

Personal Excellence

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The Magazine of Personal Leadership

October 2009

**Heaven
on Earth**

**Six Life
Lessons**

Brenda Bence
Consultant

**Personal Brand
Is It Holding You Back?**



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Personal Excellence

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Heaven on Earth

See your surroundings anew.

by John C. Robinson

HOW WOULD YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF *Personal Excellence* change if you lived in *Heaven on Earth* here and now? What seems like a crazy question may be the doorway to an entirely new way of life.

I see Heaven on Earth all the time—not as a metaphor or new-age fantasy but as an actual reality. I know this isn't religious heresy because I'm an ordained interfaith minister. Jesus tells us, "The father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it . . . What you look for has come, but you do not know it." Ramana Maharshi, a Hindu sage, puts it this way, "This is the Kingdom of Heaven. The realized being sees this as the Kingdom of Heaven whereas the others see it as 'this world.'" And the Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, explains, "You don't have to die in order to enter the Kingdom of God. It is better to do it now when you are fully alive . . . The Kingdom doesn't have to come, and you do not have to go to it. It is already here . . . There is not one day that I do not walk in the Kingdom of God." And the modern day mystic Eckhart Tolle adds, "'A new heaven' is the emergence of a transformed state of human consciousness, and 'a new earth' is its reflection in the physical realm."

Over the past 10 years, I've researched this transformed state of consciousness in great detail, amassing over 100 descriptions of it from famous saints and sages to everyday folks, from across religions and around the world, from the ancient past to the present,

who report the same shift in awareness that opens the perceptual gates to the Divine World. Heaven on Earth seems to be the best-kept secret on the spiritual path.

Where Is Heaven on Earth?

Many of great teachers, sages, and mystics have talked about Heaven on Earth. For them, it was simply an obvious, everyday awareness. Because enlightened people are far more alike

than their religions, this consensus is hardly surprising. Indeed, having known Heaven on Earth since childhood (we all experienced it then), what I have always found most surprising was how few of us remember the Divine World or see it now.

Sadly, most of us are too busy to stop and see where we really are. Instead of witnessing the Heaven on Earth, we see what we think. Remember

the Buddha's words, "We are what we think. Everything we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world." In this thought world, we experience only our concepts, beliefs, stereotypes, stories, and prejudices: a run-down building, an old man, an irritating family member, a chair or table, a frustrating job, an alcoholic. These concepts filter our experience so completely that we stop witnessing what is right before us.

Try this experiment instead. Let your eyes settle on anything around you. Begin to examine it carefully, intensely, and *without thought*. Heighten all your senses to take in its color, texture, design, smell, sound, even temperature, weight, and reflected light. Examine the



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object as if you had never seen it so clearly before or had no idea what it was.

If you do experiment sincerely, you will discover that the world is not what you think it is! Now take the experiment even further. Imagine you had been dead for 1000 years and got to come back for just one day. Step outside and be astonished by the pristine beauty, incredible diversity, wondrous magic, and ever-changing patterns of light and shadow that make up this Eden-like world.

Many who do this experiment drop to their knees in gratitude for the abundant grace and blessings that surround them. When you look deeply into the world as it is, you are looking into Heaven on Earth.

What Is Heaven on Earth Like?

It's not what you think! When I shift gears and step in Heaven on Earth, I see a breathtakingly beautiful place. The world becomes brighter, clearer, ever more lovely, endlessly fascinating, holy, precious, and absolutely perfect just as it is. Like a cathedral window, all things shine with an inner light and beauty, and people look like angels who don't yet know they are angels. Identity, insecurity, invidious comparisons, competition all disappear in this timeless, awakened, and thought-free consciousness. Here there is no one to be, and abundance is everywhere. Here there is no ugliness, corruption or lack, for everything is alive, awake and aware, pulsating with Divinity. Problems, effort and goals dissolve spontaneously in this consciousness. Put differently, every "problem" becomes simply a stimulus to wake up. Heaven on Earth is always here. It never left; we did.

Heaven on Earth Moments

We've all experienced countless Heaven-on-Earth moments, but usually we don't take the time to step into them.

I recently had a touching Heaven on Earth moment with my 90-year-old mom who is now in assisted living. With most of her memory gone, meaningful visits are hard to come by. So we began having "tea parties" for her. We bring her favorite teapot and china cups, favorite tea, cookies and ice cream, and invite a small group family and friends to attend.

In this familiar and happy context, something magical happens—everyone just relaxes and has fun. Without the pressure to relate or solve problems, we shift into the simplicity of commonplace sensory sights, sounds, and tastes. In this timeless and wonder-filled moment, my mom becomes her old self again, the world shines with its intrinsic beauty, and our tea party takes place in Heaven on Earth.

What Is PE in Heaven on Earth?

The way we understand Personal Excellence changes dramatically in the heightened consciousness of Heaven on Earth. Consider this partial list of possibilities:

- Living in Heaven on Earth means seeing the incredible beauty and holiness of the world in people, animals, plants, sky, weather, light, and all things. Indeed, it's about seeing the world through God's eyes and returning to the Garden.

- Released from the tyranny of thought, you move into a natural state where life feels like an ongoing mystical experience in the mystery of now. Here there is no place to go and nothing to figure out. You have returned to Garden consciousness.

- In Heaven on Earth, Personal Excellence is no longer measured by any standards or beliefs, for who you really are is beyond all mental constructs but, like a dancer, finds expression in the spontaneous flow of the moment—and all are in the dance.



- Now Personal Excellence means letting yourself be happy for no reason at all, and there is nothing you must do to earn or deserve this happiness; rather it is your natural state in Heaven on Earth.

- From this happiness flows generosity, gratitude, and service. Only love matters now, and your family of loved ones includes all sentient beings and the Earth herself. Gifts of love are exchanged all day long in smiles, acts of kindness, and caretaking.

Heaven on Earth for All

In the unity consciousness of Heaven on Earth, you suddenly discover that whatever happens to another person is actually happening to you, for we are the One in myriad expressions, making social justice an inevitable spiritual priority. Now the Bodhisattva vow of leaving no one behind makes perfect sense.

Ultimately Personal Excellence is about helping to awaken the awareness of Heaven on Earth for all beings here and now. This magical consciousness is contagious and reinforcing, transforming all you see and do.

Heaven on Earth is the ordinary world transformed and transfigured by a shift in consciousness into an incredibly beautiful, peaceful and holy place. It is always here when we are awake enough to see it, and seeing it changes everything. I see Heaven on Earth every day, and you can, too. Come with me to a *new heaven and new earth* and let's finally find the peace beyond words. PE



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ACTION: Discover heaven on earth.

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Six Life Lessons

Death is the greatest coach.



by Stan Goldberg

PEOPLE WHO WERE DYING in the Middle Ages said their goodbyes, gave away the furniture, and just stopped breathing. At the moment of death, friends and family absconded with anything of value. Later, they might gather to either celebrate or deride the person's life.

Today, although we rarely fight over furniture, we do something worse. We layer death with a multitude of screens, hoping to hide the elephant in the room. Sadly, the delusion is easily shattered by words, events, and thoughts that reassert the role of death in life. Today, instead of welcoming death as the greatest of all life coaches, we dread its appearance as if it is an embarrassing relative at a family gathering.

The theologian, Thomas Merton, described how when his mother was dying, she wrote him a goodbye letter, rather than risking the possibility of scarring him for life by seeing her dying in the hospital. Our attitudes today have changed little since Merton's mother's death in the early 1900's. The Buddha said that just like the elephant leaves the largest footprint in the forest, so does death when it comes to living. As a bedside hospice volunteer for seven years, I reside in the elephant's footprint. What I've learned are lessons about living that hit me with the force of a sledgehammer.

The linguist, Korzybski, said: "The map is not the territory." Arriving at the territory of personal excellence may not require lectures, workshops, or books written by great motivational authors. The map I use involves people who invite me into their lives as they approach death. As I watch their transformation and growth, I feel as if I am experiencing the peeling away of an onion's layers. When someone knows they don't have much time to live, things that were once thought important—such as roles, egos, and societal niceties—are shed as quickly as one takes off a winter coat in a hot room. What's left is an understanding about what's important in life and an honesty often painful to witness. But from the words and actions of these people comes wisdom that cuts to the core of what it means to be human.

After serving patients ranging in age from three months to 98 years, I'm understanding how to transform my life from one that has been adequate, to one that is fulfilling. One maxim I've learned is *the way we choose to live usually becomes the way we are forced to die*. If you want an easier death, make yourself a better life. Learning to live fully is unlike learning the steps for delivering a dynamite speech.

I've gleaned six guidelines from my experiences that can become a blueprint for personal excellence. Each is presented in the form of a short, but true story that serves as a life coach for how to live fully and die better.

1. Asking for forgiveness. Mary had abandoned her two children and hus-



band when she was 30. Now in her 70s and near death, she sought forgiveness from her children who refused to see her, even knowing she was dying. After three weeks of effort, we finally had a letter that would be sent to them after she died: "I've always loved you. I'm sorry for hurting you. Please forgive me." Although they refused to see or talk to her, the act of asking for forgiveness allowed her to die peacefully. *Asking to be forgiven for unskillful acts or words can be soothing, if not curative, even if forgiveness is withheld.*

2. Letting go. Martha was in excruciating pain and decided to end her own life by stopping nourishment and fluid. As she became weaker, I whispered into her ear, "It's okay to let go, I know how much pain you're in." She slowly nodded her head and pointed to her mother, who was sleeping on the couch across the room. On an erasable board she wrote, "Not ready." Martha was prepared to endure indescribable agony from a terminal illness

because her mother wasn't ready to accept her death. *By not letting go of things that no longer make sense, we not only hurt ourselves, but also others.*

3. Giving. I knew Sid for seven days before he died. As I sat next to him, I felt cheated. I wanted his friendship even though I knew he would die soon. I came to realize that my kindness towards him had a kicker—I expected a buddy in return for my kindness. I now see that giving isn't analogous to a business contract where if something is given, something is expected in return. *Giving should be unconditional with no expectation of reciprocity: you give because it's the right thing to do.*

Heart communications. For 30 years as a Professor of Communicative Disorders, I believed words and language were the best means of communication. It was only when I served people who were dying that I realized *the use of words and language often get in the way of the emotions we wish to convey.*

4. Showing compassion. Before beginning hospice, I viewed compassion as involving big gestures such as showing great concern over someone's loss or financially helping someone who was destitute. But the act of emptying an overflowing urinal resulted in an outpouring of gratitude far exceeding my efforts. I came to see that *a measure of compassion is the effect it has on the person experiencing it, not the size of effort.*

5. The dilemma of hope. I've never underestimated the power of positive thinking. But I found by hoping that one's life will get better, people often neglect improving their present situation. Instead of tying up loose ends near death, people often waited, hoping for a miracle to happen. *"Hoping" for the best in the future often results in not doing something meaningful in the present.*

6. Forgiving. We often hold on to an emotional pain as if its continuation validates the injustice. The Tibetans have a saying, "You can throw hot coals at your enemies, but you'll burn your hands." Bruce forgave his son for refusing to take care of him when both knew he was dying. It resulted in needed closure that allowed him to have a more peaceful death. *Forgiveness does not mean that an act of cruelty was justified. Rather, it implies an understanding of why it occurred and allows one to move on positively with their life and death.* PE

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ACTION: Follow a blueprint for personal excellence.

Aesthetic Intelligence

Reclaim the power of your senses.



by Rochelle Mucha

AESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE was born out of my research with theatre. I discovered a culture that would be the envy of any organization—a world where ego, self-direction, and individuality aptly describe the players; but where respect, connection, and interdependency describe how they play.

I see two imperatives today: 1) the need to cultivate an environment of connection and creativity, leading to innovation; and 2) to develop robust, diverse, and healthy relationships.

This demands a culture characterized by the performing arts—a place where players, on stage and behind the scenes, share a common goal, are passionate and energetic, play well with others, seek new thoughts, give and receive feedback, experiment without fear, and take pride in interdependency.

In probing beyond the superficial methods and metaphors of the artist's world, I discovered the underpinnings of the culture—deep listening, intentional characterization, ability to synthesize and act in real time—giving rise to Aesthetic Intelligence, the elements being *Presence, Authenticity, Synthesis*.

- **Presence** enables you to listen deeply, challenges you to suspend your routine thoughts and allow for the emergent. You become aware of yourself, your innermost thoughts as well as the surrounding environment. You are viscerally in touch with what you are feeling, and seek to know why. You witness your impact and experience on others. You recognize, accept, and embrace people and ideas. You are in a state of inquiry, not advocacy, or defense. The emergent becomes a source of surprise, energy, connection, inspiration, creativity.

- **Authenticity** is intentional characterization, thinking and preparing for who you have to be, for that audience, purpose, and time. For each role, you must bring yourself *authentically* and deliver a performance *authentically* for your audience, tapping your personal experiences and bundling your skill-sets appropriately. *Characterization* is not pretending to be someone you are not—it is being *you*, and being believable in the various roles and scenes you engage with. It is deliberate versatility.

- **Synthesis** is the outcome of presence, *availability* to access and absorb while authentically in character. Synthesis is a time of action and decision-making. It is felt, heard, and seen.

To be *Aesthetically Intelligent* is to fully engage your senses—to see, hear, touch, smell, taste, and intuit—in your interactions. Sensory knowing defines how you learn as an infant and through your toddler years. Unfortunately, through socialization and education, you relinquish the power of your senses to conform to traditional and narrower ways of knowing and being.

Reclaiming the power of utilizing all your senses, the big five plus one—intuition—is the essence of *Aesthetic Intelligence*. You may associate the term *aesthetic* with beauty, but the root of the word *aesthetic* refers to the employment

of your senses. When you do this, you release yourself from the shackles of mindless experiences and constrained decision-making, problem-solving, and creativity. Why just hear, when you can see, smell, taste, touch, and intuit? Why settle on being *rational* when you can embrace what is *relational, emotional, social, and physical*? Imagine the richness of experience that awaits you if you employ the senses available to you, transforming daily experiences into meaningful knowing, being, and doing.

Aesthetic Intelligence introduces a fresh way to think about living, working and optimizing your performance. **PE**

Rochelle T. Mucha, Ph.D., is author of *Aesthetic Intelligence: Reclaim the Power of Your Senses and founder of Business as Performance Art*. Call 770-649-8203 or visit www.businessasperformanceart.com.

ACTION: Cultivate aesthetic intelligence.

Life Stressors

Start squelching nuisances.



by Mike Zimmerman

MAYBE YOUR RIGHT EYE starts twitching when you glimpse your hair in the mirror. Or perhaps you fling sofa pillows across the room when your home team blows a 20-point lead. This isn't mere annoyance—it is bona fide stress, and proof that anxiety can spring from far more than relationship angst, finances, and work. Such "little things" can compromise your health. In fact, stressed-out people are more likely to suffer heart attacks, strokes, and diabetes.

We polled more than 1,500 people to learn which stressors lurk in their lives.

You need a smart strategy to battle these four nuisances so you can focus on what *really matters*.

1. **Insecurity.** Paying bills, managing debt, and sticking to a budget scores high among stressors. But it's just not about the money—it's about the uncertainty of your job and not knowing where you stand. To defuse this stress, do some fact-finding. Ask your boss what you can do to make yourself more valuable. The more clarity you have, the more *you will feel in control*.

2. **Appearance.** Many people feel stressed about their image or appearance, and many specify hair as the mane, or, main culprit. Baldness nega-

tively affects men's feelings of attractiveness and body image; many guys feel judged by hair loss. To defuse the stress, reframe the problem as a medical issue and get professional treatment. Run the numbers. If the expense is worth it to you, then go for it.

3. **Exercise.** Failing to stick to an exercise program rates high on the stress scale. You stress about missing a workout or not exercising. And, as you try to carve out time to exercise, your stress skyrockets, affecting what you eat. To defuse this stress, shrink your exercise time by boosting intensity: Turn your cardio routine into a shorter interval workout that alternates sprints with your normal pace (boost fat-burning.)

4. **Co-managing cash.** Financial stress can be worse when you're in a relationship, because your view of the situation is often different from your mate's. Men tend to report higher values for assets, such as a home or car, while women inflate debt totals. Estimates of income and net worth vary;

and couples often don't know how much money they have, or won't talk about money honestly. To defuse this stress, take 15 minutes to write down your estimated assets, debts, and net worth—then compare your numbers with recent statements. If you share long-term financial goals and share the responsibility to work toward them, imbalances in spending become easier to renegotiate. A sense of fairness reduces your stress level. **PE**

Mike Zimmerman writes for *Men's Health*.

ACTION: Learn to squelch stressors in your life.



Mojo Boosters

Increase your energy.



by Theresa Rose

IS YOUR MOJO RUNNING IN “slow mo?” Are you finding yourself dragging through each day, seemingly unable to move out of neutral? Are you fighting a bad case of the “grumpies?” Chances are, you need a mojo boost. Like most of us, your energy levels are being adversely affected by the negativity you are absorbing in the midst of the wide-spread challenges, both on Wall Street and on Main Street. Going to work when you’re constantly hearing about layoffs or reading about the latest company shutting its doors is difficult—and trying to remain creative, upbeat and productive can be twice as hard.

Before we begin to boost our mojo, we need to understand what mojo is. Mojo is reflected differently in each person, yet its essence is the same for all of us. Mojo is our internal energy, inspiration and power that propels us joyfully forward in life, allowing us to fulfill our goals and act upon that which we desire. In short, mojo is our fuel for a happy and productive life. Our tanks get low on mojo when we allow it to become stagnant, depleted, or sucked away from us by others. However, we can fill our tanks whenever we wish. All it takes is some intention, conscious awareness, and choice.

So how can we boost our mojo? We acquire more mojo when we choose activities that are healthy, balanced and blissful. At work especially, this means finding the silver lining, even when times are tough. But don’t despair!

Here are *five effective mojo boosters* to help you out of the recession rut:

1. Be good to yourself. One of the most important steps you can take to boost your mojo is to adopt a rigorous plan for self-care. This includes choosing the highest quality fuel to run on. Choose healthy foods to eat and snack on, avoid eating on-the-go, and especially avoid too many empty (albeit comforting) sugary foods and simple carbohydrates. Get outside at least once a day to breathe in one of nature’s biggest mojo boosters: Oxygen! All it takes is a simple walk around the parking lot or office plaza to get your energy boost. Also, don’t be shy when it

comes to getting those forty winks over the weekend, soaking in a tub, or getting a massage. Take care of your body so it will take care of you.

2. Be playful. When is the last time you’ve seen a child without energy? It rarely happens! Most children have one agenda item on their list: have fun. They revel in the act of creating, exploring and playing. Their days fly by, and they never want to take a nap or go to bed for fear that they will miss something wonderful. We can learn something from these smaller teachers by incorporating a little more play into our lives. At work, think about the ways you can bring more play into your cubicle. Display your favorite bobblehead or figurine on your desk.



Use your lunch break to play a board game with co-workers while you eat. Sign up for a joke-of-the-day e-mail. Outside of the office, pick shells on the beach, play with your family outside or even run on the Slip’n Slide in the backyard. Let your inner kid play again!

3. Be mindful. Our mojo gets sapped when our minds endlessly jump from task to task, or more precisely, obsess over problem after problem. Our computers need to be turned off every once in a while in order to function optimally, and our minds are no different. Take some time to mentally “defrag” through the act of meditation. If you are new to meditation, simply carve out a few minutes every day to comfortably sit in silence. **DO NOTHING.** Simply be. Take the end of your lunch break and use it to meditate. You will be surprised how much more energized you feel after letting your brain rest for a bit. Once you have incorporated periods of silence into your life, you can begin to add other mindful

activities such as creative visualization or clearing your office space through de-cluttering and other simple Feng Shui techniques like turning your desk toward the door, placing plants in corners, and moving electrical equipment as far away from you as possible.

4. Be present. A major obstacle to maximizing one’s mojo is the all-too-common practice of regretting the past or fretting over the future. We spend so much of our energy wallowing in previous so-called failures or fearing the absolute worst of what *may* happen instead of living joyfully in the moment. We don’t know what the future holds, and it is simply a waste of valuable time and mojo to try to control it. The best way to remain firmly planted in the present is to increase your awareness of yourself and your surroundings. Place your hand on your heart. What do you feel? Look around. What do you see? Our lives are *rich beyond measure* when we take the time to be fully present. It is, after all, the only thing we have.

5. Be grateful. Expressing gratitude is like receiving a shot of adrenaline. When we are grateful for *what we already have*—a home, a family, love, health, food, and shelter—we instantly get a boost of mojo that can help us through the tough times. The key is to make the expression of gratitude a daily habit. Think about starting and ending each day with a “gratitude rant.” Before you get out of bed and drive to work, or before you shut off the light to get back into bed, mentally rattle off all of the fabulous things in your life. Take note of the gifts contained within the challenges of the day. What was the blessing in the postponed meeting or client call? Did it allow you to spend more time on a project that had a deadline, or did it make it so that you were able to drive home a few minutes earlier to see your family? If you operate from a perspective of gratitude, then you will never have that familiar feeling of running on empty.

Even though it sometimes seems like our energy is dependent on our job status, the messages from the media, or the balance in our bank accounts, we can break that pattern by making these simple mojo-boosting choices over and over again, day after day, minute by minute. Choose to have a life of abundance, balance, and creativity, and then go about embodying those ideas, beliefs and actions that support it. **PE**

*Theresa Rose is an inspirational speaker, award-winning author of *Opening the Kimono*, and founder of Serious Mojo Publications. Visit www.TheresaRose.net.*

ACTION: Boost your energy and mojo.

Personal Change

Learn new coping skills.



by Mary-Frances Winters

YOU'VE LIKELY BEEN ON A roller-coaster ride for two decades if your organization has downsized, outsourced, reengineered, delayed, divested or merged. Such changes may have left you frustrated, angry, and dispirited.

Without spirit, you are like an empty vessel, sapped of your innate power and genius. You need to reconnect with *the excellence within*, to rediscover your true calling and the special gifts. You have more power and choices than you can imagine. When you open your soul, new energies and capabilities spill forth.

Your prime asset is to know who you are. Do you know the source of your peace, your genius, your uniqueness? Have you searched for your calling? Have you explored the depths of your soul to find your authentic self?

When you transcend the mundane aspects of your work and seek to operate from your center, your core, your soul, your passion, you achieve results beyond your wildest expectations.

Knowing yourself is the secret to a self-fulfillment, but you likely find little time for meditation, introspection, or reflection. You may feel that pressures affect your health and relationships.

The challenge is to consistently perform at your peak, to find joy in your life and work, and to feel fulfilled and at peace. Here are three ways to facilitate self-discovery and find peace:

1. Understand your natural response to change. You have your own way of managing change. Do you know what yours is? We identified six responses (the 6 Fs) to change: *Foggies* are oblivious to the changes around them. *Fakers* tell themselves and others that they are on board with change but make no personal changes to their behavior.

Faultless see the changes around them, do not like them, and constantly complain, seeing themselves as hopeless victims of an unfair system. *Fearful* engage in self-protector, non-team-oriented behavior as low trust and paranoia set in. *Fighters* either reject change and ardently promote a status quo position, or want change and feel frustrated by the lack of progress.

Futurists are accustomed to change, or highly self-differentiated, or workers

new to the culture. They are adaptable, flexible, resilient, global in their thinking and in control of their destiny.

2. Calibrate your speed. Just keeping up with all of your messages can be stressful. Part of being *self-aware* is being *self-caring*. Everyone has a different internal *battery life*. Know when your body needs recharging. Even if it just means walking up stairs or taking a few deep breaths, you'll return with *greater energy and clarity*. Finding the right speed is challenging. Technology enables you to move *faster*, but *faster isn't always more productive*. Moving too fast can lead to disaster. You have your own *speed limit* where you can be your best self and do your best work. Do you know your limit?

3. Learn to be at peace with the paradoxes of change. Rapid change causes an imbalance. It puts us in a

quandary, caught between the old and the new. You have one foot firmly planted in your old familiar ways and the other teetering in the new environment. You naturally want to feel a sense of balance, but the *magnitude* of change means no clear answers—only paradoxes. Ask yourself, *what part of this seeming paradox am I responsible for, and what behaviors can I change to enhance the situation?*

Get in tune with who you are—what you stand for, what you want from life, and what you give to life. Such introspection takes you to a higher plane and helps you to reframe yourself in the wake of the changes all around you. **PE**

Mary-Frances Winters is CEO of The Winters Group, a diversity firm, and author of *Only Wet Babies Like Change, Inclusion Starts With I, and CEO's Who Get It*. Visit www.wintersgroup.com.

ACTION: Learn new skills to cope with change.

PHYSICAL • CONFIDENCE

Defeat De-Motivators

Overcome doubt, gain confidence.



by Robert Wilson

THE SWEET STRAINS OF A Puccini aria cut through the clatter of an Italian restaurant in New York City as a crystal-clear soprano voice filled the room. Quickly all ambient noise came to a halt. Diners stopped eating and talking, busboys stopped clearing tables, the cooks even came out of the kitchen.

Singing on the tiny stage was a thin, moon-faced waitress from Ohio. When she finished, the place thundered in applause, and I saw tears of gratitude glistening in her eyes. She had hit each note perfectly.

If only she had done that when she auditioned for the Metropolitan Opera. But she choked, flinched, allowed doubt to creep into her consciousness and thus her voice.

She told me, a fellow waiter at the restaurant, her story after work. She explained that she got nervous during her audition and couldn't hit the high notes. She would get one more chance to audition—after waiting for a year!

I suspect she made it, because that night she received *proof*—a vital step.

Doubt is a silent killer. You transmit feelings of doubt through subtleties in body language, facial expression and tone of voice. It is picked up subconsciously by those with whom you communicate. Worse, you communicate it

to yourself, and it seeps into your performance. *Doubt prevents you from trying.*

The cure for doubt is to find *proof* that you are talented enough to do what you set out to do. The proof doesn't need to be big to eliminate doubt. A series of little proofs may do.

I keep a *journal* or *log* of accomplishments, because they add up to reasons for believing in my abilities. Log even the little ones, since they are easy to overlook, yet they carry great weight when it comes to gaining confidence.

Sometimes *proof* comes to you by comparison. Ask, "How many people ever attain what I want?" The numbers will often be all the proof you need.

When all else fails, fall back on faith.

Many successful people had absolutely no proof that they could achieve their dreams. All they had was a strong desire and belief in themselves. And they took the first step in faith.

Success is where preparation meets opportunity. You can't take advantage of an opportunity if you lack the

skills. Still, the key factor is your belief that you'll succeed. It's called *self-efficacy*, and it's enhanced in four ways: 1) *cumulative*—each achievement builds confidence; 2) *observation*—when you see someone similar to yourself succeed, you realize that you can too; 3) *attitude*—a positive attitude boosts efficacy; and 4) *encouragement*—others believe in your ability. When you believe that you can meet goals, you achieve more. **PE**

Robert Evans Wilson, Jr. is a motivational speaker and humorist. Visit www.jumpstartyourmeeting.com.

ACTION: Build your self-efficacy.

Can I Have Your Attention?

How to think fast and find your focus.



by Joseph Cardillo

RECENTLY I WAS MAKING coffee early in the morning when my three-year-old daughter, Isabella, pranced into the room, wearing a pink ballerina tutu and pirouetted across the floor.

Delighted by her spunk and happiness, I bid her good morning, complimented her dance, and told her to look out for a toy car that her younger sister had left on the floor. She seemed oblivious to what I was saying and told me that she was *dancing with her heart*.

I enjoyed hearing this, but again warned her about the car. It appeared she wasn't paying attention. So I asked, "Isabella, may I please have your attention?"

She responded, "But Daddy, that's not possible." Amused, I asked why. "Because," she whispered, as if telling me a big secret, "my attention is mine, so I can't give it to anybody else."

I considered the implications of what she had said and thought, well, she might have a point. As a father, I couldn't help being proud of my daughter's verbal skills. The romantic part of me wanted to consider my daughter's off-the-cuff comment about attention a gift from the gods—a stroke of childhood genius that had been handed to me on a silver platter.

Coincidentally, I was writing a book about how to improve thinking. Much of popular culture would agree with Isabella. The anthem *my mind is my mind and nobody else's* echoes everywhere from rock 'n' roll to kids cartoons. J.D. Salinger captured the attitude in *The Catcher in the Rye*, which asks: Don't we all come into life with a clean slate of attention? Isn't your attention exclusively yours? Doesn't your "clean slate" get contaminated with age? And isn't your life-long job resetting your mind to its clean, default settings?

Certainly, ideas of keeping a youthful mind and making your mind your own aren't new. But could *rinsing your mind free of contaminants* make you think faster, sharper, and more authentically as you age? And if so, how would you

do it? My daughter's whimsical response had sent me reeling with possibilities.

I mentioned the episode to colleagues at the college, and they received it with much warm-hearted pleasure—and also the suggestion that there may be more to Isabella's comment than meets the eye. A few days later, I set out to see what I could discover. I contacted a group of psychologists, neurologists and biologists and shared Isabella's story with them. Everybody loved Isabella's lively take on *attention*. After a few chuckles, we all hunkered down to take a closer look at the subject. Here is a bit of what I discovered.

Your attention skill correlates to all levels of successful living. Connected to the essence of your being, your brain's attention mechanism is hard-wired to help you become everything that you can be. As such, you can't be who you really want unless this mechanism functions properly. This is because your attention can determine what you think, what emotions you feel, and what behaviors you engage in. Attention can be trained, and there is no ceiling as to how sharp it can become. Try these self-scans to get started:

Listen to your Self—to what's going on inside. Ask:

- *Where am I at the moment?* Identify the environment.
- *What do I want to gain from the situation?* Identify your important goals.
- *What should I gain from*

the situation? Consider what you could gain. Then examine whether this is different from your desires and how they work to modify your behaviors.

- *What have I done in similar situations in the past?* Identify your past actions.
- *Do I want to change that?* Identify any behaviors you don't want to repeat.
- *If so, how?* Identify how you can avoid these actions. Note: Any procedures you create here will, through repetition, become habit, *virtually automatic* for future experiences.

Listen to your environment—what's going on outside. Ask:

- *What do others expect to gain from the situation?* Identify and prioritize these.
- *What attention does my environment*



demand? For example, I am at a meeting where I can only speak when it is my turn. I have to use professional language.

• *What information should be activated?* For example, it may be best if I am calm at this point of a lecture or meeting and if I don't ask questions.

• *What information should be inhibited?* You can, for example, suppress frustrations and irrelevant information. You may need to convey an emotion that is inconsistent to how you feel in order to reach your goal.

Look for a match. Examine whether the information you've collected (from scans) is in synch with behaviors (feelings and actions) you are outputting. If they're well matched, continue doing things as you are. If not, adjust or correct accordingly. With repetition, this entire strategy can become automatic, giving you more cognitive power.

Listen to yourself—who you are, have been, and want to be. Self is the hub of all attention, without which you can't captain your own destiny and focus becomes haphazard at best. We can tell when Self has been excluded from our focus when we behave one way and feel another. Low self-esteem, low motivation, and depression can be linked to inattentiveness.

Use reflection and visualization—to help you consider—in advance to imminent goals—new procedures that are authentic, efficient, and successful.

Use meditation—to help calm your mind. The effects of meditation carry over into daily affairs, well after the meditation has ended. This will help you to see more sharply, at will.

Let yourself be distracted—distraction is necessary for growth. Try letting other things enter your attentional field. Too tight a focus can be as hazardous as no focus. It's like the mother who is distracted when backing her car out of the driveway by something in the corner of her eye—which turns out to be her child's bicycle. Or the parent racing off to work who gets interrupted his daughter who wants to hug, opening an opportunity for deeper bonding.

Train, train, train—training makes these techniques *virtually automatic*. Just be careful what you train; once stored, your brain will help you do it faster.

One great gift you can give the world in exchange for consciousness is the fully developed voice of your unique awareness—the gift of your Self. PE

Joseph Cardillo is the author of Can I Have Your Attention? Think Fast, Find Your Focus, and Sharpen Your Concentration. He writes a blog on Attention Training for Psychology Today. Visit www.josephcardillo.com.

ACTION: Learn to focus your attention.

Memory and More

Improve your memory in 30 days.



by Barry Eisen

HAVE YOU EVER LOST OR forgot something—a name, a piece of conversation, key moments of childhood, life experiences, images of travels, or a set of keys? And when you stumble across those keys, have you suddenly become clear as to what caused the keys to be where you found them? Or, has your memory been jolted by a smell, a song, or photograph that transports you to a distant past with such clarity that other senses and emotions are triggered?

These memories are forever in your cells. And unless you have some form of brain impairment, your memory can improve as you age if your active mind is stimulated by new ideas, making decisions, and paying attention. Attitude and involvement are key elements. By engaging in word or number games (mental exercises), you stay more alert and energized, slowing down aging.

The chief reasons for poor memory are: 1) you don't pay attention to that name or conversation in the first place; or, 2) you tell yourself so often that you have a poor memory that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Words are powerful, whether positive or negative; they shape behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs.

To improve your memory, practice these four ideas for at least 30 days:

1. When meeting someone, make a conscious effort. Get eye contact as they speak their name and repeat it out loud as you shake their hand. The physical anchor of touch will help to imprint the name. Associate the name with some visual thing about them. For example, my name is Eisen, so you might get a mental picture of my eyes back in my head. The key is to pay attention. People have everything you want: love, respect, opportunities, referrals, information, wisdom. Respect them with your attention. Be present by learning to be quiet and an active, attentive listener.

2. When reflecting on your memory, always be positive. When you do remember something, you may consider it “no big deal,” unworthy of attention or reinforcement. Yet the same thing, if forgotten, looms large in your judgmental inner voice, reinforcing your frailty. When you forget something, view it as a single experience (“I have a great

memory, and I forgot something”), not an impending disaster or state of being (“senility is setting in fast”). Pat yourself on the back when you remember a name, details, or directions. Celebrate: “I do have a great memory.” When you don't remember something, let go of the need for sarcastic remarks, self-deprecating jokes, or anger. You go where you look. If your gaze is on your perceived limitation, you'll lose memory. If you focus on your strength and see the limitation as momentary, you'll enhance memory. *It's not what happens that matters—it's how you view it that empowers you or disenfranchises you from your power.*

3. During the day, play little awareness games. Pay attention to details that catch your eyes and ears and review them to keep them fresh and available. It's not the minutia that may matter. It

is the willed attention that is strengthening the discipline of focus. And, you are creating little victories. Confidence comes from creating victories; the more confident you are, the better you feel about your mastery of your focus and self.

4. When you do focused relaxation and learning sessions, you program your identity. Use the greater suggestibility of your relaxed mind to program a thought such as “I use my photographic memory to retain and recall information instantaneously and accurately at will.” Imagine yourself recalling information and fluidly communicating it to others. During the day, show yourself what you can do. Results develop within four weeks, and they last for the rest of your life. PE

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ACTION: Start improving your memory.

Power of Positivity

Join the positive movement.



by Kim Cameron

POSITIVE THINKING PLAYS a major role in your success, challenging you to think differently. With positive thinking, you can focus on the dynamics that help unlock your strengths and virtues necessary to develop new ideas, flourish, and achieve success.

The positivity movement has begun.

People are naturally drawn to positive energy and heliotropism, turning toward the light. People are smarter when they think positively. The practice of positive thinking focuses on the dynamics that lead to the development of human strength, foster vitality, and cultivate extraordinary performance.

Implementing positive practices helps highlight positive work purpose and fosters the creativity and innovation that are stymied by a negative or problem-focused orientation. A focus on the positive broadens access to valuable resources and information that might otherwise be lost. Positivity transcends disciplines; it applies to all areas of your work and life.

What can you do to foster positive thinking? Whether you need to drive change, develop your management style or oversee others, positive leadership provides you with tools you need to harness the power of the positive.

And while this helps your personal growth, it also results in greater successes for your team or organization.

Here are three examples of positive practices that produce success:

- **Gratitude journals, cards and visits:** This helps you experience feelings of gratitude and thankfulness toward yourself, your work and co-workers.
- **Reflected best-self feedback.** This personal feedback tool provides descriptive stories of your best-self. Such feedback helps you identify incidences when you created extraordinary value, resulting in a best-self portrait and an action plan designed to help you capitalize on your strengths.

- **Setting Everest goals:** These are goals that extend beyond your traditional goal setting practices and lead to extraordinary achievement.

Harnessing the positive helps shift the focus from what is wrong to what is extraordinary, from resolving problems to producing

meaningful results. Problem solving is necessary, of course, but it tends to consume most people. When you express more positive emotions, positive behaviors, and positive attitudes, you draw out the same in your followers. You are perceived as more charismatic and effective when leading positively. The results enable you to innovate and benefit the bottom line.

Positivity gives you more than a new outlook; you gain a new way of thinking that drives desired results. PE

Kim Cameron is a professor at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business. Visit bus.umich.edu/Positive. adapted from Exceed.

ACTION: Experience the benefits of positivity.

Employ Introversion

Thrive in the extroverted world.



by Jennifer B. Kahnweiler

IN TODAY'S EXTROVERTED world, introverts can feel ignored, overlooked, and misunderstood. Most introverts say they'd like to change their tendencies, but don't know where or how to begin.

The good news? Introversion can be managed; with practice, introverts can learn to build on their quiet strength.

Introverts may be less visible, but they outnumber extroverts. Even many executives—40 percent—describe themselves as introverts, including Bill Gates and uber-investor Warren Buffett.

What is introversion, anyway?

Unlike shyness, a product of anxiety or fear in social settings, introversion is a key part of personality—a hardwired orientation—and may be best defined by several characteristic behaviors.

Introverts process information internally, keep personal matters private, and avoid showing emotion.

They seek solitude. Introverts need and want to spend time alone. They often suffer from people exhaustion and must retreat to recharge their batteries. At work, they prefer quiet, private spaces and like to handle projects on their own or with a small group.

They think first, talk later. Even in casual watercooler chats, they consider others' comments carefully and pause and reflect before responding. They dislike interruptions, especially when they are thinking things through.

They focus on depth. Introverts seek depth over breadth. They like to dig deep—delving into issues and ideas before moving on to new ones. They're drawn to meaningful conversations—not chit-chat—and tune in and listen to others.

They let their fingers do the talking. Introverts prefer writing to talking. On the job, they opt for e-mail over phone and stop by only when necessary. Averse to excessive conversation, many gravitate toward social networking Web sites.

They exhibit calmness. Introverts are usually quiet, reserved, and low-key. Unlike extroverts, they have no desire to be the center of attention, preferring to fly below the radar instead. Even in heated conversations or circumstances, they tend to stay calm—at least on the outside—and speak softly and slowly.

The Hard Realities

"It's not easy being green," laments Muppet Kermit the Frog. Same goes for being introverted in an extroverted culture. With their appetite for talk and attention, extroverts dominate, while introverts—with their quiet smarts and unsung successes—sit on the sidelines. They face some hard realities:

People exhaustion. Introverts may experience ailments at work—headaches, backaches, stomachaches—yet feel fine off the job. This mind-body response to stress can result from many factors. The chief culprit: people exhaustion.

Project overload. Introverts tend to have difficulty saying no and find it equally hard to ask for help or direction. As a result, they frequently feel overloaded with projects and dead-



lines—hurting their on-the-job performance and work-life balance.

Underselling. Introverts typically stay mum about their achievements. Yet today careers are made or broken by what others know about your skills and potential. Introverts can miss out on promotions or plum assignments because they don't sell themselves.

Unheard ideas. Introverts often have great ideas that go unheard. In groups, they may show up with smart solutions, yet can't seem to find an opening in which to share them. Even in one-on-one conversations—especially with talkers—they have trouble interjecting their ideas and being heard.

Failure to play the game. Introverts routinely retreat from office politics. Sure, politics can be nasty, but much of the game is natural and necessary, particularly for building relationships up and down an organization. Introverts, with their desire to be low-key, often fail to sniff out important politicking

opportunities and wind up watching their extroverted colleagues get ahead.

Onward—and Upward

You can learn how to manage your introversion and thrive. The goal is not changing your personality or natural style, but embracing and expanding *who you are*. Follow these four Ps:

1. Preparation: Have a game plan. Rather than wing it on the people part of your job, have a game plan. Prepare for high-stakes meetings and conversations—anticipating questions and rehearsing your responses. Fact is, just as you strategize for key projects and tasks, you need to plan ahead for connecting with people—and taking regular timeouts to refuel your energy.

2. Presence: Communicate early and often. To avoid being out of sight and out of mind, take the initiative in sharing information—communicating early and often with higher-ups, team members, and project stakeholders. Don't wait to be asked for updates or news. Learn what people need to feel confident in you and provide it to them.

Match the medium to the message. Determine if texting, e-mail, phone, or face-to-face is best. Texting and e-mail may be great for quick exchanges, but they miss the mark in high-touch areas.

3. Push: Stretch and grow. Use social networking to set the stage. Technology is a great tool for preparing to meet people. Use social networking Web sites to introduce yourself, send *news you can use* items, and warm up cold leads.

Get your voice in the room. Without delay, speak up in meetings and conference calls. Even a quick question, remark, or paraphrase will do. You need to be seen as a contributor; the longer you wait, the harder it becomes.

Stand up to "talkers" in group or one-on-one settings. One way to get a word in edgewise is to hold up your hand, give the stop or timeout signal, and say, "I'd like to say something."

Value humor. You can overcome perceptions of being standoffish or too serious by smiling, laughing, and having fun now and then—being *good-humored*.

4. Practice: Rehearse and refine new skills. Learning new skills and behaviors may be uncomfortable at first, but with conscious repetition and refinement, you can manage your introversion—and thrive in the extroverted world. PE

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ACTION: Learn how to manage your introversion.

Learning Mastery

Work on it in stages.



by Jack Regan

THE SUSTAINING COMPETENCE of effective people is being masterful.

You become competent in four stages:

1. Unconscious incompetence. You begin in the state of “blissful ignorance.” You don’t know what you don’t know. This is an advantage in learning. If you knew all that you needed to learn or develop at the outset with a skill such as giving feedback or sharing an inspiring vision, you might not want to set out on the path. You might also be more hesitant or cautious if you knew what you might encounter ahead. In this stage, you don’t know what it takes, nor are you cognizant of how terrible you might be at it. This engages your sense of wonder and possibility.

2. Conscious incompetence. In this stage, you’ve tried something or practiced it. Maybe it’s a tennis swing, a new meal, or a leadership skill such as coaching performance or delegating responsibilities. As you test some new approach or some new knowledge or behavior, you quickly become aware that you are not very good at it. At this stage, be kind to yourself; admit you are learning. By making mistakes, being aware of how you made them and learning how to correct them, you grow.

3. Conscious competence. Here you see that maybe you aren’t half-bad at this skill or task. Maybe you do know a thing or two and are getting better. The ball is going over the net. The dinner tastes good. Your team is responding to the direction you set. You begin to see that this might work. You might; in fact, you are, getting better at this.

4. Unconscious competence. In this stage, you have ability or competence, but you don’t have to think about it to do it. You just do it because you know how to do it—without conscious thought. True skill is about taking action without the need to be aware of each element. It is a state of grace where those who are competent make it look easy.

The Mastery Process

Mastery involves reaching successive, advanced levels of competence.

The stage of *Unconscious Competence* may seem like the ultimate goal, but really it just brings you to a new level

of development. Once you reach the mastery stage, you may need to teach others how you do it! Remaining completely *Unconsciously Competent* would prevent you from teaching. Think of someone you know who knows what they know, but can’t convey it to you.

To teach or to lead, you must have access to what you know and *describe* or *demonstrate* it to others so they can develop it.

So, Mastery first requires returning to the *Consciously Competent* state. Once you are skilled at something and you are called to teach it to others, you go through the same stages for the skill and competency of teaching. You begin again by being *Unconsciously Competent*—not exactly knowing what you’re doing but looking for it; move to being *Consciously Incompetent*—you are aware that although you know the skill, you

need to learn a lot about teaching and developing others; to *Conscious Competence*—you are not too bad at this and see what things work; to *Unconscious Competence*—you can teach without having to be aware of every step, thought or movement in order to be effective.

You follow the same process, only at a higher level of skill. Only again to reach yet another curve in the stages—teaching the teachers! Same stages, different level of requirement and perspective.

A mastery process is a lifelong. Everything you become capable of only serves to bring you to the next level—if you are open to it. Passing through successive stages builds mastery—the ability to create the results you seek. **PE**

Jack Regan is Principal of Metis Consulting Group, Inc., a management consulting and training firm.

ACTION: Progress towards mastery.

Personal Brand

You can stay on top at work.



by Brenda Bence

DAILY, YOU RISK DAMAGING your personal brand—even if you don’t think you

have one. Your personal brand is the way people perceive, think, and feel about you in relation to others. Since people you live and work with already have perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about you, you already have a brand.

Do you have the personal brand you want? Is it bringing you greater success, or holding you back? To build your brand, take these steps:

1. Get clear about what your current brand stands for now. Discover how people perceive, think, and feel about you presently. Ask colleagues for five words they’d use to describe you. Are you

described the way you want to be? If not, your brand needs adjustment.

2. Determine where you need to make changes. Know what you need to change to create the brand you want.

3. Define clearly what you want your brand to be. Consider: How do you want to be known? What are your strengths? How can you best fill the needs of your brand’s target audience—your family, boss, colleagues, or customers?

4. Learn how to communicate your brand effectively. No one’s perceptions, thoughts, or feelings about you will change unless and until you communi-

cate the brand you want. Five activities best communicate what you stand for: your actions, reactions, look, sound, and thoughts. Be consistent with these activities—in what you say, do, and think. Do you act like someone with your desired personal brand would act? Do you stop yourself before reacting negatively to situations? Do you look and sound like someone with your desired personal brand? And do you think like someone with your desired personal brand? Thoughts affect your feelings and how others perceive, think, and feel about you.

5. Avoid damaging your personal brand. One way to keep it intact is to watch others, learn from their mistakes, and avoid doing those things.

6. Be aware of your mistakes, and fix them quickly! If you commit a blooper, do whatever is necessary to fix it. Apologize for it, take responsibility for your errors, and correct them.

7. Avoid making the same mistakes again. When your brand has taken a beating, ask yourself: What did I learn? Write down the lessons, and commit to never make that mistake again.

8. Keep a good sense of humor! If you make a branding mistake, laugh at yourself. Everyone likes you when you don’t take yourself too seriously.

Your personal brand either works for or against you every day. So, create the brand you want today to move forward in your life and career. **PE**

Brenda Bence, branding expert and executive coach, is the author of *How YOU Are Like Shampoo*. Visit: www.BrendaBence.com.

ACTION: Build your personal brand.



Stop Complaining

Be guided by your inner wizard.



by Valery Satterwhite

I WAS SITTING AT A LOCAL Starbucks snuggled up in a comfy chair with a good book and a hot latte when I heard a woman exclaim, “Traffic was a bear getting here! Drivers today are morons, and you’d think they would put a traffic light at the entrance to this place!”

Three complaints within 30 seconds. And she hadn’t even ordered coffee.

I saw this woman drive up and park her car. Her brake light wasn’t working, and she had stuff cluttering the top of her car dashboard. Her quick pace as she nearly ran into Starbucks, indicated that she was running late. As she ordered her mocha whipped whatever, she gave specific instructions to the person behind the counter to make sure they didn’t “screw up” her order. As she settled in to meet with her friend, she rolled her eyes as if to say the entire world was filled with buffoons, and she the only sane person on the planet.

I mused, “This is going to be an interesting conversation.”

Yes, I admit that I did eavesdrop. I find it fascinating to listen to how people think. I don’t care so much about the topic; I listen for generalizations, belief systems, and thought patterns. I then listen as the other person in the conversation often adds their meanings, based on their own belief system, to what was said and the conversation builds from there. Quickly, if not at the onset, the conversation has nothing to do with *what is*—it is centered in the distortions of *what’s perceived*.

And much complaining is involved. Why do people complain and complain? What do they get out of it?

Women are more likely than men to use complaints as an indirect request for action, while men are more likely to use complaints to excuse behavior or to make themselves seem superior.

Complaining can curtail your health, productivity, finances, and life. It is far more than mere observation—it is a creative act of reinforcing what you don’t want and, thereby, creating even more of it. It’s the act of dwelling on, staying stuck in, the negative.

When you complain, your *Inner Critic*, that voice of self-doubt and fear,

is hard at work to keep you safe in your comfort zone. Complaining may become a daily habit. You may not even realize how much you complain! Your habits become so routine that you don’t even notice your own patterns.

The more you complain, the better you feel about yourself. It is the Inner Critic’s way of showing how messed up the rest of the world is and, by comparison, you’re not that messed up. Or whatever is lacking in your experience is not your fault—it is the fault of those morons, idiots, and incompetents!

“Any fool can criticize, condemn and complain; and most fools do,” said Benjamin Franklin. So many people complain that it is often a common ground from which to start a conversa-



tion. And this is what I observed that morning at Starbucks. And again with a client on the phone that afternoon. And at dinner with friends. And while watching television. The news and sitcoms were ripe with people complaining about this, that, or the other thing.

Complaining has become the latest *feel good pill*. People gripe and moan about things that are *seemingly* out of their control so they can excuse what’s not working in their lives. The trouble is, the more you complain, the more experiences you have of “not working for me.” When you complain, you may feel superior, but you don’t feel good. When you complain, you might get someone to do something but the satisfaction lasts for only a fleeting moment so you find another thing to complain about because you are unsatisfied with your life. It’s a *dangerous*, vicious cycle.

Complaining traps you in negativity. The negativity is your comfort zone. It’s what you know. You don’t even know what it’s like to go through life,

let alone a day, without complaining. When you complain, you keep yourself stuck where you are in the complaint zone, constantly on the lookout for more things to be or go wrong. It’s what you expect, and so that’s what you get. You always get what you expect at your deepest level. When you complain, you are focused on what you do not want—and you get what you give your energy, attention and focus to. Complaining, therefore, robs you of the chance to live an exceptional life. Complaining spreads negative energy, and negative energy can’t create a positive outcome.

To reverse the complaining cycle, you must deliberately and mindfully notice your words, the daily conversations you have, and the conversations you are exposed to. For the next 24 hours, notice when you voice a complaint and write it down. You’ll be surprised how many times you complain in one day! Look at your complaints. Without judging yourself, ask: What was the underlying benefit you hoped to achieve with the complaint? Were you making an excuse so you wouldn’t be blamed for something or wouldn’t have to do something? Were you aggravated and wanted to make yourself feel better by letting off some steam?

Ask yourself what you really wanted when you complained? It usually boils down to wanting to feel better about yourself, your experience and circumstance. Complaining won’t get you there. Deliberately finding something good about yourself, your experience, and your circumstance will get you to that place of feeling better.

For example, if someone messes up your order, remind yourself that this person didn’t awake with that intent. It wasn’t deliberate. People do the best they can. And while you’re at it, lighten up on yourself as well. You didn’t get out of bed this morning with the intention of having a miserable day. You’re doing the best you can too.

“You can complain because roses have thorns, or you can rejoice because thorns have roses,” said Ziggy. Within you lies all the knowledge about who you are, including your challenges and desires. So, reconnect with the incredible power already within you. Recognize it, use it, and rely upon this resource that is your birthright.

I guarantee no wrong turns will be made on your life’s journey when you are guided by your Inner Wizard. PE

Valery Satterwhite is a Superstar Mindset Mentor and Coach helping people get out of their own way to success. Empower Your Inner Wizard at www.InnerWizard.com.

ACTION: *Curtail your complaining.*

Protect Your Assets

Learn from Michael Jackson.



by Hillel L. Presser

BEFORE THEY EVEN DECIDED where to bury Michael Jackson, the vultures started swarming to pick apart his estate. It's a mess. It has been reported Jackson's estate is bankrupt with many millions more owed to creditors than it has in assets. Even if it is solvent, it likely won't be once the lawyers scavage it.

Creating a tidy, tax-efficient, orderly estate that will attract little or no litigation is not easy, especially when you're a superstar with a flamboyant lifestyle, advisors by the dozen, a feuding family, dangling deals, and nobody who seems to know what's really going on.

So how could Jackson have intelligently set up his estate? Here are five lessons his passing has for the rest us:

1. Keep your will updated. Jackson's will is nine years old and likely doesn't fully or accurately represent his wishes at the time of his death. Michael could have specified where he wanted to be buried and that would have resolved the family feud. Ditto for naming a guardian for his children. Life is fluid. A will more than a year or two years old is probably near worthless considering how your financial affairs and relationships change so rapidly. And an old will may be more harmful to you than no will. How current is your estate plan?

2. Protect your estate. Jackson wanted financial privacy, and protection for his estate against creditor claims. He could have achieved both with an Offshore Integrated Asset Protection Trust (IAPT). These trusts are virtually creditor and litigant-proof and provide more privacy than living trusts that offer scant secrecy and no protection against litigation. It would have been easy to shelter Jackson's estate. The right combination of limited partnerships, IAPT's, LLC's and domestic trusts could have safeguarded much of what he owned during his life and after his death. Any wealthy American can greatly benefit from this defensive planning. How safe are your assets and your estate from your creditors? Your beneficiaries, creditors and ex-spouses?

3. Legally pay less to the tax-man. Had Michael died in 2010, his estate would have paid zero estate taxes. But since he died in 2009, only the first \$3.5

million is tax-exempt. If Jackson's estate (after debts and expenses) exceeds \$3.5 million, nearly one half the excess will go to Uncle Sam. There are many legitimate ways to decrease estate taxes, but it takes planning. It would be a shame for Jackson to lose so much of what he earned to the tax man. How much of your estate will go to Uncle Sam?

4. Buy life insurance. What if Jackson's estate is bankrupt? How then has he provided for the future support of his minor children? It would be comforting to know that his children were beneficiaries of a reasonable life insurance policy titled to an irrevocable life insurance trust that would be estate tax-free and immune from creditor claims. Such planning is the least one would expect from Jackson and his advisors. They can't assume someone will be there to

care for the children, or that there'll be enough assets to provide for them. As the Jackson children may discover, both may be faulty assumptions. Provide for your family in the event of your demise.

5. Plan your estate before it's too late. You never know when you will die. So you can't procrastinate. In that respect, perhaps Jackson is not that different from most of us. After all, 8 of 10 adult Americans do not even have a simple will. That's the tragedy Jackson likely gave more thought to his next gig than about who, when he died, should inherit what, when, how, and why. Death is life's final gig. So think about your final curtain call. You don't get an encore! **PE**

Hillel L. Presser, founding member of Presser & Goldstein, is co-author of *Financial Self Defense* (Garrett Press). www.assetprotectionattorneys.com.

ACTION: Protect your assets.

FINANCIAL • DIRECTION

New Direction

Follow these 10 tips.



by Laura Berman Fortgang

IF YOU NEED A NEW DIRECTION, follow these 10 tips:

1. List things you can't stand about work/life. You may complain that you don't know what you want. So, list all you do not want or like about your situation, and you'll find on the flip side, something you want!

2. Recognize that change (good or bad) means loss. The evil you know is less scary than the evil you do not know. It is normal to fear change because of what you might lose. Accept the perceived loss of status, money or identity; believe that more happiness awaits you.

3. Reframe 'I can't!' to 'I can!' Look for examples of people who have done things against the odds, and use those examples as symbols of what is possible for you. Change your vocabulary, and watch your results change.

4. Know how the past got you stuck today. You may have made vows as a child that get you stuck as an adult. "I'll never be like my parents!" "I won't be poor!" "I'll show them!" Identify your old motivations and decide if they still serve you; if not, change them, fast!

5. Realize that discovering your purpose does not have to be hard or grand. You don't need to be Mother

Teresa. Who you are everyday, what you do naturally, how you affect others positively, what you contribute that is uniquely you is your purpose. Make it central to what you do next.

6. Have a criteria for happiness. Write what you truly need (emotionally, not financially) and value. Do you need stability, honesty, recognition, spirituality, adventure, education? When you are purposeful about having these things, new directions become clear.

7. Research all that interests you. List all fields, jobs, careers, or areas of interest. Search the Internet and talk to people. One area may get traction and feel like the front-runner.

8. Tell the truth about your money life. Money often stops people from pursuing what they want. Don't let it stop you. Know what you have, and moonlight, borrow, or barter to move forward.

9. Put yourself in opportunity's way. Push the envelope. Take risks, get out of your comfort zone. See opportunity where it is—everywhere. Ask for favors; put yourself on the line.

10. Create a plan and get support. Make a timeline (one year) for your transition. Make a monthly plan and get cheerleaders around you. Hire a coach or get like-minded folks around you to move in a new direction.

Unbearable situations seem more bearable when you know you are on your way out. Hang in there! **PE**

Laura Berman Fortgang, author of *Now What?*, is a life coach, speaker, president of InterCoach. Visit www.laurabermanfortgang.com.

ACTION: Move forward in a new direction.

Starting Fires

Change response to mistakes.



by Ralph Heath

ON A COLD SPRING DAY IN 1957, my best friend, Edgar Hoffman, and I were playing with matches in a ranch home being constructed in our Milwaukee neighborhood. Because it was a Saturday, the work crew was not on the site, leaving Edgar and me free to roam about the new home construction.

Edgar and I had each constructed our own private “fort” within the structure. Edgar had just declared he had a warm fire roaring inside his fort. He was exaggerating, but I took that as a challenge. I was freezing, and I was always competitive; so that morning, in the fort, I set out to build a bigger fire than Edgar’s. Our forts were made of straw so it didn’t take long for me to set off a major house fire.

Fire trucks are terrifying when you’re a little boy—and you know you are responsible for burning down someone’s new home.

I was told to go to my room and await my punishment. It was not the time to ask if I could help the firemen put out the fire. And I can remember waiting in my room, certain it would be several years before I would be allowed to see the sun again, or worse, I would be carted away to juvenile detention.

I never learned who called the fire department, but I know it was my dad who called the police after the fire was out. He told them that his son was responsible for starting the fire. He confessed to me, years later, that it was one of the hardest things he ever did. I confessed that I had always admired him for doing it because it was so honest, and my dad was all about honesty.

Four years later, when Dad took us to the outdoor drive-in movie theater, the ticket taker asked the ages of everyone in the car. My dad offered up that Edgar had just turned 12 yesterday and was not eligible for free admission. He bought the extra ticket. At the time, I cringed thinking, *what a waste of money*, but years later I realized that my dad was setting the example of honesty, an example that I have followed, and will follow, the rest of my life.

The Failure Factor: Be honest. The brave person owns his mistakes and the lessons learned as a result. I learn-

ed multiple lessons the day of the fire. When you make a mistake, it is best to simply tell the truth and take your lumps. It wasn’t a malicious fire. I was trying to stay warm and was merely a dumb, little kid trying to stay competitive with my best friend (who was two years older and wiser than I was).

After being sent to my room that night of the fire, I did, in fact, see the sun again. My dad knew that I was horrified by what I had done and did not need to dole out extra punishment. In his wisdom, he played off of my remorse and told me he was disappointed and knew that I could perform at a higher level the next time.

That is what you must do. People are most often always trying their best to please you. Sometimes, in your frustration with a person, you forget that most important dynamic. They already feel horrible when they make a mistake and, most often, the best thing to do is to encourage them to reach a higher standard the next time they are



given an opportunity to perform.

The great thing about making a mistake is that the bar is now moved down, and you get a chance to rush in and correct the problem and suggest a positive solution. It is a chance to demonstrate that you listen, that you understand what you did wrong, and that you can solve the problem when given a second chance. Plus, everyone enjoys an underdog story when you can come from the depths of mistakes and failures to achieve success.

Ironically, I made the connection, years later, that starting little fires is what leaders do most often. When I started that fire at six years old, I was merely warming up for my ultimate job as a leader. A leader’s mission is to look for opportunities to grow and motivate people to raise the bar to new heights. You can’t do much by yourself. You need smart, talented, and highly motivated people who will see the little fire you lit and lead the charge to pursue even higher highs.

And after you’ve provided the spark, small flame, or flame-throwing mechanism on each issue, you get to move on, light more fires, and thus spread the gospel of *trial by fire* and the lessons it teaches us.

I’m grateful my dad set the right tone in allowing me to recover from failure.

Change your response to failure: Celebrate the lesson. When faced with a failure, find something positive to acknowledge and celebrate. Refuse to let the negative side of failure rule you or your team. Move on quickly, applying the lesson you learned.

If you want people to push the envelope, take risks, and go above and beyond, you must cushion the fall when a failure happens. And failures will happen. “Success is not the result of spontaneous combustion—you must start yourself on fire,” said Fred Shero, National Hockey League coach.

Failure and high performance go hand-in-hand. Individuals and teams with the highest performance have the lowest fear of failure—and a high failure rate because they’re comfortable with failure as a vehicle for growth. Rather than be embarrassed by failure, they wear it as a *badge of honor*. They’re always experimenting, trying to find the next great idea that will take them out of their comfort zones to reach new heights.

You cannot go far with a small idea. There is a temptation to propose the safe concept based on fear that management will not approve a risky or edgy approach, as they fear change and losing their jobs. However, risky and edgy creative approaches are the ones that cut through the clutter and get results. Sometimes big ideas cause big change. Change that disturbs the safe status quo and forces a journey into the unknown. It is a challenge to train people to embrace change, take risks, think big, and work outside their comfort zones.

New ideas require a change in thinking. Why are people so eager to cling to the past and so quick to kill new ideas? Accepting a new idea requires a “change” in thinking. When a person has been doing something a certain way for so long and someone else tries to enter their world that they control and suggests something that is counter to their established thinking, something they perceive as a threat, their first reaction is to attack the idea. PE

Ralph Heath is author of *Celebrating Failure: The Power of Taking Risks, Making Mistakes and Thinking Big*, www.CelebratingFailure.com. Ralph writes a blog called *Thoughtful Leadership and Marketing*, www.RalphHeath.com.

ACTION: Choose your response to failure.

Power of Focus

It's your ultimate advantage.



by Gregg Thompson and Bruna Martinuzzi

IF EVERYTHING IS IMPORTANT, NOTHING IS important. What are the two or three things that are most important to you? What are your passions? What legacy do you wish to leave? Do these things get the best of your energy, time, and attention? If not, you are on the road to mediocrity. Single-purpose focus is the source of formidable power.

Bill Gates said that part of his success is due to focusing in on a few things. Eric Schmidt of Google said: "I keep things focused on what we do best. *The successful man is the average man, focused.*

To achieve the power of focus, you need to first have clarity about what truly matters to you. Shed beliefs, practices, habits, possessions and burdens that no longer serve you. Imagine the sense of renewal and freedom of focus that you would have if you periodically performed this mental housekeeping and ruthlessly budgeted your attention to allocate it on only what matters.

You need to be ruthless about what you decide to concentrate on, setting aside anything that does not contribute to the achievement of your goals. This is leadership on steroids: Having clarity about what is crucial and then deciding to be intentional on what you choose to notice, developing a specialized mental vision which will allow you to emotionally and intellectually see just what you need to see in order to achieve your purpose. You develop an ability to focus on only what will help you to go the distance. This means not wasting energy rehearsing the past and staying in the present and future. Marie Curie stated: "I never see what has been done—only what remains to be done."

You gain power by what you focus on; you dissipate your power by not being aware of your habits. What habits form you? Are any of these diluting your power to achieve your goals? What would change in your life if you started each day by addressing two questions: What are the most important things I need to focus all of my attention on today to be successful? What can I do today to bring me closer to getting the results I want in these impor-

tant areas? Imagine yourself zooming in on those areas and directing your focus toward getting the results you want. What might you accomplish at the end of one year with this strategy?

If you have a habit of being detail-oriented, you may focus on data at the expense of the wider, long-range ramifications. That automatic focus of attention may prevent you from seeing all the possibilities in front of you and therefore, erode your power.

Take charge of your focus and resolve to develop your time leadership competence by being aware of your habitual inclinations—including intrusive, unwanted thoughts. You always have total control over your thoughts; your

thoughts drive your emotions and your emotions can divert your focus and dictate your actions. So, be alert for intrusive thoughts that divert your focus. Purge these from your mind and direct your attention towards a central point of focus—concentrating on what makes a difference. What you focus on grows.

What do you want to grow? What are three areas that, if you brought into focus, would make a big difference in your power to lead? What relationships do you need to bring into focus? **PE**

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ACTION: Focus more on service to others.

SERVICE • STYLE

Service Style

Is it still too rigid?



by Laura Lopez

IGREW UP DURING A TIME when dads were not expected to be involved with their families. The message for them was to sacrifice everything related to home and to be sole providers for their families. Moms were moms, and dads weren't really allowed to be dads.

Fortunately, times have changed. We are all trying to find the center in our lives. Women are trying to *break in* to higher levels, and men are trying to *break out*. We all want fuller lives. But we often come up against old thinking as rigid roles of the past pop up in our heads. Men who stop working at 4 p.m. to rush home to coach their kid's baseball team have to confront this judgment. As do fathers who become stay-at-home dads. Worse, what about the guy that wants to reinvent himself and step away from a high-paying, high-stress job to pursue a *less practical* passion?

I redefine *leadership* so that collectively, men and women can thrive. It is not about *achieving balance*, but finding what works for us. My leadership insights draw on the heart-driven aspects of parenting, and I apply them back to business. However, I find men also connect to my insights. Men are seeking *permission* to shed the corporate armor *and* to be more human at work and at home. Women are looking for *validation* that they can keep being themselves without the armor and still



be successful in business. In truth, we are all tired of the old ways. There is too much expectation for men to be "tough" resulting in them becoming emotionally removed and unavailable.

Service leadership requires emotional presence. Men have to shed the armor to be connected to those around them. Ironically, when they do, they become even more effective and influential.

Here are four things to practice:

1. Believe and let go. Control is not leadership. *Believing in others and guiding them to excellence*, is. When you control, you can't connect. When you let go, you become the leader. Start by believing in that leader within you and let go. When you start to believe and

let go, you give yourself this permission lead and help others do the same.

2. Be receptive and yield.

The word *receptivity* is often associated with women.

Women receive, men give. To lead, we must first receive.

To receive is to be in a position of guidance. You can

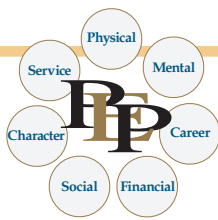
only guide others when you are open to receive them and their ideas. When men start to receive, they become more available and connected. This fosters a position of strength that enables growth.

3. Be vulnerable and give of yourself. Strength comes from stretching yourself to be more comfortable with vulnerability. That stretch develops resiliency. The best leaders are vulnerable enough to know that they can be up today but down tomorrow.

When I ask people about the leaders who influenced them the most, 90 percent say it was a parent. **PE**

Laura Lopez is a sought-after keynote speaker, award-winning author of *The Connected and Committed Leader*, and life coach. www.laura-lopez.com.

ACTION: Cultivate a service leadership style.



GOAL GETTERS



The U.S. Marine Corps believes strongly in *The Rule of Three*: "The rule dictates that a person should limit his or her attention to three tasks or goals. It prescribes boiling a world of infinite possibilities down to three alternative courses of action. Anything more and a Marine can become overextended, confused, and ineffective." They find that implementing this rule saves lives, gets more done faster and more efficiently

I believe that three is a powerful number. The most powerful physical structure is a triangle or pyramid. In fact, it's the building block of Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes and Great Pyramids of Egypt. For Christians—it's the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And then, of course, we have Mind, Body, Spirit. Three is a powerful number metaphysically—a number of completion.

In trying to focus on the things that are truly important to you—things that will make a difference in the quality of your life—three things can easily be remembered. Any more and retention suffers.

You can sharpen your focus and get better results by using the Rule of Three in your daily life.

- List the three most important **values** in your life. Your decisions become easier when your values are clear.
- What are your three primary **missions**? These are different than goals. Goals can be measured and completed. A mission is your vision of something you may never finish in your lifetime.
- List your three most important **goals**. Which one is worthy of your best attention and efforts? Remember, you can have anything you want in your life. You just can't have everything you want.
- What **three things would you like to master**? Three things at which you want to become an expert. Maybe it's speaking in public. Or learning another language. Or maybe you want to become a masterful parent. It's your life and you get to decide.

By making good use of the Rule

of Three, you'll sharpen your focus, increase your effectiveness, and experience greater fulfillment in all that you do.

—Michael E. Angier, *SuccessNet.org*



If I say that *good events, innovations, and successful results continue to happen, even in challenging times*, you may say that I'm guilty of not facing **reality**.

I believe in *The Self-fulfilling Prophecy*. Believing something can, in and of itself, cause it to happen—not in any mystical or magical way, but by causing you to take actions that will make your prediction come true. By predicting times will be worse, you make it happen.

In the past year, we've all heard many stories about individuals and organizations experiencing difficult economic times—little reporting of people who are doing well. Hey, I know the future is what the stock markets are about, but where is the balance when it comes to good results and solidarity in the face of these economic challenges. Doesn't this say something about the future as well? When did earning millions or billions of dollars become a cause for depression and hand wringing? I am tired of it.

I don't expect Pollyanna reporting, but I also don't appreciate the opposite. It offends me. First it goes against my desire to be a positive person making positive contributions and second, it creates a self-fulfilling situation, making things worse that they are already.

So, focus on what you can do about it. First, you don't need to feed the negative fires or wallow or delight in negative news. You can spread real positive results that you are involved in or hear about, and thus create your own Positive Reality. Become a better example of the positive side of the self-fulfilling prophecy. And, to the extent you can, hang with people with positive outlooks. Their positive energies will help lift up your mood, your outlook on the future, and provide you with solutions.

—Al Lucia, *Eight Pillars of Greek Wisdom*

Personal COACH



Proper Goals

It beats propaganda.
by John Clements

THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO RECALL AN OLD proverb: *Where there's a will, there's a way.* "Oh, not another slogan!" you protest. But this profound piece of wisdom is no cliché.

Consider how many times a day your mind gets sloganized. The cosh of cliché hits you from all sides: from the media, business, politics—even church placards and notice boards. And however clever the slogans are, however successfully they pass themselves off as distillations of wisdom, most of them are prefabricated packages of hollow trinkets.

That's why it's so important to distinguish between mere verbiage and genuinely wise words. What, for instance, is the difference in value between these two sentences: *Where there's a will, there's a way*; and *Eat your carrots; they'll help you see in the dark*. The first is a proverb based on a profound, universally applicable truth; whereas the second is a piece of parental propaganda that is no more applicable now than it was 60 years ago.

Propaganda? Yes, it all goes back to the Second World War when Britain developed operationally-useful radar, giving it an enormous military advantage: suddenly the Allies could carry out night-raids. The Germans became desperate to discover the secret of the RAF's success. So the RAF told them: not the truth, of course, but a clever lie leaked out in code form. The British government (so the propaganda pretended) had discovered that a chemical in carrots improved the ability to see in the dark. The War Office reportedly set up a massive carrot-eating campaign to let the whole population benefit—including, of course, the British night-fliers.

The unspoken implication was that carrots alone were giving British airmen the edge. The Germans fell for this at first; and when, months later, they found out the truth about radar, Britain had gained the air superiority that contributed to the Allies' victory.

And here we all are now in the brave new world, with more processing power than we ever thought possible or necessary. Yet we still we fall for the slogans, the jingles, the injunctions, the spin-doctored socio-political junk that assaults our eyes and ears. Why? Because we haven't cultivated the skill of detecting lies before they do their damage!

Set proper goals and pursue them. It beats the propaganda that promises quick fix, instant gratification, and fast results. **PE**

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ACTION: Set proper goals and pursue them.

Set Clear Expectations

Take accountability for results.



by Roger
Connors and
Tom Smith

EVERYONE IS WORRIED ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY today, and rightly so—no attribute contributes more to success than positive, principled accountability.

To us, accountability is like a coin with two sides. One side represents taking personal accountability for what you've done and what you are about to do. The flipside represents holding other people accountable to deliver on expectations you have of them. When you embrace both sides of the coin and create a *Culture of Accountability*, you experience dramatically improved results.

We marvel at how people who once felt powerless rise above their circumstances by acknowledging the reality of their situation, taking ownership for how they got there, asking what they can do to get results, and accomplishing what they say they will.

Yet, we also see people struggling with accountability. Everyone connected with the impact of any meltdown asks the question, "How did that happen?" Many people are still so overwhelmed with the current financial crisis that they refuse to acknowledge the lax practices and lack of accountability that led to it.

Acknowledging reality is the first step toward embracing true accountability—but this lesson is not an easy one to learn, especially if you feel victimized by the acts of others who are outside of your control. *True accountability* is not about punishing or taking revenge against those who failed to meet your expectations. It is about acknowledging the role you play, the contribution you make. Creating such a mindset creates an accountability culture.

You know that it is one thing to take personal accountability, another to hold the people you depend on accountable in a way that delivers results and leaves them feeling good about it. As you experience holding other people accountable, you form a unique connection with each person that is either positive or negative. Each interaction contributes to this connection and either strengthens or weakens your ability to hold others accountable and get things done.

This connection is greatly influenced by your *Accountability Style*—how you

approach holding other people accountable. Do you tend to *Coerce and Compel* or *Wait and See*. Improving your ability to hold others accountable depends on understanding your style and how it affects your relationships with others.

Outer and Inner Rings

Daily we see examples of how people are affected because someone failed to hold another person accountable for meeting expectations. We can explain what happened by looking at the situation through the Outer Rings and Inner Rings of the Accountability Sequence.

The Outer Ring deals with *four steps* to establishing expectations—forming, communicating, aligning, and inspecting—activities that both set up and sustain your accountability relationships

with others and lay the foundation for effectively holding them accountable in a positive, principled way. When you set expectations, fewer things go wrong.

When you do have unmet expectations, you must move to the *Inner Ring*, comprised of the four main causes of missed delivery: poor motivation, inadequate training, little personal accountability, and an ineffective culture.

People can only be held accountable for the expectations you have of them.

Managing expectations becomes the act of holding others accountable. Performing this act in a positive, principled way will deliver results and raise morale. PE

Roger Connors and Tom Smith are coauthors of The Oz Principle, Journey to the Emerald City and How Did That Happen?(Portfolio). Visit www.howdidthat happen.com.

ACTION: Set clear expectations.

INSPIRATIONAL • REFLECTION

Self-Reflection

Mirror, mirror on the wall.



by Rabbi Pinchas Taylor

ALMOST AS LONG AS THERE have been people, there have been mirrors. Why is that? Are we so self-absorbed, curious, or dazzled by our own reflection that we can't resist checking ourselves out?

More than a *physical image* is reflected in a mirror. There is a whole person, inside and out, being displayed. One confidence booster is to stare at your image and tell yourself positive things!

Your identity is formed like a mirror reflection—you formulate your self-worth by interpreting others' reactions to you.

Primitive mirrors were made by simply polishing slates of metal, usually bronze, silver, or gold, until they were shiny enough to make a reflection. Today, mirrors are made by allowing liquid metals to condense on a sheet of glass. Each step is necessary to produce the clearest reflection.

There are three steps in modern mirror making: 1. *Dissolving* silver nitrate or aluminum in water, adding ammonia until the mixture undergoes chemical reaction. 2. *Filtering* and boiling a second mixture of water and Rochelle salts; 3. *Pouring* both these mixtures evenly onto a heated piece of glass and leaving it to cool. When you apply the steps, you see a clear self-reflection.

There is a vivid parallel in an honest self-reflection and self-assessment.

1. Dissolving. The first step toward healthy self-esteem is dissolving and deflating the ego. *Self-esteem* means knowing the intrinsic value of yourself—knowing and valuing what makes you, you. A person with healthy self-esteem will still value himself despite faults. *Ego* conceals real value. Its false calculation of greatness veils accurate judgment, leaving no room for you to see your shortcomings. *Humility* is the aspect of dissolving the ego. It means you recognize your importance, but realize your deficiency in achieving your potential. Humility says, I'm doing well, but there's room for growth.

2. Filtering. Filtering separates the useful from the inutile: You single out your talents and zero-in on areas that need work. Gifts can then be used as

tools to overcome the other traits. Filtering reinforces strengths, yet keeps you humble, as you are constantly mindful of imperfections.

3. Pouring. You can now pour yourself into the world. You maintain warmth and healthy self-confidence through positive interaction with others. Also, pouring out your thoughts to others will help you hold your present healthy state. Pouring out your assets, both material and spiritual, will ensure an ongoing fire of excitement and growth in the direction you pursue.

Every glance in a mirror can remind you to connect with the principles, form a more positive reflection, and exude that being to the outside. Each look in the mirror gives you a chance for self-evaluation and improvement. PE

Rabbi Pinchas Taylor is a public lecturer and counselor. Email pinchastaylor770@gmail.com.

ACTION: Form a more positive reflection.



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