself, promote yourself, and get the market to reward yourself."

*Traditional personal branding* focuses on personal marketing by building a name for yourself and showcasing what sets you apart. This can become an ego trip.

I focus on *sustainable authentic personal branding* (APB)—on creating a trusted image of yourself that you project in all you do, which is about your true values, beliefs, dream, and genius, combined with powerful tools to deliver peak performance and to create a stable basis for trustworthiness, credibility, and charisma. You have unique gifts and a distinct purpose and dream in life.

By connecting these, you open yourself up to greater success. APB places more emphasis on personal development, growth, and empowerment, and includes your reputation, character, and personality.

*The APB process* starts with *determining who you are at your core authentic self*. This is based on your life dream, vision, mission, values, roles, identity, self-knowledge, self-awareness, self-responsibility, positive attributes, and self-management. With an APB, your strongest characteristics, attributes, and values separate you from the crowd. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Build your authentic personal brand.

# Recession Lessons

7 steps to crash-proof life.



by Jeffrey Hull

**D**RIVING ON THE NY STATE Thruway, I passed a billboard that read, “Change is the New Black.” How true. Everywhere I look today people are in upheaval and overwhelm. Even as we appear to be emerging from the great recession, the onslaught of change—devastating oil spills, political instability, foreclosures, unemployment, crazy weather, just doesn’t seem to abate. In the economic sphere, financial experts are offering tips for navigating the slowly receding waters of the *economic tsunami*.

But the onslaught of financial advice also prompts me to pause and reflect: Beyond getting our finances in order, how do we stay centered and grounded in the midst of constant upheaval? We may not be able to avoid the next big economic gyration, but can we take action to “crash proof” our lives?

Here are *seven steps* that I recommend for weathering the onslaught of calamities that have begun to feel “normal” in our topsy-turvy world.

**1. Make small things big.** Find joy in the mundane. It is in the minutiae of everyday living where meaning is found. Create quality time to be with friends and family; hug your pet a bit more often; think about the friend who makes you laugh, and seek him/her out. Make a list of fun activities that are free: walk in the park; roll in a pile of leaves; read a great novel; re-learn how to play Parcheesi; start an online photo album and re-live good memories.

**2. Invest in yourself.** Now may not be the best time to check your retirement account every few hours, but now is still a great time to invest. Instead of spending what little extra cash you may have on stocks or bonds, spend that money on *You*. Learn a new hobby. Take a class in something you’ve always wanted to learn—maybe cooking, or a new language, or web design, or pottery. Don’t necessarily think about the investment as a new career. Building resiliency in difficult times comes from having an expanding portfolio of skills. Practicing something new just for fun and practice will give you something much more important than a paycheck: it will bring you joy!

**3. Connect to community.** The main contributor to depression and anxiety in times like these is *isolation*. In fear-mode, many of us tend to withdraw and hide-out. Alone time is important, of course, but disconnecting from people can be harmful. On the other hand, being a socialite can be isolating as well. We’ve all come across those lonely souls who prefer to hide-out in a crowd. The key to avoiding isolation—in a group or on your own—is finding people with similar interests and values, a place where you can let your hair down and feel safe just to be you.

**4. Share the wealth.** A key principle of America has always been thus: *giving is getting*. No matter which color state you live in—red or blue—it is



cynical and downright anti-American to talk about “spreading the wealth” as if it were some anachronistic tenet of Marxist orthodoxy. Do you think Bill Gates wonders whether he should give \$500 million to “spread” his wealth and wipe out malaria? I doubt it. Maybe you don’t have \$500 million or even \$500 to spare these days, but the quantity you give is not the point. Giving, whether of your time, your money or both, will pay you back in ways you might never have imagined.

**5. Think long term.** Did you ever notice that economic cycles, like the average life span of a car, tends to be between five and eight years? I’m not a numerologist or astrologer but even an every day psychologist can see that most major change cycles happen about every seven years. If you look back on your life and think in terms of five- to eight-year cycles, you’ll likely see major changes—in relationships, careers, and your development. So, craft a vision for the future; think about

the next Great Decade. Fantasize about the life you desire to lead 10 years from now. In your journal, write the thoughts that come to mind in answer to these questions: Ten years from now, where are you? Where do you live? What do you do? Who are you with? Looking back (from 10 years out), how has your life changed? Ten years from now, every cell in your body will have died and been replaced. You’ll be brand new—so give your cells a new dream to live into. What is your dream decade ahead?

**6. Live in the now.** How do you think “now” and “long term” at the same time? You can toggle back and forth between “then” and “now” quite easily. The key is balance. We are the only animals on the planet that dream dreams and make them come true! On the other hand, living entirely in the future is a recipe for disaster. We also need to learn to be awake and alive in the present moment. For this practice, I recommend a mental and physical discipline like meditation or yoga. These practices instantly shift your energy from fantasies of the future (or of disaster) into the miraculous feeling of being alive, in your body, bringing head and heart into blissful alignment, now.

**7. Reconnect with nature.** Nature is soothing, healing, and grounding. We all know the importance of staying connected to the great outdoors, of respecting, relishing and rejuvenating our spirits in the exultation of mountain vistas, pristine forests and moonlit sand dunes. But do you know why nature is such a tool for healing? Think about it: What are the most profound reminders of basic truths? Where do we look when we forget that everything happens in cycles, life is made up of seasons, a few years is a blip on the screen of eternity? Trees, mountains, rocks, flowers, and beaches know what we forget: that *all things ripen and transform in time; that life is short, sweet, mysterious, and remarkable*. We need fresh air, rambling rivers, soaring birds and blazing blue sky—and in times like these—a daily dose may be just what the doctor ordered. Nature, in her miraculous bounty, is always available, always free . . . and no side effects.

**These are my seven steps to serenity**—or sanity. Stay open. Listen for that bit of advice, idea or suggestion that could come from anywhere—a simple comment, from the right person at the right time, just might change your life. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Crash-proof your life.

# Your Life

*It happens so fast!*



by Patti Fralix

WHEN I ASKED MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, Bobby, about his recent motorcycle accident, he said that one minute he was riding along, and the next minute he was on the ground. "It happened so fast," he said. He has three broken ribs, pleural effusion and road rash, but he'll recover.

**How fast life can change!** In her book, *The Year of Magical Thinking*, Joan Didion writes: "Life changes fast. Life changes in the instant. You sit down to dinner, and life as you know it ends."

**Regardless of current circumstances, your life can change immediately in profound ways.** "It happened so fast" also describes my emotions as I celebrated my five-year-old granddaughter's recent preschool graduation. How could this be? It is so soon after we were waiting in an Atlanta hospital for her to be born. How could her three-year-old sister be big enough to climb on a stool, get the cereal out of the pantry and the milk out of the refrigerator, fill up two bowls with cereal and milk, not spilling a drop of either, and tell her big sister that she had fixed breakfast for them? It happened so fast. It wasn't long ago that my daughter, the mother of those grandchildren, was starting school. How could she now have two children? It happened so fast.

**Whatever is going on in your life at the present, know that these circumstances will change, some for the better, and likely, some for the worse.** The same day that several of us were enjoying a Christmas and birthday lunch, the husband of one in our group was having a diagnostic test that subsequently found pancreatic cancer. Four months later, Hospice is helping with his transition. Just yesterday this friend said, "When it happened, we were at the top of our game, financially, business wise, and in all ways." Then their world changed when the unthinkable happened so fast.

None of these examples relate to changes that you can avoid when they occur. Children grow up, and while you may be anxious for that to happen, when it does, you think, "It happened so fast." We are mortal beings, and illness and death are no respecters of age, or goodness—as evidenced in the obituaries.

Embrace the present, even with all of its problems, even though you're strug-

gling in various ways. Learn not to say, "It can't get any worse," for you may see worse happen. Life can get worse.

Thankfully, it also often gets better. Some people have had serious health problems, and recovered. Some have experienced job losses and even financial ruin, and still greet the new day with gratitude that they were not totally destroyed. Money problems are usually fixable; health issues may not be.

It happens so fast that opportunities to positively impact those around you are over. Some grow up and move on, and your time with them is more episodic. In those situations, treasure time together, and avoid trying to change them. Once I told my daughter, the mother of those precious granddaughters, that she needed to keep her car cleaner. Oh, I also told her what a wonderful mother she is.

Which of those two comments do you think she could still be remembering?

Embrace each day with gratitude for what is good, dealing with the problems in the best ways that you can. Embrace those you love; you never know when there won't be another opportunity for closeness. And do not say those things you sometimes want to say to change someone else; instead, work on changing yourself for the better. Build people up, don't put them down. Avoid hostile humor. Be a positive influence on others, and you may see less crime and more justice and peace. Live like you know, "It happens so fast." PE

*Patti Fralix inspires positive change by speaking, consulting, and coaching. She is president of The Fralix Group. Email pfralix@fralixgroup.com.*

**ACTION:** Use money to promote wellness.

## FINANCIAL • HUNGER

# Hunger Pains

*Be hungry for excellence.*



by John Grubbs

CAN A MEDIOCRITY DULL THE hunger pains for excellence? Can accepting the status quo doom you to mediocrity? Staying hungry for that which provides the most benefit is challenging and often illusive. Many factors contribute to losing the drive for excellence.

**Marginal success can be your worst enemy**, as it can dull the pains that drive you toward excellence. Unhealthy food can kill the same hunger that the proper food can provide. This was evident just prior to the recession. The robust economy created such abundance that you did not have to be excellent to succeed. If you enjoyed marginal success, you may have lost the drive for excellence. Hard work and determination to improve are absolutes for long-term success.

**A lack of personal development is also a key reason for mediocrity.** Failing to have a robust learning and development program makes you comfortable; and without challenge, you fail to grow and improve. Learning, training and developing is mandatory for success. Doing more with less requires you to have the talent and flexibility to remove the barriers of "not my job."

As the economy recovers, the best and brightest talent will be rewarded

with raises and promotions. Spend some money and time on you own personal and professional development and seek to constantly improve your performance. Never feel *entitled* to your job and become complacent.

**Consider the big fish in the little pond.** The big fish can have whatever it wants. There is no challenge to its place in the pond. Daily, it feeds on the little fish and gets slow and fat. Days and nights of comfort and a lack of any threat makes the fish seem successful. The smaller fish may even envy the big fish. One day the rains start, and soon the land is flooded. Suddenly the big fish is part of a large lake, surrounded by

larger and physically superior fish. Soon after the flood and change of status, the big fish is consumed.

**Many people are like the big fish.** A perceived lack of threat creates apathy or comfort. So, be performance-oriented and challenged for excellence. *A safe environment can cause mediocre performance.*

**What drives the hunger for excellence in life?** How does this hunger fade as marginal success enters your life? Create a culture that pushes you to your perceived capability and then a bit further in order to grow.

You can improve continually with incremental magic. Just as coaches and teachers may have pushed you in the past, they can do the same now. Seek a personal coach who pushes you toward excellence—stay hungry! PE

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**ACTION:** Be hungry for excellence in finance.

# Stick Your Neck Out

Enjoy a more meaningful life.



by John Graham

**T**HE MOST POWERFUL MEANING comes from *service* and *working for the common good*.

When I was a young man, the only thing that held meaning for me was adventuring. I shipped out on freighters while in high school. I was part of a team that made the first ascent of the north wall of Mt. McKinley in Alaska. I hitchhiked around the world. As a correspondent for the *Boston Globe*, I waded into every war I could find, from Algeria to Laos. The only thing that mattered was the next adrenaline rush.

I then joined the U.S. Foreign Service. In my 15 years as a diplomat, I moved up fast, working not in embassies but in jungles and deserts. I saw oppression, hunger, and war—but what held meaning for me was not an urge to relieve the suffering but the attraction of danger and my own surging career.

By age 35, however, the motivations for what I was doing began to sour. *Nothing seemed meaningful to me anymore.*

In 1978, I joined the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, overseeing the arms embargo on South Africa (military equipment sold to SA was used to enforce apartheid). The embargo leaked like a sieve; there was *big money* in the arms trade, and arms dealers had friends in high places. So, I ignored instructions to overlook the leaks. A tougher embargo was enforced, which helped end apartheid. *That meant more to me than my self-centered adventures and promotions.*

I took the skills I'd used to play political power games and focused them on peace and justice issues—to end injustice and suffering. This was satisfying to me in a way no adventure or promotion had been. *It taught me to stick my neck out.*

*From my own hesitations, I know how hard it can be to take personal risks to help solve public problems.* So why should you help your community deal with racism or failing schools? Why press for cleaner air or water, or join a neighborhood association? Why send letters to a congressman or mayor?

It's hard, often thankless work. It's easier to stay on the sidelines, wanting and expecting *someone else* to solve a problem—complaining that things are not the way you want them to be. So,

*why do it?* I got my answers from *Giraffes*—people who stick their necks out to make a difference in their world.

*It took a shipwreck to turn me into a giraffe.* I was lecturing on a cruise ship, which caught fire and sank in the freezing waters of the Gulf of Alaska. During a typhoon-lashed night at sea in a frigid life-boat, *God gave me a clear choice:* I could keep running away from the life of purpose—in which case, God said, I might as well die out there. Or I could move forward *into a life of service and healing.* Near death, *I made the choice to serve,* and in instant I was rescued.

*In 1983 I joined the Giraffe Heroes Project,* founded by my wife, Ann Medlock. She convinced me that in an apathetic society, telling people the stories of real heroes (*Giraffes*) inspires them to stick their own necks out.



Most Giraffes stick their necks out because they are sparked into action by a crisis or problem. But what sustains them is *a strong sense that what they're doing is meaningful to them* and in sync with their deepest priorities and values.

We identify people who bravely take on tough problems and bring about change. We spread their stories to encourage others to take on a task that means a great deal to them. *Such commitment generates passion and power.*

Have your actions be part of a purpose that *satisfies you deep inside and makes you feel alive.* There's no deeper yearning than *to live a meaningful life*—to know that *who you are* and *what you're doing* matter. The more meaningful your actions, the more alive you feel. You face trials, but you feel an energy, excitement, and deep satisfaction of *being in the right place at the right time.*

People who lead meaningful lives don't find meaning in possessions or positions—they find it in carrying out personal commitments to ideals bigger

than themselves and their own needs.

*The path to a meaningful life is out there for you, but you have to find it.* You have *unique opportunities* to make a difference, if only in *small* and *quiet* ways. Spot and act on them. Don't ignore the quest, settle for an ordinary life, and just look out for Number One—to live and die without making a difference.

**Ask yourself:** Is what I'm doing with my life, including any current volunteer work, meaningful to me, or am I just going through the motions? What ideals am I committed to—or might I commit to—to provide that meaning? What can I do to put those ideals into action?

*There is an issue out there with your name on it*—something you care about, someplace where you can serve and make a difference. Pay attention to it. Instead of thinking *why don't they do something about it?*, think, *"It's up to me."* Being a Giraffe doesn't require superhero abilities—just enthusiasm and persistence.

Here are eight Giraffe tips:

**Decide what you care about.** You can't save the whole world. You can *only* rescue a piece of it. Look locally. Identify one problem that you'd like to solve.

**Research the situation.** Has anyone else tackled this problem? With what results? Do you want to join forces with a group, or seek a different approach?

**Identify the stakeholders**—people whose support or opposition would make a difference. Don't write off opponents. Think of ways to involve them.

**Recognize the obstacles.** See what is standing in the way of a solution. Discover creative ways around the hurdles.

**Create a vision.** Imagine *the solution*—if that empty lot became a garden, or food that is now thrown out by restaurants went instead to hungry families.

**Devise an action plan** based on available resources. Many successful grassroots movements start *with small actions.*

**Assess the risks.** You may not face *physical danger*, but you'll face risks—and criticism. Learn where others went wrong and what works. Practice *active compassion* to defuse negative emotions and conflict. Listen without judging. Acknowledge others for their strengths.

**Spread the word.** *A good cause deserves publicity.* Ask for help. People are generous. Ask for referrals. Use the media to get attention. Seek funding. Often funds materialize from *unexpected sources.*

**What do you plan to do with your one precious life?** Stick your neck out. **PE**

John Graham is executive director of The Giraffe Project and author of *It's Up to Us* and *Stick Your Neck Out* (Berrett-Koehler). Visit [www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org).

**ACTION:** Bring hope and healing in your service.

# Support Network

Start building your own.



by James Mapes

**S**upport IS A TRICKY WORD. I like the implication of this definition: "To hold in position so as to keep from falling, sinking or slipping or to strengthen."

In organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Al-Anon, being part of a support system is the key to recovery as well as achieving and keeping physical, mental and spiritual health.

*Having a support system, group, team, or circle is key to living an exceptional life.* As you move through life's peaks and valleys, a solid support system can bless you with family and friends who celebrate your wins, comfort you at low points, cheerlead you, and lend a hand when needed. *Friends are like bras: close to your heart, and there for support.*

*Cultivating and nurturing a support team is the most important project you undertake.* Here are three examples:

- In 1984, I was going through a career minefield. I knew that I needed to reinvent myself, but I did not know how to do it. Bringing together a group of my closest friends, for two days we examined my life, taking it apart and putting it back together again. Out of this experience came the creation of *Quantum Leap Thinking* and a dream career of speaking and coaching. I simply could not and did not want to do it alone.

- In 2002, more friends helped make my one-man show on Broadway a huge success. I could not have done it alone.

- In 2009, I had open-heart surgery to replace my aortic valve. Both friends and family called and asked what they could do to help. My wife arranged for two people to visit me at home once a day, everyday, for an hour. I was showered with food, gifts, and love. This generous show of support elevated my mood and contributed to my healing.

People who maintain strong connections with family and friends have fewer mental and physical health disorders.

Having a strong support system does not magically materialize. It takes clarity, focus, energy, and willingness to help others without expecting a payback. To cultivate a network of healthy support, take these seven steps:

**1. Commit to treat yourself with kindness and compassion.** Be your own cheerleader. If you can't do it for your-

self, why would anyone want to join you?

**2. Define your needs, limits, and boundaries.** Your clarity will help you get your priorities in order and make clear to others the support they can give.

**3. Appreciate the strengths and limitations of the people close to you and accept them for who they are.** Not everyone can support you in the same way. Each person in your network is unique and has distinctive talents and interests and gives you a different kind of support.

**4. Ask for help when you really need it and be specific about what you want.** Don't hesitate to ask for support, since people really do want to help. And, if they help once, they'll often help again, as they become invested in your success.

**5. Nurture your support system.** Look for what you can do to help your family and friends achieve their dreams. You receive by giving; if you give support without expecting anything in return, you'll receive all the support you need.

**6. Be a great listener.** Listening without judgment, with an open heart, heals.

**7. Show gratitude.** To have a solid support system, never take anyone for granted and always express your gratitude.

Start building your support network, and you'll live an exceptional life. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Follow these steps in gaining support.

## SERVICE • PEACEMAKING

# Anger Is a Choice

Create a peace plan instead.



by Janet Pfeiffer

**Y**OU MAKE ME MAD! IS A common phrase, but it's actually a big misconception to think that other people or situations have the power to make you angry. *No individual or event has the power to make you mad.* Anger is a choice—one that occurs depending on your perception. What you choose to think about an experience you are having or the person you are involved with determines how you feel.

For instance, if someone criticizes you, you can think "She's so mean!" Or, you can choose, "How sad that someone could be so insensitive." The former evokes anger; the latter, compassion. The truth behind her actions matters little. You only need to concern yourself with how you choose to perceive her and allow her behavior to affect you.

**Anger is not inherently negative.** It is a useful emotion that can be used as a motivating force to bring about positive change. If you witness an injustice, your anger can serve as a propellant to create new laws. *Your anger becomes a negative force when it is used in a destructive manner, either to hurt yourself, another or to damage property.* Unresolved anger leads to resentment and bitterness and can damage your relationships, health, career, and enjoyment of life.

Anger is a feeling of distress brought about by feelings of helplessness or powerlessness. You create your feelings of being victimized when you feel that

others are controlling you.

**Power and control come from within.** You are responsible for choosing your thoughts. No one else controls that. From there, everything else flows: thoughts generate emotion, and you act out what you feel. Everything in this equation is about *personal responsibility*. A victim is one without power. Regaining your personal power eliminates feelings of helplessness and anger. Others no longer have the ability to push your buttons and *make you mad*.

Take three tips on reducing anger:

**1. Put everything into perspective.**

Ask if the situation is worth getting upset about. If not, let it go. If it is important, identify what needs to

change and create a plan. Switch your focus from the problem (*negative*) to the solution (*positive*).

**2. When you feel anger well up inside you, stop, walk and talk.** Stop what you're doing.

This prevents the situation from escalating. Next, *walk* away. Creating distance

allows you to calm down and cool off. **Talk** yourself calm. Discuss your feelings or situation with a neutral party, seeking deeper understanding and guidance. If no one is available, talk to yourself. Repeat calming statements: "I'm fine. I'm calm. I can handle this in an intelligent way."

**3. Create a peace plan.** Engage in daily activities that naturally replace stress and anger with feelings of peace and serenity: aerobic exercise, prayer, meditation, deep breathing, smiling, music, nature, and pets. *When you have inner peace, you have it all.* **PE**

*Janet Pfeiffer, CEO of Pfeiffer Power Seminars, is a speaker, and author of The Secret Side of Anger. Visit www.PfeifferPowerSeminars.com.*

**ACTION:** Reduce anger; be a peacemaker.





## GOAL GETTERS



**To become a long-term winner, you need to know how to hit a curveball—how to confront and regularly overcome the unexpected.**

When things don't turn out as you plan, when you're thrown a curveball, you tend to freak out. *Resilience* is the capacity to withstand stressors and not manifest some form of dysfunction, whether it's depression or a flash of anger. Resilience is largely a learned trait. The more you face unexpected or stressful situations and overcome them, the more confidence you gain and the more resilient you become. Confronting and overcoming little hurdles prepares you for big obstacles, major curveballs. The best curveball hitters repeatedly confront and overcome the unexpected.

**Hitting a curveball starts with stepping up to the plate.** While it's natural to feel ashamed or embarrassed by being caught flat-footed and to want to conceal what's happening from those closest to you, procrastination and avoidance only extend pain and problems. Revealing you've been blind-sided removes the burden of shame and enables those close to you to provide support, advice, and comfort.

**Next, you need to overcome natural pessimism**—to set aside the fears that accompany curveballs. Don't let your imagination get the best of you. Find ways to fight off the worst case scenarios you so often paint and deal with the situation realistically. You need to be the batter, not the ball.

You can't do everything. Some things are beyond your power to effect. Let go of the things beyond your control and focus on what you can do. You need to keep your eye on the ball and concentrate on that which you can control.

**Reach out for help.** You can't win a game by yourself, so don't even try. Instead, pack your lineup and bench with savvy professionals who can help you overcome the unexpected, and listen to your coach. By filling out your team's lineup with other curveball hitters, you foster innovative thinking.

Take a moment and step out of

the batter's box to look at the situation from a fresh perspective. In developing a plan to deal with unexpected events, embrace non-linear thinking. Curveballs, by nature, are rarely solvable through conventional thinking.

No matter how eager you are to get over a curveball, you need to be patient and wait for a pitch you can hit. *Persistence beats resistance.* Give yourself and your plan the time needed to be successful.

**Curveballs, like all crises, offer opportunities.** You must shift from the *defensive* to the *offensive* to take advantage of the curveball and hit it out of the park.

—Scott R. Singer, [www.hitacurveball.com](http://www.hitacurveball.com)



**Great ideas are often right in front of your eyes, awaiting your discovery.** A rich place to

discover innovation is at the intersections of differences. Think differences in its broadest sense—in *perspectives, people, disciplines, businesses, organizations.* Here are a few lessons we've learned about working with differences:

**Wacky and weird are often promising!** The best ideas are usually the most wacky or even weird on first examination.

**Listen to the outsider.** By listening to *outsiders* and hearing how they see the innovation, you can often expand the usefulness of an idea. Examine their patterns of innovation.

**Diversity expands the options for innovation.** Without diversity, there can be no "verges of difference." Celebrate differences; enlarge the mix; it creates options.

**Complexities stifle innovation.** Working with differences calls for flexible, fluid partnership arrangements, so innovations don't get bogged down in complexities that stifle creativity.

**Everyone matters is a mind-set.** Innovation-generating partnerships require a mindset. A reliable yardstick: Everyone will benefit; no one will be harmed.

Learn how to get buy-in for innovative ideas or new programs.

—Joel Barker and Debbe Kennedy

## PersonalCOACH



### Self-defeating Behaviors

*These five make you fat.*

by Freeman Michaels

**WHEN YOU ENGAGE IN SELF-CRITICISM OR self-blame**—when you're preoccupied with your faults and mistakes—you put yourself at risk for depression, anxiety, emotional eating (and disorders) and weight gain.

I used to have a poor self-image and great anxiety. So, I engaged in unhealthy patterns around food and eating. I soon went from being an attractive TV soap opera star to being obese. But when I learned to forgive myself, be self-compassionate, and stop judging the way I looked, I released more than 70 pounds. You can do it too. It's not about giving something up, dieting, loss, or deprivation. It's about changing the way you think. Here are five behaviors that make you fat.

**Denying your emotional needs.** You're taught to buck up, stop complaining, be strong, keep our chin up. When you judge yourself for being "needy," you end up trying to fulfill your real needs (e.g., for safety, love, comfort, and so on) with food.

**Having a negative self-perception.** When you focus on your deficiencies (*I'm not good enough*), you start to feel defeated. Holding on to negative feelings about who you are can dominate your thoughts and erode your confidence. Changing your self-care, eating, and exercise habits begins to feel hopeless.

**Viewing yourself as a victim.** What you focus on expands, so focusing on what you *don't* want makes it inevitable that you will get more of it. When we feel sorry for ourselves (for being alone or unwanted, for example) it perpetuates a feeling of shame, humiliation, and self-judgment. In this frame of mind, it's too easy to engage in unhealthy habits that perpetuate the self-loathing.

**Resisting change.** Sometimes, even if we feel miserable and unhealthy, we don't want to take steps to feel better. Being unwilling to explore new ways to live, such as eating different foods or getting out of an inactivity rut, eventually turns into a feeling that those things are for other people, not for us.

**Reacting from the past.** Past experiences create emotions that get locked up inside us. When this happens, we end up reacting to present-day situations—such as workplace or relationship stressors—defensively. (*Here I am again, getting rejected or put down.*) The result? We seek comfort in food, because that seemed to help in the past. **PE**

Freeman Michaels (Drake Belson on *The Young and the Restless*) is now a weight-release coach, seminar leader, and author of *Weight Release: A Liberating Journey*. [www.servicetoself.com](http://www.servicetoself.com)

**ACTION: Avoid these self-defeating behaviors.**

## Who Are You?

*I love you just as you are.*



by Alan Cohen

AT A SEMINAR, DONNA reported that she'd just seen a healer who told her about several physical issues she needed to address. This report led to a discussion among participants, including lots of advice for Donna about how to regain her health and lose weight.

As I listened, I was uncomfortable. Everyone meant well, but the theme was, "There's a lot wrong with you, and we are going to tell you how to fix it."

When Donna stepped away, I invited her aside, took her hands, looked her in the eyes, and told her, "I love you just the way you are. I know there are things you are working on, but now I find you perfect, and I appreciate all you are and all you do for me and others."

Tears welled up in Donna's eyes and she let her head fall onto my shoulder. I held her as she let loose the pain of feeling that there were so many things wrong with her, and she could not be whole or happy until she fixed them. After a minute or two she felt better.

I was not suggesting to Donna that she overlook any conditions that were causing her pain, or that she should not make an effort to improve her health and feel better. I was simply affirming Donna's beauty, wholeness, and worth—even as she walked her *healing journey*.

*You and I live two lives simultaneously.* At one level, we have needs, deficits, and issues to be handled, and we strive to improve and set disorders or imbalances right. At the same time, we live in a deeper world in which we are whole, complete, well, and perfect as God created us. On a spiritual level there is nothing wrong with us, there never has been, and there never will be.

Only *in a world of illusion* do we identify ourselves as separate, wounded, broken, pained, and striving. In truth, the game of life is not about *getting somewhere*—it is about discovering that *we already are somewhere*.

*Perfection is not condition to be attained—it is a reality to be accepted.* The sage Swami Satchidananda noted, "We started out fine. Then we got defined. Now we are getting re-fined."

One of my clients reported, "I feel so overwhelmed with all the work I need to do on myself." I said, "Can you ever

imagine that you don't need to work on yourself? You are not here to fix what is broken about you. Can you visualize your life as an adventure of creativity, joy, and self-expression instead of striving to get somewhere or get it right?"

A smile grew on her face. "Wow!" she exclaimed. "I was taught that life is a struggle and I must get myself together. I just had a taste of freedom!"

The moment you start to work on yourself, you adopt the identity of the you that needs to be worked on. *You don't get to wholeness by denying your wholeness but by accepting it.*

*Claiming wholeness does not mean that you sit and do nothing.* You can be immersed in meaningful activity, seeking to make life more rewarding. The issue is not *what* you are doing but *why*

and *how* you are doing it. If you believe you are empty and need to be filled in, you set yourself up to lose. If you regard yourself as basically sound and you'd like to expand your experience of good, you set yourself up to win. You are not a black hole that needs to be filled—you are a light that needs to be shined.

*The more you know, the less you need.* When you know everything, you need nothing. The only real knowledge is *who you really are*—a spiritual being created in the image and likeness of a loving God. If you know that, everything you do will honor the wisdom and beauty you already own. PE

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**ACTION:** Recognize your true identity.

## Peace of Mind

*To find it, stop searching.*



by Joan Marques

WE'RE ALL SEARCHING FOR something. Some are looking for tangible assets, such as material wealth. Others are pursuing more delicate matters, like meaningful work, happiness, satisfaction, or peace of mind. And it seems as if *finding* what we search for has become harder.

We live in a time when media play an important role in our lives, and practically dictate what we should do, how and where we should live, who we should befriend, and what our appearance should be. The media serve an excellent purpose, but, there's a dark side! Needs are created when we view television, listen to the radio, surf the Net, or read newspapers and magazines. We see and hear—*thus we need*.

Today, *we search* more because we *need* more. Life has become more complicated, even for those of us who don't look for those new shoes, luscious meal, or fabulous earrings that were advertised. *Happiness, satisfaction, and peace of mind*—the more "ethereal" things we pursue—are much tied to the fulfillment of our other needs. You may, for instance, consider yourself happy if you can take your partner to that great restaurant that you heard about on the radio, with those trendy boots that you saw in the newspaper, or that new car advertised on television last night.

I invite you to *step back* and seriously

think about your eternal searches. You will realize that *you find the most important things you wish when you stop searching*. The more anxiously you look for something, the harder it seems to achieve, perhaps because you become impatient and decide to settle for less if what you want does not happen soon enough! Soon you become dissatisfied, realize your mistake, feel trapped in your choice, and start searching again.

Yet, once you finally decide to stop searching, you distance yourself from your desire, and you achieve peace of mind. If you detach yourself from the desires that incite you, there's little that can disrupt your inner balance. When you stop searching, you don't feel pressure to find what you initially desired.

*Once the pressure is gone, a sense of relief and inner peace sets in, and you are ready to accept everything at the right time.*

Taking a mental step back makes you realize *the superficiality* of most of your desires, and provokes you to rethink them. *This is when the right things start happening to you, and you wishes get fulfilled.*

It's all about abolishing pressure and attaining a calm, balanced state of mind.

You then become *more discriminating* in the choices you make. You no longer settle for the first option that crosses your path. You have the patience and detachment to sense when the right opportunity, person, or job comes along. You know when the time is right, make deliberate choices, and enjoy lasting contentment. PE

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**ACTION:** Enjoy peace of mind.

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