

Outsmart Your Brain

AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL



HOW NEUROSCIENCE AND QUANTUM PHYSICS CAN HELP YOU CHANGE YOUR LIFE

by David Krueger, M.D.



MENTORPATH
MIND OVER MATTERS

OUTSMART YOUR BRAIN
AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL

**How Neuroscience and Quantum Physics
Can Help You Change Your Life**

By

David Krueger, M.D.
Executive Mentor Coach



A MentorPath™ Publication

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Chapter 1

INVERSE WISDOM

Thanks to Mom

I came home from college after my freshman year and announced to my mom that I'd decided to major in psychology. We talked; she was excited for me. Then she mentioned that she made an A in her college psychology course.

I said, "You must have really enjoyed it and studied a lot."

She said, "No, I just answered everything on the test the opposite of what I thought was right."

In honor of my mom, who thought it was all opposite anyway, here is a list of nine things that are the inverse of conventional wisdom in writing a new life or business story.

1. Burn your bridges.

Make it impossible to go back to an old habit or way of being. If you decide to quit smoking, make it impossible in some way to restart. Create an uncomfortable scenario if you do start again. Focus on the present without the bad habit. Reward yourself for not going back.

To change, you have to develop a life or business story that contains the storylines you want. To stop doing something is not complete change—a new story incorporates new behavior and beliefs. You have to have a new story to be in before you can give up an old story. But you can't just remove all the old software, because it's who you are. And much of it has worked—and works—very well.

And you can't just suddenly start appending some success principles to an existing story and assume that there won't be resistance—reversion to the familiar—and noise—from the old story.

2. Do the opposite of what you'd normally do when you are afraid, worried, anxious, or uncomfortable.

If you're uncomfortable with public speaking, avoidance will increase the fear, so do more of it. Jump in the water; you can't learn to swim on paper.

You are always free to change your mind, always free to change your beliefs and core assumptions about who and what you are. Prediction and expectation based on the past create repetition, but attitudes based on the present and future create possibilities. A belief system constructs an obstacle or an opportunity. Trying to change your past is not change, as your past will always be the way it was.

3. Obstacles reveal desires.

Show me an obstacle, and I'll show you a desire. An obstacle conceals but simultaneously reveals the underlying desire. Proceed despite the obstacle:

When you're ready to recognize the obstacle, you're ready to consider the possibility of not creating it.

The more you run away from something, the more you engage it. So the more apparent it becomes. And sometimes you can recognize something the first time only by denying it.

4. Discomfort can be a sign of progress.

Moving beyond a comfort zone is necessary for progress. Comfortable is not a place you begin, but a place you can arrive at. Moving from a comfort zone is necessary in order to proceed.

Change generates discomfort. At a physiological level, change produces pain. One reason has to do with how and where the brain processes new ideas. Routine activity without the introduction of anything new requires little attention or energy.

When something new confronts these habits, you feel discomfort and have to expend more energy. It's work to change. The natural inclination is to resist the stress of change, and to preserve the default habit.

5. Lean into the unknown.

If you think you're too old to do something, you will be right. Studies show that even highly accomplished people close themselves to novelty as they get older. The major factor is not their age, but how long they have been doing a particular thing, such as being in a particular business. People who stay in one place and one position get most entrenched. Those who have changed positions or careers often adapt to change more readily. They reset their clocks. This means that the eminence and prestige of being highly accomplished in one area tends to add to the resistance of change.

You can tiptoe through life very carefully and arrive safely at death.

Put energy into what you want. Focus on wealth instead of debt. Possibilities instead of problems. Desires instead of obstacles. To fight something is to engage it—to add energy to it. This creates resistance. When you focus on what you want, what you don't want falls away. Like your lap when you get up to walk.

6. You do not attract what you want; you create what you focus on.

Everyone wants more money, so wanting is not the key to having it. Focusing on scarcity attracts scarcity; focusing on prosperity aligns your energy to pursue prosperity.

You keep coming back to what you run away from. You attract what you resist because you engage it with focused emotion.

The most important principle is to focus on what you do want rather than on what you don't want. Most focus is outside awareness. The challenge is to target the specific outcomes you want. Discover all the things that you focus on that you don't want—make a list as you notice thinking about them. This list will cue your personal “radar” for early recognition. Then, each time you notice you're thinking about them, stop and shift to thinking what you do want.

Be specific about what you do want, not just what you don't want in disguise (“I want to lose weight” keeps the focus on overweight.).

Thinking this way is not magical. It requires discipline. This is why most people don't have a spectacular result. Spectacular results require mind and brain

consistency for 25-30 days without resistance to change and without reverting to the old pattern.

7. You only see what you believe.

When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change. This fact comes from quantum physics and the process of observing quarks.

In quantum mechanics as well as in the brain, the question you ask influences the outcome you see. Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz describes a well-verified law called the Quantum Zeno Effect: the mental act of attention activates and holds in place brain circuitry. Consistent focus then rewires the brain.

8. Believe in someone and then he or she will show you why you do.

Neuroscience has demonstrated that authentic belief in someone activates their brain to create a state of mind that transcends usual thinking and performance.

9. Don't believe every thought you have.

Thoughts lie a lot. They're like my Uncle Ted (rest his soul or I'd have to use a different example). You don't have to believe every thought that crosses your mind. You're not even stuck with the brain you have – you can make it better.

Chapter 2

CHANGE YOUR MIND, CHANGE YOUR BRAIN

The Psychology of Change

Why is change so difficult? Part of the answer to these questions is in our minds.

A child reads *Goodnight, Moon*, gets it the first time or two, and then reads it ninety-eight more times. Or she watches the same movie so many times that she can say all the lines. An adult will repeat behavior that doesn't work, often do it harder, and expect a different result – even when it leads to debt, plateaued careers, or disappointing relationships.

Why is repetition so compelling to intelligent people while it is so illogical? Why is it not obvious to the adult that trying to move beyond an old story by simply writing a “better ending” only recreates the same story and ensures staying stuck in it?

Repetition feels secure and familiar. We repeat the same story because we know the outcome. Predictability masquerades as effectiveness. The invisible decisions that we make daily become camouflaged as habits, our collection of repetitions. We always strive to remain true to the central theme, the plot, of our lives, returning to it as often as we can. Any departure, even temporary, causes uncertainty and trepidation. Being in new territory – developing a new story – creates anxiety. The easiest and fastest way to end this anxiety is to go back to the familiar: the old story.

A person may not be able to simply break out of a behavior cycle – for example, launch a new business that he's dreamed of often and planned well – because it's not just a matter of intellect or willpower. Nor is it a matter of shifting to another frame of mind or stepping into a substitute story. A new story has to be gradually constructed by giving up what is known, secure, and predictable. Even when eagerly anticipated and welcomed, interruption of the familiar is uncomfortable.

We know from developmental psychology that our most basic motivation as human beings is effectiveness. We know from psychoanalysis that a fundamental drive

is for mastery. We know from social psychology that certain needs— attachment, validation, support, intellectual stimulation—are universal and remain present throughout adulthood. And all these needs have greater valence at times of change.

The Neuroscience of Change

And part of the answer to why change is difficult is in our brains.

In the fall of 2004, some voters voted twice in the presidential election. Their first time was a stopover at the laboratory of neuroscientist Dr. Drew Westen to be hooked up to functional MRI brain scans. He presented this group of voters with a variety of new material and found that people emotionally committed to particular ideas manage to ignore facts that contradict their own preconceptions. The participants simply did not register data opposing a belief system. He also found that three separate areas in the brain acted in concert to ignore everything except what fit a preconceived idea.

Dr. Westen demonstrated that people make decisions based on bias and belief, rather than on facts. His research reminds us that there are truths we refuse to see, and that incorrect assumptions will be validated. We see what we believe.

We ignore facts that contradict what we believe. We believe, not so much what we want to believe, but what we expect to believe. Our brains and emotions are both programmed this way. We believe according to our self-image. Although we see ourselves as principled, logical, and objective in sorting through data, we ignore facts and ideas that contradict our beliefs.

The same thing happens in the brain in another circumstance: for example, the arrival of an old friend re-lights the brain cells' configuration of that relationship, even though many years have intervened since the last encounter.

Here's what both have in common:

Familiar experiences travel along well-established neuronal connections with their predictable neural networks. A neural network contains the information of a particular way of relating, a habitual pattern of response based on past experience.

Reactions become automatic, so we don't have to make a new decision in each situation. This default mode of operating can mistakenly be read as fate, when it is simply a kind of learning neuroscientists call long-term potentiation. We call these reactions habits. In professional coaching, to facilitate change, we can highlight a habit to demonstrate that it is, or can be, a choice – a decision.

Old habits and accustomed behaviors are like being on a daily commute. Though repetitive, it is familiar. To change is like coming to the end of that usual path to suddenly enter uncharted territory with no reassuring landmarks. This is what actually happens in the brain as a grooved neuronal pathway and network – the default mode – is changed to generate new experience. The result? Feeling lost. The temptation? A return to the familiar, the old story, in preference to the discomfort of uncertainty. No one is comfortable in the beginning of a move into new territory.

A comfort zone is a matter of both mind and brain. For powerful, effective results, we have to know how to address both.

Affecting Change

But we are not hard-wired for life. With new experiences, new neuronal pathways are created. This reprogramming can shift to more adaptive and more successful modes. New research shows that throughout our lives we have the ability to rearrange brain-cell connections (a process called neuroplasticity) as well as produce new brain cells (neurogenesis). In other words, by creating new experiences consistently, we can generate new neuronal pathways and neural networks. And, as some remarkable new research shows, consistently repeating new experiences even alters gene expression. When we change our minds and our behaviors, we change our brains.

Methods and tools exist that can effectively catalyze and accelerate the process of change; I have discussed many of these in my previous columns. There is an infinite sea of new possibilities to be created for arriving at new goals. But they come with a caveat. If you want to write new script for new experiences, you have to take action to diminish preprogrammed responses. And there are no shortcuts, since long-term change requires consistent practice to groove new neural patterns – until it becomes the default mode, as automatic as the old story.

Change from a familiar pattern of repetition may manifest in significant anxiety. Change creates discontinuity and disrupts cohesiveness, a hiccup in the experience of self. In the beginning, change not only disrupts the usual order of things, but constitutes an uncertain and precarious venture into new territory of mind and brain – the steps to get there not yet etched like the old story.

What are the guidelines for proceeding with a new story?

- Tolerate risk in departing the familiar
- Hold a belief of successfully filling a new space
- Read present anxiety or uncertainty as an understandable signpost of moving ahead without familiar landmarks
- Contrast the old model's anxiety as danger-head-for-cover with present anxiety of the new

With sustained change, you can retranscript – reprogram – your mind and brain.

Principles of Change

Some change occurs from the inside out, beginning with examining and altering thoughts and feelings, then progressing to a resultant change in behavior. Some change occurs from the outside in, the process of adapting to new experiences and situations. Each individual usually has a favorite mode of how he or she works best: from the inside out, or the outside in.

1. Change begins with the recognition that you are the author of your own life story.

Everything that happens to you, you either create or allow. Creating is easier to understand, even when it comes about through indirect consequences, such as lack of exercise leading to lack of energy. The allow aspect is harder to own and sometimes elusive. You didn't say no and your personal time is eroded. You didn't make an appointment with yourself to meditate, or brainstorm, or exercise, so it didn't happen.

- You worked out, so now you feel more energy and alertness. That's creating.

- You didn't attend to marketing, and now your business is slumping. That's allowing.

Choice is a mindset. The antithesis of choice is also a mindset. Here's how the latter sounds: fate/luck/circumstance/bad traffic/things just happen/I can't do it.

In order to change, you first have to know what you want to change – that is, know what you do not want in your life and what you want to create instead. Without this awareness, meaningful and systematic change cannot occur. Doing something differently, being a contrarian, is not change, because it uses another person or idea as a point of reference in simple opposition.

You create whatever you think, feel, and experience each moment. Every day is a blank page until you begin writing on it – even though it seems to be “just the way things are.”

2. If you want to change your life, first change your mind.

How do you take an inventory of self-limiting and compromising beliefs if you experience them as reality? Analogous to Impressionist painting, each of your experiences is a dab of paint on a pointillist canvas. Only when you step back and view the entire picture do you recognize that the points form a pattern of a particular segment of life, and that the segments have their own unity. You create each experience, the patterns, and the composite image – and each element is at a different level of awareness.

Beliefs may be conflicting, such as in a woman who indicated that she wanted to lose weight, yet wanted to enjoy life, food, and her summer free of dieting.

3. You are always free to change your mind, always free to change your beliefs and core assumptions about who and what you are.

Changing your mind not only alters your brain but also transforms your life. But first you have to become aware. Prediction and expectation based on the past create repetition, but when we base our predictions and expectations on the present and future we create possibilities. A belief system constructs either an obstacle or an opportunity. Trying to change your past is not change, as your past will always be the way it was.

4. You have to have a new story to be in before you can give up an old story.

To change, you have to develop a life story that contains the storylines you want. To stop doing something is not complete change, for a new story incorporates new behavior and beliefs. You have to embody—actually live—this story you want. Good theory is not enough. While abstaining from an old story, such as excessive drinking or eating, is a beginning, another behavior must be put in the old story's place.

You have to have a new story to be in before you can give up an old story. But you can't just remove all the old software, because it's who you are. And much of it—most of it has worked—and works—very well.

And you can't just suddenly start appending some success principles to an existing story and assume that there won't be resistance—reversion to the familiar—and noise—from the old.

Knowing what not to do is at least as important as knowing what to do. You may not always know what the next right thing is, but you can almost always know what it isn't.

5. When people create their own answers, they have signed on to invest in the outcome.

This establishes the beginning of a sense of effectiveness and mastery. Chapter 3 describes how the brain lights up with an “ah-ha” or insight experience, while it fails to do so when receiving advice.

6. We don't see things as they are; we see things as we are.

Assumptions manifest as feelings and behaviors. When you make assumptions explicit, you can see more clearly which ones facilitate and which interfere with goals.

7. Change is constant and inevitable; it is the resistance to change that generates most problems.

We are most successful when we learn from yesterday, anticipate tomorrow, and integrate the impact of new experience.

8. Small changes lead to big changes.

Issues that seem overwhelmingly large and insurmountable can be approached by looking for simplicity somewhere in the issue as a means to progress. For example, when you feel overwhelmed with the number of tasks you face, first clarify one task that, if done today, would represent progress. This focus on a specific action exercises effectiveness and initiates a model of mastery.

9. Solutions, causes, and problems are not always related or even interconnected.

To resolve a problem, even to make an emotional end to the past, does not create a blueprint for success. That's why there are a lot of frustrated therapy dropouts. Strategic plans for specific goals are necessary. If something is a totally new experience, you may need a guide, even for something like a healthier diet or exercise.

With time, the benefit of doing more of what is working and less of what is not will become evident and self-perpetuating.

10. You need to know where you're going – goals and strategies.

If you don't know where you're going, any map will do.

11. You need the correct paradigm.

A paradigm is an internal map—the way you see, interpret, and understand something. It needs to be correct. If you're in Dallas and need to navigate the city, a map of Houston is useless. And it needs to be current, not a paradigm from an old story. For example, if you read the anxiety or uncertainty of a new experience in an old paradigm, such as anxiety-equals-danger-ahead; or uncertainty means wrong-decision, then stopping the new experience makes sense. A current paradigm reframes the excitement and trepidation of moving ahead in new territory as a signpost of progress.

12. What you seek is camouflaged in what you fear.

Show me an obstacle, and I'll show you a desire. For example, show me clutter, and I'll show you blocked energy that desires release. We always create the outside to match the inside.

This is the secret hiding in the open: an obstacle is the unconscious mnemonic of desire. It reminds you of what you want, but makes it safe to want if you're afraid.

I saw a cartoon of a dog straining at its leash, and barking relentlessly at a cat, as if to say, "Just lemme at him." The cat wasn't too shabby, and actually looked pretty mean—about as big as the dog. All of a sudden in the middle of a ferocious bark, the leash snapped. So the dog was free to go after the cat. He looked astonished. Frightened. He quickly grabbed the leash and tied a triple knot. Then, saved from taking a risk, he could again strain at the leash and bark his ferocious, "Just lemme at him."

When you find yourself focusing on an obstacle (e.g., "I can't find time to exercise"), reflect on the underlying desire. When you're ready to consider that you create the obstacle, you're also ready to consider the possibility of not creating it. Imagine what it would be like not to create your obstacles.

13. We can change our brains.

Neurogenesis is the creation of new brain cells. Two things above all other create neurogenesis.

First, an enriched environment of intellectual and emotional stimulation creates more complex brain structure. The hippocampus is the part of the brain especially connected with creativity and memory. Mice from an enriched environment have a 15 percent increase in their hippocampus cells. Second, physical exercise increased the number of cells in the hippocampus by almost 100%.

Another finding: chronic stress impairs neurogenesis.

14. The brain remodels itself.

Neuroplasticity – that our brains can change in form and function – has been called the scientific revolution of our time. A region of the brain that originally had one job can be trained to perform another. For example, for stroke patients who have a dysfunctional arm, the good arm is put in the sling so that they are forced to use the “bad” arm to do things like feeding and dressing. After ten days of therapy, the patients regained significant use of an arm they thought would always hang useless. The brains of these individuals recruited nearby brain neurons to perform the functions of the damaged ones.

Neuroplasticity includes the concept that the brain can reassign job descriptions of neurons. The amount of cortical real estate that a body part claims can be changed depending on its use. For example, an expert Braille reader has a significantly greater area handling the finger reading Braille than someone who doesn’t.

Chapter 3

OUTSMART YOUR BRAIN

Part I The Principles

To change behavior is difficult, even when it means the difference between life and death. In studies of coronary bypass patients, when their lives are at risk unless they adopt healthier lifestyles, only one in nine change their habits.

Advances in the integration of psychology—study of how the mind works—in combination with research in neuroscience—study of how the brain works—can significantly benefit coaches. The more we know about the innate predispositions of the human brain, the better we understand strategies required to implement change. This research has reversed some of our most basic assumptions, while affirming other wisdom that could only have been passed on by our grandmothers.

We Are of Two (or More) Minds

Neuroscientists use fluorescein magnetic resonance imagery (fMRI) scans—a video of the brain actually working) to study the brain's responses to various emotional stimuli. These studies and their findings can be used to help people make decisions that are in their long-term best interest.

These same studies disprove the long-standing assumption that people have a consistent and predictable set of preferences and responses based on logic and outcome. The rational origins of behavior—and the situations that derail this logic—can now be studied more precisely.

In a complicating twist, neuroscientists have discovered that different parts of the brain operate in radically different ways. The prefrontal cortex's long-term perspective counters the limbic system's desire to order a third cognac.

Some fundamental paradoxes:

- We are literally of two minds when long-term planning and immediate gratification must struggle over the same “dollar” without tearing it.
- Making people happy is not simply giving them more of what they prefer. The brain’s pleasure center quickly adapts to new stimuli and expects them to continue, so only unexpected pleasure registers as happiness.
- Emotions do not simply and solely corrupt decision-making. Emotions also seize attention and motivate people to focus on the immediate. Those individuals who feel no emotion are not good at making decisions.

As we attempt to find a balance in making decisions, the long-term benefit so important to the prefrontal cortex must dance with the immediacy so important to the limbic system.

How the Brain Opposes Change

Both our minds and brains automatically resist change. Findings from the cognitive sciences can inform transition and transformation in a personal or business story. We’ll first examine how the brain opposes change, then discuss how to use this information to facilitate success.

Since the brain has a mind of its own, we need to consider eight crucial principles of how our brains work. The mechanisms are somewhat complex, but the principles are so simple they’re almost elusive.

1. Change Generates Discomfort

At a physiological level, change produces pain. One reason has to do with how and where the brain processes new ideas. Routine activity without the introduction of anything new requires little attention or energy. The brain circuits of these longstanding habits reside in the basal ganglia. You take the same route to work each day, so you don’t have to think about it and can listen to audio books as you drive.

When these habits are confronted with the need for change, the automatic pilot in the basal ganglia gets disrupted, creating discomfort. The prefrontal cortex then has to get busy with more energy and attention to process this thinking.

It's work to change. The natural inclination is to resist the stress of change, and to preserve the default habit.

2. Change Creates Dissonance

The brain has an innate capacity to detect what neuroscientists call “errors”: the differences between expectation and perceived actuality. It registers that difference as a sense that something's not quite right. At times this recognition can be abrupt and explicit: remember the experience of absent-mindedly going to the refrigerator for a drink of milk, only to abruptly discover when you took a sip that it was orange juice? When this happens, neural firings disrupt expected flow and use brain energy.

These error signals are generated in the orbital cortex, just behind the eyes – a close neighbor to the amygdala and its fear/anger/excitement circuitry. Error-detection signals can immediately catalyze an emotional response and cause impulsive behavior. An example is an upsetting event that causes someone to react in an obsessive-compulsive way. The error-detection circuit is torqued, and the orbital frontal cortex sends a message, “I just touched something dirty and have to wash my hands.” While the person knows logically that the message isn't reasonable, the compelling urge to remedy the situation by hand-washing persists. Acting on the urge brings immediate relief, which is reinforcing. But the more this “remedy” is engaged, the more etched become the neural circuits in the basal ganglia. So hand-washing becomes more compulsive.

Because of this error-detection signal that something is “wrong” when routine behavior changes, we have to take this coupling into account when guiding and strategizing about change. Feeling uncomfortable in the beginning of a new behavior is not an indication to stop. You have to leave your comfort zone to change.

3. The Brain is a Prediction Machine

This reality is a huge factor in writing a new story – sometimes you have to outsmart your brain. When anything happens twice the brain predicts a third repetition. A stock goes up two quarters in a row, so the brain predicts a third rise.

J. Paul Getty listed three key elements to getting rich. 1. Get up early 2. Work hard. 3. Find oil. You can see how that principle is also the basis of many jokes: listing two things, then surprising with a third nonsequitur.

Well-grooved circuits become default behavior patterns.

These brain connections literally become mind-maps and subsequently influence the reality that we see. Remember the placebo effect: what we expect accounts for what we perceive and experience. A patient is prescribed an inert pill + given some expectations. In the majority of cases, the expected results occur. By anticipating an experience, you can create it. This story generates a truth so powerful that it can even reverse the pharmacological effect of a real medicine.

We need to be sure we predict – envision – the right things.

4. Behavioral Reinforcements Can Backfire

Clinical research demonstrates that some incentives, as well as threats to motivate change, don't work for the long term. For example, typical behavioral incentives and threats in the workplace (such as commending punctuality and reprimands for lateness) usually backfire.

Studies show two things:

1. Threats work short-term, but draw attention away from work and back to the problem that created the behavior.
2. Recognition for being on time actually raises anxiety and reinforces the neural patterns connected with lateness.

We assume people will receive information about change and use it to better themselves. Not so, says the brain. In fact, being told what to do sets up innate opposition. The brain's natural homeostasis says: avoid change.

5. Motivation Is Not Essential

Someone does not have to be motivated to begin doing something. And someone may not generate motivation until a goal is set. An action can generate its own motivation. Many of the professional athletes I've worked with get up in the

morning and go to the gym, even though at the time they aren't motivated to do so. They just do it. At some time during the course of the workout, perhaps late into it, they become motivated. Or they may just do the workout because they know that it's the thing to do in order to do what's next. Motivation isn't essential – but having a plan and sticking to it are.

Humanistic psychology emphasizes persuasion and self-actualization as change agents. This approach assumes that people will receive information about change and use it to better themselves. Not so, says the brain. Being told what to do sets up innate opposition, a function of natural homeostasis to maintain present balance and to avoid change.

6. Emotions Change Brain Functioning

Anxiety or fear shifts someone into a survival mode that prevents fluid learning and understanding. The alarm signals of fear, anxiety, anger, or even irritability and impatience hijack the attention of the frontal lobes, causing them to forfeit their optimum functioning.

A classic study looked at the correlation of reward and dopamine response. The assumption was that an animal gets a reward, then produces more dopamine. This is not what happens. It is not the reward that causes the spike in dopamine, but the anticipation of the reward. When gamblers were studied, their excitement occurred as they approached and sat down at the slot machine. Their dopamine spike was shown to precede their touching the machine, long before they were ever rewarded with a win.

7. Stimulation and Performance

Stimulation, also known as a little bit of stress, enhances both explicit memory (declarative, such as facts and information) and implicit memory (procedural such as riding a bicycle and action patterns). This stimulation increases oxygen and glucose delivery to the brain and strengthens neuronal connections. This, in turn, increases the occurrence of learning that neuroscientists call long-term potentiation.

So things that excite us, and provide a bit of stress short-term, enhance learning. The time window on this phenomenon is about two hours.

For longer periods of time, especially four hours or more, things go in the other direction. Learning capacity declines, less oxygen and glucose are delivered to the brain, and neurons in the hippocampus – where learning connections form – shut down. Thus with sustained stress people make bad, emotionally charged decisions.

The anticipation of pleasure increases dopamine to the brain. But prolonged stimulation depletes dopamine, and pleasure wanes. Yes, you really can have too much of a good thing.

And the four hours or more of stress that worsens performance can be stretched to days, weeks, even years.

The timetable of stress is an important factor to know. Some studies indicate that the body responds to stress, such as increased blood pressure, with the first threat of a stressful situation. For example, in the situation of potential layoff from a job, the stress doesn't begin when the person is actually laid off; it begins with the first threat of it. The anticipation creates stress before the feared thing occurs, and that increase in stress brings about altered physiological responses.

The amygdala, which is the limbic portion of the brain that deals with emotions, and the frontal cortex regulate each other. During stress, however, the frontal cortex is not functioning optimally, so it does not have tight reins on the amygdala. The emotional reaction that says, "I was abandoned once and I will be abandoned again," is not seen as a past experience but as a present fear when the frontal cortex cannot regulate the present state of mind. The overgeneralization, "This will be a disaster," is unimpeded.

When the seesaw is tilted toward the limbic system and right brain, emotion-driven decisions prevail. Access to the left frontal cortex – the reasoning, intellectual brain – is curbed, or hijacked entirely.

8. Closure to Novelty

Dr. Robert Sapolsky studied the resistance to change that is common with aging. Very young laboratory rats, like small children, don't like new foods. Yet when they reach adolescence, both rats and youngsters love trying new foods. By early adulthood, both rats and people tend to close to food novelty again.

Chapter 3 – OUTSMART YOUR BRAIN: Part I. The Principles

Here's another example of phase-specific openness or closure to novelty: among nonhuman primates, when one member invents a new type of tool, it's the juveniles who discover it and spread its use among their own group. Adult primates tend to avoid incorporating the new. Same with people – just substitute video game for tool.

At the human level, there is much psychological, cultural, and neuronal stasis that closes people to novelty. Why? We automatically program continuation of the familiar, the default mode.

Perhaps the hardest reality of all is to recognize that although something is right, change must always be considered.

The people most willing to change their stories are the most progressive. What determines the inflexibility of people and businesses is not age, but tenacity to a story. An example is how Motorola slid from a premiere electronics firm to a troubled industry because they stuck to their story. Nokia, however, put their electronic technology in the hands of children and young people, avidly seeking their feedback. Children did not rigidly adhere to a story, because their own stories were just being formed.

Chapter 4

OUTSMART YOUR BRAIN

Part II. The Instructions

Seven crucial elements are required to outsmart your brain and program changes. When you understand and incorporate each of the six, you have the outline to master your life and business stories.

1. Mind-maps: The Brain's Stories

These brain connections, or mind-maps, subsequently influence the reality that we see. The mind-map is the brain's story. What we expect literally then becomes what we experience. Analogous to the placebo effect, we then generate the effect of the accompanying story.

A paradigm—also called a mindset—is a model, a theory or frame of reference. It is simply the way we see the world. What we perceive, understand, and interpret is our individual paradigm—our map. The paradigm is the map that explains the territory, not the territory itself. If you are trying to navigate downtown New York City, and you use a map of Chicago, it wouldn't work no matter how hard you try. With the right map, planning and strategy can make a significant difference.

We are often not aware of our paradigms, simply because it is the way we see things. We validate our beliefs daily. It's just the way things are. These paradigms—the way we see things—then determine how we think and behave. The result is performance.

Each of us has a number of maps or paradigms in our head—our storylines. We often are unaware of having them, assuming that we see things the way they are.

One of our uniquely human qualities is self-awareness—the ability to reflect on how we think and what we do. Having this ability, we can learn from both our own experiences and from those of others. This is why we can create a new story. We are not our old story, we created our old story. We are not our habits or our

thoughts. We can think about these things and reflect on them. We can examine our paradigms to see if they serve us well.

A dilemma means having two or more mental maps in conflict. The work of coaching involves selecting the mental map that is most productive for a given task, or developing a meta-map.

2. How to Regulate States of Mind

Each state of mind has its corresponding mind-map—the software program of experiences, beliefs, and behaviors.

A state of mind is a set of particular emotions, memories, mental models, and behavioral patterns. Each of us has a consortium of different states of mind: Relaxation. Alertness. Anxiety. Anger. Centered attention. It's important to become aware of your various states of mind and know which state works best for what purpose—e.g., creative writing vs. editing; brainstorming vs. completing a project.

A key element of coaching is to help clients develop awareness of different states of mind, and bring a particular focus to which state works best for what purpose. A client may move from a state of mind where he feels stuck and/or myopic to possibilities, to a state where the scope and range of thinking and possibilities is much broader.

When you're in a state of upset, the first order of business is to regulate feelings to restore a cool state. Break the state of mind. Step away. Take a walk. Wash your hands and face with cold water. Breathe deeply. Take a time out. Even sleep on it: "Let me think about that and get back to you" is a decision.

Then you can respond when your state of mind is balanced.

Here's the brain equation for good decisions: right brain (emotional) + left brain (logical/intellectual) = balanced decision.

When you're relaxed and centered, you have the greatest access to all of your states of mind—all the information you possess.

Your brain can be measured to function differently depending on the music you listen to. Drs. Gordon Shaw and Frances Rauscher showed that undergraduates who listened to ten minutes of a Mozart sonata performed better on cognitive tests. The improvement lasted for ten to fifteen minutes. This Mozart Effect is about getting centered and relaxed to have access to information stored in all of your mind states.

Create a list of things that change your state of mind. Here are some prompts:

- Make your first thoughts of the day positive and fulfilling. They set in motion how the day will transpire:
- Make your last thought at night before you go to sleep a positive, enhancing one. It sets in motion what your unconscious mind works on while you are asleep.
- A meditation period of three to ten minutes a day can be powerful to get centered and determine your focus.
- Be aware of especially fertile times to plant seeds, such as the beginning and ending of the day. If you are positive, it will grow. If you are a collector of injustices, your collection will grow.
- The quickest signal of what you're thinking about it what you're feeling. Feelings let you know whether you are on track or not.

Consider this application of states of mind:

Lump tasks according to states of mind required to do them. It takes energy to change a state of mind, so clustering similar tasks that require the same state of mind is an efficient strategy. Going back and forth during the same time period between tasks that call for varied states of mind is both exhausting and inefficient. For example, creative writing and editing call for different states of mind.

- Learn the optimum state of mind for a particular task.
- Protect your time for an endeavor of a particular state of mind
- Cluster tasks that require the same state of mind (for example, action items such as errands may be most useful for a time later in the day when you are tired and have more difficulty concentrating).

3. The Power is in the Focus

The mental act of attention holds in place brain circuitry that is activated by the focus. Paying attention over time keeps the brain circuits open and active. With repetition, these chemical links actually become stable changes in the brain's structure.

The paradox is that we do not attract what we want, but we attract what we focus on. Everyone wants more money, so wanting is not the key to having it. Focusing on scarcity attracts scarcity. Focusing on prosperity aligns your energy to pursue prosperity.

Your unconscious doesn't register positive or negative; it registers only the focus. Just as a photographic print and negative are both forms of the same image, your unconscious is the image actualizing whatever you focus on. Make your focus the positive you want, rather than the negative you avoid.

Some NASA astronauts did a training experiment in which they wore headgear with an apparatus that gave an upside-down visual image – consistently, 24 hours a day. They had to learn to adjust everything they did – down for up, up for down – reversing everything. Then at about Day 25 each of them noticed something remarkable: their brains automatically made the adjustments. They no longer had to consciously adapt. Their brains had developed new neural pathways.

Another group of astronauts in the headgear, however, were given a day off – out of the helmets – at Day 15. When they put the headgear back on, it took them 25 days from that point on to make the adjustments.

Write your new story consistently for it to become the default mode.

Where you focus your attention, your brain makes connections. Your mind is an energy field and responds to focus. (We'll talk about how to do this systematically and effectively later.) Focus your attention consciously on a new experience, and you create new connections. Neuroscientists call this neuroplasticity. Focused attention plays a crucial role in actually altering the structure of the brain. Stimulating environments, especially when coupled with structured repetitive activity, form new brain connections and expand function. Simply put, when you focus attention in constructive ways you change your brain.

This concept offers explanation at a brain level for why a solution focus is more effective than a problem focus. These brain connections literally become mind-maps, and subsequently influence the reality that we see.

New neuronal networks and pathways are created when you focus on solutions. The existing circuitry is further etched when you focus on existing problems. This is why people can get stuck in therapy.

Neuroscience validates the reality that focus on awareness of choice is more beneficial than understanding the source of our thoughts.

In coaching, the coach helps the client focus attention on behaviors in a planned strategy to reach goals.

4. Visualize Changes

When you program your unconscious, you actually create a “future memory” to live into. The brain can’t tell whether you or reality conjured it. The more detailed your visual image, the more specifically etched your brain will be. We know that by simply picturing a danger we can trigger the entire body’s fight-or-flight response.

Visualization is a way to rehearse for your future. It takes both art and science to establish a vision.

Chapter 6 will address the art and science of visualization.

5. Insight Changes the Brain

Electroencephalogram (EEG) and fMRI monitoring of the brain reveal that at the moment of insight, a complex new set of neural connections is being created. A totally different part of the brain lights up in fMRI scans during these times, as contrasted with the effect of information or a directive received. An “ah-ha” activates centers in the brain to release certain chemicals. Important as this insight-induced change is, even more important is the sustained attention’s ability to hard-wire it into the brain’s circuits.

At the same time that the brain searches for patterns, when people create novel responses it also releases adrenalin. So, when someone solves a problem,

neurotransmitters immediately respond with a rewarding release. This means that our most powerful effectiveness as coaches is to facilitate insight—to help someone come to his or her own novel answers. An “ah-ha” evokes a chemical release in the brain.

In a classic study in the 1960s, John Dewey demonstrated that rats raised in an enriched environment with other rats learned more effectively as adults. Their neurons and cortex were better developed. When a rat is put in a small cage, cut off from contact and active participation with other rats—instead, only watching—the neuron changes did not occur. Active participation is essential to create the enriched brain-enhancing environment.

6. Take Action

The world will not pay you for what you know. It will pay you for what you do. It rewards action.

To create novel activity, you have to leave a comfort zone, as well as overcome the brain’s resistance to change.

Successful people develop a plan and set it into motion. It may not be perfect, but they self-correct and keep moving forward, learning from their mistakes to produce results.

7. Identity Transformation

A new experience or idea must be focused on consistently and frequently. When attention is consistent, brain circuitry is stabilized. The mindset of identity then incorporates the new experience and integrates it as part of an evolving self—as a component of one’s identity. Otherwise, it is not integrated and prone to be dismissed as “not me,” or attributed to luck or circumstance.

Internally generated insight and its ownership must be combined with consistency of focus and application for lasting impact. Practically put for coaches, asking powerful questions for new ways of thinking by the client catalyzes self-directed discovery with the adrenalin boost of new circuits firing. This shift is then followed by recognition, affirmation, and internalization of the insight for a transformation of mental maps—also known as identity.

A new experience or idea must be focused on consistently, closely, and frequently. When attention is consistently focused on a new experience, the brain circuitry is stabilized. The mindset of identity must incorporate the new experience and integrate it as part of an evolving self. Then, this new experience can be incorporated as a legitimate component of one's identity. Otherwise, it is unintegrated and prone for dismissal as luck, circumstance, or "not me."

Your brain has a mind of its own, and both can change.

The Science of Change in Coaching: A Summary

Coaches focus on solutions rather than understanding why, on giving options rather than advice or dictates. Since old patterns are hard-wired, it takes consistency of focus on new experiences to change this wiring. The first requirement is claiming ownership of the story, followed by recognition in order to understand, assess, and change. Peter Drucker stated, "The most pressing task is to teach people how to learn."

Following is a summary of some of the elements required to map change and author new experiences.

- Concentrate on new behaviors rather than problems in order to create new brain pathways. Identifying the problem won't solve it.
- Co-create new ways of thinking to stimulate brain circuits, with an "eye on the prize" to lay new mental maps.
- Regulate your state of mind and manage emotions to promote brain power. New insights and adaptations occur through balanced learning: left brain and right brain, intellectual and emotional.
- Facilitate insight rather than give advice. People can usually discriminate between inquiries that prompt insight and attempts at persuasion.
- Focus on successes rather than obstacles or nonperformance. The power is in the focus.
- Emphasize positive adaptive behavior and progress; discourage attention to negative behavior.
- Facilitate new behaviors and guide the development and actualization of

new mental maps.

- Collaboratively conceptualize the mental map – the internal model – of the client in order to facilitate a new level of mastery.
- In the event of diversion to old feeling or behavior, redirect ideas and energy flow to the new ideas.
- Remember that the power is in the focus, and that permanent change arises from the consistency of that focus.
- Knowledge conveyed passively is inert; knowledge generated through insight changes the brain and mind.
- Conceptualize the meta-map with the client in order to master and internalize the process. Lasting change requires incorporating the new experiences as part of one's identity.

Chapter 5

THE NEUROSCIENCE OF THE SECRET

One of my clients talked about her daughter leaving home for college. She was aware that her daughter had had a very sheltered and privileged existence when she called home after her first week in school and said that she missed the Pineapple Fairy. My client asked, “What do you mean?”

“Well, it always seemed that there was a fresh pineapple in the corner of the kitchen counter when I was home. Now, I’ve been here a week and there is no Pineapple Fairy. In fact, if I want anything, I have to go get it,” she said in mock desperation.

Many viewers of *The Secret* have assumed that it can generate the Pineapple Fairy. But just focusing your attention on what you want is not magical. If it were, the world wouldn’t be so crowded with wishful thinkers. Focusing on what you want is not wishful thinking, and it is more complex than positive thinking. Disappointed practitioners ask questions about how long it will take for their desire to become a reality.

The phenomenon of the film *The Secret* speaks to a secret that a small segment of the population has known about and prospered from for thousands of years. The secret is really not so secret. It is the Law of Attraction: you create in reality what you focus your attention on. Your life story is the outcome of where you focus your attention.

Focus is not enough. Action alone, for its own sake, is not enough. Focusing—and wishing—do not create and develop skills that people value in the world and will pay money for.

So here are the secrets behind *The Secret*: what it leaves out, why it works, and four principles to empower its application.

Why It Works

The Law of Attraction is based in neuroscience. Your mind is an energy field and

responds to focus. Where you focus your attention creates brain connections. Quantum physics tells us that each of us generates energetic frequencies or vibrations. We project energy in our emotions and thoughts that are the source of what and whom we attract, as well as the basis of our sense of well-being.

If you lay a nail and a paper clip side by side, nothing happens. When you take a magnet and stroke the nail several times from head to point, the nail itself becomes a magnet; it can then pick up the paper clip. Why? The molecules of the nail are aligned in the same direction, creating a magnetic field. When all of you is going in the same direction – and focused – you have power.

The secret, rather than being about wishing for something and getting it, is about understanding and refocusing personal energy.

There is a subtle but significant difference between this principle and the notion that where you place your attention you manifest in reality. Magic is the backdrop of the latter concept. Your mind is a powerful goal-seeking mechanism. When you focus on a goal, your mind begins to figure out how to get it. Your mind takes the focus as instruction to attract. The difficulty is not a lack of ability to focus, but a difficulty with intentional and conscious control over what you focus on. Your mind is preset to focus on certain things, and it makes that focus unconsciously and unintentionally. The automatic pilot of your mind – what it is preset to focus on – has to be consciously redirected.

The mental act of focusing attention activates brain circuitry. Paying attention over time keeps the brain circuits open and active. Focused attention plays a crucial role in actually altering the structure of the brain. With repetition, these chemical links actually become stable changes in the brain's structure.

This concept explains at a brain level why a solution focus is more effective than a problem focus. Focusing on possibilities creates new neuronal networks and pathways, while focusing on problems deepens – further etches – the already existing circuitry. These brain connections literally become mind-maps that subsequently influence the reality that we see.

The real secret behind the secret is to ask the question, “How can I create ...?” This “How can I?” question focuses attention on precisely what you want and enlists your full energy to find an answer and a pathway to achieve it. Thus the real secret moves from imagining and wishing to doing.

When results seem to be coming to successful people easily and quickly rather than by sustained action, you make your assumption by comparing your inside to their outside. Not an apples-to-apples comparison.

How to Make The Secret Work

1. The Power Is in the Focus

Here's The Secret deconstructed: Focusing on a vision will create structural tension in your brain—the tension between where you are now and where you want to be.

Dissonance can create motivation. And your brain, like nature, abhors a vacuum. Your brain will conspire to close the gap between your vision and reality.

The paradox is that we do not attract what we want, we attract what we focus on.

Your unconscious doesn't register + or -. It just registers the focus. A print or negative is the same image; your unconscious is the image.

The power of focus is that whatever you attend to or focus on, you align yourself to bring about—like the magnetized nail. Be specific about what you do want—not just what you don't want in disguise. "I want to get out of debt" focuses on debt. "I want a reliable car" focuses on the idea that the car will break down and need repairs. Everyone wants more money, so wanting is not the key to having it. Focusing on scarcity attracts scarcity. Focusing on prosperity aligns your energy to pursue prosperity.

2. Know How to Ask and Align

Since the Law of Attraction is a law of energy, if you have shortages or struggles in your life, you need to ask two questions:

1. Do you know how to ask? To align yourself with the ABCs: Ask. Believe. Create?
2. Are you resisting in some way? That is, do you place resistance in a natural flow of energy—the harmony with yourself and what you want, including how you proceed to get it?

Thoughts or feelings that focus on these and other negatives can generate resistance:

- Doubt
- Unworthiness
- Questions of self-worth
- Limitation
- Fear
- Scarcity

If you are not generating what you really want, consider whether you're automatically focusing on what you don't want. This unconscious focus is often informed by the beliefs from childhood experiences that ghostwrite present storylines.

Alignment includes letting go of negative emotion and thoughts. When you suppress negative feelings or thoughts, they remain in the background, generate and subvert their own energy, and sabotage attempts to polarize yourself to positive experiences. When you release negativity, you dissolve the emotional charge. Then you're free to align yourself with feelings of joy, happiness, and peace. You reconnect with the positive energy without the impediment.

3. Take Strategic, Planned Action

The Law of Attraction won't give you what you want, but it will give you the energy to sustain the process to create what you focus on. It won't send a Brink's truck up your driveway, or align the Lotto balls for you. The magnetized nail just lying on the table does not get anything done. However, you can align your internal molecules by focus and purpose, to point the energy field of your mind to specific goals. It's a way to use your power to write the story you want.

If you want to attract a pizza, you can focus on a pizza, think about having it, and wish to manifest it. But just sitting there visualizing the pizza without doing something about it is relying on magic. If that's all you do, you won't manifest a pizza. If someone happens to walk into the room and offer you a pizza, it is not because of the Law of Attraction, it is because of what scientists call coincidence.

Sometimes people who have a strong belief in and need for magic convert coincidence into magic or into synchronicity. Synchronicity does exist, but the pizza's appearing isn't an example of it. People who need to believe in magic convert a coincidence into evidence. Luck is narcissism meeting chance.

When you focus on a pizza, you need to hatch ideas about what action to take in order to make your idea a reality – in other words, how to get that pizza. Focusing on what you want generates a motivation to act, coupled with the sense of how you'll feel when you get it, and together both elements can sustain the motivation to act. Then, a hard-work "miracle" occurs. As you become focused on what you want and think about the benefits and experience of having it, you will persist in the focus of your attention, the discipline, and the strategy to sustain efforts to pursue it. By this focus you will both have ideas and notice (manifest) people and resources that can help you achieve your goal. Sustaining motivation to act and developing internal qualities will help you act in an informed way.

The pen is in your hand to write your story. The world will not pay you for what you know. It will pay you for what you do. It rewards action. You need to believe

- specifically
- strategically
- systematically
- consistently.

Then, have a plan, and act on it. Once you act on a plan, you can always self-correct.

This particular secret behind The Secret is also ancient wisdom, captured best by my grandmother who said, "Wishes don't wash dishes."

4. Be of Value to Others

Your focus and your actions must bring value to others.

This is the Law of Attraction applied: You have to give value in order to get value. You get back what you put out. If just focusing your attention and "putting it out

to the universe” were enough, no one would still be wishing for more money.

5. What You Attract is Equal to What You Provide

The mantra of *The Secret*, according to the film, is: Ask, Believe, Receive. You will have much more success by converting it to the ABCs: Ask, Believe, Create. The amount of benefit you receive depends on the amount of energy you dedicate to it.

An example of this truer secret behind *The Secret* is that the amount of money you make depends on the amount of value you provide. And, of course, you have to ask for and collect what you’re worth. While there is no Pineapple Fairy, you can create immense success with planned, strategic, consistent action that is of value to yourself and others.

6. Pay in Full for Your Success

A secret to success is that you have to pay in full for that success. If you get something for which you haven’t provided value or benefit, you will still have to pay in some way. If you incur debt in order to purchase something before you’ve earned the money, you simply end up paying more for it.

So you might as well find out what the price is, pay it in full, pay it as soon as possible, and then enjoy the benefits of success. The price is always an energy, whether that energy is money, time, work, or experience.

7. The Secret behind the Secret to The Secret

People who truly enjoy getting what they want are those who have discovered how to enjoy paying the price. The enjoyment makes paying for it easy. The essential Law of Attraction is that the price is whatever you must give in order to create or attract exactly what you want. The antithesis is hoping and wishing with no energy input, which of course doesn’t work.

Intention is a good start, but intention is not all there is to the Law of Attraction.

Here’s the secret shortcut to *The Secret*: Find people who are already successfully doing what you want, getting what you want, and research what they are doing in order to do your own version of it. Ask. Learn. Question. But make it your story.

Chapter 6

YOUR MIND'S EYE

The Old Art and New Science of Visualization

A group of executives asked me to present a seminar to them on writing a first book. My first question was, "Has any of you seen a yellow Jeep in the last month?" Of the twenty-four people present, one raised his hand.

Then I went through a visualization exercise with them.

Let's do it now:

1. Close your eyes and visualize a yellow Jeep – the specific detail of how it looks.
2. Walk toward it. Walk all around it. Look at the tires, the body, and the trim.
3. Open the passenger door. Look at the seat, the steering wheel, the dash.
4. Smell the interior. Touch the seat. Start it, and listen to it run.

Open your eyes. In the next week, see what happens.

I asked them to contact me if they saw a yellow Jeep in the next week. Twenty-two of the executives contacted me in the first three days to say they had spotted a yellow Jeep.

What happened? What someone sees – what appears on the radar screen – is determined by belief and assumption. In that particular situation, a yellow Jeep was preprogrammed as possibility.

For example, the most common reason people don't earn more money and accumulate wealth is that they don't see themselves as capable of it. I can tell you how much money people will make by listening to their assumptions. Once someone genuinely sees himself or herself as capable of doing it, all sorts of things begin to happen. The amount of wealth – or number of yellow Jeeps – existing in

the world doesn’t change; you just code your radar for possibility.

It’s difficult to challenge long-held beliefs, because they are part of your identity. A vision starts at the other end – the successful outcome. If someone has a fear of success, or a fear of failure, the visioning process bypasses that fear and etches the successful outcome.

In the film *The Lookout*, Lewis, a blind man, helps his mentally challenged roommate make sense of things by thinking of his day as a story. Lewis said, “Start at the end. Can’t tell a story if you don’t know where it’s going.”

Our possibilities are only limited to the ones we allow ourselves to see.

The Art of Visualization

A vision crystallizes possibility into a fundamental, articulated idea. A vision gives hope possibility – a shape and form – to program your future while rehearsing it. You inhabit the experience of your vision as guide to then guide its creation

A vision serves as inspiration to design ways to realize it. The most successful businesses have a vision that is also universal with each person in the organization. Proven guidelines include the following elements:

- You must construct your own vision.
- The criteria to measure success need to be clearly defined.

Wanting to change, to start your life over, to be happy are all imprecise and abstract goals.

- Create positive terms for success.

Make your criteria in positive terms of what you want, what you will do.

- Be specific, simple, concrete.
- Vague and theoretical criteria are not useful, because there is no way to live a theory.
- Be entirely present to your experience of the vision: Being in your body, what you feel, what you think.

Now: form a real vision. Picture yourself as you have just succeeded at your goal at a specific time in the future, such as one year from now. Create this success experience specific to time, place, how you would experience yourself, and your body through all five senses. Hold the energy of the precise outcome you’ve just achieved, the goals met, and the feelings it brings. Imagine the details of the scene of your success inside and outside, engaging all senses, thoughts, feelings, and bodily experience along with details of the scene. For example, for a successful transaction, include the values and needs fulfilled, the money you have made from it, the details of what you are doing, such as shaking hands and ushering someone out of your office.

Carve out a few moments at the beginning and the end of each day to “read” this vision. You’re programming a message for success in your mind by creating the experience of having achieved it. This vision statement related to a goal begins the experience and outline of a new story that you can then live into.

You do not have to be motivated in order to plan and act. A vision can mobilize motivation. Even professional athletes drag themselves to the gym, get started, and when they get in motion, then they access a motivated state. They do not wait for motivation to get moving. Waiting until you get the energy to exercise doesn’t work; you have to exercise in order to get the energy to exercise.

A number of accomplished, creative individuals were asked how they did what they did. Their response had a common thread: they just got up to do the next thing, and only in retrospect did they recognize how important or how immense it was. Or as one writer stated, “I’m just going to be here at my desk from 8:30 to 12:30, and if anything shows up that’s worth writing, I’ll capture it.”

There are ten scientific, aerodynamically proven reasons why bumblebees cannot fly. Yet they do. The bumblebee has transcended factual evidence and obstacles to be able to fly. The bumblebee does not refute or overcome each of the aerodynamic principles; it simply does not engage them and sets about flying. Working through each of the problems, each bit of scientific data, to disprove the notions of its inability to fly would not enable it to fly.

While resolution of a problem may bring an end to the past, that alone does not create a successful future. Like the bee, your design is internal, and which is what directs your journey.

The Science of a Vision

Recent positron-emission tomography (PET) scans of the brain have confirmed several things about visualization:

- Visualization brings about actual physical changes in the brain.
- The brain assimilates a mental picture whether the stimulus is actual from the optic nerve, or imagined; the brain cannot distinguish between a mental image and an actual image.
- When you repeat a vision of successfully attaining a goal, the act programs neural networks and neuronal pathways to etch the experience more strongly.
- Mental visualization of a complex movement can actually improve performance.
- PET scans have established the fact that thoughts cause physical changes in your brain.

When you program your unconscious, you actually create a “future memory” to live into. The brain can’t tell who conjured it—you or reality. The more detailed your visual image, the more specifically etched your brain will be. We know that by simply picturing a danger, we can trigger the entire body’s responses of fight or flight.

Here’s the key: You do not make the brain changes permanent unless you incorporate them into your story. Doing so makes it part of who you are—your identity. Otherwise, the change either doesn’t register, or gets extruded as noise.

For example, if you see yourself in a successful business, you create the specific imagery to live that experience. You then incorporate it as part of your identity, rather than as belonging to someone else.

While your unconscious mind cannot tell the difference between something you physically see and something you mentally picture, your conscious mind can do so, and your conscious mind must incorporate an evolving story to include and assemble the imagery as part of the story. Otherwise, unconscious messages will

delete access to or believability of the imagery.

Here are the key elements:

- Repetition. The neural networks dedicated to your vision must be renewed and repeated regularly, or they will be eliminated.
- Conscious incorporation of this new vision into an ongoing story to be ultimately metabolized as part of the self. Otherwise, you will “lose” this vision.
- Specificity about the experience of having achieved the goal.

A footnote: Write it down. Research on memory tells us that a new idea or fact lasts an average of 40 seconds in short-term memory before it’s gone, unless you write it down to review.

Visualization crystallizes possibility into an articulated idea—the experience changes the brain. A vision serves as guide and inspiration to design ways to realize it—to live into it.

When you program your system with a visualized goal, you create structural tension in your brain—cognitive dissonance—the difference between where you are and where you visualize and affirm. Your brain then strives to end this tension by actualizing the goal. Structural tension (dissonance) in your brain will do the following things:

- Give you creative ideas
- Help you see things in your environment not seen before— a perceptual shift
- Provide motivation to take action (remember: The universe rewards action)

Major James Nesmeth spent seven years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. During the time he was imprisoned, he was essentially isolated and had no physical activity. Before the war, Major Nesmeth was an average weekend golfer, hardly breaking 100. To preserve his sanity, he learned to visualize golf. He selected his favorite country club. He saw himself dressed in golfing clothes. He experienced everything in great detail. He smelled the fragrance of the trees and grass, made each stroke with his entire body.

After he was released from his captivity, playing golf in his mind seven days a week for seven years, on his first outing he shot a 74.

Affirmations to Support Visualizations

Affirmations make visualization a complete story. To achieve a goal, reprogram your automatic pilot by affirmations. Affirmations are positive statements that state the goal as if it has already been achieved. For affirmations to be optimally effective, the following characteristics need to be incorporated.

Present tense

Begin with, “I am ...” State the goal as if you have already achieved it. “I am enjoying this month of skiing in Steamboat.” (I told you you have to be persistent)

Positive

Your brain will strive to achieve the image you focus on (close your eyes and notice the images that come to mind when you think, “The dog is not chasing the cat,” or “I am not thinking about elephants.”) The purpose of an affirmation is creation of an image; a positive image is more powerful than ideas

Personal

Make your affirmations about your experience and accomplishment. Do not try to change other people’s behavior. “I am watching my daughter clean her room” won’t work

Visual

Use all five senses, different lenses: include wide-angle and close-up; make a complete picture of experiencing the success of your goal

Emotional

Include a feeling word (happily interacting, peacefully experiencing). A primary reason we do things is how we imagine we’ll feel when we do it

Brief

Brevity is the soul of wit – and affirmations

Specific

Clearly focused, specific detail makes it real. No abstractions

Action words

“I am driving ... acting ... living ...”

If you say “I am going to ...” you will always be on the way

Consistent

As soon as you let up on the disciplined, focused pursuit of a goal, your automatic pilot will revert back to the familiar. This is the frustration of losing weight and then letting up to have it all come back. Remember the astronauts who got Day 15 off and had to start over?

Add “Or something better.” “I am enjoying my month each summer writing on the coast of Maine, or something better.”

Write each goal and affirmation on a 3 x 5 card. Read each one at the beginning and the end of each day. Remember to visualize yourself as having already achieved the goal.

How long do you do this? Until you reach the goal.

How many goals should you generate affirmation for? A reasonable number – at least three – maybe more – that you’re working on daily.

In this way, you create the feeling of internal success. You inhabit the experience.

An affirmation will initially make you feel uncomfortable, even anxious. With an affirmation that is positive and not yet achieved, you challenge the core belief of your identity and systematically create the template of a new life or business story.

Chapter 7

REGULATING STATES OF MIND

Twelve Poker Lessons

Imagine that you are at an auction, and the room is filled with seventy-five sophisticated-looking people in business attire. The auctioneer holds a \$100 bill before your group. He explains the auction scenario: “Bids move in five-dollar increments. The highest bidder wins the bill. The second highest bidder pays the bid but gets nothing in return, and this is real money, people.” Within seconds, the bids pass \$100. Some of the seventy-five people push the bidding up to \$300.

Two of the people get into a bidding war. One of them ends up paying \$465 for the \$100 bill. The other owes \$460 and gets nothing. You are dumbfounded. How could reasonable people pay more for something than it’s worth?

Actually, this scenario has already happened, more than 600 times. The auctioneer, Professor Max Bazerman. The setting, Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. The participants, investment specialists and economic gurus. Some of the brightest financial experts paid more than four times the worth of the \$100 bill, just because of the way their minds work. (This isn’t a stock – whose perceived value is determined only by the bid – and doesn’t even know who owns it.)

Professional Bazerman commented, “I’ve never seen bidding stop below \$100 in any of the more than 600 times that I’ve done it.”

What happened? And what can we learn that will help you in business and in life?

What is this secret hiding in the open – this key internal strategy that can redefine success?

Answer: The art and science of regulating states of mind, including managing emotions.

Regulating States of Mind

A state of mind is a mind-body state, like a specific software program that determines how we perceive and process information—and how we respond.

A state of mind is a set of particular emotions, memories, mental models, and behavioral patterns. A key element of coaching is helping a client become aware of his various states of mind, with particular focus on which state works best for what purpose. Clients may move from a state of mind where they feel stuck and/or myopic to possibilities, to a state where the scope and range of thinking and possibilities is much broader.

A model of state of mind and regulation of states is the infant-adult interaction. In any one moment, the very young infant is totally in a particular state: Contentment, upset, hunger, or pain. The adult empathically resonates with this state in order to lend the function of regulation until the infant is soothed. With time, as infants develop, they learn to moderate all-or-nothing states of mind to internally regulate. This attachment and borrowed regulation is gradually internalized. It is the basis of collaboration and contingency among adults. And among coaches with clients. We engage in collaborative conversations with our clients and help them both understand and regulate states of mind. Coaching needs to be both heart-based and brain-based for balanced learning and growth.

Dr. Daniel Siegel has demonstrated how this collaborative communication and empathic connection creates new neural connections.

Each of us has a range of states, with some awareness of what state works best for what endeavor, even of how to enter into and move out of different states. It is very important for someone to become cognizant of which state to enter for a creative endeavor, which state to enter for conceptual planning, and what state of attention and concentration works best for everything from the alertness required in business endeavors to relaxation for sleep.

Access to Mind States

The regulation of feelings and states of mind involves the understanding and mastery of access to a particular state of mind without altering consciousness to do so (i.e., while “staying present”). Perhaps nowhere is this more poignant than the regulation that happens when artists and writers enter a creative state.

- Dame Edith Sitwell would lie in the stale solitude of an open coffin as a prelude to entering the mind state for writing her macabre literature.
- Willa Cather read the Bible to set the right tone prior to writing.
- Voltaire used his lover's back as a writing desk.
- Benjamin Franklin wrote on a pine plank while soaking in a bathtub to free his thought processes.
- Diane Ackerman does the same thing, in a bubble bath, to let her thoughts float.
- The painter J.M.W. Turner liked to be lashed to the mast of a ship and taken for a sail during a ferocious storm, so he could later recreate this experience on canvas.
- Some authors play a piece of music repetitively while writing, to create an emotional framework on which to build their evolving story.

The corresponding state of mind in the reader often matches that of the author, with the author guiding the reader through the senses: The music and voice of the words, the texture of imagery, the rhythm of feelings.

The most natural method of regulating state change is distraction, for example, jangling car keys to shift the crying infant to a calmer state. Likewise, an individual may use various ways to reconnect mind and body, such as the distraction of physical activity, or building some somatic bridge to engage the senses, like jogging, a warm bath, or breathing exercises.

Action symptoms of stimulation of the body, such as alcohol and drug use, or bodily self-harm, are attempts to make the body the foundation of emotional experience and organization. Physical reconnection by action symptoms, e.g., symptomatic eating, establishes only a temporary balance.

The Neuroscience of Decision and Conflict

A man sees a car swerving into his lane headed directly for him. In a matter of seconds, his life could be over. As soon as he perceives the danger, he reflexively hits the brake pedal and horn while sharply turning the steering wheel to the right. In a matter of seconds, his physiology has changed; he is exhausted, short

of breath, heart racing. His emotional chemicals triggered by an automatic alarm reaction instantly change his state of mind to survival.

Each thought and feeling has a chemical consequence. The chemicals of emotion alter mind and body; personal experience determines what software program (state of mind) to use to process the data, and how to respond. When incoming data resembles threat or danger, it triggers an emotional and biochemical response within a fraction of a second. These chemicals of this emotional state hijack the logical, rational brain—which is a natural survival response. But emotion-based states where rational ones should prevail may use information unhelpfully. This automatic alarm system may cause mistaken perception, judgment, and reaction.

A hot stock tip, a business deal gone sour, a family tragedy—any or all may create an alarm response and an emotional state of mind geared for survival rather than the use of logic.

The following considerations apply to decision-making and conflict resolution regarding emotions and choices:

- Increased tension produces emotional regression. With increased tension and advanced conflict, the stress response reaction can move someone into a more emotional pattern characteristic of a much earlier age.
- Increased emotion narrows perspective. When emotion prevails, focus becomes narrower and more restricted to the most recent event. Paradoxically, attempting to use reason and logic with an escalated individual—someone in a highly emotional state—deepens the automatic alarm pattern. The escalated individual will further escalate, dig in his toes, and spiral into more extreme responses, hurling himself away from logic. When conflict prevails, the most difficult task is to listen to the other person convey what he or she has said, then ask the other person to do the same for you. But this task is also the most necessary if conflict resolution is to begin.
- Tension regulation and de-escalation tools are essential to foster listening and subsequent communication. The use of empathic listening and communication of understanding is a central de-escalation tool for regulating emotion and restoring reason.

In the Boardroom

Jim was the COO of a large company in a major U.S. city. He initially consulted me because his CEO, Brad, was driving him crazy and he was ready to quit.

Brad was a direct, hands-on, chain-of-command guy, an administrator.

Jim was easy, sociable, with people skills, a natural rainmaker.

Each was striving to convert the other to his style.

Our first piece of work focused on building a bridge between the two very different styles. As an analogy, think of Quicken and Word Perfect, two very useful yet different, software programs that do different things. Quicken can't do Word Perfect, and Word Perfect can't be pressured or rehabilitated to do Quicken. In the same way, each of these men had his own particular style and skills.

We co-constructed a common ground that made sense to Jim, focusing on his goals and strategies to get there—and how to convert his bottom line to Brad's language.

Jim soared. His style and capacity made him a natural—which he now saw more clearly when he wasn't distracted by interactions with Brad. He decided to toss his hat in the ring for a CEO position elsewhere.

He had some great offers, and we negotiated a terrific compensation package.

At his new position:

Jim and another company's CEO, Tom, were negotiating a joint venture.

Jim said to me, "Look, I'm more myself than I've ever been. I'm way beyond what I had imagined. But this one I can't get my arms around. When Tom gets on his soapbox and explains simple things to me—as he would to a novice—it's like a put-down. I want to tell him off."

I said, "I understand how when you take it personally it bruises your pride. What, ideally, would you like to do?"

He said, “I have to think and not react. But I get sucked in even when I know what not to do. I can’t not respond. I need a strategy.”

He was saying, in effect, that he needed to regulate his state of mind in order to be effective. The challenge was, how to do that in this situation.

I use different metaphors with different people, and I knew Jim was a poker player. So I asked him if he wanted to be a better poker player.

He said, “Yeah, I’d be happy just to win your fee. But I really need to figure out this Tom thing – this deal is coming to the table in three weeks.”

Twelve Poker Lessons

Here’s where we can integrate research from two pristine fields: neuroscience and poker. Poker experts indicate that the difference between winning and losing is often the ability to stay off “tilt.” In poker terms, tilt is the emotional reaction to winning big or losing big. The emotion from winning big or losing big alters a state of mind, which carries over to the next hand. When poker players are on tilt, they make decisions they normally would not make because they’re upset, disappointed, irritated, or extremely happy. Typically, after a big loss, they attempt to recoup their losses. Or, after a big win, they feel flush (literally) and get loose with their money.

When someone is in an emotional state he’s marooned in the right brain—the feeling, intuitive brain. The emotional brain hijacks the intellectual, logical brain and holds it hostage.

So what do you do? Your brain is working against you.

Here are some lessons for managing tilt in poker that Jim and I co-constructed.

1. Don’t take it personally.

Jim already recognized he was taking personally the behavior he had seen Tom engage in with him – as well as with others – that it was Tom’s self-statement (his unique personal point of view and experience regardless of the focus or content). I asked him to get into Tom’s head in order to understand Tom’s responding in the

way that he did. Jim could reflect, “He probably feels threatened when he gets on his soapbox and lectures.”

I said, “So he counters feeling insecure by doing something that feels effective to him. And you take it personally.”

Jim saw this more clearly – even recognizing that Tom did the same thing with other people.

2. You are writing your own story.

Whatever you think, feel, and do are what you create – a choice.

You don’t have to play every hand you’re dealt.

You don’t have to attend every argument to which you’re invited.

3. Beware of internal bargaining.

Poker: “I just need to win one more big hand, then I’ll quit.”

Jim: “He can’t get away with that – I’ve got to respond.”

The internal bargaining of “starting a diet next Monday” creates the illusion of commitment, but has never lost its author a single pound.

4. Identify the self-deception of rationalizing.

Jim’s version: “I need to show him this isn’t my first rodeo – just this one time.”

Another example: “This plasma TV costs a lot, but amortized over the next ten years, it’s only fifty-three cents a day.”

Remember this conversation from *The Big Chill*?

“Rationalizing is more important than sex.”

“How do you figure?”

“Have you ever gone a week without rationalizing?”

5. Recognize the early warning signs of tilt.

Recognize your motional triggers—they're different for each person. Outline the response patterns to each emotional trigger. Then substitute the hierarchy of responses you want.

6. Rein in your natural emotional response.

Don't play your last hand or your leftover emotion. Your response to a mistake affects the quality and effectiveness of your next experience.

At times the hardest thing to do is. . . nothing.

7. Regulate feelings to restore a cool state. (Get centered.)

Break the state of mind: Take a walk; wash your hands and face with cold water; breathe deeply; take a time-out. Even sleep on it: "Let me think about that and get back to you" is a decision.

Anxiety is an energy experience. The most effective antidote to anxiety is grounding yourself—transforming the energy by becoming present.

8. Plan your strategy of response. (Restore left brain logic.)

Jim wrote out his responses to Tom while Tom was speaking.

This put him in the mode to think about what he wanted to say.

- By listening without responding, he moved from tunnel vision to logical view.
- He could focus on the next right step rather than on what got him upset.

9. Respond only when your state of mind is balanced.

Right brain + left brain (emotional + logical/intellectual) = balanced decision.

When Jim returned to that balance, he did great.

10. Objectively choose a response.

Make choices and act on decisions at a cool time.

Jim: "I think I understand him—and me—better. I now have an easier time in each encounter with guys like him."

11. Analyze the situations that generate tilt.

Outline a strategy of responses to different scenarios.

12. Manage or eliminate tilt triggers.

Figure out a way, as my favorite coach kept saying, "Keep your eye on the ball, and your head in the game." Keep the big picture—the goals and strategy—in mind."

Crucial Applications and Benefits

Why is it important to regulate states of mind and manage emotions? Because there's no part of life or business in which it doesn't apply.

So the next time you're:

- Sitting at a board meeting
- Negotiating with a colleague
- Cut off by another driver on the beltway
- In a disagreement with your spouse
- Or playing poker

Remember the lessons from poker: Mind over matters.

Self-control

Self-control is conscious, willful intention with a tangible, short-term goal.

- "Get hold of yourself."

- “Push through your fatigue to finish the project by tonight.”
- “Count to ten so you don’t blurt out something angry.”
- “I’ll go jogging this afternoon instead of stopping for a beer.”

These adages of self-control constitute some essential, if sometimes stressful, life skills. Self-control enters volitional memory, the first step of willful control. Self-control usually has the following components:

- A concrete goal is imposed, often by an outside need.
- Intention is established.
- Emotions and emotional memory are either not consulted or have to be over-written.
- Self-control involves a short time range for the specific goal.

Self-regulation

Self-regulation involves creating an optimum state of mind to access all information in each of our different states of mind.

Self-regulation involves different parts of the brain. It is internal: emotional and cognitive. A different kind of goal-setting and brain involvement is necessary for longer-term goals. An example is getting in shape and losing weight. Here, self-regulation comes into play. Self-regulation involves steps of self-control, but it goes beyond externally set goals. Self-regulation engages experiential memory. This function operates from an emotional perspective; it makes use of bodily sensations and markers to keep us informed about a situation, using the template of test experiences. Some examples: A “gut feeling” about a matter; rapid heartbeat in a fearful encounter; wide-open eyes and adrenaline rush with an excited idea. The use of emotional experiential memory means that we have to take into account what stimulates and motivates us in the formulation of goals.

Self-regulation is far more than simply reducing physical and emotional distress in a particular moment. Factors such as fatigue, sleep deprivation, energy level, attention, and emotional reality all affect state of mind and, therefore, access to optimum mental functioning. Self-regulation can also be influenced by caffeine, alcohol, and exercise.

“I want to start a coaching practice because I get really excited about helping others and having my own business.” This is an internally generated, emotional, and cognitive goal. Establishing this plan regulates parts of the brain that determine mood and general arousal. Self-regulation instructs a story plot and crafts the life storylines that live it.

Greater activation comes when we engage all five senses in visualizing a desired goal. This goal must be specific and consistent, because its promise has to override a temporary temptation to settle for something less, such as going to the beach for the day rather than carrying through planned activities. Or, for someone who has a vision of fitness and weight loss, it must promise that the feeling from passing up the baked potato and cheesecake will last longer and be more pleasurable (though not intensely so at the moment) than eating these items.

Begin with small matters of self-control, but within a framework of self-regulation. Writing a new story, even in one segment of your life, is a process that can be addressed in stepwise fashion. Make small changes first, then these become automatic, paving the way to larger alterations.

Self-control and self-regulation both play a role in the success strategy of regulating states of mind.

Management of State-specific Issues: Chokes, Slumps, and Blocks

Centering brings mind and body together and in full focus. The principles borrow from my work with professional athletes and artists whose physical performance must be aligned with a hyperfocused state of mind. Even a slight interruption of concentrated focus can disrupt a performance and initiate a slump. I worked with an actress who discovered that jumping up and down helped her get focused and centered. She could then better move into the state of mind of her character.

Conscious, specific, factual, and focused learning is referred to as explicit learning. Explicit learning focuses on data and information. Implicit learning takes place outside awareness. Implicit learning includes a body memory, such as riding a bicycle, or a procedural memory, such as complex behavioral patterns; for example, a parent repeats with her child the same behavior or attachment pattern she experienced as a child. Implicit learning and memory operate in the flow of a process, so you ultimately don't have to think about it each time.

Chokes

A switch to an explicit memory, a conscious focus, can cause someone to “choke.” Thinking about it moves away from the automatic (implicit) to the intellectual (explicit). This slight internal shift from implicit to explicit disrupts the flow of the automatic, procedural response. More obvious shifts can occur through a change of state of mind, such as anxiety, panic, crowd distraction, pressure, stress, or emotional meaning.

Reverting to an explicit mode and thinking about it makes it deliberate and considered, such as when one was first taught how to hit a ball or do some particular routine.

Slumps

Continuing in this explicit mode can create a “slump.”

Panic or anxiety narrows perception, focusing on one thing, analogous to thinking too little. Thinking too much converts instinct to cognitive observer, creating a choke. I have worked with a number of solo performance athletes, such as golfers, gymnasts, and tennis players, whose performance requires intense concentration and focus to keep them in the flow. If these athletes lapse even for a second, such as wondering about being viewed by a coach, the audience, or another competitor, that slight shift from being totally centered and inside the athletic experience has significant impact on the performance. This instantaneous imbalance affects the precise athletic implicit process.

Blocks

Nathan felt increasingly excited about his decision to become a full-time professional writer. But he was experiencing a writer’s block—he had not produced anything for a month when he called me. I’ll mention a segment of our work.

I asked him to explain his writing process—to walk me through it, step by step, in detail, to describe what he did and what he was experiencing. I also asked to hear his internal dialogue.

He described his space and procedures. Then, as he sat down to write, he reported,

“I get nervous and begin doing a lot of different things other than writing.”

After exploring the details of this process and his distractions, I could observe, “It seems that your nervousness is basically excitement about immersing yourself in the passion you’ve always wanted to experience.”

When Nathan confirmed this, I continued. “When you perceive it as you did in your old story—as anxiety—it’s as if there’s danger. Distracting yourself was adaptive—a way of regulating the tension.”

This perception, coupling of meaning and coping mechanism, were part of his old story, now juxtaposed with a newly evolving story.

He recognized his current anxiety as feeling different—an excitement—yet also an uncertainty about letting go of the familiar.

He reframed his excitement as a validation of being in a new experience, and as a signpost of progress to continue moving ahead in his writing.

AN ADDENDUM

Effect on Stress

Besides your poker game, there are other reasons regulation of states of mind is important. Stress is the primary result of not regulating states of mind and managing emotions.

- Stress contributes to 85% of all medical problems (Cooper Wellness Program)
- 70-80% of physician visits are stress related. (U.S. Public Health Survey; U.N. International Labor Organization Study)
- 52% of executives will die of diseases related to stress. (Cooper Wellness Program)
- Stress is the number-one reason behind sickness from work. (Gee Publishing Survey)
- Stress undermines work productivity in 9 of 10 companies. (Industrial Society survey)

Chapter 8

BRAIN HARDWARE OPTIMIZATION

Scientists used to believe that brain cells and the connections were set early in life and did not change in adulthood. In the past decade, that assumption has been drastically disproved. Through advancement in brain imaging and other techniques, we now know that the brain as well as behavior can be trained, physically modified, and functionally transformed. The inner workings and circuitry of the brain change with new experiences.

Neuroplasticity and behavioral change occur within the context of individual styles. Some of these styles that appear more or less hard-wired need to be taken into account for optimum learning and performance.

Learning and Performance Styles

Self-management involves understanding yourself quite well: your strengths, weaknesses, learning style, working style, needs, and values.

Optimum learning and performance occur when you are in a specific state of mind matched to what you are doing. When you operate from your strengths, you optimize the potential for excellence.

In addition to recognizing strengths, knowing how you learn and perform is crucial for success. These learning and performance characteristics are styles; they can be slightly modified, but ultimately must be respected and strategically planned.

Readers

Some people learn best by reading, and need to see a text or pictures in order to really comprehend material. President John Kennedy was a reader who assembled an outstanding group of writers on his staff. Part of Kennedy's brilliance was in using these people and what they wrote to inform his decisions.

Chapter 8 - *BRAIN HARDWARE OPTIMIZATION*

Listeners

President Johnson had attained his reputation and success as a listener. When Johnson kept the same people on his staff after he succeeded Kennedy, they kept on writing. Johnson derailed his presidency by not recognizing that he was a listener, not a reader.

Writers

Some people learn best by writing. Beethoven kept copious notes and amassed an enormous numbers of sketchbooks, yet never looked at them when he composed. When asked about this practice, he said, "If I don't write it down immediately, I forget it right away. If I put it into a sketchbook, I never forget it and I never have to look it up again."

Talkers

Some people learn best by hearing themselves talk. This is a style I am quite familiar with. A significant portion of the material in my books comes from what I later jot down from teaching, presentations, and supervision of professionals— things that came to me in a different way from what I had previously thought or written out. "I don't write because I have something to say, I write to see what I have to say."

Collaborators

Some people work best in collaboration with others. Creative pairings and the dance of ideas are common for those who perform best in conjunction with others. Some collaborators work best as team members, succeeding in a system where ideas and implementation occur as part of a group.

Loners

Some people work best alone, preferring the purity of concentration and focus that they can achieve only in the quietness of working alone.

These predominant styles of learning—and none of them is all-or-nothing—constitute an important piece of self-knowledge and a way to facilitate performance for clients.

Information Processing

One element of a life story is the way a person perceives and channels information. Three fundamental representational systems elaborated in neurolinguistic programming are based on the predominant representation channel: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. How each person perceives, records, and recalls events depends on the predominant representational system used. Predominantly though not exclusively, an individual uses one representational mode.

Auditory Processing

Those who use primarily auditory processing perceive experiences more in terms of sound and spoken word. They use phrases such as the following:

- I hear what you are saying.
- I really want you to listen.
- It sounds good.
- Tuned in.
- Within hearing.
- Loud and clear.

Those who primarily process in a visual way record and construct pictures or internal images of their experiences; they recall by snapping a picture into focus. Visual individuals will be inclined to say something like this:

- Can you picture it?
- I can see what you're saying.
- Bring this into focus.
- It appears to me ...
- Mental image.
- It seems fuzzy to me.
- I'd like to look at it.
- Short- sighted.

Chapter 8 - *BRAIN HARDWARE OPTIMIZATION*

Kinesthetic individuals experience in a bodily way, and index information by sensation and feeling. Those who process in a kinesthetic way use sensory and bodily terms, such as these:

- I need to grasp that.
- Hold that thought.
- To be more in touch with ...
- Able to get a handle on it.
- Come to grips with.
- Start from scratch.
- Hand in hand.
- I'll walk you through this.
- Hold on.
- It slipped through my hands.

Developing empathy and establishing rapport with another can be facilitated by awareness of the other's primary representational system.

A wife who is more kinesthetic asks her visual husband how he feels. His response, "I can see what you're saying," seems elusive to her. She presses him to convert his model into hers, and continues to ask how he feels, or at least what he senses.

He repeats.

They escalate. Rapport derails. She accuses him of being stubborn.

Baffled, he retreats.

You can communicate better when you appreciate the predominant mode of your partner or colleague. If you use primarily an auditory model and your partner uses a predominantly visual mode of organizing, communication may suffer unless each of you appreciates the other's filter for perceiving and processing information and experiences.

Chapter 8 - *BRAIN HARDWARE OPTIMIZATION*

At the beginning of a relationship, all three channels are active, taking in more information, just as in traveling to a new country and intensely taking in everything possible through all five senses. As a relationship progresses to developing and sustaining the connection, the intensity gives way to a default mode—the primary operating mode of auditory, kinesthetic, or visual. At this stage, communication issues become exaggerated.

The same models apply to executives and business owners who must be able to lead clearly and communicate effectively. Recognition of these distinct ways of processing information may be useful to consider in establishing and developing rapport and in fostering communication toward a common objective.

Neurolinguistic program researchers and practitioners have distilled some basic principles to identify the particular model, then use that means to facilitate communication.

- Recognize the predominant channel of processing information for yourself and your partner: auditory, visual, or kinesthetic.
- Respect the other person's model of the world, of perceiving and processing information along one of the three representational systems. One is not better than the other, just different.
- The observational skills of the type and meaning of communication are necessary components of emotional intelligence.
- The representational system, as well as the words, is only a symbol and not the event represented. A map is not the territory. The model of your mind is not your mind.
- At times, the most important information about an individual is behavior.
- An individual's behavior at any moment is not who he or she is. (Yet in the face of persistent behavior, it's helpful to remember Maya Angelou's advice, "When people show you who they are, believe them.")
- If what you are doing is not working, rather than doing it harder, think about doing it differently.
- Understanding this method of coding and understanding successful behavior and communication along one of the three models replicates and builds further success and intimacy.

Patterns of New Learning

I consistently hear my coaching students puzzle about why their clients stall or quit at about two months. Why does someone begin a new endeavor – such as coaching – with such excitement, then seem to lose it several weeks into the work? The possible answers involve both the mind and the brain, as well as familiarity with a map of development to understand this phenomenon.

The Art

New learning falls into four phases.

1. Initial confusion and excitement combine to launch new learning. Awareness of the unfamiliar and uncertain registers as curiosity, or even anxiety, mixed in with the excitement, propelling momentum.
2. Increasing confidence follows, both with the experience of effectiveness and with positive feedback.
3. Mastery is the consistent experience of effectiveness and movement to a new level of excitement, validation, and into its own self-sustaining “flow.”
4. Entropy occurs when the excitement and invigoration of the learning curve’s newness and mastery level off or decline. Even a leveling off may register as a lessening of the ever-increasing acquisition of mastery, pleasure, and rewards. Disillusionment may be introduced, with accompanying questions of why there is not more to this, why the increasing mastery and success have leveled off or waned.

The Science

The brain also plays a role in this process. Dopamine is the brain chemical that induces excitement by anticipating pleasure or reward. The rush from dopamine release motivates people to take risks. The risk is exciting, adding to the dopamine release. But neuroscientists have shown that anticipating a reward is even more exciting than actually receiving it. Why? Because receiving a reward actually shuts down the anticipatory release of dopamine, and along with it the accompanying positive feelings and high energy. This explains the paradox that the expectation

Chapter 8 - *BRAIN HARDWARE OPTIMIZATION*

of an event is more exciting than the actual event, as has been demonstrated in various arenas:

- An investor will feel more positive when expecting a stock to rise, yet feel less excited than he anticipated when it actually does rise.
- The purchase of a big ticket item – a new car – isn't as exciting as expected.
- Clients hit plateaus in coaching after one to two months.

What we can do in coaching is foster attitudes that both promote curiosity and openness as well as introduce new learning. Learning is always a choice, a potential creation. There are many different levels of learning, both internal and external.. Learning does not always have to be converted into action or into a specific metric of success.

And by knowing this phenomenon, we can address and explain it as a natural development in coaching.

Chapter 9

INSTALL NEW PARADIGMS

Mentoring Mindset Changes

In a classic study, the audience is asked to watch several people dribbling and passing a basketball. Their job: to count the number of passes each person makes during a one-minute period. Intense concentration is needed because the ball moves quickly. Then someone dressed in a gorilla suit crosses the floor, walks through the players, turns and thumps his chest, and leaves. How many people saw such an obvious phenomenon? Researchers Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris found that consistently 50% of people failed to notice the gorilla. This “inattention blindness” is our brain at work, trying to construct meaningful and consistent narratives from an inconsistent world. Things that don’t fit the storyline get unconsciously edited, or, simply fail to register as relevant.

Einstein said, “It is the theory that decides what we observe.”

What we believe is what we see. This means that we are not just data determined, but also hypothesis determined. The brain as computer and as biological evolutionary system determines a story constructed to be called reality.

What is the practical value in this? How does it play into decision making? What is its relevance to changing some mental models?

1. For any situation, look at the data, but also at the hypothesis – the default assumption that appears as “given.”
2. Because we shape and filter the world by our assumptions, they need to be continuously tested.
3. Examine the assumptions that work and the ones that don’t work.
4. Challenge your thinking and assumptions. Interact with diverse people and keep an open “beginner’s mind” rather than a quick foreclosure to a new idea. Life as a series of experiments keeps a system open to the new. Premature closure occurs by too-rapid judgment, as well as moving

a new idea into an already existing model to lose the context of the new. This style of dismissal occurs frequently among very bright people with significant life experiences who immediately relate something new to something that they already know, absorbing it into an old context or meaning without sufficient examination.

5. We become comfortable and dependent on our old habits; uncertainty and discomfort result when we move away from existing internal models.
6. Use data to test a hypothesis rather than automatically confirm it.
7. Distinguish between transforming your thinking and being caught up in a new fad. Focus on the foreground without losing sight of the background's big picture. Repeat zooming in and out to keep perspective. Both microscopic and macroscopic views offer benefits.
8. The best way to excise something from your life is not to ignore it. The best way to avoid something is to be informed by it. By avoiding something, you engage it, and keep it central in your life. The more you run away from something, the more you engage it—and the more apparent it becomes. To ignore anything takes energy and moves you from a centered, healthy place. Decide what you want to keep, what you want to avoid, and what you want to let go.
9. You are always free to change your mind.

The clearer we are about what we want, the more power we have. Success comes from being all of who we really are and having the totality of ourselves go in the same direction. Self-validation and affirmation result from having an internal ideal—a sense of “good enough”—and consistently attaining it. Each of us uniquely defines our own meaning of success and fulfillment.

Individual success involves a full understanding of what we create to facilitate and to interfere with success. Revising a life story begins with changing our minds as well as behaviors, because we are authoring the fundamental plot and storylines. Past, present, and future are current constructions. The world occurs to us in the ways that we see and believe it to be. Beliefs drive behavior. Behavior drives performance.

We perceive only those possibilities for which we have a map (a framework or paradigm) to recognize. Everything else is a gorilla on a basketball court—

superfluous or not noticed. We invent our perceptions and experiences, just as the map created is not the territory itself. And we sort information into patterns and categories in order to perceive it.

Fear, adventure, change, and possibility are all synonyms, just viewed from a different spot. Possibility may simply be a different way of looking at something, a new way of thinking, or openness to feeling about and reflection on what was previously unknown or foreclosed. Each of us has to see and experience for ourself the advantage of tolerating change and living into possibilities. And we have to judge what needs to remain the same, as some changes may be difficult to resist, such as an impulsive decision.

Consider these three caveats of possibility thinking:

- The prerequisite to possibility is not necessarily insight and understanding. You have to be in a new story before you can give up an old story. Significant life change occurs by doing and experiencing things differently in the present moment. Or, some changes you have to get ready for after they happen.
- Someone does not have to be motivated to begin doing something. An action can generate its own motivation. Motivation isn't essential – but a plan and sticking to it are. (I knew I was ready to make the transition from psychoanalysis to executive coaching when I sent a cartoon to the New Yorker of a patient lying on the couch with the analyst pointing to the ceiling painted with the Nike "Just Do It" swoosh.)
- Both possibility and change require ownership of a person's story. Authorship is an active, self-determined process, not ghostwritten by past experiences or hidden assumptions.

Chapter 10

REVERSE NEURAL ENGINEERING

(Or, How to Think Outside the Box)

Ben Fletcher at the University of Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom devised a study to get people to break their usual habits. Each day the subjects picked a different option from poles of contrasting behaviors—lively/quiet, introvert/extrovert, reactive/proactive—and behaved according to this assignment. So an introverted person, for example, would act as an extrovert for an entire day. Additionally, twice weekly, they had to stretch to behave in a way outside their usual life pattern—eating or reading something they would never have done.

What do you think was the biggest change in the group?

The remarkable finding was that after four months, the subjects had lost an average of eleven pounds. And six months later, almost all had kept the weight off; some continued to lose weight.

This was not a diet, but a study focusing on change and its impact.

The rationale: requiring people to change routine behavior makes them actually think about decisions rather than habitually choosing a default mode without consideration. This is story busting in an indirect way. In having to actually process decisions in an active way, they exercised their choice and decision-making abilities, extending to other choices such as what and what not to eat. Once they became aware they were actively making choices, they could decide what was in their best interest, what did and did not further their stories.

The Proverbial “Box”

We trust our stories. They are our reality. When our stories and our behaviors don't fit, we experience disharmony. We have to change one or the other to restore harmony. Sometimes we revise our stories; sometimes we change how we see reality.

What is “the box”? How do you think outside it? As Randall Kennedy put it, the box is “...Thinking that frees itself of reflexive obedience to familiar signals.” (Quote printed on a wall at the Student Union at Princeton.)

How do you know when you’re in the box, to get out of it, to revise your story or write another one?

The questions assume the story is there, a given in the universe. The story – the proverbial box of the familiar and accepted – becomes the obstacle. Yet the truth is, it is not there until you create or accept it. And people are always free to change their minds, beliefs, and core assumptions.

The box is the result of programming and conditioning. It is self-created in adulthood.

Boxes are not a bad thing. They don’t have to be limiting. They can be defining. Guiding. Validating. And expandable.

Listen to these different boxes to hear how very arbitrary and situational each one is – with its own intrinsic set of beliefs, behaviors, and rules.

- People treat a piece of processed leather as if it were sacred: they protect it, hide it, try to steal it. There are all kinds of rules about what you can and can’t do with it – even who can hold it. If it crosses an arbitrary line someone draws, it can count for different points: 2, -2, 3, or sometimes 6. Football.
- Another box moves in and out of your life, varies daily. You usually want more, but may keep doing the same thing not to get it; two people can do the very same thing and obtain different quantities. You can buy it or sell it, but the price changes daily, even hourly. It’s a stand-in for whatever you want, even for what you despise. Money.
- There’s no clear definition of winning. It’s always at risk. There’s always a price to pay. There’s always another level of success. Money. Your life story.

A box may be a traditional way to make money. Tradition says you make more money if you work harder, or charge more. Yet a box can be limiting or inflexible. The canal-boat companies of the 1700s didn’t become the railroad companies of

the 1800s – they stuck to their box. There was no Union Pacific Airline in the 1900s – the Union Pacific, too, stuck to its box.

Open yourself to possibilities you haven't quite imagined yet. Scarcity is a rigid box. Abundance is expandable. No one can grant you freedom; you have to declare it. No one gives you power. You have to generate it, claim it, and not give it away.

To recognize yourself as the author, the creator, of your story challenges an assumed model and leads to the deeper question, "How do I create something else instead?" And, "What will the something else be?"

To simply stop doing something is not complete change; a new story means incorporating new behavior and beliefs. You have to embody – actually live – your new story. To abstain from an old story – from stuckness or repetition – is a beginning. But you must also engage a new story before an old story can be given up.

A mind that accepts a new idea generates a new dimension; a brain that creates a new experience alters its neurochemistry and neuronal pathways. Neuroscientists now know that the brain is sculpted by changes and experiences. The mind can change the brain. It's an inside job.

The AAA Principles of Change: Awareness. Acceptance. Action.

1. You're writing your own story. Is it working?

For each component, what are the results? Honestly assess each of these storylines with the question: "Is it working?" And make that a yes or no.

- Your personal wellness story: mind, body, spirit
- Your business/career story
- Your relationship story
- Your money story

When I ask people what they most look forward to and what they are most afraid of for the next chapters of their lives, they often respond with vague dreams, yet

specific fears. Topping the lists of long-term concerns are health and money.

A not-so-secret to success is that you have to pay in full for that success. So you might as well find out what the price is, pay it in full, pay it as soon as possible, and then enjoy the benefits of success. The price is always some form of energy, whether that energy is money, time, work, or experience. If you get something for which you haven't provided value or benefit, you will still have to pay in some way. As an example, if you incur debt in order to purchase something before you've earned the money, you simply end up paying more for it.

Another non-secret: People who truly enjoy getting what they want are those who enjoy paying the price. This makes it easy to pay. The price is whatever you need to give in order to generate exactly what you want.

2. You're writing your own story. It takes just as much energy to create any belief in your story.

Positive or negative; based on past/present/future; adaptive or maladaptive – the same energy. The belief of scarcity takes just as much energy as abundance. You generate the energy and give power to your story. Here's the subtle but crucial distinction: you give specific power to your story, and it assumes a momentum and power of its own. Remember that you're not the subject of that process – you're the creator of it.

Here's a short list of some results when you focus on what you don't want: Fear, anxiety, anger, confusion, annoyance, guilt, helplessness.

3. You're writing your own story. Decide what you want.

The primary reason people don't get what they want is that they're not sure what they want.

Here's a neuroscience/Law of Attraction question: How does the brain work like a travel agent? The first two questions a travel agent asks: Where do you want to go? When do you want to get there? A goal is like Mapquest: You program in where you want to go, make a map, and determine the time.

There is a caveat: To know what not to do is at least as important as knowing what

to do. You may not always know what the next right thing is, but you can almost always know what it isn't.

What you resist, you draw toward you. Resistance is an engagement. (Anger is as passionate an attachment as love.) And most suffering is the result of resisting what is.

People resist going to the doctor. But they aren't afraid of doctors. They're afraid their denial may be confronted.

4. You're writing your own story. Do you have specific, measurable goals?

In a Harvard study begun in the mid-1950s, 10-15% of Harvard Business School graduates fashioned a vision and specific goals for their life in business. Five decades later, that same 10-15% had 90% of the assets of the entire group.

Motivation increases as soon as you're clear about the goal and the payoff. A specific plan and strategy will enhance focus.

It is estimated that less than 10% of people have measurable goals. On the other hand, 100% of people have good ideas—at least some. The difference between a good idea and a goal: Measurement and time. Where? When? (The travel agent questions)

Good idea: I'd like to lose weight.

Goal: I will reach 185 pounds by 5 P.M. December 31, 2007.

Good idea: I want to make more money.

Goal: I will generate \$265,000 from individual coaching and \$175,000 from products in the next 10 months.

Then: Write a breakthrough goal—something that would stretch you, bring incredible opportunities, and move you to a higher level. A quantum leap. Getting a book on the New York Times bestseller list. Spending four weeks in Steamboat Springs every March skiing.

Then: Reread your goals—regular and breakthrough—twice a day, when you wake up and before you go to bed.

5. You're writing your own story. Small changes lead to big changes.

Issues that seem overwhelmingly large and insurmountable can be approached by looking at the simplicity of the issue, to specify a step to take for progress. For example, if you feel overwhelmed at work with the amount of tasks, identify one specific thing that you can do in the next 24 hours that will give you some traction. This focus on a simple, specific action creates a sense of effectiveness and initiates a model of mastery.

Terry Fox started the Marathon of Hope—a cross-Canada run of 3339 miles. Since he had an artificial leg, his running style was a shuffle-and-hop. He managed about 24 miles a day and completed the run in 143 days. He was asked how he kept himself going when he was exhausted and knew he had thousands of miles ahead. His response: “I just kept running to the next telephone pole.”

Divide up your work. Focus on and complete one thing at a time. There's always something you can focus on.

During my specialty training in psychiatry, one of my first-year supervisors had a puzzling picture on his wall. It was a photograph in which everything seemed curiously out of focus. As I met with him each week, I glanced at the photograph, until finally, toward the end of the year, I asked him about it.

“Look carefully,” he said. “What do you see?”

I walked over to the photograph to get a closer view. Closer didn't help. It still seemed out of focus. I saw no particular aesthetic value. My experience and considerable interest in photography offered no further instruction.

“Steven, the only thing I notice is that there's only one branch of one tree in focus in the entire picture.”

My supervisor nodded. “That's why I have it hanging there. It's my reminder that, while things may seem confusing and blurry, there is always at least one

thing that you can have in focus and see clearly.” (Which is why he was a great supervisor for first-year residents.)

6. You’re writing your own story. Be consistent in the pursuit of your goals.

It takes 25-30 days to etch a new pathway in your brain and make it permanent. Remember the NASA astronauts.

Write your new story consistently for it to become the default mode.

7. You’re writing your own story. The benefit of doing more of what is working and less of what isn’t working will become evident and self-perpetuating.

This is all so simple—good parents have known this for centuries. Sometimes it just takes human science and cognitive research to remind us of the obvious.

We can foster change by conscious practices and effective tools. An infinite sea of new patterns and possibilities can be created to further new goals. The caveat: You have to take action to diminish preprogrammed responses and to write new script for new experiences; a new story has to replace the old one. There are no shortcuts, since long-term change requires consistent practice—repetition—to groove new neuronal pathways and establish new neural networks. But you can make use of effective and efficient methods to accelerate optimum change and ensure transformation.

8. You’re writing your own story. Ask for feedback.

Ask your spouse or partner, “On a scale of one to ten, rate the quality of our relationship.” If you do this, you can get direct feedback—and learn what you can address. Everybody else is probably in on it anyhow, except you: Lunch buddies, neighbors, hairstylist, colleagues, other family members. Why should you be the only one who doesn’t hear it? Maybe you just need to ask.

Ask your employees and colleagues, “On a scale of one to ten, how am I doing?” Then ask, “How can I get to ten?”

A tribe in Southern Africa called the Babemba has an interesting practice. When they hear a story of a person doing something wrong, something that destroys the social net of their tight community, all work in the village halts. The people gather around the offender, and one by one, recite all that that person has done right in his life: Good deeds, responsible behavior, thoughtful acts. This honest feedback on misbehavior has a time-honored consequence, in that it allows the offending person to reclaim the better part of himself. He remembers who he is and why he is important to the life of the village.

This may have been an original 360° feedback.

Even without this kind of social network and feedback, we can relax and remember our way back into alignment with our true selves. We can get centered and reconnect with our true essence.

It is not that I am so smart; it is that I stay with problems longer. — Albert Einstein

An interesting statistic: After giving a complete presentation about the benefits of their service or product, more than 60% of the time salespeople never ask for the order.

How to ask is a crucial factor. Ask clearly, confidently, sincerely.

Virginia Satir, the well-known family therapist, was hired by the Michigan State Department of Social Services to submit a proposal on how to restructure the Department of Social Services to better serve the client population.

Sixty days later, she provided the department with a 150-page report. They said two things: “This is the most amazing report!” and “How did you come up with all these brilliant ideas?”

She said, “I just asked all the social workers in your department what it would take for the system to work better.”

9. You’re writing your own story. Take a chance.

You didn’t have a New York Times bestseller before you sent your manuscript to an agent. If you get it rejected, you still don’t have one. So what have you got to

lose? What's holding you back? You've already spent your whole life not having a New York Times bestseller.

A young chiropractor just out of professional school wanted to open a practice in Carmel, California. He was told he'd never make it—the town already had one chiropractor for every eight residents.

He went to 12,500 homes and talked to 6,500 people. He asked three questions:

- Which location should I open my office—the north or west side of town?
- Should I have extra office hours from 7 to 9 A.M. or 5 to 7 P.M.?
- Which newspaper should I advertise in?
- He added, “When I have an open-house party, would you like an invitation?”

He took in \$72,500 the first month and netted over \$1 million his first year.

10. You're writing your own story. It's never too late to start.

Don't let conventional wisdom or limiting assumptions ghostwrite your story.

Cliff Bion was a 61-year-old Australian sheepherder. He heard about a crosscountry race from Sydney to Melbourne and decided to enter. He showed up in Oshkosh overalls and workboots. The officials looked at him like he was crazy. They said, “This is a race of over 800 kilos—the most seasoned runners in the world compete. Do you have any running experience and equipment?” He said, “Yeah, I run after my sheep every day. And I got these boots and this baseball cap.”

When the race began, the world-class runners took off as they were trained to begin. Cliff started shuffling along in his boots. You're supposed to run 18 hours and sleep 6. But no one told Cliff, so when the other runners were sleeping, he kept shuffling along. They were all asleep and couldn't tell him he wasn't supposed to keep running. He just shuffled along for three days.

He cut 5.5 hours off the world record.

Each of us has beliefs that limit us. Find the story that will improve you and start believing that.

If there were no barriers, what would your ideal life be?

11. You're writing your own story. Everything is OK in the end. If it's not OK, it's not the end.

For tens of thousands of years before books and computers, we transmitted our essence and principles by story. Story linked to the past, organized the present, and illuminated the future. Story allowed us to connect with one another's humanity in the paths crossed on the long journeys out of Africa to populate the rest of the world. Then as we put thoughts and feelings into stories the anatomy and physiology of our brains grew. Stories informed, instructed, inspired, governed, organized. Story is the most powerful way human beings communicate. Stories give birth to possibility.

Stories are a way that we resonate with our earlier selves, connect with others, and create a road map to proceed.

Your story is yourself, your life, and what will survive you. At some point, in the distant future, all that will be left of you, all that will survive you, is your story.

Get it right.

Chapter 11

PROGRAM A MINDSET OF SUCCESS

Get Success Insurance

Goal-setting, especially having the proper tools to structure goals, is crucial for long-term achievement. The usual problem, though, is not setting goals but completing them.

While a vision involves creativity and foresight, goals require strategy and dedication.

Instead of waiting for good luck, success insurance is proactive. (Luck is defined as probability taken personally – narcissism meets chance).

An extensive study on goal-setting by Marshall Goldsmith and Laurence Lyons helps us understand an essential component, why people give up on goals. Here, according to Goldsmith and Lyons, are six of the most common reasons people give up on goals:

- Lack of ownership. It's necessary to "buy in" to one's goals, to take ownership. Doing so shifts the initiative to an internal point of reference. Then effectiveness and mastery can result.
- Time. Goal setters tend to underestimate the time it will take to complete the task (an "optimism bias"), leading to giving up.
- Difficulty. The optimism bias equally applies to difficulty as well as time.
- Distractions. People tend to underestimate the distractions and "noise" of competing goals.
- Inadequate rewards. Disappointment sets in when achievement of a goal fails to translate into other goals or to yield the desired happiness.
- Maintenance. Maintaining changed behavior is difficult, and there is always the pull of the old and the fear of the new.

Eleven Steps to Ignite Success

Create a plan and plot a course to stay on track, to recognize and avoid detours and distractions, to measure progress, and to move effectively toward a goal. Without a plan, you can't know where you are, or strategize to get to where you want to go. If you don't know where you want to go, you can't figure out how to get there.

The following steps will guide success when coupled with the blueprint of how to establish specific, attainable goals:

- Have your needs and values in sharp focus.
- Know what you do uniquely well.
- Assess specific strengths, passions, and weaknesses
- Establish SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.
- Determine three key initiatives to take for each goal (timetable: 1-2 weeks).
- Decide on the next best action for each initiative (timetable: 2-3 days).
- Structure a strategy to reach and stretch each goal.
- Increase tolerance of planned risk with associated fear.
- Focus on specific results, action, and momentum regarding goals.
- Continue assessment of disciplined activity with refinement of goals.
- Endorse your progress.

Applying SMART Goals to Your Personal Mission Statement

You can use these five key questions to apply SMART goals to your personal mission statement:

WHO?

Who should accomplish the objective? In conjunction with others? Should certain aspects be delegated?

WHAT?

“What must happen” focuses on specific outcomes within a particular time frame to achieve a goal. Each outcome should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

HOW?

“How to accomplish the goal” may be a co-created exploration and discussion of possible approaches and alternatives, but the choice of direction must come from you, because the outcome must belong to you. A commitment needs to result.

WHY?

This exploration clarifies a pathway and precisely determines the goal. If it is unclear or uncertain, the best intention would be a promise you never keep.

WHEN?

The time frame for each objective must be specified so that the sense of mastery can occur. A goal may have a several-month time frame. Each goal should have an initiative that can occur within the next several days, and each initiative should have a next best action, to begin within the next day or do.

Chapter 12

STRATEGIC REBOOTING TO EXPAND YOUR COMFORT ZONE

A comfort zone is a familiar pattern of behavior. It is a gradual process that, once established, resists change. We repeat in order to play a game where we master the rules and know exactly how to win.

A comfort zone is a belief combined with a behavior pattern, repeated until automatic. So it's familiar and predictable. Picking the known over the unknown seems to make sense. We follow comfort zones unconsciously and automatically because we know what the outcome will be.

Here's an example of a comfort zone in action. Most lottery winners manage to spend or give away their newfound winnings to return to their previous situation. In fact, 80% of U.S. lottery winners file bankruptcy within the first five years.

Their money changed, but their mindsets didn't. So much money moved them from their comfort zone, and they ended up returning to it.

Think of your comfort zone like your home thermostat. If the temperature increases or decreases, the thermostat signals the heater or air conditioner to turn on or off. It keeps the temperature in a narrow range of comfort.

Your performance – even the money you make – operates in a similar way. Greater success initially registers as discomfort – like being in new territory. Especially if the results go outside your self-image, that cues an internal thermostat to return to the comfort zone.

Here's an example I heard Jack Canfield tell about his stepdad, a regional manager for NCR. He noticed that each of his sales staff had a particular self-image of as a salesperson. The image might be a \$2000-a-month salesperson, or a \$3000-a-month salesperson. If a salesperson's self-image was that he earned \$3000 a month in commissions, each month when he got to that figure he slacked off until the next month. But if the end of the month was near and he had only earned \$1500, he would work 16-hour days, weekends, and beat the bushes until he got to \$3000.

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Your comfort zone acts as an unconscious thermostat – until it becomes conscious. Then you can do something about it. You can reprogram your mind and brain with what you want when you want it. Your brain has a mind of its own. Sometimes you have to outsmart your brain.

A comfort zone can be beneficial and save energy, like automatically driving to work the same way each day and not having to think about the route. A comfort zone can be a behavior pattern, such as self-effacing jokes, or a habitual role you play in relationships.

Or a comfort zone can become an obstacle. Familiar patterns get repeated even when they don't work very well: waiting until the last minute and creating crises, automatically playing the devil's advocate.

A comfort zone can trade passion for predictability, continuity for creativity, the familiar for the new.

How do you know when your comfort zone is not serving you?

- You feel stuck, repeating the same pattern or scenario
- You lack enthusiasm and may feel lassitude or dullness, still very busy, but not changing.
- You've lost enthusiasm and excitement, but keep repeating the same pattern.
- Your friends notice patterns that are invisible to you about how you keep doing the same thing again and again.
- You get uncomfortable and frustrated with the same storyline and the same limited results.
- A big event, such as a medical crisis, loss of a loved one, loss of a job, or a career change, forces transition.

Your comfort zone is the ghostwriter, invisibly creating the same storylines without questioning or even awareness.

Here is a way to generate awareness without waiting until a huge event crystallizes your confrontation:

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- Recognize patterns and repeating behaviors to determine which comfort zones no longer serve you, and which ones continue to benefit you.
- Assess what you really want apart from your comfort zone.
- Picture what you want in each aspect of your life. Consult with a friend, relative, mentor, or coach to determine the best way to proceed. What is the next step to break free of your comfort zone?
- Concentrate on new behaviors rather than on problems in order to create new brain pathways. When you get diverted to old feelings or behaviors, redirect ideas and energy flow to the new ideas.
- Create new ways of thinking to stimulate brain circuits, with an “eye on the prize” to lay new mental maps.
- Remember that the power is in the focus, and that permanent change is from the consistency of that focus.
- Think about your new experience and evolving self – how your new experiences require thinking of yourself – your identity – in an evolving way. No longer in the old story.
- As you take the next step, hang in there. It takes continuity and consistency in order to change. Repetition often requires 25-30 days of consistency in order to rewire the brain. Your challenge is to continue with the new behaviors until they become automatic.
- Recognize that when you initiate change to move from your comfort zone, it challenges the system. Everyone around you will be forced to react to your change. Their first reaction inevitably will be change-back pressure. Their “help” to restore the old comfort zone will allow you to validate your loyalty to yourself.

Chapter 13

HOW TO AVOID CHANGE: EIGHTEEN CAVEATS

1. Focus on the system. Devote special attention to the things that seem frustrating, out of your control, and impossible to address: politics, corporations, and economics. Systems must remain in focus as broad categories in order for you to feel distanced and disaffected.
2. Maintain a focus on theory. Avoid detail, singular aspects, and application. Remain theoretical about how to transform various systems, about what needs to be done, maintaining the frustration of what seems to continue to be out of your control.
3. Believe that the answer will appear when you step out of the box, or when you simply oppose the system.
4. Keep the point of reference external; keep believing that the antithesis of conformity is opposition; know that one or the other of these external points of reference of conformity or opposition holds the real truth.
5. Do not decide. Allow the urgency of a situation to decide for you. The gravity of a last-minute emergency forces action and avoids planning. Waiting for the deadline excuses responsibility for thoroughness and excellence.
6. Believe that the answer is more rules and further structure.
7. Debate the obvious; give energy to the controversial.
8. Believe in experts unequivocally, and that expertise is authoritative. Dismiss any notion that expertise is perceived, processed, and filtered through assumptions, belief systems, and prejudices of experts.
9. Do not seek your own information or develop your own solutions when you have experts to listen to. Rather, find someone to provide a map for you and avoid anyone who wants to help you develop your own guidance system to navigate.

10. Always find some cause-and-effect relationship to explain things otherwise not understandable. Maintain a consistent external focus to blame someone, or find some tangible explanation that offers a specific, concrete focus on what is wrong. Warning: Much work is required to maintain this particular caveat, as you must be certain that the obstacle can never be totally removed, or you would have to confront its causal effect as inaccurate. The perceived cause must always be just beyond reach and remedy in order to remain as the object of blame.
11. Keep doing the same thing and expect a different outcome. If the outcome doesn't change for the better, do the same thing harder.
12. Be suspicious of new ideas.
13. New ideas, being perturbations of the existing system, must be curbed if not silenced.
14. Meticulously guard against mistakes; the best way to be sure to avoid mistakes is to keep doing the same thing again and again with perfection as the goal.
15. Maintain a focus on failure, giving it the proper respect of fear so that it remains ever in focus with its guiding principle of avoidance.
16. Be extremely wary of new strategies and solutions, and invest instead in enforcement of the existing approach.
17. When you make mistakes, focus on the mistakes and attempt to get them right.
18. Continue to hold prejudices, because they are markers of emotional landmines.

Chapter 14

COACHING VS. THERAPY

Frontiers and Fences

Broad Lines of Distinction

Michael is stuck, afraid of proceeding in his job search. If this were a recurring problem or pattern with indications for psychotherapy, a therapist might explore the origin of his fear, the underlying conflict. Then help Michael experience and express his feelings, explore the conflicts that resulted in his stuckness, and work through the obstacles to proceeding.

With patients, a therapist examines conflicted or troubling behavior. A goal of psychotherapy is the resolution of emotional problems. Understanding patterns, motivations, and dynamics occupies a central position in many therapies. Therapy might even try to resolve personality issues.

If Michael's presentation were situational, without a need for referral to a therapist, a Professional Coach might acknowledge Michael's fear in order to help him convert the fear into an intention. For example, Michael may recognize the fear as information that he needs to gather more information to make an informed decision. The coach invites him to choose a specific next best action. Michael moves the intention to a commitment to research contacts for interviews. The coach may then help Michael clarify his needs and ideals in order to better align his actions with overall specific goals to plan purposeful strategies. If the goal is different than any previous experience, the coach may suggest a visualization to etch a neural code for success.

A Professional Coach works with emotionally healthy clients to establish strategies and plans that have specific, achievable, measurable goals. Coaching works with personality styles as part of the plan. The Professional Coach helps clients write the next chapter of their life or business stories.

A therapist is more like an archaeologist, whereas a coach is more like an architect. Traditional psychotherapy endeavors to explore and work through the origins of

problems, to come to the end of an old story in order to move into the present. Coaching is about writing – and living – a new story.

Underlying causes are always present for any problem – often complex, multi-determined causes. A coaching approach is to use causes, feelings, and history as information to focus on now and plan for next. At times, simply doing what is currently effective dissolves barriers. Professional Coaching focuses on bridging the gap between where someone is now and where that person wants to be.

Part of the struggle to get people to embrace change is because the methods to facilitate change are often contrary to how the mind and brain work. Despite being presented with ample evidence of how change will be beneficial, many people don't make changes even when they know it's in their own best interest.

Coaches are *choice architects* who help the client make this moment's choice fully conscious, considered, informed, and strategic.

Distinctions between a Healthcare Professional and a Professional Coach include:

- Fixing problems vs. co-creating possibilities
- Recovering vs. discovering
- Professional expert vs. collegial
- Ending the old story vs. co-creating a new story
- Trauma and healing vs. goals and succeeding
- Healthcare provider vs. accountability partner

A skillful coach's clients experience dramatic behavioral changes in a relatively brief period of time. An aspect of the coaching process is co-creation with the client of internal transitions to match the external changes, in order to incorporate a new identity.

A Professional Coach should know how, why, and when to refer a client to a psychotherapist, and a psychotherapist should know how, why, and when to refer a client to a coach. As we coaches further define our professional identities, therapists will know how to use a coach as colleague. Both professions have a lot to offer to clients and to each other.

While professional coaching meets needs that people have always had, it also offers a new delivery system for mentorship, accountability, partnership, co-creative work, and a sense of possibility.

Overlapping Influences: Contribution from Psychology and Psychoanalysis

Some principles from psychotherapy that are useful in coaching:

- Empathy: The listening position from inside the client's experience; the subjective reality of how the client thinks, feels, processes, attributes meaning.
- Neutrality: Remaining equidistant from a client's dilemma, conflict, or ambivalence – not taking sides, but allowing the client to resolve the dichotomy
- Confidentiality: The necessary guarantee of confidentiality establishes a foundation of trust.
- Repetition: The past teaches the present so not to repeat the old story. The information from experiences of the past is used to inform present choices.
- Self-empathy: Being empathic with your earlier self is important – not to judge yourself now by what you know now but could not know then. You can understand life backwards, but it can only be lived forward.
- Unconscious beliefs: We listen for the assumptions and beliefs that ghostwrite current behavior.
- Emotional salience: We listen for what the client is experiencing emotionally just as in other facets of personal and professional life.
- Self-regulation: Regulating states of mind and managing emotion is a crucial success strategy.
- Self-statement: A unique, personal communication of experience and point of view. What people say and do are inevitable, unavoidable self-statements of their beliefs and personal realities. All that you say is about yourself. (Krueger, D. *Live A New Life Story™ The Owner's Guide*)

- Transference. The active organizing process of the mind to understand a present experience, but necessarily relying on existing software. What we expect in the present tells us instantly what has happened in the past. A person is always showing us exactly what it is like to be him or her. (Krueger, D. *Integrating Body Self and Psychological Self*)

“What really makes people happy?”

Martin Seligman, who began the positive psychology movement, asked this question. Seligman’s research on positive psychology and authentic happiness indicated that positivity can be taught, is self-reinforcing and strengthening, and must be actively practiced. The focus is on positive growth and mutual enhancement rather than on analysis of problems.

These basic interactions of early development—mutual affirmation, recognition, responsiveness, empathy and positive support—are the same fundamental aspects of the coaching relationship, leading to an adult-version effectiveness and mastery.

As a Professional Coach who formerly practiced Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis for over two decades, it makes a great deal of difference to be alert to possibility rather than scouting for problems and veiled negativity.

Seligman sees the difference between optimists and pessimists as a fundamental different explanatory style. A pessimist attributes negative events to stable and global factors, believing bad events are pervasive, permanent, and uncontrollable. An optimist sees bad events as local, changeable, and temporary.

Perhaps some of the popularity of professional coaching is the readily understandable language of a coach, speaking of goals, achievement, and attainable possibilities. Contrast this to Freud’s notion of cure as turning “human misery into common unhappiness” in dealing with people who are living lives of quiet desperation and feel empty, frustrated, overwhelmed, and alienated.

The coach can help co-create and hold a vision of what the client can do and be. The coach may be the first person in an individual’s life who is totally dedicated to that person’s success and totally believes in him or her.

Over the last decade and a half, a radical shift has occurred in psychotherapeutic techniques such as psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapy, which have traditionally operated on the belief that exploration of past trauma is necessary for healing. These therapies have been increasingly eclipsed by the “new school” of cognitive behavior approaches, which demonstrates that reviewing the past is both unnecessary and counterproductive.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is currently the most widely used “talking cure” approach in America. This theory holds that it is not necessary or even important for someone to return to the origins of a problem in order to overcome it; rather that it is more productive to focus on correcting the present and moving forward. This school of therapy teaches patients to retrain their thinking, the result being that they behave and feel better. Cognitive behavior therapy focuses exclusively in the present. And unlike psychodynamic therapy or psychoanalysis, a complete treatment often occurs in a dozen sessions.

While there is increasing evidence that understanding the origins of problems is unnecessary, there is evidence that a “preoccupation with the past can actually interfere with making changes in the present. Obsessive rumination about past events can trap patients in a self-defeating cycle from which they cannot extricate themselves. It can actually retard healing.” (Professor John C. Norcross, University of Scranton in Pennsylvania).

Psychoanalyst and author Adam Phillips writes in the *New York Times*, “... The standard practice of using talk therapy to discover traumas in a patient’s past is not only unnecessary but can be injurious.”

Contributions from Neuroscience

New neuronal networks and pathways are created when you focus on solutions. The already existing circuitry is further etched when you focus on existing problems. This is why people can get stuck in therapy. Neuroscience validates the reality that it is not understanding the source of our thoughts that is most beneficial, but a focus on awareness of choice.

- Concentrate on new behaviors rather than problems in order to create new brain pathways. Identifying the problem won’t solve it.

- Regulate your state of mind and manage emotions to promote brain power. New insights and adaptations occur through balanced learning: left brain and right brain, intellectual and emotional.
- At the moment of insight (an “ah-ha” experience), a complex new set of neural connections is created. Parts of the brain lights up on fMRI scans during these moments. An “ah-ha” activates centers in the brain to release certain chemicals. When someone is given information, a directive, or an order – nothing happens.
- We do not attract what we want, but we attract what we focus on. Our unconscious doesn’t register + or -. Just the focus. A print or negative is the same image – the unconscious is the image.
- Guiding the development and actualization of new behaviors combined with conceptualizing the mental map – the internal model – facilitates a new level of mastery.

Coaching as a Catalyst for Change

What has given rise to the emergence of coaching? What need is this a response to?

Whether on an individual or an organizational level, a coaching client is usually engaging some transition. The problem of change becomes the possibility of transformation.

Some remarkable findings in recent studies emphasize that coaching is a natural response to some of the large changes that are happening in current time.

- 75 to 90% of all visits to primary-care physicians are for stress-related complaints or disorders. (U.N. International Labour Organization Study; US Public Health Survey).
- Stress contributes to 85% of all medical problems (Cooper Wellness Program).
- 71% of workers are not emotionally engaged in their work. (Gallup)
- 52% of executives will die of diseases related to stress. (Cooper Wellness Program)

- Stress is the number-one reason behind sickness from work. (Gee Publishing Survey)
- Stress undermines work productivity in 9 of 10 companies. (Industrial Society Survey)
- Professional Coaching has an average return on investment (ROI) of six fold (600%) in four different studies (Lore Institute; Manchester Consulting)

Individuals from various disciplines including academics, philosophers, poets, coaches, and students of organization change have observed that our existing paradigms have not served us well when change is badly needed.

Coaches experience daily a power of coaching as a valid catalyst in growth, increased awareness, increased connection to a deeper intelligence, and increasing utilization of emotional intelligence. Of all existing modalities, professional coaching is the most effective for this kind of work.

Coaching is about helping individuals clarify their purpose, establish their goals, grow, and achieve meaningful outcomes. Great coaching engages all individuals at all levels to help them become aligned, connected, and inspired to their higher selves and higher purpose.

The coaching model is one of creating the space and the working crucible for breakthrough change. As accountability partner, the coach focuses on change until new knowledge transforms into new behavior.

People change by creating new experiences that, when done consistently, alter neuronal pathways and neurotransmitter patterns. Changing your experience changes both your mind and your brain. Creating a change in behavior must also be coupled with creating a new model to make the change permanent.

Some change occurs from the inside out, from examining and altering thoughts and feelings, with the resultant change in behavior. Some change occurs from the outside in, from creating new experiences until different thoughts and feelings surface. Each individual usually has a favorite mode of how she or he works best, from the inside out, or the outside in.

Change in behavior causes feelings to change. Changes in feelings can also cause behavior to change. Change in thinking can cause change in feeling and behavior.

A study by M. Talmon examined clients who came to a single therapy session. The therapist believed that something was lacking, misleading, or had gone awry in the session so that it was not successful. This assumption was disproved. From the client's perspective, 78% reported that the one session had helped them enough that they did not feel a need for further sessions. Some research has indicated (of course depending on the nature of the patient population and the kind of problems) that approximately 30-40% of new cases come to a psychotherapist for only a single session.

Problem vs. Possibility

All problems have exceptions. A research team focusing on brief therapy and families devised what they formulated as the solution-focused approach. (Brief Therapy: Focused Solution Development. *Family Process* 25: 207-221, 1986)

Exceptions are those times when problems could have happened but somehow did not. Instead of focusing on the problem, giving attention to the details and occurrence of how problems occur, clients begin to pay attention to how exceptions occur. All the details of who, what, where, why, and when that would previously have been focused on problems focus on the exceptions instead. The result: Changes occur more rapidly.

Rather than giving energy to the problem and to understanding the problem, energy focuses instead on the exception, which is to say, the solution. When no problems are created, there is less space in time and energy for problems.

By this approach, we will find out:

- What has worked
- When the client feels calmer
- When the client feels more peaceful
- When the client feels more confident
- When the client has effected mastery
- How the client can conceptualize effective strategies.

Chapter 14 - COACHING VS. THERAPY: Frontiers and Fences

A new story can occur by living in the present moment. Each person's life story is created. We create whatever we think, feel, and experience each moment. Every day begins a new page.

Insight, understanding, even coming to the end of the past and ending an old story are important. But they're not enough. You have to create a new story to be in before you can completely give up the old one.

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