

Colin Powell

"You can be very proud of the good work you're doing. I highly commend your efforts."

BELIEVE IT!

BECOME IT!

HOW TO HURDLE BARRIERS
AND
EXCEL LIKE NEVER BEFORE

PAULA NOBLE FELLINGHAM

Believe It! **BECOME IT!**

**How to Hurdle Barriers
and
Excel Like Never Before**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Believe Five Pillar Principles

Chapter 1 Power Beliefs

Chapter 2 I Can Create Change

I choose my thoughts, words and actions
I release myself from damaging beliefs

Chapter 3 I Am Joyful and Confident

I create my own happiness
I enjoy positive self-beliefs

Chapter 4 I Set High, Achievable Goals

I identify what hurts most and what I want most
I apply the 7 Steps to Success

Chapter 5 I Use Positive Experiencing to Become My Ideal Self

I imagine things in great detail which become like real experiences
I often replay my wins

Chapter 6 I Act ‘AS IF’ While I’m Becoming

I live the part as I diligently pursue my goals
I affirm my abilities and stay on course

Chapter 7 Believe It!

INTRODUCTION

The doorbell rang one frosty January morning. It was Mom, standing on the front steps with a grin on her face and a package in her hands. She had found our old Family Time Capsule! You see, on New Years Day 1985, our family wrote goals and placed them in a box we called our Time Capsule. The plan was to review them the following January...but Mom lost the box. Now, years later she was delivering the newly-discovered contents to her grown children. I laughed as I unfolded my yellow-stained notes. My laughter turned to dismay as I read my ancient goals. I could hardly believe my eyes! These goals were nearly the same ones I wrote for myself just days before!

Why do we continue setting the same goals for ourselves, year after year?

Believe it and Become It. In this e-book you'll learn ways to create positive change and release yourself from negative thoughts...allowing you to rise above life's obstacles and live beyond their energy-sapping, joy-sucking grip. You'll learn how to reflect joy and confidence in your self-mirror; to create your own happiness *and* light the way for others.

Then, as you work toward your goals using positive experiencing and positive crisis (wonderful tools) you'll understand how to exceed your highest expectations. And finally, through partnering, preparation and performance you can become your best self and create an extraordinary life.

This book is a tool for doers. It is a life-changing program for those who want to thrive, not simply survive. If you read this book thoughtfully and carefully absorb its teachings, then conscientiously practice its principles, you can experience powerful, personal improvement.

As you use the Five Pillar Principles in your life, you can modify or change the circumstances in which you now live and take control of them rather than be directed by them. Each of your relationships can improve, and you can have increased influence over everyone in your life's circle.

You can enjoy a delightful new sense of well-being, and even increased health. How can I say with certainty that these are the by-products of learning and living the Believe It! Become It! principles? Because I've witnessed amazing results in readers' lives and know these concepts are life-changing.

I invite everyone who wants to live joyfully to join me in the adventure of **becoming** our ideal selves.

The first step? **Believe.**

CHAPTER 1

POWER BELIEFS

“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their beliefs.”

William James

Wouldn't it be thrilling to hurdle every barrier in your life and excel like you've never excelled before? You absolutely can! The first step is *believing* that it's possible.

Within each one of us there is a power we scarcely tap. This power has fueled heroic deeds since time began and has energized great inventors, artists and musicians throughout the ages. It's the exact same power available to you every day of your life. It is the power of belief.

What is a belief? It is a sense of certainty about something. For example, if you believe you're a good musician you think, "I feel certain that I'm a fine musician." And that sense of certainty helps you channel your skill, creativity and resources to produce beautiful music. On the other hand, a negative belief works the same way. If you say, "I believe I'm a terrible singer" then your certainty that you sing badly will actually help orchestrate just the right elements needed to produce results that validate your belief.

The aim of Believe It! BECOME IT! is to ignite the marvelous power of positive belief within you. This power can, without question, amplify and enrich every area of your life. As you study and practice the principles in this book, and as you identify and use positive beliefs in your life, you will gain access to a reservoir of energy and inspiration for constructive personal growth, taking you to a whole new level of living.

Marcus Aurelius, a 2nd century philosopher and Emperor of Rome once said,
“A man's life is what his beliefs make of it.”

And Dale Carnegie, author of the book *How To Win Friends and Influence People* wrote,

“Believe that you will succeed. Believe it firmly, and you will then do what is necessary to bring success about.”

Through the years I've heard, "How can I believe I'll be successful when my past history tells me otherwise? That's a common question asked by people who are wounded by past failures. They've allowed the blows of life and the multiplication of their challenges to produce entrenched self-doubt. Frequently, those who *want* to believe they can become their ideal selves suffer from a deep sense of inadequacy and insecurity. They simply don't trust their ability to make positive changes in their lives. Their damaged hearts don't allow them to believe in themselves, so they settle for something less than true fulfillment.

The Power Beliefs in this book teach you how to control and direct your thoughts in positive ways. As you develop the sense of certainty that positive beliefs provide, you'll be able to accomplish virtually anything, including those things that others think are impossible.

Take a look at some facts about people who believed in themselves and in their special "gifts":

- Dr. Seuss's first children's book was rejected by 23 publishers.
- Michelangelo endured 7 long years lying on his back on a scaffold to paint the Sistine Chapel. He was nearly blinded by the paint that dripped in his eyes.
- Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team.
- Walt Disney went bankrupt four times before he succeeded.
- Charles Goodyear was imprisoned for debt and ridiculed by family and friends.
- Albert Einstein's doctoral dissertation was rejected and called "irrelevant."
- Cyrus Curtis lost over \$800,000 on the *Saturday Evening Post* before it realized a single dollar profit.
- Thomas Edison failed one thousand nine hundred ninety-nine times before his invention of the light bulb worked. He remarked, "I am not discouraged because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward."

I believe we're all here to contribute something unique, and that each of us has a special gift, a particular talent, to share with others.

My hope is that you will come to believe that you don't have to be defeated by anything. You can enjoy peace of mind, boundless energy, compelling confidence and even improved health each and every day of a joy-filled life.

Too many people go through life in quiet unhappiness, defeated by everyday problems. They struggle through their days and nights without knowing that it doesn't have to be that way! Yes, life throws us curves and challenges – frequently. But allowing ourselves to be defeated by difficulties is needless and avoidable. While not ignoring the obstacles and tragedies in our lives, we shouldn't allow them to dominate our minds because the beliefs in our minds create the results in our lives.

As you sow in your mind, so shall you reap in your life. Think of your mind as a bed of rich soil that will help all kinds of seeds to flourish, whether good or bad. If you sow noxious thistles you can't expect to reap luscious fruit. It is essential to allow only good thoughts to grow in the fertile soil of your mind because happiness is directly related to our ability to fill our minds with positive thoughts.

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*. (Phil. 4:8) For, as *a man thinketh, so is he*.

The World Within Creates the World Without

Another way to explain this concept is that the world *within* creates the world *without*. If you want to change external conditions you must first change the cause...your thoughts. Every thought is a cause, and every condition is an effect. Often, people try to change circumstances by working on the circumstances. Why? Because they fail to see that to remove limitation and lack from your life you must first remove the beliefs and images which encourage that limitation and lack. Change the cause and you change the effect. You possess all the power necessary to heal a troubled mind and a broken heart, and to move forward joyfully. Indeed, you can choose to make your life greater, richer, nobler and better than ever before, or you can choose to live in emotional bondage, in a stagnant or even regressive state.

Let's talk about *how* to create positive change and move forward joyfully.

If we want to make use of physical forces of nature, such as in chemistry, mathematics and physics, we must first learn the principles. Likewise, if we want to make use of the force of our mind, we must learn its principles.

One law of your mind is this: the response you get from your subconscious mind is determined by the nature of the thoughts in your conscious mind. The latter is like the captain of a ship. He sends orders to people in the engine room who control the ship navigational instruments. The engine room people are like the subconscious mind. They don't know where they're going, they just follow orders. They'd hit rocks and wreck the ship if the captain sent them faulty instructions. Because the captain (conscious mind) is in charge, the engine room people don't talk back to the captain, they just carry out his orders because he's supposed to know what he's doing.

Your conscious mind - the captain of your ship – gives your subconscious mind orders based on your self-beliefs. Then your subconscious mind acts on the orders, without questioning them, even if those beliefs are wrong.

For example, if you say to yourself, "*I'm no good at selling. Hey, I like people, but I just can't sell.*" Then your subconscious mind acts on that belief and will be sure that you don't succeed as a salesman. You will not be able to sell, and you'll believe that circumstances caused it. The fact is, you created your circumstances through your negative belief. Your false belief was the cause, your failure as a salesperson is the effect.

Conscious and Subconscious

You may know that the conscious and subconscious are two spheres of activity within your mind. Your conscious mind reasons and chooses. For example, your decisions like the home you live in, the food you eat, the people you choose as your friends – these choices are made with the conscious mind.

On the other hand, your subconscious mind functions without any conscious choice on your part. It keeps your heart beating automatically and your body functioning without thought. Your

subconscious mind doesn't reason things out, it doesn't argue with you, it just blindly accepts your conscious belief, both good and bad. Again, it's like rich soil that accepts any kind of seeds. For example, if you consciously believe something is right – even if it's wrong – your subconscious mind accepts it as right and then works to make that information correct. It will bring information and suggestions (even the wrong ones) to pass as conditions and experiences. This works for both good and bad like this: When you think, “*I believe I'm a loving, kind person,*” each day you act in loving, kind ways. On the other hand, if you think, “*I'm always impatient with my children,*” you continue to be impatient.

Whatever the conscious, reasoning mind *believes*, the subconscious mind *accepts* and *acts* on.

Your subconscious mind is always working, night and day. It keeps your body functioning even though you aren't consciously participating; it's always on the job for you. Since you can't interact with the subconscious mind, realize that your business is with the conscious mind. Therefore, it is imperative to a healthy, joyful life to sow the seeds of positive thought, gratitude, abundance, love, and peace. Expect the best continuously and fill your mind with goodness. Take care of your conscious mind, knowing that your subconscious mind is always expressing and manifesting according to your habitual thinking.

Almost everything that has happened to you in your life happened because of your conscious beliefs, impressed on your subconscious mind. If you've communicated wrong or distorted beliefs to your subconscious mind, it is urgently important that you correct them. And as you learn new ways of thinking, your subconscious mind will accept your new, healthy thought patterns and they'll become habitual. Your subconscious mind drives habits.

Thinking Patterns Create Deep Grooves

Your habitual thinking patterns create deep grooves in your subconscious mind. If your habitual thoughts are constructive, peaceful, loving, your subconscious mind will respond by creating positive, peaceful, loving conditions in your life. On the other hand, if your thought patterns are fearful, worrisome or otherwise destructive, the good news is that you can use the Power Beliefs to break the cycle and create new, healthy thought habits.

I absolutely know that we have the power to take control and change nearly anything and everything in our lives, because within each of us lies both the ability to turn our dreams into reality, and the solutions to our every challenge.

Deep inside all of us lies the belief that our life experience can be greater than it is. We *want* to raise our standards to a new, more exciting level and to also lift others.

This book is meant to be a powerful personal catalyst. It can help you produce specific, measurable, long-lasting changes. The five Pillar Principles will catapult you forward, allowing you to take giant leaps toward becoming your ideal self. These principles will take you from merely wishing you could improve to reaching - and exceeding - each and every goal you've had on your New Year's resolution list for years.

CHAPTER 2

Power Belief #1 “I Can Create Change”

“If we don't change direction soon, we'll end up where we're going.”

Irwin Corey

An event may be crucial in the short term, but researchers find that people's enduring self-concept—their view of who they are and what they are capable of—is not tied to any single positive or negative event. Instead, a self-concept is composed of a combination of beliefs and feelings based on long-term experiences both at home and at work (Black, 1999).

Researchers find that an optimistic personal outlook is more than just seeing the bright side of things. Believing in yourself actually produces increases in good health, motivation, and achievement for six in ten people (Schulman, 1999).

I Choose My Thoughts, Words and Actions

The first step to **becoming** is to get yourself out of the way.

Michael despised his cubicle. He was envious each morning as he passed the offices with doors, occupied by executives behind large mahogany desks. Michael wanted a promotion, but it was a wish, not a goal. A wish is a goal without the do and the deadline.

One evening Michael expressed his discontent to his wife. She quickly reminded him that he should be grateful for his job and be content. “Don't make waves,” his wife counseled. “We're fine the way things are. Don't do anything that might put your job at risk!”

The next day Michael repeated her words in his mind as he walked by the executive offices. And he thought, “She's right. I'm not smart enough to get promoted, anyway.”

What if Michael had taken another path in his mind? Instead of going down the low road of Negative Thought, he could be striding confidently along the high road of Positive Belief that always leads to successful **becoming**.

You have a myriad of choices every moment, and your mind will take you wherever you wish. The very first and most important thing you need to understand is your role in creating the results that are your life.

Zig Ziglar remarked, “You are free to choose, but the choices you make today will determine what you will have, be, and do in the tomorrow of your life.” Indeed, our lives are a sum total of the choices we make.

You Create Your Life with the Choices You Make Each Day

This isn't always what we want to admit, because frequently our choices lead us to negative results. But the truth is: we own our lives. Whether we're happy, unhappy, successful or unsuccessful, we're accountable for our choices.

Admittedly, many people are weighed down with challenges that are absolutely no fault of their own. Children are abused, parents divorce, fat genes are part of life, and bad things happen to good people. But right now, as adults, we have choices regarding how we deal with our past and present circumstances. We can either point fingers, blame, withdraw, resent, or we can turn our faces to the future and focus on solutions. We can allow ourselves to be pulled backwards, or we can "take the best and discard the rest" from past experiences, and move forward. The choice is ours.

When you choose to resist or deny ownership for your life and for your choices, you also choose stagnation, because as long as you're convinced that you're a victim, you simply cannot begin to heal and progress. If you truly want to improve your life then you must embrace the principle of choice and accountability. This is about taking responsibility for your thoughts, words, and actions. This wonderful principle has the power to set you free from damaging beliefs about yourself and others who may have hurt you. It has the power to release people from all negative habits. As you practice this principle you learn how to live above everything that attempts to pull you down or backwards. So let's learn how to harness the power this principle provides.

The First Power Belief, "**I Can Create Change,**" has three parts:

First, assess where you are in your belief patterns; how you habitually think about yourself, others and your circumstances.

Second, understand the principle of choice. This principle makes change possible.

Third, learn how to release yourself from damaging beliefs by controlling and directing your thoughts.

Assess Your Belief Patterns

Honestly answer these twelve questions.

1. Do I usually think positive thoughts about myself and others?
2. Do I think I'm fairly attractive?
3. Am I usually clever in social situations?
4. Do most of the people in my life's circle like me?
5. Am I kind to my family members?
6. Does my family know that I love them?

7. Am I assertive when I need to be?
8. Do I usually make wise choices about most things in life?
9. Am I generally happy with my home and neighborhood?
10. On most days do I like my job?
11. When I help others do I do it cheerfully?
12. Do I look to the future with optimism?

How did you do? Were most of your answers “no” or “yes?” On one end of the scale are those who answered every question with a “yes.” You are usually kind, optimistic people with healthy self-confidence. Your belief patterns are consistently positive and you’ll easily handle the second and third parts of this Power Belief. On the other end of the scale are those who answered every question with a “no.” In parts two and three of this Power Belief you’ll discover ways to lift yourself to a higher, happier level of living.

Most people answered some questions “no” and some “yes.” For you, portions of the next two parts will come easily and, using the Daily Action Plan, you’ll quickly release yourself from all damaging beliefs and as you learn how to control and direct your thoughts.

The Principle of Choice Makes Change Possible

I remember the very moment it happened. It was one of those life-altering experiences we often describe as “ah-ha moments” when the mind suddenly seems to expand with new understanding. I was sitting on the front row of a seminar on strengthening relationships when the speaker quoted Eleanor Roosevelt. That great lady said, **“No one can make me feel inferior without my consent.”** I remember thinking, *Wow! That means that we allow people to offend us; we allow people to make us angry. Our reaction to people and our circumstances is our choice!* And then my mind took it a step further and I thought, *that means that if we can allow people to make us angry, we can refuse to be offended or angry!*

Time actually seemed to stand still as I pondered, then understood, this incredible concept: **We can respond to others and to our circumstances however we choose.** And I realized that the time had come to take control of my life.

Soon afterwards I learned about Victor Frankl. Let me take you to the place where he learned this same priceless lesson:

Victor Frankl Story

The year is 1945. You are in Auschwitz, Germany imprisoned in a concentration camp whose horror defies description. Your entire family has been killed. You’re a Jewish psychiatrist named Viktor Frankl. The guards have stripped you, beaten you, starved you and deprived you of sleep. And yet you live on, determined to somehow create meaning out of this horror. As you are experiencing this hell on earth you come to an incredible understanding. The guards can torture you, but you have the power to respond

to them however you *choose*. They can beat you, but they can't take away your will to live. They can strip you, but you can clothe yourself with mental power beyond their reach. They can starve you, but you can feast on your dreams of the future. You see, Victor Frankl imagined himself at a university pulpit, teaching the future generation about the ultimate freedom - the freedom to choose how you respond to life. He was passionate about living to tell his story so that never again would a human being be allowed to cause such suffering as he had endured.

Those prison guards couldn't make Victor Frankl angry or discouraged. Think how our lives would change if we truly understood and applied this concept! We would no longer blame others. We wouldn't say, "You make me angry!" because we'd understand that no one *makes* us angry; we can choose to be in control of our emotions. We would no longer blame other people, our circumstances, the weather, etc. for anything. We wouldn't say, "I can't get up that early - I'm just not a morning person!" because we're any kind of a person we choose to be. We wouldn't say, "I'm in a bad mood because the boss is being a jerk today." Or, "My kids are making me crazy!" Do you see how it works?

This is an incredibly important principle. This means that you and you alone own your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. Is this difficult? Yes, because it's easier when you can point to someone else while you're saying, "It's not my fault - he made me do it!"

This is a wonderful, liberating principle with monumental significance as it relates to personal progress.

"I Choose My Thoughts, Words and Actions" is part of the first Power Belief because it's the key to personal growth. You must take responsibility for your thoughts, words and actions if you are to move forward in your life. It is imperative that you understand this principle thoroughly in order to progress. To help you do that, here are three stories of people who do *not* get it.

Marlene and David Didn't Get It

Marlene was furious at David, her husband. It was 7:30 at night and he still wasn't home. She had made a lovely dinner and had prepared his favorite dessert. Marlene and both children had waited until 7:00 o'clock, but they finally gave up and ate without him. With each passing minute Marlene became angrier. She complained to the children about their father's irresponsibility, and after dinner she impatiently paced the floor. When David finally arrived, Marlene exploded with a flood of accusations and belittling remarks.

Was Marlene's behavior justified? Maybe David had promised to be home at 6:00 pm and this was the fourteen time he was late. Maybe it was the first time he was late. That doesn't matter. The question is, should David's behavior determine Marlene's reaction?

If Marlene understood that we are responsible for our emotions, regardless of the words or actions of others, perhaps she would have handled it differently. Her children certainly would have learned a far different lesson that night. This is how the evening might have looked if

Marlene didn't blame David:

Marlene thought, *Darn, David is late again. I wonder what happened. I hope this dessert will taste as good when he gets home.* "Well, kids," she remarked cheerfully, "It looks like Dad won't be here for dinner, but look how delicious this looks! Hop up to the table and let's eat." Then instead of focusing on David and the possible reasons for why he wasn't there, Marlene focused on the children. She asked each one about what they learned at school that day, she shared her experiences of the day, and she genuinely enjoyed the meal. After dinner Marlene read stories to the children.

Does understanding this principle mean that we never get upset when things go wrong? Of course not. The difference is that we don't blame others for our reactions. We learn how to control our emotions and we wait until an appropriate time to discuss the problem. And when the time comes to talk about it we communicate in a way that doesn't create more problems.

Another unhealthy scenario occurs when people choose not to *say* anything, but instead harbor negative, critical *thoughts*.

A Lesson Learned

Joseph and his wife Sharon love their family, and stay in close touch with their children and their grandchildren. When their daughter, Jody, began having marital problems, they were concerned and supported her the best way they knew how. After her divorce, she began dating heavily and brought her two young children to Grandpa and Grandma's house often. Joseph and Sharon wanted Jody to be happy; but as time went on, they felt more and more used. They began resenting the grandchildren and became angry with their daughter. However, they didn't say anything to her and continued to watch the children each time she asked because they were afraid she'd be upset.

How would Joseph and Sharon handle this situation if they understood that 1) when we allow someone to make us a victim, it's our choice, and 2) we're all responsible for our thoughts, words and actions?

As soon as Jody began bringing her children too often, Joseph and Sharon could have started a calm discussion with their daughter. "Jody, we love you and want you to be happy, but we're not comfortable tending the children as often as you want us to. We'll be glad to watch them one evening each week." Then (and this is important) Joseph and Sharon would likely begin think more kindly about their daughter and grandchildren. If unkind thoughts crept in, they would label them as such and work on replacing them.

Does this take mental strength? Yes. Can it be done? Absolutely! Let's examine one more example:

Two Endings to the Story

Diane thought she should be promoted at work. She was qualified, she worked hard, and she

did everything she was asked to do. However, when promotions were announced, Diane was overlooked and Steven got the job she wanted. Diane told every co-worker, "I am *way* more qualified than Steven, and I've been here longer!" She repeated her disapproval for weeks. Then she began coming late to work, and not giving 100% of her effort when she was there. "Well," Diane reasoned, "Why should I do my best when it doesn't make any difference? If those executives had given me the promotion, I would've been great. It's their fault I'm turning in lousy work."

If Diane understood that when you take responsibility for your thoughts, words and actions, you don't blame others, her behavior would have been far different:

When she heard the news that Steve got the promotion, Diane could have swallowed her pride and congratulated him. Although she may have been disappointed, she would have understood that it wasn't Steve's fault, or the executive's fault. "*You know,*" Diane thought, "*There must be a bigger picture that I don't see. Oh, well, there will be other promotions, and I'm going to work really hard to qualify for the next one.*"

But You Don't Understand!

As you read those examples, you may think, "*You don't understand! I have some real challenges in my life. And there are genuine toxic personalities I have to deal with on a daily basis! It's really NOT my fault that my life is the way it is. It's my parent's fault - or my wife's fault - or my boss' fault.*"

OK, let's go there.

First, let me console you by saying that it is at the very core of human nature to blame other people. It's like "survival of the fittest" - self-preservation - to try to escape accountability. You don't want to be responsible, because if you are, you're accountable. Then you have to experience the consequences of your mistakes, *every* time. You're where the buck stops.

It's far more difficult to accept accountability for your life. But once you "get it" and grab hold - taking responsibility for the results in your life - you'll begin achieving as you've *never* achieved before. If you truly want to progress, you must go to work and take control of every part of your life.

However, let me be very clear: Until you stop blaming others for your problems; until you stop convincing yourself that you are a victim, you will never progress. You will remain in a backwards-focus, finger-pointing mode that spells f-a-i-l-u-r-e. No growth. No achievement. No extraordinary life.

On a plaque that hung in Mother Teresa's Calcutta orphanage, Kent Keith wrote the following words:

People are often unreasonable and self-centered,
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.

If you are honest, people may cheat you.
Be honest anyway.

If you find happiness, people may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.
Give your best anyway.

For you see, in the end, it is between you and God.
It was never between you and them anyway.

To Move Forward, Embrace This

To move forward with your life you must fully embrace the fact that the solutions to each and every one of your life's challenges lie within you.

Remember the examples above? Since Marlene understands that she creates her own results, she doesn't believe that her husband's behavior justifies her losing control; so she chooses to focus on enjoying the meal and her children.

If Joseph and Sharon accept accountability for their lives, they'll take control of the situation as soon as it becomes uncomfortable for them and create a positive solution.

When Diane accepts accountability for her life, she is then able to take her loss in stride, with graciousness and dignity. She can move forward in her life, free of anger and envy - two "companions" of those who don't accept responsibility for the results in their lives.

You may believe that something in your childhood, which was far beyond your control, caused you pain and that's why you are troubled.

How about the little girl who was raped, or the little boy who was molested? How can they possibly "create their own results?" People who have had their childhoods stolen, for any reason, often feel that since they were wronged, they aren't accountable for their own behavior as adults.

No one will disagree that hurting children is a grievous sin. The adults who caused such pain are depraved and should be punished. However, you will never fix your problems blaming someone else. When you were a child, you didn't have the power to choose the events in your

life; but things have changed, and you are an adult, now. As an adult, you can choose your reaction to those childhood events and circumstances. To move past the past, you must understand that in the todays and tomorrows of your life, you can gain control by accepting responsibility for your thoughts, words and actions.

Relative to unfortunate events in your past, you have choices. You can re-live them, focusing backwards with a pointed finger. Or you can face forward, replacing past sadness with **positive beliefs** about who you are now, and with **positive goals** to create the successful person you'll be tomorrow. The choice is yours. I'm guessing that since you're reading this book, you've already made the right choice. Let's move on to *how* to replace past sadness and damaging beliefs with positive ones. Later, we'll talk about those positive goals.

Release Yourself from Damaging Beliefs

We each carry with us mental pictures of ourselves; our "self beliefs." These beliefs may be unclear to our conscious mind, but they are there, down to the last detail. They are our ideas about who we are, formed from past experiences, successes and failures, embarrassing moments, achievements, (both big and small), and the way people have treated us, especially during our childhood. From all of these experiences, we mentally create pictures of ourselves. Once a belief about ourselves goes into this picture, it becomes a "fact" to us and we don't question its validity; we act as though it were true.

Your self beliefs form the foundation for your personality and your behavior. Therefore, these self beliefs are the key to change. This is true for two reasons: First, your actions are always consistent with your beliefs. Second, your beliefs *can* be changed.

Simply stated, **we act like the person we believe ourselves to be.** We literally cannot act otherwise, in spite of our conscious efforts. Because our actions are always in harmony with our beliefs, ideas which are inconsistent with our beliefs are rejected (by our subconscious minds), not believed, and therefore not acted upon.

It should be clear, then, only ideas that are consistent with our core beliefs will be accepted and acted upon.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz, author of *Psycho-Cybernetics*, underscored this when he wrote: "The man who conceives himself to be a 'failure type person' will find some way to fail, in spite of all his good intentions, or his will power, even if opportunity is literally dumped in his lap. The person who conceives himself to be a victim of injustice, one 'who was meant to suffer,' will invariably find circumstances to verify his opinions."

For example, many people are told, when they're young, that they're no good in math. Parents say things like, "None of our family is good in math. We just don't understand it!" Other parents make similar comments regarding music, athletics, etc. Remember back to your own childhood. Did anyone ever tell you that you weren't a good singer, or that you couldn't draw well? Or perhaps you were told that you'd never be a good basketball player, and so on. Most adults can easily remember stinging comments like these.

Children who hear such remarks, day after day, soon come to believe them. They create negative self-talk (how we talk to ourselves in our minds). They think, “*I’m just no good in math, none of my family is.*” Or, “*I could never make the team, so I just won’t try out.*” Or, “*Since I can’t sing, I shouldn’t take chorus, and I’d make a fool of myself if I tried out for the school musical.*” Then, sure enough, these same children don’t excel in those areas, and usually their report cards verify their beliefs. Children then have “proof” that they’re failures. And because of this objective “proof,” they don’t question their incompetence. Sadly, ***these young people don’t ever think that the trouble may lie in their own beliefs about themselves.*** And yet, tell a young person who is failing in math that he only “thinks” he can’t understand it and he won’t believe you! He’s tried and tried, and still his report card tells the story. Often he gets a low score on a test, and instead of saying, “I failed that test,” he’ll think to himself, “*Yep, I’m a failure!*”

And perhaps the saddest fact of all is that we carry these negative beliefs throughout our lives! We develop limiting beliefs about who we are and what we’re capable of from our earliest years, then we carry those negative self beliefs for decades. Based on past failures, we believe we’ll fail in the future. But the wonderful news is – *the past doesn’t equal the future!*

How about the businesswoman who believes she can’t sell? Oh, she’ll agree that she has good people-skills; she’s friendly and personable. But this woman was rejected by the first six people to whom she tried to sell a product, and now firmly believes she’ll never be a good salesperson. “I’m just not good at it,” she’ll explain. Additionally, she believes that she will never earn more than a certain figure, and her paycheck proves it month after month. And sometimes, instead of saying, “I’m not a good salesperson,” she says, “I’m a failure.” And then she allows her failure in one area to affect other areas of her life.

Our life experiences confirm, and thereby strengthen, our self beliefs, and positive or negative cycles are created.

Most of us recognize that we have a few negative self beliefs that impede our progress and personal growth in some areas. But the good news is that negative self beliefs can be changed! We’re never too young or too old to reverse our negative beliefs and start living a life full of extraordinary achievements!

More Than Positive Thinking

What we’re talking about is more than “positive thinking,” however. This is about changing your core self beliefs. It’s not about someone gritting his teeth and thinking, “*I will make this sale!*” Rather, thoughts about ‘self’ are altered. He thinks, “*I am a successful salesman. In fact, I do quite well at most things!*” Pessimistic, harmful core beliefs need to be fundamentally changed into positive ones.

Dr. Maltz wrote, “It is literally impossible to really think positively about a particular situation as long as you hold a negative concept of self. And numerous experiments have shown that once the concept of self is changed, other things consistent with the new concept of self are

accomplished easily and without strain.”

When you change your negative self-beliefs, which underlie all of your negative actions, you increase your ability to act in positive ways. Then, achieving your goals – in every area of your life - becomes easier and easier.

Let’s get real clarity about a few points we’ve discussed:

1. You are who you are because of the dominating thoughts you permit in your mind.
2. You can either choose to attack yourself with negativity or affirm your abilities.
3. Positive mental picturing is a key to healthy change. You are the writer, director and star of either an Oscar-winning epic (an extraordinary life) or a Grade ‘B’ movie (less than your best). The person you see in your imagination will always rule your world.

The key is you. You must:

- Believe you can change, and *want* to change your negative self-beliefs
- Identify the beliefs you need to alter
- Learn and use key skills

Believe You Can Change Your Negative Self-beliefs

To take control in any area of your life, the very first step is to create a belief that says with certainty, “I can do this!” When you develop this sense of certainty, you can accomplish virtually anything.

People develop this certainty in different ways. Some people take the first step and realize on their own (before life becomes painful) that change is not only possible, but highly desirable. Other people have family and friends who lovingly point out the need for change, and encourage them in positive directions. Still others don’t have a support system; they “go it alone.” Then, when the pain becomes too great, they find the courage within to change. Many look to God for additional strength to move forward and break the cycle of negativity or destruction in their lives.

Those who struggle to believe they *can* change their negative self-beliefs, and develop a powerful sense of certainty, may be encouraged by those who hurdled similar barriers.

Tawni, from Utah, desperately tried to overcome her negative feelings. She shares her story:

I had absolute terror panic attacks which would render me completely sleepless and immobile. This fear would drive my decisions about activities, travel, work, etc. What got me through it? The number one thing was my desire. Down to my toes I desired to be free! I’m now 46 years old, and it took approximately 44 years to achieve, but I’m here! The second “help” was *my total belief* that God would help me conquer. Third, were friends, and learning about kinesiology. I learned about how the brain/body is organized and balanced. I worked hard at this, and eventually my old patterns of fear

went out and I put calm, new ones in. My advice to others who want to accomplish this is to *believe it can be done*, trust God, and get educated about your problem. Celebrate your baby step improvements. I can now stay alone, travel alone, and I think completely differently. I am finally free!

Sara, age 23, from California, described her struggles and accomplishment:

Since childhood I have been a compulsive overeater. It was the compulsive overeating combined with depression and extremely low self esteem that led to my eating disorder of Bulimia Nervosa. I was bulimic every day for almost two years during my college years. It was then I became completely powerless over binge vomiting. It was something I could not give up. I would wake up in the morning praying for the strength to make it just one day without binging or vomiting, and by lunch time I had already succumbed to the disease. Every day was a struggle to survive. After seeking professional help, I was led to Overeaters Anonymous (OA) and *they helped me believe* I could do this. I became abstinent after two weeks of attending the program. I relapsed six months later but was able to regain abstinence. It has been nearly three years since I've been in recovery.

The answer for me was *believing I could change*, sharing my thoughts and feelings at the OA meetings, and being accepted unconditionally. They knew how to cure my unbelieving heart. Also, picking up the phone and talking to others brought my despairing mind back to reality. Another thing that helped me is service. Doing charitable acts of kindness for others always helped me feel better. Lastly, journal writing, reading good books, and praying have been things I've done to get me through the hard times.

My advice to others is to not give up, no matter what. You may slip and fall and feel like your troubles will never end, but "this too shall pass." One day at a time is all you have to get through. *Begin by believing you can do it.*

One of my heroes, the ever-positive Walt Disney, once said, "When you believe in a thing, believe in it all the way, implicitly and unquestionably." I would like to urge you to believe in your power and ability to change; believe you can turn from negativity and from every damaging belief that pulls you backwards; believe you can replace harmful beliefs with new, positive ones that will catapult you forward to exhilarating success.

Identify the Beliefs You Need to Alter

To begin any change, first you need to identify all behaviors needing change, because you can't alter what you don't acknowledge. And if you refuse to acknowledge your own self-destructive beliefs and behaviors, not only will they continue, they'll become more deeply entrenched and grow more resistant to change.

Acknowledgement of your weaknesses (and strengths) requires absolute honesty about what is and what isn't working in your life. You need to know both what's working, (which you can *celebrate*) and what's not, so you can fix it.

I offer an exercise that will help you identify the beliefs you need to alter. However, before we begin:

- First, give yourself permission to examine and question every belief you now hold about yourself.
- Second, open your mind to the possibility that some of your beliefs – even ones you’ve firmly held as true - may be false.
- Third, allow the possibility that some of your beliefs may be preventing you from moving forward as you’d like.

Now, we’re ready for the exercise. Relax and take an unhurried few moments to answer the questions below (simply reflect on your responses to each question; nothing need be written down for this exercise).

1. Name the person or people who bring you the greatest joy. Think about why they make you happy.
2. Name the thing you enjoy doing the most. Think about how you feel when you’re doing it.
3. Name a place you love to go. Think about that place and, using your imagination, “go there” for a few moments.
4. Now, name a person in your life who causes you sadness and pain. Did you just go from peace to agitation? Why?
5. Name what you like least about your job or about your family. Feel what’s happening to your state of mind as you go there.
6. Think about a time when someone you care about humiliated or deeply hurt you.

If you did that exercise thoughtfully, taking your time and imagining in great detail, you experienced the marvelous power of the mind. In a matter of seconds, you can go from happiness and peace to agitation and discomfort, even anger. This same mind power will be your ally as you attempt to identify the negative behaviors in your life that need altering. As you carefully question your self-beliefs, in your heart of hearts, you will know what needs correcting in your life.

And, with that same mind power, you can control your thoughts - if you choose. There are three steps. Each one is mandatory, if you are to successfully control your thoughts.

- 1. LABEL**
- 2. REPLACE**
- 3. FOCUS FORWARD**

Label Your Negative Thoughts

Labeling your negative thoughts is like casting a light into a dark room—it disperses the darkness (negativity). Labeling is the critical part of this “solution” because when a negative thought enters your mind, you can either pay attention and stop it - by labeling it immediately - or you can let your mind take you along a negative path and allow the thought to grow and fester.

A far better choice is to “nip it in the bud.” This requires you to exert some willpower and strength of character. The very moment a negative thought enters your mind, label it with something like:

- “That was negative.”
- “That was unkind.” (Name the thought: critical, judgmental, etc.)
- “That wasn’t like me. I usually don’t think negative thoughts.”

The third comment (above) is a superb self-fulfilling prophecy that helps people hurdle the barrier of habitually negative thought patterns.

Replace Your Negative Thoughts

Replacing negative thoughts is most effectively done by trying to ‘be’ the person you’re thinking about, with their needs and life experiences. This requires you to put yourself in the other person’s position and really consider why he’s speaking or acting as he is. Most of the time, with this perspective, even if you don’t agree with the person, at least you can replace the negative thought with something like:

- “I can understand why she’s doing (saying) that. It’s because she...”
- “If I understood her better, I’d probably like her more. I’ll get to know her.”
- “Too bad he acts (talks) that way. What can I learn from it?”
- “Different strokes for different folks!”

Focus Your Thinking Forward

Healthy forward thinking is the third step. Instead of focusing backwards, blaming others, or wallowing in negativity, fill your mind with positive thoughts that move you forward. Is it always easy? No. Is it possible? Absolutely! Does it sometimes take creativity? You bet. Here are some examples of positive, forward thinking that are solution-based:

- “I usually don’t think unkind thoughts like that. I’ll do better next time.”
- “Tomorrow will be better. Good days usually follow rough ones!”
- “I might not have all the facts. I’ll learn more and it’ll probably make sense.”

And this is perfect for adults who regret any past action:

- “I made the best decision I could with the information I had at the time. I have more information now, and I’ll do better in the future.”

The steps to change negative self-beliefs aren’t difficult. But, as with all things worth doing, the process requires effort. And yet, don’t let yourself become discouraged if you have trouble in the beginning, if changing your thought patterns proves to be difficult for you. Your previous ways of thinking are habits and **it takes about three to six weeks to break a habit**. Have the courage to keep trying until you naturally and easily think predominantly positive thoughts.

It comes back to the question, “How badly do you really want to change?” And that reminds me of a well-known story about Socrates.

What The Seeker Needs

One afternoon, a young man approached Socrates, the wise old philosopher, and exclaimed, “Socrates, I want to know what you know! I want knowledge and wisdom like yours!” The gentle Socrates replied, “Very well, young man. Follow me.” And he led the youth to a nearby pond, where he held the boy’s head under the water for quite a long time. When Socrates finally released his grip, the young man jerked up out of the water and gasped, “Socrates! Why did you do that?” The philosopher calmly asked, “Young man, when you were under the water, what did you want most in the world?” The boy answered, “Air! I wanted air!” And then Socrates patiently explained, “Young man, when you want knowledge and wisdom as badly as you wanted air, you’ll find a way to get it.”

I would like to submit that when your desire for change and improvement is great enough, you’ll make the effort to control your thoughts and direct them in positive ways.

We’ll conclude this Power Belief the way we began – by assessing your self beliefs in an attempt to ascertain the positive ones that empower and strengthen you, and the negative ones that limit you. You’ll keep the first and discard the second.

This is first done by carefully questioning and examining your beliefs. Now take a quality moment of unhurried time – right now – and ask yourself these questions:

Do I have beliefs (that I may have held for years) which might be wrong? What are they?

Now, it’s tough to re-examine your core beliefs. It is difficult to scrutinize the personal convictions you’ve held for years. You’re doing this, though, because some of your closely-held beliefs might be preventing you from reaching your goals and becoming your ideal self. Defining and questioning those beliefs is the first step.

To discover your long-held limiting beliefs, ask *why* you either succeed or fail in each of these life areas:

Ask yourself two questions for each area in your life:

- Physical Do I excel physically? If not, why not?
- Mental
- Social
- Emotional
- Financial
- Spiritual
- With Relationships

Now ask yourself (in each area):

“What positive beliefs can replace my negative ones?”

Here’s an example of how to do this:

Physical. *Do I excel?* “No.” *Why not?* “Because I was never any good at sports. I was overweight/My parents didn’t encourage me/There wasn’t an athletic program at my school.”

What positive beliefs can replace the negative ones? “Even though I wasn’t involved in sports in school, it isn’t too late to start learning and getting in shape. I can swim each morning with the community group at the local pool/I can jog around the high school track before work in the mornings, and perhaps join a competitive program for masters when I’m ready/I can join the local work-out facility/I can shoot hoops with my buddies (or children). It’s never too late to have fun!”

Another exercise that provides clarity begins with asking yourself the following questions:

“What will the consequences be (what will happen) if I continue believing as I do?”

“Will those consequences bring me happiness or unhappiness?”

“What would I have to believe in order to succeed and enjoy greater happiness?”

The answers to these questions will most likely be revealing. Remember, one well-known definition of insanity is “doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results.” If some part of your life isn’t working, question your beliefs and make changes.

Examine each belief that keeps you from being successful – at home, at work, in your relationships, etc. and replace those negative beliefs with positive ones. Choose beliefs that empower you and make you a better person. Release yourself from damaging beliefs. It will take effort and creativity, but the rewards are unlimited. I suggest you do this self-discovery exercise with a loved one who deeply cares about your well-being, and with whom you are completely comfortable.

“Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time; what we want is for things to remain the same but get better.”

Sydney Harris

CHAPTER 3

Power Belief #2 “I Am Joyful and Confident”

**“Happiness depends upon ourselves.”
Aristotle**

Think for a moment about the people you most admire in your life. To whom are you drawn? Usually it’s the joyful ones who smile, laugh, compliment others and radiate happiness.

I Create My Own Happiness

Happiness is all about focus. Whatever you focus on pulls you in that direction, either negative or positive. So the secret to happiness is to *choose* to focus on the positive in life, no matter what. Abraham Lincoln said, “Folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” I’d say President Lincoln was an expert at creating his own happiness, wouldn’t you? Time and time again, that amazing man refused to let failure keep him from success.

Clinton, age 35, from Balga, Western Australia, is another extraordinary man. Although stricken with severe cerebral palsy, Clinton shares his joyful heart freely. When asked how he keeps going through the tough times he answered, “I always thought positive thoughts, I always have a happy outlook on life, and I always pray to God.”

There is an amazing amount of research that verifies Lincoln’s belief about creating our own happiness. Here is just a sample:

An experiment conducted in 1994 at Stanford University by S. Lyubomirsky, concluded that: “Happy people do not experience one success after another and unhappy people, one failure after another. Instead, surveys show that happy and unhappy people tend to have had very similar life experiences. The difference is that the average unhappy person spends more than twice as much time thinking about unpleasant events in their lives, while happy people tend to seek and rely upon information that brightens their personal outlook.”

“Studies find that happy people experience much the same range of events as unhappy people. The real difference is in what they define as positive and negative. Happy people are those who use a lower threshold in order to label an event positive” (Parducci, 1995).

“Those who regularly ruminate over negative subjects and unhappiness are 70% less likely to feel content than those who do not” (Scott and McIntosh, 1999).

“People who like what they have are twice as likely to be happy as those who actually have the most” (Sirgy, Cole, Kosenko and Meadow, 1995).

“Researchers found that having a positive attitude about those around us is among the most important predictors of life satisfaction and that without such attitudes, we are less than half as

likely to feel happy” (Glass and Jolly, 1997).

“Over 9 in 10 Americans are uncomfortable or worried about aspects of the world and of society. The difference between more and less happy people is what they do with that discomfort. Less happy people wallow in the problems they see, while happier people focus on potential improvements in the future (Garrett, 1996).

“A study of life satisfaction looked at twenty different factors that might contribute to happiness. Nineteen of those factors did matter, and one did not. The one factor that did not matter was financial status”(Hong and Duff, 1995).

Studies of older Americans find that one of the best predictors of happiness is whether a person considers his or her life to have a purpose. Without a clearly defined purpose, seven in ten individuals feel unsettled about their lives; with a purpose, almost seven in ten feel satisfied (Lepper, 1996).

In a study of adult self-esteem, researchers found that people who are happy with themselves take defeat and explain it away, treating it as an isolated incident that indicates nothing about their ability. People who are unhappy take defeat and enlarge it, making it stand for who they are and using it to predict the outcome of future life events (Brown and Dutton, 1995).

In research on older Americans, what predicted satisfaction more than finances or the state of their current relationships was their willingness to adapt. If they were willing to change some of their habits and expectations, their happiness was maintained even when their circumstances changed. Those who were resistant to change, on the other hand, were less than one-third to feel happy (Clark, Carlson, Zemke, Gelya, Patterson, and Ennevor, 1996).

How can we focus on the positive? Exactly what do we think that helps us create happiness? Here are several ideas:

1. **Think *gratitude*.** Instead of looking at what you don’t have, pay attention to what you *do* have and to the good things about your life.

For example, when you begin to think thoughts like, “Man, I wish I had a car like that!” Just catch yourself and think, *Hey, no matter how fast his car can go, the speed limit is 65 for all of us! My car is great, and I’m OK.*

Another one: “She is so gorgeous! I’ll never look like her because I was born with a shape like a pear!” Again, stop and think, *I’m so glad I’m healthy. I like my life and every day I’m making it better and better!*

Dale Carnegie once remarked, “Happiness doesn’t depend on outward conditions. It depends on inner conditions. It isn’t what we have or who we are, or what we are doing that makes us happy or unhappy. It’s what we think about it. For example, two people may be in the same place, doing the same thing, at the same

time, and yet one is miserable and the other happy. Why? Because of a different mental attitude.” And that attitude is *gratitude*.

Mr. Carnegie would enjoy the results of an experiment completed in Washington D.C. by J. Brebner, in 1995: “Happy people and unhappy people explain the world differently. When an unhappy person must interpret the world, 8 in 10 times he or she will see the negative in an event. When a happy person must interpret the world, 8 in 10 times he or she will see the positive.” (12)

That experiment was validated by Teresa, age 39, when she said, “I tried to remove thoughts of being a ‘victim’ of my circumstances to that of being a ‘student.’ Every time I felt like a victim, I felt sorry for myself and disempowered. When I was able to shift my perspective to being *grateful for the lessons I was learning*, I was able to shift my mind into feeling positive and hopeful. I believe that pain in life is inevitable, but misery is optional.”

People who have experienced similar life events can wind up with nearly opposite perceptions of life satisfaction. Researchers have compared, for example, people who have received a job promotion, and they found that while some of the people treasure the opportunity, others lament the added responsibility. The implications of life events are a matter of perspective (Chen, 1996).

I’d like to share a personal experience that significantly affected my level of gratitude. In May, 2001, I attended the annual conference of the World Movement of Mothers, held that year at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. This marvelous group of women, organized in 1949, has the distinction of being the first non-government organization to influence the policy-making at the United Nations. Their hearts are good and their mission is to honor motherhood and strengthen families worldwide.

At that conference my heart was touched as I listened to stories of women who literally help change the world. The representative from France spoke about character-strengthening classes in their schools. She explained that all French school children learn ethics from their earliest years. Commendable! And the Swedish representative spoke about stay-at-home moms in her country who receive social security when their children are raised. Admirable!

But the woman who changed my perspective forever lives in Mali, West Africa. She courageously stood and described the difficult living conditions in her country. She explained that open sewage runs through her village. And in her village there are dirt floors in the huts, lean-to structures, and caves where they live. What does she do to strengthen families in her country? She buries the dead aids victims and then raises their children. Currently, in her cave, she tenderly nurtures many children.

As I listened, my heart filled with love and empathy for this extraordinary woman, and her story prompted an overwhelming feeling of gratitude for my countless blessings. However, at the same time, I felt ashamed of the many things I take for granted each day of my life. Oh, what a valuable perspective we acquire when we develop an attitude of gratitude!

2. Offer love and kindness. We have all seen the magical effects of love and

kindness in our lives and the lives of others. It seems as though the giver is always more blessed than the receiver; for as we love, we are loved and it becomes easier to love.

Mother Teresa said, “Spread love wherever you go. Give love to your husband, your wife, your children, to your next door neighbor. Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness. Kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.”

In the book *Heart of Goodness*, JoAnne Larsen tells the story of a young nursing school student who buzzed through a test until she came to the last question, which completely stymied her. The question: “What was the first name of the school’s head custodian?” Well, the student didn’t know, nor did anyone else. When asked by a classmate whether the last question would count toward their grade, the professor said, “Absolutely!” teaching the class that, as nurses, they would cross paths with people from every walk of life; all of whom had ultimate value. And, thus, all people were worthy of the nurses’ utmost care and consideration, even if their efforts consisted of a gesture so small as a smile and a greeting. Describing her experience as a lesson never forgotten, the student relates that she still remembers the custodian’s name, which she later learned. It was Dorothy.

I remember Etienne de Grellet’s words:

I shall pass through this life but once.
Any good, therefore, that I can do
Or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature,
Let me do it now.
Let me not deter or neglect it,
For I shall not pass this way again.

A final thought on creating joy and confidence, from John Wesley:
“Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, and with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can.” (*Heart of Goodness*, 2000, foreword).

3. **Be others-centered**, instead of self-centered. Look through windows, seeing the needs of others, instead of mirrors, seeing your own needs.

This principle is magical. When you focus on others, your problems diminish, you’re happier, and well-loved. An old saying is, “All that you send into the lives of others comes back into your own.”

This principle embraces patience, forgiving quickly, serving others gladly, noticing other’s needs before your own, and seeking to understand before you try to be understood. These are simple, yet profound “guarantees” for happiness.

The best way to be others-centered is to treat people the way you'd want them to treat you. Think deeply about the people in your life's circle, one by one. Think about what it would be like to *be* those people, with their life experiences, their needs and desires. For example, at the end of a long, frustrating day - as you're walking in the door of your home and all you can think about is food and relaxation, what if one of your loved ones is upset? Can you immediately put aside all thoughts of self and focus only on that person's concerns? Can you be sincerely compassionate, rather than annoyed at the inconvenience?

God's Little Devotional Book for Leaders (1997), tells of a young man who made great personal sacrifices as he kindly reached out to help strangers.

When Chris Gross of Santa Clara, California, heard about the 137 children who lost at least one parent in the bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City, he thought, "*Where would I be if my folks weren't around when I was growing up?*" With that motivation, he set up a college fund for those children. His first step was to call the CEO of his company and explain his intentions, and that he would be donating his annual salary as an investment analyst – all \$53,874 of it – to the fund. He then challenged his company and eighteen others to match his gift, so that the fund might reach one million dollars. "It's not easy living without a paycheck," Gross admitted, but the 26 year-old had no debts and lived frugally with four roommates.

Word of Gross' sacrificial gift quickly spread through the central coast region of California, and many residents responded with personal gifts. Several benefit shows, concerts and seminars were held, including benefits by the San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Giants. Can one man make a difference? In four months the fund Gross established grew to \$525,000!

Pam, age 59, hurdled her shyness 'barrier' by focusing on others. She explained:

I overcame extreme shyness and feelings of inferiority that made it almost impossible for me to do anything in front of people such as teach, speak, etc. One of the major things I tried to do was focus on others, their feelings and needs rather than my discomfort. The more I was able to do this, the more I recognized that no one else really paid attention to how I looked or sounded, they were more concerned with themselves.

I didn't feel qualified to serve as some others did in large, spectacular ways, but I knew I could do small acts of service and do them consistently. Whenever I felt inferior, I reminded myself that even insignificant acts add up and contribute to the whole.

To evaluate your level of other-centeredness, take a quick three-question quiz and answer in your mind "true or false."

- When someone gives a compliment to another person, it makes me think I'm not as good. (Rejoice with the person; it's no reflection on you)
 - I worry that everyone will notice my weight/wrinkles/baldness. (Don't focus on yourself - no one else does!)
 - I'm so embarrassed because I'm not a very good computer technician /secretary/ teacher. (Your focus shouldn't be on your embarrassment, but rather on how you can improve your skills and thus contribute more).
4. **Be flexible and cheerful.** Choosing to be flexible is choosing to focus on the positive. People who adapt well and who are cheerful, no matter what's happening around them, are appreciated and well-loved. There are many times in our lives when we simply aren't in control of the situation. Our ability to adapt well is an indicator of our strength of character. A saying I learned when I was young is, "Be pretty if you are, be wise if you can, but be cheerful if it kills you!"

Change is an inevitable part of life. We have choices relative to the change going on in our lives – we can be flexible and bend graciously, or we can fight it and be unhappy. Again, these are choices. In retrospect, we usually see even the most jolting of life changes as “catalysts” for growth.

What we are talking about here, over and over, really, is simply our attitudes.

Roberto De Vincenzo, upon completing a golf tournament, was approached by a woman who stated her daughter had leukemia and pled for money to pay medical bills – money he produced. Later, a friend told De Vincenzo the woman's daughter wasn't ill – she had lied to him. In response, Roberto replied, “The child is well? My friend, that's the best news I ever heard!”

General Dwight D. Eisenhower paid a visit to front-line troops during WWII and braved rain and ankle-deep mud to address the men from a makeshift platform. After finishing, as he turned to go, Eisenhower slipped from the platform and sprawled in the mud, sparking the soldiers to roar with laughter. The commanding major general accompanying Eisenhower helped him to his feet, apologizing profusely for his men's behavior. “It's all right,” the President responded. “That fall probably helped their morale much more than my speech!” (Remen, *Heart of Goodness*, 2000).

Cheerfulness is an attitude!

ATTITUDE By Charles Swindoll

The longer I live the more I realize
the impact of attitude on life.
Attitude to me, is more important than facts,
it is more important than the past, than education,
than money, than circumstances, than failures,
than successes, than what other people think or say or do.
It is more important than appearances, giftedness or skill.
It will make or break a company, a church, a home.
The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding
the attitude we embrace for that day.
We cannot change our past, we cannot change the fact
that people will act in a certain way.
We cannot change the inevitable.
The other thing we can do is play on the one string
we have, and that is our attitude.
I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me
and 90% how I react to it

Michael, age 53, from Elkhart, Indiana, is an extraordinary example of this virtue. At age 16, he was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. This chronic disease progressed and severely affected his hands and feet. It frequently attacks his other joints as well. Daily he suffers excruciating pain and severe loss of function. He cheerfully explained:

I am, and always have been an optimist! I also figure that there are some things I cannot control, so I make the best of what I have to work with. I can mope and cry and complain, or I can just say, "This is not going to beat me!" and do what I need/want to do. I choose the latter course. I have been in many medical facilities and I've seen a lot of people in worse condition than I am, so I thank God I can do what I can. My advice to others is to think positively. Pace yourself. Know your physical limits. Ask for help and don't give up.

Career analysts find that 83 percent of mid-career professionals believe chance played a significant role in their ultimate career path and that they highly value staying open for unexpected opportunities (Williams, Soeprapto, Like, Touradji, Hess, and Hill, 1998).

5. Be passionate about something. People who open their eyes each morning and immediately look forward to something that they're passionate about are usually more satisfied, happy and hopeful people who focus on the positive. How do we become passionate about something? We develop it the same way we develop any virtue - love, kindness, patience – we practice it. Look at your life and find something that you really enjoy doing. Schedule time in for things you love doing and make them a priority in your life. You can give better from your 'overflow,' so fill your cup!

William, age 64, in Dallas, Texas, is deeply passionate about his work. His story is an example to us all.

One day, William, an experienced designer, was asked by a client to build a large, elaborate model. It called for several building interiors and hundreds of human figures. The model was to be created in a scale of one inch to five feet, which meant that each of the human figures was only a little more than an inch in height. Each one had to be hand-painted, using a brush with a single hair. As William hunched over his table one day, painstakingly painting the figures and then carefully gluing them in place, one of his employees asked him, "Don't you find this tedious?"

The designer replied, "Tedious? My goodness, no! I've loved making and painting models ever since I made my first model airplane at age seven. I just can't believe someone is actually paying me to do this!"

From golfers to professional singers, those who *excel* are passionate about their interest.

From an early age, Larry lived and breathed golf. As a teenager, he was ranked one of the top 16 young golfers in the nation. Then, at the beginning of his senior year of high school, Larry was in an automobile accident. He suffered severe injuries, but the most devastating was that his left arm had to be amputated just below the elbow.

After several months of practice with a prosthetic hand, Larry hit a ball. When it landed more than 200 yards away, he knew he could do it. He rejoined his high school team, scoring even better than before, and was awarded a college scholarship.

"Don't think of your missing limb as something that makes you a lesser person," Larry once told an audience of children who had lost limbs. "Think of it as something that can make you stronger. I would love to be the first pro golfer with a prosthetic hand. But I also know that if I don't succeed, I won't be a failure. We only fail if we don't try."

In her autobiography, Dolly Parton wrote,

My high school was small. So during our graduation event, each of us got a chance to stand up and announce our plans for the future. "I'm going to junior college," one boy said. "I'm getting married and moving to Maryville," a girl followed. When my turn came, I said, "I'm going to Nashville to become a star!" The entire place erupted in laughter. I was stunned. Somehow, though, that laughter instilled in me an even greater determination to realize my dream.

Another sterling example of passion is Wilma Rudolph. She simply loved to run.

Wilma was born into a very poor family in a shack in the backwoods of Tennessee. She was the 20th of 22 children, prematurely born and frail. Her survival was doubtful. When she was four years old she had double pneumonia and scarlet fever – a deadly combination that left her with a paralyzed and useless left leg. She had to wear an iron leg brace. Yet she was fortunate to have a mother who encouraged her.

Wilma's mother told her daughter that despite the brace and injured leg, she could do whatever she wanted to do with her life. She told her that all she needed to do was have faith, persistence, courage and indomitable spirit.

So at nine years old, Wilma removed the leg brace and took the step the doctors told her she'd never take normally. During the next four years, she developed a rhythmic stride and set a goal to become the world's greatest woman runner.

At age 13, Wilma entered a race and came in dead last. She entered every race in high school, and in every race she came in last. Friends begged her to quit. However, one day, she came in next to last. And then, there came a day when Wilma won her first race, and she never looked back.

Years later, at the Olympic Games, Wilma was pitted against the greatest woman runner of the day, Jutta Heine, from Germany. Jutta Heine had never lost a race. However, Wilma beat her in the 100-meter dash and the 200-meter dash, winning two gold medals.

Finally, it was time for the 400-meter relay. It would be Wilma against Jutta once again. The first two runners on Wilma's team made perfect handoffs with the baton. But when the third runner passed the baton to Wilma, she dropped it, and Wilma watched Jutta take off down the track. It seemed impossible that anyone could catch this fleet and nimble woman. But Wilma did just that, and earned her third Olympic gold medal!

I Create Positive Self-beliefs with Good Self-talk

“Self-talk,” the way we talk to ourselves in our minds, plays a hugely significant role in determining our level of happiness and confidence. Why? Because we usually become what we tell ourselves we are. Indeed, speaking to ourselves positively is the most effective way to create positive self-beliefs.

Since we now understand the power of choice and the power of our minds, we know that our thoughts can be directed. Why would we allow negativity to pull us backwards into undesirable states, or allow the programming of our past to control our present and future? With effort and perseverance, we can re-direct our thoughts and enjoy positive self-beliefs.

To do this, use the same steps (we discussed earlier) that direct thoughts in positive ways. Just as soon as negative thoughts enter your mind:

1. Label
2. Replace
3. Focus Forward

Here's how:

1. "This rain stinks! Now I can't play golf!"
Label/Replace/Forward Focus
Gee, that was a negative attitude. We really need the rain and I can play golf tomorrow.
2. "My boss just doesn't get it! I bet he got promoted because he's such a brown-noser!"
Label/Replace/Forward Focus
Wow, I was being overly critical there, and I usually don't criticize.. I'm going to do a great job at next week's presentation and blow his socks off!
3. "My mother-in-law hates me. No matter what I do it's not good enough."
Label/Replace/Forward Focus
Woops – negative attitude. Hey, that woman raised an awesome daughter.
4. "What happened to my life!? These kids are sucking it away and they don't even care!"
Label/Replace/Forward Focus
Hey... What happened to my positive outlook? They're just kids! You know, I should go outside with them to play and get some fresh air.
5. My wife is such a lousy cook!
Label/Replace/Forward Focus
That wasn't kind. I know she does her best. Maybe I should give it a try.

Another way we can direct thoughts in positive ways is to practice ignoring the negative ones.

We all have thousands of thoughts each day. Some are going to be positive and productive, and others will be worrisome, fearful, covetous, etc. *The question isn't whether or not you're going to have negative thoughts – it's what you choose to do with the ones you have.*

You really only have two choices. You can either worry about them, analyze them, think more and more about them, or you can dismiss them; not take the negative thoughts seriously and let them go. Of course, we want to learn how to do the latter, so think on this: When you have a thought – any thought – realize that, that's *all* it is...*just* a thought. It truly can't hurt you without your permission.

Think of a negative thought as a match that has just been lit. You can either blow it out immediately and stay healthy, or you can let it burn, hurt and scar you. The choice is yours.

Let's look at two examples:

Karen, painfully shy, was completely convinced that her introversion and her low self-esteem were her parents' fault. Karen bitterly explained, "My parents didn't do a very good job, and that's why I'm a social failure."

Karen let the negative thoughts fester and wound her; convincing herself that she should indeed be unhappy. Instead, she should have realized that although her childhood was difficult, *in this present moment, she has a choice* and can direct her thoughts. Another example:

Darrel and Katie had a quarrel just minutes before Darrel left for work. Darrel "blew out the match" and let the negative thoughts go soon after he left the house. Katie, on the other hand, was still stewing and angry about the issue when Darrel came home at 6:00 o'clock that night.

While Darrel was able to have a productive day, Katie didn't get anything accomplished because she spent hours fuming and fretting, calling family and friends to complain and get advice. What she didn't understand is that an argument that happens in the morning is no longer an actual argument; it's a thought in your mind. And we can do with our thoughts whatever we choose.

As you learn to ignore and dismiss negative thoughts – blowing out the flaming match immediately – your ability to do so will increase, and you'll become a more peaceful and loving person.

In addition to the negative/positive **self**-beliefs you're working on, I'd like to suggest you make an effort to eliminate *all* negative expressions, no matter how benign they may seem. Your subconscious mind takes it all in – and anything negative becomes part of who you are. So we should get rid of the "little negatives" that clutter our conversations and weaken us:

- "I don't think I can do that."
- "I'm afraid I'll be late."
- "I'll never get through this – there's so much to do."
- "If I didn't have bad luck I wouldn't have any luck at all!"
- Yep – I knew it! Just when things were starting to go well, this had to happen."

Other negative expressions to watch for (and discard) come in the form of questions. One of the best keys to behavior change is to stop asking yourself bad questions and start asking good ones. Let's look at some commonly-asked "Why" questions:

"Why does this always happen to me?"
"Why can't I figure it out?"
"Why can't I ever remember names?"
"Why am I depressed?"
"Why don't they like me?"

What are you focusing on when you're asking those questions? Negativity. If you're feeling miserable it's usually because you're deleting all the reasons you could be feeling good. Far better are these "What" and "Who" questions, which help us ignore the negative:

"What could I do to make myself feel happier?"

"What is really great in my life right now?"

"What can I learn from this that will make me a better person?"

"Who can I help today?"

"Who loves me? Who are the people I love most in the world?"

I guarantee that if you ask questions like these you'll focus on the positive and feel better. There are two more important questions to ask yourself at this point (reflecting on these may feel like you're looking in the mirror at long-hidden parts of yourself): "If I don't change my negative patterns of thinking and questioning, what will it cost me in the long run?" and "Isn't it about time that I start enjoying the results of developing new, empowering habits of positive self-talk?"

By Improving the Words you Consistently Use You Can Immediately Improve the Quality of Your Thoughts, Your Emotions and Your Life

One of my heroes, Norman Vincent Peale wrote:

To overcome your obstacles and live the 'I Don't Believe in Defeat' philosophy, cultivate a positive-idea pattern deeply in your consciousness. What we do with obstacles is directly determined by our mental attitude. Most of our obstacles, as a matter of fact, are mental in character.

"Ah," you may object, "mine are not mental, mine are real."

Perhaps so, but your attitude toward them is mental. The only possible way you can have an attitude is by the mental process, and what you think about your obstacles largely determines what you do about them. Form the mental attitude that you cannot remove an obstacle and you will not remove it, not if you think you can't. But get the idea firmly fixed that the obstacle is not so great as you previously considered it to be. Hold the idea that it is removable, and however faintly you entertain this positive thought, from the very moment you begin to think in this manner, the process is inaugurated which will lead to its ultimate removal.

If you have been long defeated by a difficulty, it is probably because you have told yourself for weeks, months and even for years that there is nothing you can do about it. You have so emphasized your inability to yourself that your mind gradually accepted the conclusion upon which you have insisted, and when your mind is convinced, you are convinced, for as you think so are you.

But, on the contrary, when you develop a new mental slant, emphasizing and

reemphasizing a positive attitude, you will convince your own consciousness that you can do something about difficulties. When at last your mind becomes convinced, astonishing results will begin to happen. Of a sudden you discover that you have the power you would never before acknowledge. (*The Power of Positive Thinking*)

Taking action and applying these empowering principles requires a certain confidence on our part . . . confidence in our ability to generate change in our lives.

Confidence

Confidence, in combination with a realistic self-appraisal, produces a 30 percent increase in life satisfaction (Sedlacek, 1999).

Nine in ten people who believe they will one day realize their career goals have strong feelings of competence and assertiveness (Velting, 1999).

To build confidence, the practice of suggesting Confidence Concepts to your mind is highly effective. If your mind is filled with thoughts of insecurity and inadequacy, it is because such ideas have dominated your thinking over a long period of time. The solution? A more positive pattern of ideas must be given to the mind, and that's accomplished by repetitive suggestion of confidence ideas. Thought disciplining is required if you are to re-educate the mind and make it into a positive-power-producing plant. It is possible, even in the midst of your daily work, to drive Confidence Concepts into consciousness.

The conclusion of a study by Myers and Diener (1995): "Across all ages and all groups, a solid belief in one's own abilities increases life satisfaction by about 30%, and makes us happier both in our home lives and in our work lives."

Confidence Concept Cards

Let me tell you about a previously struggling and now highly-successful salesman who made this idea work for him. This man put 3x5-inch cards everywhere he could easily see them: on his bathroom mirror, on his desk at work, in his car (on the visor), and in his planner. On these cards were Confidence Concepts that affirmed his goodness. Some samples:

"I am a great salesman!"

"I radiate confidence and kindness to everyone."

"I am a patient, loving husband and father."

"I am organized and efficient at work and at home."

"Nothing is impossible, because I am a successful leader in every area of my life."

Do you see how this type of positive input, read regularly and believed sincerely, can have a powerful impact on your level of confidence? The lesson is to look at life through lenses dipped in optimism and to remember that "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Do not forget that if we constantly think of the forces that seem to be against us, we form them into an unrealistic power, and they become stronger. But if, on the contrary, we mentally visualize and affirm our assets, contemplating our strengths and abilities, we can rise out of any difficulty.

Know this: your level of confidence depends upon the thoughts that habitually occupy your mind. Think defeat and you are defeated. Think confidently and you will develop such a strong sense of capacity that, regardless of the obstacles that arise, you'll overcome them.

Before we move on, take a moment and ask yourself two questions: "What do I want people to see when they look at me?" and, "Is what people *now* see a reflection of what I want to be?"

Reminder: You're in Control

What do you see in your 'self mirror'? What you think of yourself determines your success boundaries and sets your limits. By improving your self-image, you expand your boundaries and extend your limits.

Where is your 'self picture' and who creates it? It's in your mind, and you do.

Your brain is a marvelous mechanism that works for your success or for your failure. Since you're the operator, the outcome depends on your skills. Are you in control? Do you direct and carefully maneuver your thoughts so that you focus on your goals - steering straight toward them as you power along life's highway? Or are you out of control, frequently allowing negative and destructive thoughts to take the wheel? Know, without a doubt, that you can daily drive your thoughts, words and actions in the direction of high achievement. And ***with the right tools and consistent effort, you can steer yourself toward previously unimagined joy and unattainable success.***

On a day-to-day basis, having confidence in your ability to control your thoughts can make a huge difference in your life. An example of this is Paul, age 68, from Orem, Utah, who suffered a debilitating back injury. He said, "I worked on tolerating high levels of pain and felt *confident* I could overcome anything!"

Give Yourself *Healthy* Self-fulfilling Prophecies!

Self-fulfilling prophecies are statements that help you become what you want to be. They are incredibly powerful in their effectiveness relative to self-esteem. You can either damage your feelings of self-worth or build yourself up, depending on how you use self-fulfilling prophecies. The sooner we begin building ourselves up, the faster we'll progress.

Examples of healthy self-fulfilling prophecies:

- "It's just like me to be on time! I'm usually prompt and ready."
- "I like to meet new people, and I'm good at helping them feel comfortable around me."

- “Even if she’s rude to me I’ll still be kind to her; because I don’t let other people determine how I react.”
- “I like the way this is turning out. Good thinking!”
- “It’s not like me to make mistakes like that. I’ll do it better next time.”

This principle is illustrated perfectly by the story of a young boy and his father. The father promised his son that if he would practice all day, he’d play baseball with him after work. When Dad arrived home he accompanied the boy to the backyard.

“Show me what you can do,” the father said. The little boy shuffled his feet, threw the ball up in the air, took a swing and missed. “Strike one,” said the dad.

The son repositioned his feet, threw the ball up again, took a second swing and missed again. His father commented, “Strike two.”

More determined than ever, the boy dug in deeper, threw the ball higher and took a third mighty swing. He missed again, spun completely around and fell on the ground. His father said, “Strike three, you’re out. Well, what do you think about that?”

The youngster stood up, brushed himself off and cheerfully responded, “Man, am I a good pitcher!”

That’s the way we want to think about ourselves!

**“The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.”
Marcus Aurelius Antoninus**

CHAPTER 4

Power Belief #3 “I Set High, Achievable Goals”

“It must be born in mind that the tragedy of life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. It isn’t a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity to not dream. It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim is the problem.”

Helmut Schmidt

“Nothing Happens Unless First a Dream”

Carl Sandburg

Even though they may not want to, people tend to take their jobs home with them at the end of the day. Low levels of career interest are associated with low enjoyment of life overall and even greater dissatisfaction with family life (O’Brien, Martinex-Pons, and Kopala, 1999).

Our challenge? To turn an invisible dream into a measurable reality.

Imagine a pilot coming over the intercom and announcing: “I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is we’ve lost one engine and our direction finder. The good news is we have a tail wind and wherever we’re going, we’re getting there at a rate of 600 miles an hour!” I don’t know about you, but I’d find that news rather disconcerting! Yet people often “fly along” in their lives like that – directionless, lacking energy, but being pushed swiftly along by the winds of circumstances. David Mahoney advises to take heed of such tendencies to lose sight of your goals: “The important thing is not where you were or where you are, but where you want to get.”

My friend, Glenn Van Ekeren, tells about his teenage years when he was hired by a local farmer to do the fall plowing. His first day on the tractor was disastrous. He explained, “As I watched the plow turn the soil behind me, little did I realize that by the time I reached the end of the field, the row was incredibly crooked. Toward the end of the day, the farmer arrived to survey my work. The crooked rows prompted him to give me this advice: ‘You can’t plow a straight row if you keep looking behind you. You must keep your eyes focused on your goal straight ahead.’ And so it is with life. Plowing our way into the future is powered by meaningful and specific goals. Focusing on the past, what lies behind, will prevent us from focusing our energies on what lies ahead.

Don’t allow distractions or backward glances to sidetrack your thinking. As you work toward your goals, be like a laser beam focused powerfully and directly on your target.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

I love the story about the time Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes misplaced his ticket while traveling on a train. Watching him fumble through his belongings and pockets in growing

frustration, the conductor tried to ease his mind. “Don’t worry about it, Mr. Holmes. I’m sure you have your ticket somewhere. If you don’t find it during the trip, just mail it in to the railroad when you reach your destination.” Appreciative of the conductor’s empathy, yet dismayed by his predicament, he looked the conductor in the eye and responded: “Young man, my problem is not finding my ticket. It’s to find out where in the world I’m going!”

Where in the world *are* we going? And how are we going to get there?

I Identify What Hurts Most and What I Want Most

At first glance, identifying “what hurts most” may seem a little harsh. But think about it: the characteristics that bother you the most about yourself (for example, being overweight, being impatient with your children, being disorganized/inefficient at work) *can* become your goals, your “target areas” to improve. For example, your thought, “My disorganization really slows me down at work” can become the goal, “I will be more organized. I will do this by cleaning out my desk, staying on schedule, filing items immediately upon receiving them, and purchasing a day-planner. I will clean out my desk by Wednesday at noon and I will purchase a planner today on my lunch break.”

Yes, identifying what bothers us most may be the very first step to goal achievement because it helps us recognize exactly what we want most. And we set goals based on stopping pain and creating pleasure in our lives. Since people have created goals for thousands of years, we can benefit from a fail-safe formula that works:

I apply the 7 Steps to Success

1. Choose only those goals you deeply care about and are absolutely committed to achieving.
2. Write your goals in detailed specifics.
3. Give yourself a time limit.
4. Break goals into small, doable steps.
5. Consistently and enthusiastically take action.
6. Notice what’s working (or not) and reward yourself along the way.
7. Continue to make course corrections until you achieve your goals.

1. Choose Only Those Goals You Deeply Care About and Are Absolutely Committed to Achieving

You might imagine that a promotion on the job automatically raises confidence and self-worth. Instead, studies find nearly half of recently promoted managers in the technology industry express uncertainty and doubt about themselves and their new position. Psychologists find that the promotion can undermine their self-confidence because instead of being the best among a group lower-level workers, they now find themselves surrounded by more accomplished people to measure themselves against (Cassirer and Reskin, 2000)

People who are prone to use stereotypes in assessing themselves and others are 39 percent more likely to believe that opportunities are limited for others and themselves (Frome, 1999).

The more deeply you are convinced of the absolute necessity of reaching your goals, the more

tenacity you'll exert as you work toward them.

James Allen wrote: "One who *cherishes* a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal, will one day realize it." Belva, age 68, from Vancouver, Washington, understood this. After training herself to become an accomplished musician, she offered this advice: "You must love the thing you want to accomplish!"

How are you going to decide on your goals? Here are some suggestions for "preparing the soil" properly:

- Go somewhere alone.
- Think deeply and slowly about the most important things in your life.
- Carefully consider where you want to be in ten years, your "ideal life."
Ask yourself, "What do I want to be doing in ten years? Who do I want to be with? What do I want to look like? What do I want my life to look like?"
- Then, think about your "ideal life" in five years . . . in one year . . . in six months . . . in one month.
- Create detailed, visual pictures in your mind of your ideal self and your ideal life.
- Use the "I DR" 3-Step Formula:
 - Identify your goals
 - Decide which are your highest priority
 - Resolve to focus like a laser beam

The congruence of people's goals with their resources strongly correlates with happiness. In other words, the more realistic and attainable people's goals are, the more likely they are to feel good about themselves. People who conclude their goals are out of reach are less than one-tenth as likely to consider themselves satisfied with life (Diener and Fujita, 1995).

The human being is goal-seeking by design. Dr. Maxwell Maltz, best-selling author of *Psycho-Cybernetics*, compared the mind to the homing system in a torpedo or an automatic pilot:

Once you set your target, this self-adjusting system constantly monitors feedback signals from the target area. Using the feedback data to adjust the course setting in its own navigational guidance computer, it makes the corrections necessary to stay on target. Programmed incompletely or nonspecifically, or aimed at a target too far out of range, the homing torpedo will wander erratically around until its propulsion system fails or it self-destructs. (*Psycho-Cybernetics*, Prentice-Hall, 1960)

The individual human being behaves in very much the same manner. Once you set your goal, your mind constantly monitors self-talk and environmental feed-back about the goal or target. Using this negative and positive feedback to adjust your decisions along the way, your mind subconsciously makes adjustments to reach the goal. Programmed with vague, random thoughts or fixed on an unrealistic goal too far out of sight, you'll wander aimlessly around until you give up in frustration, wear yourself out, or self-destruct.

2. Write Goals in Detailed Specifics

People who regularly keep a journal, or some kind of written record pertaining to their aspirations, are 32 percent more likely to feel like they are making progress in their lives (Howatt, 1999)

People who construct their goals in concrete terms are 50 percent more likely to feel confidence they will attain their goals and 32 percent more likely to feel in control of their lives (Howatt, 1999)

Writing goals in detailed specifics is of utmost importance. There was an experiment conducted in 1985 with 100 high school students who all discussed and decided upon future goals. Fifty of the students merely talked about their goals, and fifty students wrote their goals in specific terms and gave themselves a time limit. Ten years later the students were questioned. Of the fifty students who did not write their goals, only 15% had achieved them. Of the fifty students who wrote their goals in specific details, 92% had achieved them.

Our minds can't effectively deal with undefined statements. However, give your mind a definite, clearly defined, laser-targeted goal and watch the power it will manifest! Create goals that your mind can clearly envision and work toward, written in terms it can understand. For example, a salesperson's goal might be, "I will give my sales presentation to 12 people before noon on Friday."

3. Give Yourself a Time Limit

Not only do you need specifics, you need a time frame for success. A goal without a time limit is no better than a wish. You want dreams with a deadline. The simple act of deciding when you'll achieve a goal is a huge step towards making them a reality.

Since time is so valuable, you may consider setting time limits on activities at home and at work. For example, schedule errands for just one afternoon a week or combine them in a timely way. Decide that all your housework will be completed in 30 minutes each day and work, with your family, quickly each morning or evening to get it done. I've discovered that I can be more productive with goal achievement *and* my family is more peaceful when our home is clean and orderly.

Schedule blocks of time to accomplish your tasks at work. Follow a daily to-do list, giving each task a time limit. When the time for that project has expired, move on to the next one and either complete the unfinished task before going home or save it for the following day.

Another strategy that works is to inform your friends and loved ones of the blocks of time when you *won't* be available. During the most productive hours of your day, allow no distractions. Let your answering machine take your calls and think of yourself as a laser beam – zeroed in on productivity and goal achievement!

A valuable strategy you'll learn is how to use the Power of Positive Crisis. It's an important piece of the "time issue" which will help you create a sense of urgency and propel you forward at warp speed.

4. Break Goals into Small, Doable Steps

No matter how large the task, it is infinitely easier when broken into daily tasks. For example, if you were considering losing 40 pounds, the thought is daunting. However, when you contemplate losing two pounds a week for 10 weeks, it seems more achievable. How about the goal of writing a 250-page book? At first, it might overwhelm you, but if you think about just writing three pages a day, it's not so bad, and it would only take you a few months to do that.

If writing a book is one of your goals, this is how it'd look:

Goal	Time limit	How
I will write a book (About 250 pages)	3 months researching 4 months writing Begin researching Jan. 5th Begin writing April 1st	Research 2 hrs/day Write 3 pages/day

After writing your goal, an additional task is to convert it into even smaller, more detailed steps for your Daily Action Plan.

A word of caution is necessary here: while on your goal achievement journey be sensitive to your level of energy, your family, work, and personal commitments and your life circumstances. Use this as a measure: choose goals you can realistically work on without damaging your health, relationships and family time. You'll know when you're spending too little or too much time on goal achievement. Finding a balance is a key to peaceful living.

Marianne, age 24, recently graduated magna cum laude from a fine university. At times during her education she was so overwhelmed that she wrote her goals in "baby steps" like this: "I plan to take one class at a time, one chapter at a time, one day at a time, one hour at a time, one problem at a time, one equation at a time."

Brady Burr, age 21, is recovering from muscle cancer. I am impressed with Brady's insightful comments and his wisdom at such a young age. He remarked, "Nobody ever leaped to the top of a mountain! All things must be done in steps."

John, age 24, from Vancouver, Washington, passed a difficult Certified Financial Planner course. He commented, "The review guide was about 600 pages and I knew I had to cover the entire book twice. This meant 1,200 pages in 40 days or 30 pages a day. I kept to that schedule and even studied during the breaks on exam day!"

5. Consistently and Enthusiastically Take Action

Once you've chosen your goals and put them into small steps, two magical keys are **consistency and enthusiasm**: working every day, every week, every month toward your goals. This will happen naturally when you are totally committed to reaching them. Goal achiever

extraordinaire, Alexander Graham Bell, explained it this way: “What this power is I cannot say. All I know is that it exists and it becomes available only when a man is in that state of mind in which he knows exactly what he wants and is fully determined not to quit until he finds it.”

William E. Holl remarked, “You can do it gradually – day by day and play by play – if you want to do it, if you will to do it, if you work to do it over a sufficiently long period of time.”

What about the enthusiasm part?

“Nothing good or great can be done in the absence of enthusiasm.”

Tom Peters

**“Enthusiasm is the electric current that keeps the engine of life going at top speed.
Enthusiasm is the very propeller of progress.”**

B. C. Forbes

“Like the chicken and the egg, enthusiasm and success seem to go together. We suspect, however, that enthusiasm comes first. If you hope to succeed at anything in this world, polish up your enthusiasm and hang on to it.”

John Luther

Of course you can reach a goal without enthusiasm, but how enjoyable is the journey? While you’re working toward your goals, do it with a great attitude and lots of enthusiasm and it will be much more fun! Here’s an example:

When the alarm goes off and you know that means work-out time, instead of thinking “Oh, man . . . there is *no way* this body can get on that treadmill this morning!” . . . instead, think, “OK – here we go again – another chance to turn this body into a ‘macho machine’/raving beauty!” Use your sense of humor and have fun with it . . . your subconscious is paying attention!

Dr. Charles Garfield contributed the following experience about a man who lives life with enthusiasm:

If you have ever gone through a tollbooth, you know that your relationship to the person in the booth is not the most intimate. It’s one of life’s frequent non-encounters: you hand over some money; you might get change; you drive off.

Late one morning in 1984, headed for lunch in San Francisco, I drove toward a booth. I heard loud music. It sounded like a party. I looked around. There were no other cars with their windows open, so I looked at the tollbooth. Inside, a man was dancing.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“I’m having a party!” he answered.

“What about the rest of the people?” I noticed no one was dancing in the other tollbooths.

He said, “Good question. What do those look like to you?” He pointed down the row of tollbooths.

“They look like . . . tollbooths. What do they look like to you?”

“Vertical coffins. At 8:30 every morning, live people get in them and sorta die for eight hours. They act brain-dead as they just go through the motions. Then, at 4:30, like Lazarus rising from the dead, they leave their coffins and go home. They do that every day.”

I was amazed. This guy had developed a philosophy about his job in a tollbooth! Sixteen people dead on the job, and the seventeenth, in precisely the same situation, figures out a way to live. . . and live enthusiastically! I couldn’t help asking the next question: “Why is it different for you? You’re having such a good time!”

He looked at me. “I knew you were going to ask that. I don’t understand why anybody would think my job is boring. I have a corner office, glass on all sides. I can see the Golden Gate Bridge, a big piece of San Francisco, and the Berkeley hills. Half the western world vacations here . . . and I just stroll in every day and practice dancing!”

6. Notice What Works and Reward Yourself Along the Way

Positive reinforcement is the way all animals (including humans) learn best. For decades, this has been verified in numerous experiments. Reinforcement is the fastest method of conditioning a new pattern. Linking pleasure to behaviors you want to repeat speeds up the process of change. We can turn goal-striving into goal-arriving with frequent, motivational rewards.

For example, if your goal is losing weight, then immediately reinforce the slightest progress. The moment you choose to walk by the cookie jar instead of reaching in, say to yourself, “Good job! I feel great at 128!” (“I feel fine at 209,” or whatever is your ideal weight) And when you push away your plate instead of taking a second helping, reinforce that progress by saying, “This isn’t easy, but I can do it! I’m feeling better already!”

If your goal is to quit smoking, don’t wait until you’ve gone a month without smoking; when you’ve gone eight hours without a cigarette, reward yourself with an ice cream cone or some other “pat on the back.” As you congratulate yourself, both your conscious and your subconscious mind learn to link pleasure to positive change.

Again, once we make even the slightest bit of progress, we should reinforce it immediately. My younger sister, Carol, is an outstanding aerobics instructor. She would never think of concluding a class by saying, “Well, that was a nice try, but you didn’t do the routines very well, so I’ll see you all on Wednesday and we’ll try it again... and *be on time* Wednesday!” She wouldn’t have many people return to her class, would she? Far better would be a comment like, “Hey, you did *great* today! You worked hard and gave it your best effort! I sure loved doing the

routine with you and I can't wait to seeing you again Wednesday. Take care now!"

But, you know, sometimes it's easier to encourage *others* than to encourage ourselves, isn't it? We need to give ourselves pep-talks like, "Yeah, I *did* work hard, and I *am* doing great! My routine isn't perfect yet, but it's coming along and I'm proud of myself!" Good self-talk is one way of rewarding yourself. Another way is to buy a little something special when you reach a milestone toward a long-term goal. Or take a mini-vacation, or treat yourself to a long phone conversation with a special friend. Be creative and plan your rewards in advance so you can look forward to them. You'll find yourself going from reward to reward and then – you've reached that long-term goal!

Most institutions and organizations understand the importance of rewards. In our early years at elementary school, our teachers gave us gold stars. As we grew older, we received grades, diplomas, awards and bonuses. Don't wait for the applause of others; give "self-strokes" as you succeed at even the smallest task. This is one way it can work:

- Take each goal and choose three or four milestones that you consider to be the most significant "intermediate goals."
- Decide on rewards to give yourself for the intermediate goals.
- Exercise discipline. Don't give yourself rewards until you've honestly reached your milestones.

When you divide your goals into intermediate milestones it's easier to see progress and to create a reward system that facilitates your progress.

6. Continue to Make Course Corrections Until You Achieve

Comparing middle management employees, researchers have found that those whose careers continue to have momentum are 53 percent more likely to engage in healthy life habits than those whose careers are stalled (Roberts and Friend, 1998).

All airplane pilots, CEOs and ship captains understand this: staying on-course as you progress toward your goal requires course corrections. The goal is to move forward; improve; develop. And so you first plot a course (set goals), then start the journey (take action in the direction of your goals). From time to time, however, you may veer a little to the right or to the left as you move along because distractions and obstacles are inevitable. Count on them; don't let them discourage you. Just make course corrections and get back in the groove. Let's look at an example:

Jaime was determined to lose twenty pounds. She had her plan – both long-term and short-term. She was "on track" with her new work-out routine and improved eating habits, and she lost eight pounds the first five weeks. Jaime was thrilled. Then, a series of events knocked her for a loop. She went out of town for five days to attend her sister's wedding, and it was nearly impossible to work-out daily and eat right. When she returned home, Jaime immediately came down with a nasty cold, which she had for nearly a week. She hadn't worked out during that week, and was derailed with her diet, too. When Jaime's health returned, she got on the scale and

realized that she'd gained back five of the eight pounds.

Jaime has choices now. She can either grumble and give up, or correct her course and get back on track. Course corrections. If you accept them as part of the long-term plan, you'll have a far better chance for success.

Evaluate As You Go

How can you make course corrections without evaluation as you go?

Sometimes, as we move toward a goal, we discover that our previous good intentions and best-laid plans simply aren't right for us. Perhaps our information was wrong, our assumptions were a little off, our approach was too time-consuming or inefficient, or our priorities have changed. Course corrections need to be made, the sooner the better. Rather than allow this to discourage you, let each detour or setback provide clues for handling similar tasks differently and for making better choices in the future.

**“Some men see things as they are and say, ‘Why?’ I dream
of things that never were and say, ‘Why not?’”**

George Bernard Shaw

CHAPTER 5

Power Belief # 4 “I Use Positive Experiencing to Become My Ideal Self”

**“We are what and where we are because we have first imagined it.”
Donald Curtis**

I Imagine Things in Great Detail Which Become Like Real Experiences

How did you learn that you’re good at some things and not good at others? **You experienced success and failure from your earliest years and you built beliefs about yourself based on these experiences, and on the way people reacted to you.** For example, during your first years at school, if you excelled in art, your work was praised. If you repeatedly bungled math problems, you were reprovved. You learned, from experience and other people’s reactions, that you were a good artist and a bad mathematician. Consciously and unconsciously, you developed your self-picture from your experiences and the input of others.

If you have a poor self-image in any area of your life because of past negative experiences, there is good news! **You can improve your self-image by creating new, positive experiences to replace the old ones.**

You may ask, “Can beliefs from a past which is riddled with failure and nearly void of successes be changed years later?” Absolutely! Studies show that one is never too young nor too old to *change negative beliefs* and start living a joyous life.

The key is in the way you acquired your *positive* self beliefs in the first place: by positive experiences. Now here’s some great news:

Positive Experiences Can Be Simulated; They Can be Created “Artificially” in Our Minds!

You see, the very nature of the human brain and nervous system allows you to literally *create experiences* in your mind. Experimental and clinical psychologists have proven:

- **The nervous system cannot tell the difference between an ACTUAL experience and an experience IMAGINED IN GREAT DETAIL.**
- **Your nervous system reacts obediently to what you think or imagine to be true – whether it’s actually true or not. In other words, people always feel, act and behave according to what they *imagine to be true* about themselves and their circumstances.**

We all possess the ability to create images in our minds. By realizing that our feelings and behavior are a result of what we imagine to be true, we can change these feelings and behavior by changing our mental pictures.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz was one who discovered these truths, through a number of experiments. Dr. Maltz wrote:

The human brain and nervous system are engineered to react automatically and appropriately to the problems and challenges in the environment. For example, a man doesn't need to stop and think that self-survival requires that he run if he meets an angry grizzly bear on a trail. He doesn't need to decide to become afraid. The fear response is automatic. First, it makes him want to flee. The fear then triggers bodily mechanisms which 'soup up' his muscles so he can run faster than he has ever run before. His heart beat is quickened. Adrenalin, a powerful muscle stimulant, is poured into the bloodstream. All bodily functions not necessary to running are shut down. The stomach stops working and all available blood is sent to the muscles. Breathing is much faster and the oxygen supply to the muscles is increased manifold.

All of this, of course, is nothing new. Most of us learned it in high school. What we have not been so quick to realize, however, is that the brain and nervous system which reacts automatically to environment is the same brain and nervous system which tells us what the environment *is*. The reactions of the man meeting the bear are commonly thought of as due to "emotion" rather than to ideas. Yet, it was an idea – information received from the outside world and evaluated by the forebrain – which sparked the so-called "emotional reactions." Thus, it was basically *idea* or *belief* which was the true causative agent, rather than emotion – which came as a result. In short, the man on the trail reacted *to what he thought, or believed or imagined* the environment to be. The 'messages' brought to us from the environment consist of nerve impulses from the various sense organs. These nerve impulses are decoded, interpreted and evaluated in the brain and made known to us in the form of ideas or mental images. In the final analysis it is these mental images that we react to. (*Psycho-Cybernetics*)

You act, and feel, not according to what things are *really* like, but according to the *image your mind holds of what they are like*.

You have certain mental images of yourself, your world, and the people around you. And you behave as though these images were truth – reality - rather than the things they represent.

Let us suppose, for example, that the man on the trail had not met a real bear, but a movie actor dressed in a bear costume. If he thought and imagined the actor to be a bear, his emotional and nervous reactions would have been exactly the same. Or let us suppose he met a large shaggy dog, which his fear-ridden imagination mistook for a bear. Again, he would react automatically to what he believed to be true concerning himself and his environment.

It follows that if our ideas and mental images concerning ourselves are distorted or unrealistic, then our reaction to our environment will likewise be inappropriate.

Realizing that our actions, feelings and behavior are the direct result of our own images and beliefs gives us the leverage needed for changing our personality, gaining skill, and living

joyfully.

Mental pictures offer us an opportunity to “practice” new traits and attitudes which otherwise we couldn’t do. This is possible because, again – your nervous system cannot tell the difference between an actual experience and one that is vividly imagined. If we picture ourselves performing in a certain manner, it is very nearly the same as the actual performance. Perfect mental practice helps to make perfect.

One of the many experiments done years ago (this experiment was reported in *Research Quarterly*, 1956) which validated these statements is briefly described in the following:

Mental Free-throws

In the experiment, there were 3 groups of free-throw-shooting basketball players. The first group practiced throwing free-throws every day for 20 days - 20 minutes a day. The second group never practiced (they were tested on their free-throw shooting ability, like each group, on the first and last days). The third group never touched a ball. Instead, they spent 20 minutes each day for 20 days just IMAGINING they were sinking free throws. They imagined it in great detail. The result? The first group improved 24%. The second group didn’t improve at all. The third group - the boys who just imagined the ball going through the hoop - improved 23%!

In the April, 1955 issue of Reader’s Digest, an article by Joseph Phillips told about how the great, undefeated chess champion Capablanca lost the championship to a rather obscure player named Alekhine. The chess world was stunned by the upset. Phillips told how Alekhine had trained for the match, “very much like how a boxer conditioned himself for a fight. He retired to the country, cut out smoking and drinking and did calisthenics. And for three months, Alekhine played chess *only in his mind*,’ preparing for the moment when he would meet the champion.”

I Practice in My Head

Here’s another example: Artur Schnabel was a world famous pianist. He took lessons for only seven years. Artur explained that he hated practicing for any length of time at an actual keyboard. When questioned about his limited amount of practicing, as compared with other concert pianists, Schnabel said, “I practice in my head.”

C. G. Kop, of Holland, was a recognized authority on teaching piano. He recommended that all pianists “practice in their heads.” A new composition, he said, should be first memorized and played in the mind before ever touching fingers to the keyboard.

Alex Morrison, a world-famous golf instructor, actually worked out a system of mental practice. It enables the golfer to improve his score by sitting in an easy chair, and practicing mentally. Morrison said, “The mental side of golf represents 90% of the game. The physical side 8%, and the mechanical side 2%. Morrison told how he taught Lew Lehr to break 90 for the first time, with no actual practice whatsoever. The golf instructor explained that “you simply need to

have a clear, detailed mental picture of the correct process. You must ‘see in your mind’ where you want the ball to go, and have the confidence to know that it is going to do what you want. Then, in your actual golf game, your subconscious mind takes over and directs your muscles correctly. If your grip is wrong, or your stance isn’t in the best form, your subconscious will take care of that by directing your muscles to do whatever is necessary to compensate for the error in form.”

Every Accomplishment Created First in Imagination

Dr. Maltz explained that successful men and women have, since the beginning of time, used ‘mental pictures’ and ‘rehearsal practice’ to achieve success.

- Napoleon, for example, ‘practiced’ soldiering in his imagination for many years before he ever went out onto an actual battlefield.
- General Norman Schwarzkopf, in an interview after the victory in the Persian Gulf War, described how he played out his battle plans in his mind before committing troops to combat.
- Gymnastics champion Mary Lou Retton has described how she rehearsed every routine in her mind, visualizing every step, every leap and turn, every hand placement before putting her body through an actual performance.
- Conrad Hilton imagined himself operating a hotel long before he ever bought one.
- Henry Kaiser said that each of his business accomplishments was realized in his imagination before it appeared in actuality.
- Juliet McComas, concert pianist, said, “If I visualize the keyboard, I can practice in an airport or at my kitchen table. It’s just as useful as actual practice.”
- Arnold Schwarzenegger, movie star, and Governor of California, maintains, “As long as the mind can envision the fact that you can do something, you can. I visualized myself being there already, having achieved the goal already.”

Form a Picture and “See Yourself” succeed

What does this mean in terms of *believing and becoming*? This creative mechanism within you can help you become your ideal “self,” if you will form a picture in your imagination of the person you want to be and “see yourself” in the new role.

Four ways to use this skill:

1. Take 15 minutes each day and relax your body as much as possible in a comfortable place. Close your eyes. Create a mental motion picture of yourself as you would like to be. Imagine, in great detail, your ideal self. Imagine your face radiant and smiling; your body at its optimum shape and fitness level; your clothes well-fitting and nice. Imagine (in great detail) doing something extremely well that you enjoy doing, with the people around you appreciative and admiring.

Regarding one’s self-image, Dr. Maxwell Maltz noted:

Your present self-image was built upon your own imagination pictures of yourself in the past which grew out of interpretations and evaluation which you placed upon *experience*. Now you are to use the same method to build an adequate self-image that you previously used to build an inadequate one.

Set aside 30 minutes each day where you can be alone and undisturbed. (*Paula's note: I believe 15 minutes is sufficient*) Relax and make yourself as comfortable as possible. Now close your eyes and exercise your imagination.

Many people find they get better results if they imagine themselves sitting before a large movie screen – and imagine that they are seeing a motion picture of themselves. The important thing is to make these pictures as vivid and as *detailed* as possible. You want your mental pictures to approximate actual experience as much as possible. The way to do this is pay attention to small details, sights, sounds, objects, in your imagined environment.

Details of the imagined environment are all-important in this exercise, because for all practical purposes, you are creating a *practice experience*. And if the imagination is vivid and detailed enough, your imagination practice is equivalent to an actual experience, insofar as your nervous system is concerned.

The next important thing to remember is that during this 15 minutes you see yourself acting and reacting successfully, ideally. It doesn't matter how you acted yesterday. You do not need to try to have faith you will act in the ideal way tomorrow. Your nervous system will take care of that in time – if you continue to practice. See yourself acting, feeling, “being” as you want to be. Don't say to yourself, “*I am going to act this way tomorrow.*” Just say to yourself, “*I am going to imagine myself acting this way now – for 30 (15) minutes – today.*” (*Psycho-Cybernetics*)

**“Imagine how you would feel if you were already the sort of personality you want to be.”
Dr. Maxwell Maltz**

If you have been shy and timid, see yourself moving among people with ease and poise – and *feeling good* because of it. If you have been fearful and anxious in certain situations – see yourself acting calmly and deliberately, acting with confidence and courage – and feeling expansive and confident because you are.

This exercise builds new “memories” or stored data into your mid-brain and nervous system. It builds a new image of self. After practicing it for a time, you'll be surprised to find yourself ‘acting differently,’ more or less automatically and spontaneously – ‘without trying.’ This is as it should be. You don't need to ‘take thought’ or ‘try’ to make an effort now in order to feel ineffective or act inadequately. Your present inadequate feeling and doing is automatic and spontaneous, because of the data, real or imagined you have built into your automatic mechanism. You will find it will work just as automatically upon positive thoughts and experiences as upon negative ones.

2. As you go through your day, when you aren't focusing on something else, take a "mini-vacation in your mind." This is easily done with practice. You simply create in your mind a wonderful place where you're very happy. For some, this is a lovely, richly decorated palace; for others, it is a walk along a warm, clean, sandy beach at sunset with someone they love. For still others, it is a simple, yet beautiful room with a large, comfortable bed . . . and a big window looking out onto a pond and a garden of well-manicured trees and flowers. Wherever you go in your mind, that place needs to be seen in great detail. Touch the palace walls, smell the ocean, feel the soft pillow on the bed. Are you with me here? Can you visualize it? You can go on this mini-vacation whenever life gets stressful or you just need a mental break.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale suggested,

Fill your mind with all peaceful experiences possible, then make planned and deliberate excursions to them in memory. You must learn that the easiest way to an easy mind is to create an easy mind. This is done by practice. The mind quickly responds to teaching and discipline. You can make the mind give you back anything you want, but remember the mind can give back only what it was first given. Saturate our thoughts with peaceful experiences, peaceful words and ideas, and ultimately you will have a storehouse of peace-producing experiences to which you may turn for refreshment and renewal of your spirit. It will be a vast source of power. (*The Power of Positive Thinking*)

3. The third way you can use this marvelous tool of visualization – to become your best self – is to heal yourself from past pain. Everyone who has experienced emotional pain and heartache knows that it is very real and extraordinarily difficult to forget. Although you cannot erase the past, you can help yourself heal with visualization. Here's how: When a painful memory forces itself into your mind, **label** it with "Here it is" and then **replace** it with a thought about how the person *should have acted*. Instead of letting your mind re-play the experience as it was, use your power of visualization to imagine what it should have been like. Then **focus forward** as you extend the image into the future, but in a positive way instead of the way it 'played out' negatively. Here's an example of how you do this: A painful incident from the past comes into your mind and you think to yourself:

Here it is. I'm seeing my father hit me . . . but I am now reversing that and visualizing him walking into the room and we talk to each other. We don't get angry, and he doesn't hit me. After we talk, he hugs me and tells me he loves me. Dad, if you knew then what you know now – you wouldn't have hit me. I forgive you, and I'm now thinking about how you love me . . . and about how our relationship is now. (If the relationship is good, that's easy. If not, do this) I am thinking about how I would like our relationship to be . . . I'm thinking about how much more kind you are now. You know, this helps me with my resolve to be a good parent. I learned some good things from you, but I also learned about things I'll never do to my children. So it wasn't all bad . . . I learned, and now I'll be a better parent because of you.

4. A fourth way you can use visualization is to imagine yourself in the future, doing

something that you are going to do: a presentation at work; meeting with the boss; working toward a goal; achieving a goal; taking a vacation with your family; being patient/kind/forgiving, etc; visiting relatives during the holidays; and on and on. Again, you create mental pictures in your mind – in great detail. You imagine every part of the experience. Here is an example of what I do. I think to myself,

I'm going to give this presentation to my department in 24 hours. I've prepared well, and I know the material. I will imagine what it will be like. I'm going to get up tomorrow morning with a positive, upbeat attitude and look forward to the presentation. I'll put on my black suit, my hair will look great and I'll feel really good about my appearance. I can see myself right now...yeah, I look good! After a healthful breakfast of orange juice, two eggs and whole wheat toast, I'll go through the presentation highlights out loud, so it will be on the tip of my tongue. Then I'll take my briefcase and drive to work calmly because I've left plenty of time to get there. As soon as I get to work I'll email the department and remind them of the meeting. I'll answer my mail and pick up my presentation hand-outs. On the way to the meeting, I'll get a drink of water, and then confidently open the door of the boardroom. Inside, I see my colleagues looking at me with admiration and respect. I go to the front of the room and lay out my materials. I stand in front of the group confidently -- with my shoulders back and smiling -- anxious to begin. As I present, I am articulate and witty. I remember to speak slowly enough to be understood, and I patiently answer every question. My co-workers are interested in my information and enjoy the meeting. Afterwards, I thank them for their interest and participation and I graciously accept their compliments."

Do you see how it works? Your success in manifesting the “ideal” outcome is built upon powerful laws of the mind; so, *of course* visualization works!

Now, *what if* something unanticipated goes wrong on the day of your presentation – the car doesn't start, or during your presentation you're asked a question you can't answer, or the overhead projector didn't work, or your co-workers were critical and unappreciative? Although you don't expect those things to happen, you can prepare yourself mentally by thinking like this: “If something unfortunate happens, I'll handle it calmly and stay in control.”

Imagine in Great Detail and Visualize Yourself as the Person You Want to Become

It's important to understand that although your visualization necessitates high expectations for yourself, you have control only over your behavior. Your high expectations for ideal conditions and other people's positive behavior *may* not ever be realized. For example, you might have to deal with traffic that you couldn't anticipate, or rude co-workers who don't appreciate you. Remember, that *your responsibility* lies in how you react to your challenges . . . the way you deal with problems. The tricky part is learning how to think, “I can only control what I do; their behavior is not my problem.” And then *let it go*; blow out the match before it burns you. Now, if things go wrong with your presentation, that's another matter. You need to evaluate, learn, and use your mistakes as stepping stones to future success.

“Believe in the self you are now in the process of becoming.”

Dr. Leslie Weatherhead

Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead, author of *Prescription for Anxiety*, has valuable advice relative to visualization. He remarked,

If we have in our minds a picture of ourselves as fear-haunted and defeated nobodies, we must get rid of that picture at once and hold up our heads. That is a false picture and false must go. God sees us as men and women in whom and through whom He can do a great work. He sees us as already serene, confident, and cheerful. He sees us not as pathetic victims of life, but masters of the art of living; not wanting sympathy, but imparting help to others, and therefore thinking less and less of ourselves, and full, not of self-concern, but of love and laughter and a desire to serve. Let us look at our 'real selves' which are in the making *the moment we believe in their existence*. We must recognize the possibility of change and believe in the self we are now in the process of becoming. That old sense of unworthiness and failure must go. It is false and we are not to believe in what is false.

And Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick explained, "Hold a picture of yourself long and steadily enough in your mind's eye and you will be drawn toward it. Picture yourself vividly as defeated and that alone will make victory impossible. Picture yourself vividly as winning and that alone will contribute immeasurably to success."

**"Great living starts with a picture, held in your imagination,
of what you would like to do or be."**

Dr. Harry Fosdick

It took Jack, age 53, many years to complete his Masters Degree. Jack reported that what got him through the tough times was "visualizing what I wanted." He said, "I never lost the vision. If you see it in your mind, you will eventually gravitate toward it." His advice? "Day dream a lot! See yourself enjoying your dream!"

Susan, age 29, used visualization to help her through childbirth. In her words: "I wanted to experience childbirth without medication. I tried to relax and visualize the entire process. I told myself that I was in control of the pain; it was not in control of me. I thought, '*You can handle the pain and make it through.*' And I knew the power of the mind over the body: if I allowed myself to think for one moment that the pain was unbearable, it instantly became so! However, as soon as I returned to thinking I could control it - that the pain was for a purpose - I could endure it; the pain lessened and I was able to make it through the contraction."

Kathy, age 28, was miserable while struggling to overcome an eating disorder. Kathy explained that during her challenging days "I tried to keep in mind all the things I wanted to do in my life such as get married, have a family, excel in a career. I thought about how my behavior would prevent me from reaching my goals. I would also try to remind myself that I was not a quitter and the way I was behaving was in fact the easy way out. My advice is to believe in yourself and know that you can do whatever it is you want to do."

Review these facts and consider how you can use them to become your ideal self:

- Anything you imagine to be true is accepted as true by your subconscious mind.
- An imagined experience is perceived and acted on by your subconscious mind exactly the same as a real experience.
- Your behavior follows what you believe to be true.

For those who desire an answer to the question, “Exactly how does this work?” I’m including a brief explanation of how the left and right sides of the brain function. Bobbe Sommer, of the Maxwell Maltz Foundation, explained it in her book *Psycho-cybernetics 2000*. The following is just a portion of the information learned from neuropsychologist Roger W. Sperry’s split-brain experiments that earned him a Nobel prize.

How Does This Work?

Communication between the two halves of the brain (right and left hemispheres) is controlled principally by a bundle of nerve fibers called the corpus callosum. Sperry and his students studied patients in whom this nerve bundle had been surgically cut in an attempt to control epileptic seizures. In these people the two brain hemispheres functioned independently of one another. Sperry found that each half of the brain has its own conscious thought processes and its own memories.

In 97% of us, the left brain controls the ability to produce and understand speech; the right brain enables us to form, store and respond to sensory data, such as when we put on our clothes, find our way to a known location or recognize a face. When a word was flashed to a split-brain subject’s right hemisphere, she was unable to speak the word. The “verbal” left brain had not seen the word; the “visual” right brain knew what it was, but could not speak it. When a subject’s right brain was shown a picture of an apple, he could not name the object; but when his left hand (controlled by the right brain) was then given several unseen objects to choose from, he identified the apple.

**The left brain is logical, analytical and reasonable.
The right brain is intuitive, impulsive, and passionate.**

The left brain comprehends an object by its name; the right brain by the way it looks or feels. When you’re doing your taxes you use the left side of your brain. When you are afraid of something, it’s the right side at work. It has not been fully established what causes these differences in function, but it seems clear that the abilities of both cerebral hemispheres are necessary for a full human existence.

Generally, we think of the left brain as working with the conscious mind, while the right brain tends to partner with the subconscious mind. That’s why simply using “willpower” often becomes “won’t power;” because, since the way you behave is intimately bound up with your *self-image*, you’re not going to change it by attacking the problem with the part of your brain that deals in *words*. Trying to change your behavior through your left brain (talking about it instead of visualizing it) is frustrating because it doesn’t work very well.

For example, Spencer could tell himself logically that there was no reason why he should be afraid of public speaking. His left brain would say, “There isn’t anything to be afraid of – the people in the audience are just like you. It will be fine!” But in his right brain, Spencer *saw* himself standing awkwardly in front of the group and blubbering his way through a presentation. All the logic in the world wasn’t going to change that image! You see, his right brain simply *couldn’t process the logic* it was given because it only deals with how things *look* or *feel*. And so, my readers, it follows that:

The key to positive change is to create positive images and experiences with the right side of the brain AND to use positive communication (including good self-talk and helpful affirmations) with the left side of the brain.

“I Often Replay My Wins”

Has a story ever changed your life? Occasionally, I hear a story that gives me an “ah-ha!” moment. I love it when that happens! Here’s a true story:

One summer during the 1950’s, a bright Stanford University student labored over a difficult physics problem. Finally, he decided to ask his father for help. This young man’s father was not just any ordinary guy – he was a Nobel-prize-winning scientist. As the wise scientist studied his son’s problem, he asked, “Isn’t this problem similar to one we worked on last week?” His son answered, “Yes, I guess so . . .” Then his father asked, “Well, what have you been thinking about this week . . . I mean, when you were walking along, or in the shower, or driving? Weren’t you thinking about this problem?” His son admitted that, no, he didn’t think about the problem at all. The brilliant father then asked a question which his son never, ever forgot. He said,

“What do you think about when you don’t *have* to think about anything?”

His son admitted that he didn’t think about science. And then, with a sad expression on his face, the wise father remarked, “Then you better not be a scientist. You should go into whatever field you think about when you don’t have to think about anything.”

I would like to ask you that same question. “What do you think about when you don’t *have* to think about anything? Where do you allow your thoughts to take you?”

Your answer is a marvelous indicator of your self-image. People who are emotionally healthy focus on positive things like:

- their past achievements
- what they can learn from the challenges in their lives
- their goals
- how they can help others

People who are emotionally unhealthy spend their time thinking negatively. They:

- berate themselves for past failures

- blame others for their problems
- resent people and they plan ways to “get even”
- think about their weaknesses and the reasons they’re unhappy

Consider your thoughts carefully. Ralph Waldo Emerson reminds us, “**A man is what he thinks about all day long.**”

I’d like to suggest:

When you don’t *have* to think about anything, replay your wins!

Replaying your wins is just what it sounds like. During moments when your mind isn’t required to produce something significant, think about the times in your life when you did something well – when you accomplished something you’re proud of. Think about the good things in your life, the happy moments. Recall, for example, the times when you’ve won something, like a promotion, a scholarship, a race...even a spelling bee! Think about loved ones and people whose lives you’ve touched for good. Remember happy moments that make you smile. And think about those things whenever you’re tempted to be negative, to blame others, or to insult yourself because of weaknesses or bad decisions in the past.

Imagine your mind as producing an ongoing stage or movie presentation. In the Theater of Your Mind, you can play whatever scenes you choose. What I’m suggesting is that you flick back on your wins every chance you get; especially during those times when you don’t *have* to think about anything.

Here are ideas of past ‘wins’ you can imagine in great detail, and some positive questions you can ask yourself:

- I remember the time when my friends and I were... That was such fun!
- I remember that wonderful teacher who really cared about me...
- I remember how Mom used to..... And Dad always....
- I sure appreciate how my brother (sister/grandma/uncle) cares about me. He...
- I learned a lot from that experience. I learned to.... And now I’m better at....because of it.
- I love this weather! I can....now, but I can’t during the other seasons.
- I sure enjoyed winning that.... You know, I was pretty good at that!
- I love those people. They are so kind and good. I remember when we...
- I sure do enjoy a good book; I learn so much! From that book I learned...
- How can I use this information to be a better person?
- What I can do today to improve myself?
- What I can do to help lighten someone’s load today?
- What’s great about today?

In William Shakespeare’s play “As You Like It” he wrote: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players... And one man in his time plays many parts.”

During your moments on life’s stage, shouldn’t one of your parts be the optimist . . . the

builder-upper . . . the believer . . . the joyful one? Flick back on your wins every chance you get, and, as you are lifted by the positive pictures you create in your mind, you'll be better equipped to lift others.

Before we leave this Power Belief, I'd like to share a wonderful story told by Rachel Naomi Remen, MD. She is the author of the outstanding book, "*My Grandfather's Blessings*" (*Penguin Putnam*).

Years ago, I cared for a desperately sick two-year-old boy with bacterial meningitis. Deeply unconscious, Ricardo lay in a nest of IV lines and monitor cords, his tiny body almost hidden by the technology that supported and documented his struggle to live. His mother, a slight Filipina woman, sat at the foot of his bed day after day. She even slept there, sitting in her chair and leaning forward across the mattress. Whenever any of us came to examine Ricardo or draw blood from him, we would find her there, often with her eyes closed, one hand under her baby's blanket. She was holding on to his foot.

After he began to recover and the life-support equipment was withdrawn, I asked her about this. She smiled and looked away, a little embarrassed. But she told me that for all those days she had felt that his life depended on her holding on to his foot. Moved, I asked her what had been going on in her mind all that time. Had she been praying for his recovery? No, she told me, while she was holding his foot, she would just close her eyes and dream her dreams for him.

Day after day, she would watch him grow up. She would imagine taking him to his first day of school, see him learning to read and to write and play ball, sit in church at his first communion, watch him graduate from high school, dance at his wedding. She would imagine him as the father of her grandchild. Over and over and over again. She flushed slightly. "Perhaps," she told me, "it made a difference.

Dr. Remen then added, "Sometimes we may strengthen the life in others when we have an image of the future and hold on to it fiercely, much as Ricardo's mother did."

"The most interesting people are the people with the most interesting pictures in their minds."

Earl Nightingale

CHAPTER 6

POWER BELIEF #5

“I Act ‘As If’ While I’m Becoming”

“Act as if it were impossible to fail.”

Dorothea Brande

This Power Belief affirms the importance of living *as if you already are the person you want to become*. It is impressively effective, and well understood by high achievers, because most successful people – at some point in their careers - realized the importance of acting *as if* they were already competent/successful.

One Friday morning, an eager young student at Stanford University stood before Louis Janin. He was seeking part-time employment from Janin, who informed him, “All I need right now is a stenographer.”

“Fine,” the young man said eagerly, “I’ll take the job!” Then he added, “But I can’t come back until Tuesday.”

Janin agreed, and the next Tuesday the young man reported for work as scheduled. Janin asked him, “Why is it you couldn’t come back before Tuesday?”

The young man replied, “Because I had to rent a typewriter and learn how to use it.”

This zealous new typist was Herbert Hoover, whose ‘I-can-get-it-done’ attitude eventually led him through the doors of the White House.

I Live the Part as I Diligently Pursue my Goals

Using your imagination to create positive images requires imagining those experiences *as if* they were true. Remember:

- * Any belief can be reevaluated and challenged (they might be false ideas that you’ve acted on for years because you thought they were true).
- * New beliefs can replace the old ones.
- * When you focus, in great detail, on your new beliefs (your ideal self), your conscious mind directs your subconscious mind to accept these new images.
- * Your subconscious mind always agrees with images your conscious mind creates.
- * **Then, acting *as if* it were true can *make* it true.**

Here's an example of how this "As If" principle works:

Sharon, a brand new salesperson in her company, was thrilled with the product and the prospect of earning good money. However, she was scared to death of *selling* the product, and she didn't believe she could do it. In fact, explaining the most obvious benefits of the product to her closest friend seemed an impossible feat.

When Sharon heard about the principle of acting *as if*, she agreed to give it a try. This is what she did in her mind as she prepared to give her first presentation:

1. Sharon thought, in great detail, about the experience relative to her physical appearance. She first imagined what she would wear: a good-looking business-casual pantsuit. She imagined exactly what her jewelry looked like, and how she'd wear her hair. She thought about her posture and her facial expressions.
2. Sharon imagined every detail of the presentation. She planned how she would diligently prepare. Sharon knew that preparation would result in knowledge, expertise, and confidence. In her mind's eyes, she saw herself on her couch reading the material she'd present. She saw herself practicing the presentation in front of a mirror, and she imagined the exact way she'd look as she presented the information to customers.
3. In her mind, Sharon visualized herself communicating positively (with both her body language and verbally) during the presentation. On the stage of her mind, she saw herself smiling and poised, standing with the confidence of an expert. She imagined understanding the challenges of her customers, and felt compassion. This gave her insight regarding the best way to sell to them. She imagined herself speaking clearly, kindly, articulately and authoritatively. Sharon smiled as she realized that she really *could* do this!
4. Sharon then imagined herself explaining the benefits of the product in a way that customers not only understood, but motivated them to buy. She saw they were excited about the product and asked questions that Sharon easily answered. Then, she imagined one customer asking a question that she couldn't answer. She heard herself calmly reply, "Mr. Smith, I don't know the answer to that question, but I'll find out and get back to you this afternoon." She noticed that she didn't lose her composure, but remained poised and confident.
5. Sharon saw herself closing the deal authoritatively. Her customers bought the product and ordered even more than Sharon had anticipated. She was pleased, as she imagined sharing the good news with her family at the dinner table.

If you imagine scenes like this, over and over in your mind, your confidence level will increase, your performance will improve, and you will be able to act AS IF you already *are* the person you want to *become*.

Now let's look at the example of Sharon actually *making* the presentation and let's see how she took it beyond the mental practice to *acting as if* throughout the entire process:

1. As Sharon dressed and got ready on the morning of her presentation she repeated this in her mind: *“I love what I do! I’m a confident, successful salesperson who wants to share the good news about my product with everyone I meet.”*
2. As Sharon drove to the presentation, she continued to fill her mind with positive thoughts. When negative, doubtful thoughts pushed their way in, she replaced them with positive ones. As Sharon walked in the door of the building where she was to meet her customers, she squared her shoulders, took a deep breath and said to herself, *“I can do this!”*
3. Sharon smiled radiantly as she met her potential customers. She immediately put them at ease and connected with them as she asked questions about where they lived, their families, and their activities of the day.
4. Sharon then moved into her presentation with ease and confidence. Because she was well prepared, she boldly described the characteristics and benefits of her product. She then enthusiastically explained how much she and others enjoyed using it. As Sharon spoke, she was acting *as if* she was the person she’d watched on the stage of her mind so many times. She *was* the person she had imagined herself to be!
5. When Sharon closed the deal, it wasn’t as easy as she had imagined. For just a moment her confidence wavered and she stumbled a bit when her customers countered in ways Sharon hadn’t anticipated. However, she regained her composure by honestly saying, “I understand how you might want to go that direction, but let’s look at it this way . . .” and she maneuvered the conversation around to review the benefits of the product again.
6. Although Sharon didn’t sell as much product as she’d imagined in her mind, she did sell a good amount and closed the deal with a discussion of future sales.
7. At the dinner table that night, Sharon described her experience in glowing terms. She acknowledged that imagining in great detail and acting *as if* were the keys to her success.

Before we leave this Power Belief, remember that as you act *as if* while diligently pursuing your goals, you should schedule into your morning and evening routine just 10 or 15 minutes of relaxation. This is the time to both rehearse in your mind, and emotionally enjoy, the experience of achieving your most important goals. Imagine with great detail – see, hear, feel – and try to create the exact sensation you’ll feel when you reach your goal.

This exercise, if done twice each day, will make deep impressions on your subconscious mind and will create neural pathways between where you are and where you want to go. It will be especially effective at night because of how the subconscious mind internalizes experiences while you sleep. Before long you’ll find yourself feeling a sense of absolute certainty that you’ll reach your goals. *This certainty motivates the actions that guarantee success.*

“The greatest way to live with honor in this world is to be what we pretend to be.”

Socrates (469 BC - 399 BC)

CHAPTER 7

Believe It!

Before we move on to *BECOME IT!* I'd like to review the primary *Believe It!* principles. I have included this section in an effort to insure total clarity on the key concepts.

The beliefs in your mind bring about the results in your life. When you stop accepting false beliefs, opinions, and fears, and begin filling your mind with thoughts of goodness and peace, you'll be delighted to discover wonderful things occurring in your life. You will be able to hurdle barriers that you previously thought insurmountable, and begin excelling like never before.

As children, we were powerless when given suggestions by people who were important to us. We often accepted into our subconscious minds negative remarks that affected us throughout our lives. This helps us realize how incredibly important it is to speak positively and lovingly to children - showering praise and appreciation every chance we get.

As Adults We Can Make Choices

As adults we can use constructive self-suggestions and other healthy tools as reconditioning therapy to *change* the beliefs we accepted in the past. New, constructive self-suggestions release you from the negative conditioning that may have damaged your self esteem and inhibited your progress.

Once you understand the laws of the mind, you recognize your power to completely reject all negative suggestions from others. You can refuse to give attention to unkind remarks that, prior to your new understanding, would've hurt your heart and caused you pain. Why would they have caused pain? Because you would have allowed the pain, as you replayed the comments over and over in your mind. You would've thought about *why* the person said it, and you'd give the remark importance in your mind, thinking about it again and again. You may have even allowed those thoughts to anger you. These are choices *you* make. A better way? Blow out the match quickly (ignore the unkind remark) and refuse to allow the flame to hurt you. Go about the business of living with the secure knowledge that you are the master of your thoughts.

Unkind remarks can be like rubber balls thrown at an armored truck. You are the armored truck, totally in control of your thoughts. Simply think this: "I'm sorry he's choosing to talk like that, but I'm choosing to blow out the match. He can't hurt me unless I allow him, and I simply won't allow it." Or, "This is his problem, not mine. I know I'm doing the right thing, and I'm OK."

The following story reminds us of the importance of refusing to allow others to hurt us.

An aging Hindu master grew tired of his apprentice complaining, and so, one morning, sent him for some salt. When the apprentice returned, the master instructed the unhappy young man to put a handful of salt in a glass of water and then to drink it.

“How does it taste?” the master asked.

“Bitter,” spit the apprentice.

The master chuckled and then asked the young man to take the same handful of salt and put it in the lake. The two walked in silence to the nearby lake, and once the apprentice swirled his handful of salt in the water, the one man said, “Now drink from the lake.”

As the water dripped down the young man’s chin, the master asked, “How does it taste?”

“Fresh,” remarked the apprentice.

“Do you taste the salt?” asked the master.

“No,” said the young man.

At this, the master sat beside this serious young man who so reminded him of himself and took his hands, offering, “The pain of life is pure salt; no more, no less. The amount of pain in life remains the same, exactly the same. But the amount of bitterness we taste depends on the container we put the pain in. So when you are in pain, the only thing you can do is to enlarge your sense of things...Stop being a glass. Become a lake.”

You Can Give Unkind Remarks Power

Whatever power unkind remarks have over you, *you give to them*. You give mental consent and allow unkind remarks into your soul when you replay them over and over. And your subconscious mind will convert those negative thoughts into negative life experiences. When that happens, the person who spoke unkindly ‘won,’ didn’t he, because you allowed him to affect you negatively.

Your greatest power is your capacity to choose. So while you’re choosing, choose wisely. Choose to reject negative thoughts, and constantly affirm the good. Pay attention to the good that is all around you. Choose love, life, and laughter rather than lack, limitation and loneliness.

Many of the beliefs you hold weren’t accepted deliberately. Think about it: daily papers and television stations worldwide spread stories of doom and gloom that sow seeds of worry, anxiety and fear. If you accept the fear it becomes part of you and is later evidenced in your conversation and actions. You then convey these fears to others in numerous ways, and the cycle continues.

However, there are those who understand that we don’t have to accept the negative thoughts created by tales of woe. We have choices relative to what we allow in our minds. We have within

us the power to counteract destructive ideas by feeding our subconscious minds only constructive thoughts and seeking only that which is good and lifts our souls.

Choose to Heal Yourself

Can you choose to heal yourself emotionally, and sometimes even physically, by using your mind? Consider this: destructive thoughts produce negative emotions that must find an outlet. These emotions are often expressed as ulcers, tension, heart trouble, etc. What we choose to do with our destructive thoughts determines our emotional, and sometimes physical, health. We now know what to do with those thoughts and how to convert them from negative to positive. I will caveat with a personal belief: as we keep our hand in God's hand, keeping His commandments and partnering with Him every step of the way, our ability to heal, hurdle barriers, and to excel, is infinitely multiplied.

Every part of you reflects, to some extent, your self beliefs: your health; energy level; financial condition; relationships and social status. Usually, the circumstances and level of success in every area of your life are outer manifestations of what lies in your subconscious mind.

How often are you angry? Jealous? Fearful? How often are you cheerful, complimentary, and content? These are indicators of beliefs held in your subconscious mind. You weren't born with negative beliefs and *they can be wiped out*. Learning how to feed your subconscious mind with life-giving thoughts, and learning – then applying - ways to create new, positive belief patterns will bless your life and the lives of everyone around you.

“...and according to your belief it is done unto you.”
(Matt. 9:29)

“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”
(Mark 9:23)

Visualize Your Success

Any picture you conceive in your mind is real to the subconscious mind. That ‘real’ thought will one day appear in the real world if you imagine it often enough.

Think about the power and common nature of this principle. Architects and contractors visualize the building they create. . . they see it in their minds just exactly as it will look when completed. The building process always begins in someone's imagination. Likewise, any goal you wish to achieve begins with visualization; imagining it in great detail. The subconscious mind will bring to pass any picture vividly held in the mind long enough. Visualize the end result you wish and the state of happiness it produces.

You will sometimes find that your intellect tries to get in the way, trying to reason and even argue with you. Resist this by setting aside your problem-solving techniques and instead, in a relaxed state and with conviction, picture yourself without the problem, having reached your

goal already. Imagine happiness and relief. Remember that the subconscious mind is the architect and builder of the body. It controls all your vital functions, and it will help you become your ideal self.

Build a Beautiful Mental Home

Each time my family built a new home we carefully chose the perfect blueprint and made sure the builders followed every detail of our plan. We thoroughly analyzed every choice and carefully selected only the best materials. Realizing that our future comfort depended on the quality of our home, we thoughtfully deliberated and each step of the process was discussed. Now, a relevant question is: “Do we spend such time working on our mental homes - on our very personal blueprints for living?”

The quality of each life experience is determined by the building blocks we use in the construction of our mental homes. If our blueprints are made up of mental blocks of fear, worry and limitation; if our blueprints include verbal doubts and negativity . . . what can we expect the quality of our lives to be? Can we reap luscious fruit if we plant thorns?

We are all building our mental homes each hour of the day with our thoughts and imagery. We can enjoy radiant health, loving relationships and boundless joy if we allow quality thoughts on the stage in our minds. The mental homes we build - our magnificent mansions (upon the construction of which we’re always engaged) are our personalities and life stories.

Perhaps the most important life exercise we can “practice” is to create a blueprint of beauty and build an exquisite mental home from that blueprint . . . by filling our minds with positive thoughts which constantly bless our lives and the lives of others.

Overcome Any Weakness

True and lasting happiness will begin to enter your life the very day you have a clear understanding that you can release yourself from all negativity, overcome any weakness, solve every one of your problems, and succeed beyond your fondest dreams. You are a storehouse of infinite intelligence, boundless love, and limitless potential that only you have the power to develop and use, or ignore and abuse. Believe in yourself and in your dream! Choose to become your ideal self, and work diligently to reach your goals.

“Believe in yourself, trust in God, then let go and enjoy the adventure!”

Rose Kennedy

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All of Paula Fellingham’s presentations boost morale, reveal specific ways to create positive change and reach goals, and inspire people to do their very best every day. Paula’s presentations are content-rich, highly motivating, and filled with stories people want to hear and principles they can apply immediately. Paula Fellingham shows, step-by-step, how to hurdle barriers and excel like never before!

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