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August 2009

# Personal Excellence

The Magazine of Life Leadership

INSPIRATIONAL • EXCELLENCE

## Personal Excellence

Whatever you do, do it well.

by Kevin Hogan

**N**O MATTER WHAT YOU DO IN LIFE, DOING IT well is the great reward. Whether this applies to your work, health, relationships, or goals, committing to personal excellence in whatever you do lays the foundation to a life of fulfillment, success and passion.

The results you experience tend to be in proportion with the quality and intensity of your effort. If you don't go for excellence, you experience minimal results. If you give your absolute best, you increase the chances of getting *results* (even if they aren't what you initially intend). Sometimes the results are better than you expect.

### Law of Diminishing Return

We need to be clear about the *Law of Diminishing Returns*. You can cut your half-acre lawn in 90 minutes and get 99 percent of the grass cut. Or you can cut your half-acre lawn in three hours and get 100 percent of the grass cut and miss nothing. Me, I'll take the 99 percent in most things in life. I work hard for the 99 percent.

Few things require perfection, but most things require *being awesome*—and *awesome* is not *perfection*. People who require perfection of themselves or others are likely to *fail* in most of their ventures. *Perfection* becomes *procrastination* in many cases—an excuse for nonaccomplishment or a factor in delay. In most fields, perfectionists are mediocre performers. Sound like a paradox? It's not.

### Don't Confuse Perfection with Excellence

I don't need my airline pilot to land perfectly—just perfectly safe! When you are a

leader, you can't be *perfect* because no rule book tells you what *perfect* is. Does *perfect* mean everyone gets promoted or that everyone likes you. No, that won't happen, but you must be awesome.

You have to be filled with energy when you speak so that you light up the bulbs in everyone's minds. So you turn on everyone's minds. You want to stimulate people for emotional impact and give them take-aways that they can

use every day to be better at what they do—and balance it as well as is possible.

And there is only excellence as a pinnacle in performance. There is no perfection in leadership—thank goodness. If there were, there would be no creativity, no desire, no excitement, no love, no lust, no happiness—just perfection. Choose this: *Be Excellent*.

One reason people don't give their best effort is because

they don't believe they are capable of more. Is that you? Do you avoid working harder than you have to? Do you believe that success is only for the truly talented and lucky, so there's no point in giving your best? You may be capable of *10 times* more than you have achieved so far. If you don't believe you are capable of more, you are already working at your peak.

People perform better when they believe they *can* perform better and they believe they are *in control* of their performance. Even if you just *consider* that you're capable of more, you are in the right mind-set to change everything.

Think about your accomplishments, and be straight with yourself about the things you could have done better. Perhaps you shied



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away from increased responsibility at your job and got passed over for a promotion, or you gave up on making your dream a reality because it seemed too difficult.

To bring out your personal excellence, you need to first acknowledge that your present circumstances are typically due to the actions you've taken so far, and more importantly the quality and intensity of effort you've put forth.

Imagine you're in a shopping mall, standing before one of those "You are here" maps. If you know where you are, you can easily map out a route to get somewhere else.

Don't judge yourself *guilty* for your lack of accomplishment to date. Feeling disappointed can cause you to move decisively and take measured and focused action. But for many, it accomplishes nothing.

*The point is to gain a clear understanding of where you are, and figure out where you want to go.* Acknowledge that you did the best you could with the re-sources you had, but now you are ready to do better and be more.

Excellence is not so much about *what* you do, but *how* you do it. The more time you spend doing things that matter to you, the more naturally you will bring out your inner excellence. What is important to you? What do you live for? What have you always wanted to do? Answering these questions will start you on an amazing journey of self-discovery and growth.

Once you know the activities that make your heart sing, do them often, and do them well. Master them like you've never mastered anything before. Throw yourself into them and become consumed by them.

When you do something you feel extremely passionate about, you automatically give the best of your self to the task. When you are passionate about what you do, you end up enjoying yourself more fully. And you lend that much more power to the end result. Half-hearted effort leads to lukewarm results, but focused, passionate action brings forth powerful results.

### When It Just Has to Be Done

As important as it is to follow your passions, you have things that simply must be done. You've got jobs, family responsibilities, mundane chores, and obligations. It's easy to slip into a mind-set of drudgery and do these things with half effort. You may do just that. But what happens when you give them your full effort and attention?

*First, you feel more proud of yourself and about these unpleasant tasks.* Rather than feeling annoyed or weary about them, you feel good about them. Sounds odd, but it's right. I hate mechanical work, but I go for it when I can avoid cessation of my

life—and the accomplishment feels good.

*Second, you focus on the benefits created by the work you do, not the work itself.*

*Third you'd gain a sense of personal mastery over just about everything you do.* From errands to interpersonal relationships, each activity would feel like its own reward. The results gained from these activities would simply be a nice bonus—a better organization, greater fulfillment, deeper relationships, and powerful results from projects.

Personal excellence creates a sense of inner pride about who you are and what you do. It makes you feel more confident, happier, and focused.

### Commitment to Excellence

*Commit to excellence* in whatever you do. Don't clean out the garage because you "have to". Do it as if it were the most important thing you were doing that day. Clean it out as if a neat garage was of utmost importance in the grand scheme of things. Clean it



out as if you would rather be doing nothing else in the world. Why does your attitude matter when cleaning out the garage? If you approach any task with a sense of boredom or grudging obligation, three things happen. *First, you don't enjoy the process at all.* Your mind will focus only on getting it done, and you won't give full attention to what you're doing. Consequently, you end up missing out on the enjoyment of the process. Worse: You will be teaching your brain to become familiar with not going for it in things you don't like to do. Pre-disaster 101.

*Second, since you don't pay full attention to what you are doing, your results are less than stellar.* The garage might look "okay" and you might be fine with that. But wouldn't "good" be better than "okay"? The garage doesn't need to be surgical perfect . . . it needs to be really good.

*Third, with a ho-hum attitude, you also miss out on the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction* that comes from a job you do right. Perhaps you think it doesn't matter, that doing a job for its own sake is fine. Sometimes that might be true. However, if you want to experience greater fulfillment in your life, it makes sense that you'd want to enjoy the things you do, and experience better results from them. The only way to do that is to commit fully to everything you do. Focus your attention to it and allow yourself to be immersed in the process.

Give it your absolute best and watch how it dramatically enhances the result!

PE



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**ACTION:** Commit to personal excellence.

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# Your Virtual Brand

*Exercise personal leadership.*



by Deborah Dumaine, Catherine Mullally, and Brian Penry

**M**OST OF THE TALK ON DEVELOPING A personal leadership brand focuses on live interaction—how you present yourself in face-to-face situations where people see or hear you. But in our global world of remote virtual interactions, you also lead and define your brand by writing, participating in virtual meetings, and through the Internet. When is the last time you googled yourself? Try it again—know what information is available about you. This, too, is part of your virtual brand. Take charge of how you speak, write, and represent yourself to increase your impact and income.

## You Are Your Word

Today, people are often inspired by leaders whom they've never met. Written communication is a manifestation of your virtual brand. Much of your personal leadership is done via writing, even in e-mail. Each time you write, you're leading—making decisions, managing, guiding, collaborating, giving feedback. As you motivate and inspire, you're creating your brand.

Here are three ways to improve your leadership brand in writing.

**1. Motivate people by considering their needs.** Analyze their needs—not just your point of view. Include only the information they need. Drive action by answering: Why am I writing this? What message do I want people to remember? What do I want them to do?

**2. Sound a call to action.** Delineate what you need people to do. Include action steps, timeframes, and a simple request for action. Add headlines—and make them specific. Include *Action requested*, *Next steps*, and *Suggested deadline*. What key message do you want remembered? That's your bottom line, and it should up front and include a *so what?* statement. Clearly explaining your purpose in writing will motivate people, drive desired action, and position you as a sure-footed decision-maker with a dynamic brand image.

**3. Cultivate a style that matches your virtual brand.** Express compassion and support. Avoid judgmental terms or corrective feedback—save that for live or phone meetings. Your style should be evident in the look of your communications. Style includes word choice, sentence and paragraph length and structure, and use of headlines. Use a simpler style for in-house communications. Avoid long paragraphs that look difficult to read and trim long sentences. Keep paragraphs to six lines and sentence length to 28 words. Use frequent and informative headlines. Match your style to your brand. All styles should be inspirational, drive action, and convey that you are approachable. Your virtual image should reflect the best you: in charge,



inspiring, clear, and helpful.

Conveying your brand through clear writing simplifies decision-making and drives action.

## Speak Your Brand

Conference calls and virtual meetings are convenient, but running meetings over the airwaves imposes a new set of rules. Gone are the more nuanced elements of facial expression, eye contact, and body language. In this environment, it's all about the voice, language, and skill in delivering an effective message. Here are five things you can do to make a strong impact:

**1. Understand your audience.** Take stock of their needs. What do they already know? How much do they need?

**2. Deliver a clear message.** Thinking out loud doesn't work in a conference-call format, where the agenda and goal need to be stated—and restated. Keep the message accessible with simple and conversational language, strong and active verbs, shorter sentences, and a minimum of jargon. Keep other people's needs in mind. Don't interrupt.

**3. Watch volume, inflection, and cadence.** In conference calls, it's easy for participants to tune out. This increases the importance of volume, inflection, and cadence. Your voice is your most important amplification or distortion device. A low voice implies lack of confidence; high volume may be considered overbearing. Appropriate inflection or range, as well as enthusiasm, keeps listeners interested. Cadence or pacing draws the listener into your story.

**4. Be mindful of tone.** Aligning tone of voice with the meaning conveys power and authenticity. Fred Thompson's primary run never got off the ground because of his laconic delivery. Inversely, the groundswell under Barack Obama can largely be attributed to the quality and tone of his oratory—what was said, and how it was delivered.

**5. Listen!** Listening is a primary leadership skill. Former President Bill Clinton was famous for his late-night phone calls inviting diverse opinions on a wide range of topics. Such engaged listening enlightens and shifts from an "I-centric" style to one that is collaborative and focused on the listener's needs.

You can deliver your brand through what you say and how you say it.

## Your Virtual Brand Online

In the online landscape, branding takes on three additional dimensions:

**1. Control online content.** When you google yourself, are the top search results your own content or Web site? Less flattering images and words can be trumped by launching better ones and influencing the volume of visitor traffic.

**2. Unleash the power of online video.** Online video and Webcam conferencing are great virtual-branding options. Each online telecommunication is a window into your leadership brand—and image.

**3. Manage your brand.** Communicate your leadership brand online—from a full Web site to a Web page or a Web log (blog): a forum for your positions and the feedback of others. A *personal vision statement* PDF can give your virtual brand power. Whether writing, speaking, or representing your leadership brand virtually, be true to your authentic self. Maintain the delicate balance that enables your sense of self and style to thrive while serving the interests of others. Then, your culture and personal leadership brand will become one. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Craft your brand to your advantage.

## Stop Focusing on Money

Nine ways to revive your happiness.



by Alexander Green

**S**TOP WALLOWING IN ECONOMIC angst; use this time to take stock of things—not just your bank accounts or retirement portfolios, but your life. A recession is a gift—a wake-up call to end your obsession with money and then to make sweeping changes—to become happier, to make a bigger mark on the world.

I draw connections between money, values, and the pursuit of the good life. Yes, you want to better your conditions, but the relentless quest for *more* undermines your quality of life. Material wealth can be fleeting. Successful lives are *built*, not *bought*. An over-consumptive lifestyle ultimately limits choices.

To lead a rich life in a down economy, follow these nine tips:

**1. Stop using material possessions to make you feel better.** Stop shopping just to get a short-term high. It doesn't take much money to meet your needs. In fact, your material possessions may not be worth the time and trouble it takes to acquire them. Reasonable, affordable consumption means less struggle, less debt, fewer hassles, less stress, more time, new experiences, better relationships, and greater freedom.

**2. Pursue the four elements of happiness.** In *EconoPower*, Mark Skousen provides *four elements of happiness*: 1. Rewarding and honest employment 2. Recreation 3. Love and friendship and 4. Spiritual development. None of these requires money. Yes, money matters—but it doesn't buy genuine love or friendship. It won't solve your problems, end your worries, fix your marriage, make you more "successful" or more charitable. Stop imagining that money can do all these things—it can't.

**3. Examine your livelihood.** Are you happy at work? Does your job simply mean money, security, and benefits? It hurts to spend your days doing something that is not well suited to your talents when you know you could be doing far more. Work you enjoy is invigorating. When you're *expressing yourself and making a difference*, you'll be happier.

**4. Know that happiness is an inside-out job.** When I visited Nicaragua, I saw that most people there seem genuinely happy, relaxed, and cheerful. When you can't make the world conform to your

desires, moderate those desires—and seek contentment within.

**5. Check your priorities and align your actions with them.** Are you suffering from a *warped image of success*—the idea that status and self-worth are derived from cars, jewelry, or mansions? Are these things worth long hours and strained relationships? The insatiable desire to have, acquire, and possess don't generate fulfillment like doing, creating, contributing, and giving. In setting priorities, *doing* should precede *having*!

**6. Live in the present.** By living in a state of distraction, you deny yourself the time to be fully present, right now. You can appreciate the good things in your life only when you're fully present.

**7. Think about you less and others more.** When wrapped up in yourself, you make a small package. Ensure that

your actions are in harmony with your values. How are you treating people? What are you *contributing* daily? Are you doing *good*—or just doing *well*?

**8. Stop worrying about keeping up with the Joneses.** Concentrating on your own fortunes—and improving those of others—generates more satisfaction. Don't begrudge the other people their blessings. Count your own, instead.

**9. Be a giving type.** Helping those in need is most rewarding, and it is guaranteed to create purpose in your life.

Pursue your financial ambitions. But take time, too, to appreciate your health, your family, and friends. **PE**

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**ACTION: Focus on fulfillment.**

## FINANCIAL • RECOVERY

### Had a Bad Day?

Here's how you can recover.



by Melissa McCreery

**B**AD DAYS ARE A PART OF life. We all have them.

No matter how many yoga classes you attend or how smoothly your life runs, you'll have a few bad days. The *secret to thriving* is learning how to move forward *in spite of bad days*.

Here are six tips for dusting yourself off and getting back on track:

**1. Give yourself permission to have a bad day.**

Make sure that your inner-perfectionist (who requires all-or-nothing success) isn't running your show. Are you deep in self-blame or guilt for things that contribute to a bad day (or your reaction to it)? If you beat yourself up, you can't move on. An occasional bad day is to be expected. It doesn't mean you failed; it means it's time to implement the *bad day plan*.

**2. Be ready to move on—and know what you'll need to let go of to do so.**

Are you ready to move on from your bad day, or do you need it to continue longer? If you're busy beating yourself up, or feeling miserable, or drowning your sorrows, or feeling indignant and victimized, you're not ready to stop having a bad day. What do you need to let go of in order to shift into a different space? Anger, hurt, frustration, and negativity are common answers.



**3. Know what you want to move on to.** How do you want things to be? How do you want to *feel*? What do you want your mindset or attitude to be? Your posture? Your facial expressions? Look in the mirror and make sure you aren't still carrying your bad day with you.

**4. Do what helps you feel grounded.**

To move on from a bad day, you need to connect with the present and let go of the past. What helps you to be present in this moment—completely here and alive? Deep breathing or physical activity may help. You might write in a journal or spend quiet time alone. Get centered and set your intention for how you want to be in the moment and in the future.

**5. Do something kind for yourself.** What kind thing can you do for yourself when you are having a bad day (besides consume ice cream)? Can you call a friend or rent a movie? Pick a flower from the yard? Schedule a massage or a long bath or buy some new nail polish? Bad day recovery days are prime times for self-care.

**6. Take one small step or action** that signifies that you are moving in a positive direction. Do a good deed or short workout or clean out a drawer. Take *the action that fits*—the first step toward getting on a more positive track. And when that's done, take the next one.

Taking these six steps will get you back on track. **PE**

*Melissa McCreery, PhD, is a wellness coach who helps women who are struggling with weight, stress, and emotional eating. She is the creator of the Emotional Eating Toolbox. Visit [www.enduringchange.com](http://www.enduringchange.com).*

**ACTION: Recover fast from your bad days.**

# Reach Your Goals

Practice the five disciplines.



by Mark T. Edmead

**I**MAGINE THAT YOU ARE A travel agent receiving this call from a customer:

Hello, I want to take a nice vacation. Great! Where would you like to go? I have no idea.

Do you know *when* you'd like to go? I have no idea.

How would you like to get there? I had not thought of that.

What you would like to do? Sit on the beach? Visit museums? Go to a place with an exciting night life?

No clue what so ever. All I know is that I want to go on vacation. Oh, and I don't know how I'm going to pay for this vacation either.

So you want to go on vacation, but you don't know where or when, you don't know how you want to get there, you don't know what you want to do on your vacation, and to top it off, you don't know how you are going to pay for this vacation?

That's about right.

Unfortunately, this is how many people live their lives—wandering aimlessly without knowing where they are going and how they are going to get there. Would you plan a vacation trip like this? Most of us would not. Many people spend more time planning their vacations than they do planning their lives.

If you don't have a plan, how do you expect to achieve success? If you don't know where you are going, how do you expect to know when you get there?

## Five Disciplines

To reach your goals, you need to exercise five disciplines or the 5 P's:

**1. Purpose.** To achieve your goals, you need to have a **Purpose**—what you are trying to do (or where you are trying to go). Without a purpose, what is the incentive to do anything? Think of the last time you decided to go on a vacation. There are so many vacation spot options to choose from, right? One consideration I use when selecting where to go on vacation is to decide the “purpose” for my vacation. Is my purpose to

have a vacation where I relax on the beach? Is my purpose to visit another country and tour their museums and other cultural landmarks? If I was going on vacation with someone else and their purpose was to lay on the beach all day and mine was to visit cultural landmarks, then it is very likely we will not have a pleasant vacation! Having a purpose helps define better what it is you want to do. When setting goals, not only do you need a purpose but you have to be precise in defining what you want. Simply stating you want to go on vacation is not enough. You need to be specific as possible. The location you want to go to, what you want to do while on vacation, and so on.

**2. Planning.** Most people spend more time planning for their vacations (which last one or two weeks) and do not spend any or little time planning for their future. *Proper planning prevents poor performance.* The better you plan, the better the outcome will be.



Many people go through life just “winging it” and letting other outside influences decide the course they will take in life. You may say, many people don't have plans and somehow things turn out great for them. That might happen, but it is the exception. If you don't have your plan, you likely will follow some-

one else's plan. And that plan might not have your best interest in mind. Rest assured, if you don't plan your life, someone else will plan it for you!

**3. Persistence.** In your quest to reach your goals, you'll encounter obstacles. To overcome them, you need the discipline of *Persistence*. Once you identify your desired destination, you will face obstacles that hinder your progress. Booker T. Washington said: “Success is to be measured not by the position that you reach in life as by the obstacles that you overcome.” As you face roadblocks in the pursuit of your dreams, remember: “What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.” You must remain positive about your goals and know deep in your soul that you have what it takes to make it happen.

Sure, some people become rich by winning the lottery, but does this make them successful? If their goal was to become rich, then perhaps in their minds they are successful. However, one-third of lottery winners later go bankrupt—and most lose all their winnings within five years. Why? Because they lack the discipline to manage the money. On the other hand, Donald Trump was worth millions and lost it all. Yet in a short time, he was worth billions again. Why? Because of the person he is. Because he has the discipline, knowledge, and personal philosophy of the millionaire mind. He has a purpose, he knows what he wants, he plans what he needs in order to achieve his goals.

**4. Patience.** Donald Trump also has the next discipline for reaching goals: the patience to stay on course and not let distractions take you away from the ultimate price. Impatient people make mistakes. They become desperate. They take deals they should not take or pass on deals they should take because they lack the patience to do the research.

**5. Proactive.** Dennis Waitley says: “Losers let it happen, winners make it happen!” Success is not the end result—it is a journey. Success is doing positive things regularly. It is not always doing one big thing—but taking small, positive steps to achieve your goal. The idea of writing a 240-page book might seem like an overwhelming task. But if you simply write one page a day, you'll be done in eight months! You just need to be patient and persistent! Every journey, long or short, begins with a single step.

**What have you done today to reach your goals?** Daily I make a list of two or three things I need to do to reach my goals. Perhaps it is making a phone call, writing an e-mail or letter to a client, or going to the gym for one hour to get your health in shape. Perhaps it is the \$100 per month you put away in your emergency savings account.

**Remember, the 5 P's of reaching your goals:** Establish your *purpose* in life. Make detailed *plans* on what you want. Be specific. As you execute the steps to reach your goals, be *persistent*. Don't let anyone or anything take you off course. Don't get discouraged when bad things happen. Be *patient*. And you need to be *proactive*. Do something, even if it is small, every day to reach your goal. Keep these disciplines in mind daily, and you'll reach your goals! **PE**

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**ACTION: Empower from within!**

## Imagine Possibilities

Look ahead, prepare for the future.



by Lisa Parker

PEOPLE ARE HUNKERING DOWN, trying to look busy even when they are not. They aren't attending professional development workshops, conferences, and training programs even if they planned to do so. It's understandable—we're distracted and uncertain about where our company or market is heading.

People are also opting out because of the fear of looking expendable or unnecessary. "After all, if she can be away at a seminar, then . . ." and anxiety finishes the thought. How can you invest in the career of your dreams in a recession?

This is the *perfect time* to think about the future. Times of crisis separate winners from losers. Why are so many people who are out of work enrolling in college courses and public seminars? They want to be ready for the recovery.

You can avoid layoffs and stay future-focused, strategic and proactive—even when you're not sure what tomorrow will bring. How? Here are six strategies to keep you focused on creating the *career you want*, even in turbulent times:

**1. Be clear without being rigid.** What is your ultimate objective? What do you really want to do? Start by narrowing what's in and out of scope. For instance, do you want to: Continue to manage people? Oversee more people? Have more autonomy or visibility? Why? To do what? Be closer to the front lines or to customers? Change from line to staff, or staff to line? Expand certain skills or gain new experiences?

When you picture your *ideal day*, are you looking for more creativity and freedom to experiment? More chances to set direction or influence strategy? A position more aligned to your values?

Gaining clarity will help you evaluate options readily and engage others in your career management discussions.

**2. Be flexible.** As you pursue your goal, remember you may need to make several moves, some lateral, to arrive at your destination. In 1994, I realized I wanted to be an executive coach, but I knew I needed more executive experience and/or more education to be credible in that role. My next few career moves were deliberate choices to get me there. It was a twisty road, but it finally happened—in 2002!

**3. Be strategic.** What are the emerging trends? Where are the anticipated skill and experience *gaps* that align with your interests, skills, and experience? Look for the job that needs to be done, and do it. And if it happens to be a job that generates revenue, profit, or good press for your company, even better.

**4. Be visible.** Your leaders need to know who you are and what you can do. Volunteer to make a presentation; ask a smart question at your town hall meeting; show that you can work collaboratively. When talent discussions happen, you want to be visible and credible.

**5. Be prepared.** Assess your strengths and weaknesses relative to your goal, and consider getting a "thought partner" who knows you well to help you be as objective as possible about your assets and potential liabilities. When I

was deciding if I should go out on my own after three decades, I was too anxious to do this by myself, so I worked with a coach to gain clarity and focus.

**6. Be available and helpful.** Stay connected with peers. Be available to help others. They'll be grateful, perhaps impressed, and they'll remember. Also, reach out to others for help. In my experience, most people are willing to share their expertise and feel flattered when asked to do so. This is a way to stay connected, energized and supported.

You can do much to ensure you reach your destination, even if it doesn't look exactly like you thought it would. So, look ahead; imagine the possibilities. **PE**

Lisa Parker is president of Heads Up Coaching and Consulting. Visit [www.headsupcoach.com](http://www.headsupcoach.com).

**ACTION:** Imagine your professional possibilities.

## PROFESSIONAL • ENTHUSIASM

### Love Your Job

How to stay motivated.



by Roxanne Emmerich

REMEMBER YOUR FIRST DAY on the job? Your shoes had a shine, your pants had a crease, your grooming was impeccable, your appearance impressive—after all, you'd been *hired*. You'd been given a chance to excel, to make a difference.

Contrast that day with this morning.

Are you motivated to wake up every morning and go to your job with full enthusiasm? Or, have you, after a while, made one compromise after another until you've resigned yourself to mediocrity? It's tough to keep a first-day buzz going.

But, you can *recover* that first-day feeling, motivate yourself to strive for excellence, and serve people you touch daily. You can love your job again—if you choose to do it.

**You come into life with enthusiasm.** And you may choose to stay in touch with your native inner enthusiasm or lose touch with it because of boredom, responsibility, challenge, fatigue, or bad management. Enthusiasm is the lifeblood of all success. Without it, nothing great happens. If you choose to lose touch with your inner enthusiasm, you are choosing mediocrity.

Sure, many things can curb your enthusiasm—but you can find it again.



### How to Find Enthusiasm

Take these four steps:

**Step 1: Be grateful for your life and your work.** Start with the fact that you were born at all, that you have a job, and compared to many folks, you likely have a darn *good* job.

**Step 2: Look at the circumstances of your job.** List your five biggest complaints and spin them into positives. For example, "My boss micromanages me" can be reframed as "My boss cares enough about me to step into my work when I need help."

**Step 3: Vanquish your victimhood.**

All this rethinking and reframing removes a huge energy drain from your life. It takes massive amounts of energy to continually reinforce your own sense of victimhood. Excellence is much less expensive. Now that you feel lucky instead, what are you going to do with all that energy?

**Step 4: Play the Big Game you signed up for.** Now, you just filled yourself up with a lion's share of this precious human spirit, and it will not invest in mediocrity. So play the meaningful, big-hearted game you always dreamed of playing, and leave the mediocrity to others. Get motivated and start loving your job again.

If you've truly committed to finding your first-day buzz again, you should be a lot closer to it now. And with natural enthusiasm for your life and work, you can make great things happen. **PE**

Roxanne Emmerich transforms "ho-hum" attitudes into "bring-it-on" attitudes. She is author of *Thank God It's Monday*. [www.thankgoditsmonday.com](http://www.thankgoditsmonday.com).

**ACTION:** Make great things happen.

# Overcome Challenges

Apply three lessons of learning.



by Steven Steinberg

STEWART IS A 47-YEAR-OLD CEO in downtown Chicago recently diagnosed with heart disease. Of course, his business is going through a rough period. If that isn't enough, his two teenage children are both having trouble at school and his wife's mother has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Stewart asks, "Why me?"

What is the answer? In life we encounter stress, suffering, loss and failure. We expect to overcome these obstacles and solve our problems without any difficulties or suffering. When such expectations are not met, we go through the motions of life without joy, focus, or proper communications, complaining about problems, blaming others and too stressed to create or implement solutions. This causes us to cry out "Why Me?"

## Three Lessons

The real question being asked is: "Why do I suffer with so many problems in my work and life?" Three lessons can help you to understand and overcome these challenges.

**Lesson 1: Why me? I will never know for sure.** Absolute truth exists, but you can't know it absolutely. That is the human condition, uncertainty. That uncertainty is the source of many problems. With uncertainty, you can make mistakes that cause you pain. With uncertainty, without the complete answer to life's problems, you feel pain. You have problems from uncertainty, but you also have freedom. Since you can't know for sure, you have freedom of choice. You can choose an ordinary or extraordinary response in any situation. What will be your extraordinary response to your conditions? Will you focus on the pain of problems or the freedom of choice? If you focus on the freedom of choice, you are ready to move on to Lesson 2.

**Lesson 2: Why me? I want to know anyway.** To be perfectly human is to know imperfectly. Responsibility is the ability to respond extraordinarily in the face of uncertainty. Your job is to continue your quest for knowledge, knowing that you can never know for sure.

You must then act upon your learning. Your responsibility is to search for truth and do the right thing. Rabbi Tarfon has said, "It's not up to you to finish the job, but you are not free from doing some of the work." Responsibility is the name of the human game.

**Lesson 3: Why me? I want to know my purpose.** What do you want to know? Why do you exist? What is your purpose in life? Searching and finding your purpose is the key that opens the door to success in business and life.

## The Extraordinary Answer

When you search for purpose, you find two possible answers to life's challenges. The ordinary answer to the



question "why me?" is: "because\_\_\_." You fill in the blank with blame. If you can blame, you are not responsible. Blame turns you into a victim. Blame looks backwards. To look forward, to solve problems, to see your purpose being met, you must change your answer to the extraordinary answer.

The extraordinary answer to the question *why me?* is: "So that\_\_\_!" Fill in the blank with a powerful purpose—some overriding value or some meaningful solution to the problems of your business or your life. Freedom, responsibility and purpose are the values that you learn from the three lessons.

The point of the three lessons is this: You can choose to focus either on *problems* or on *purpose*. Focusing on problems causes pain and suffering. However, when you focus on purpose, then **the power of your purpose overrides the pain of your problems!** You must discover your *So That\_\_\_!* Purpose is the flipside of problems.

Without problems you'd have no

purpose. Problems, obstacles, and challenges exist *So That* you can solve them! That is why you are in the business of life—to serve others by solving their problems. They, in turn, serve you by solving your problems. Together, you can overcome any challenge.

## Keep Three Tips in Mind

Keep these three tips in mind when trying to overcome challenges:

**Lesson 1 focuses on freedom.** While you can't choose your conditions, you are entirely free to choose your response to those conditions. Don't focus on the challenge; instead focus on your choices regarding how to fix the problem. Have a future focus.

**Lesson 2 focuses on responsibility.** There are two parts to this: first, you have the ability to respond—you are free to respond, even in the presence of uncertainty; second, you are free to choose a positive ethical and moral response. Responsibility implies acting as you ought to act.

**Lesson 3 focuses on purpose.** You were put here for some special-purpose. What music were you put here to make? Make sure that when it is time to leave this world you do not go with most of your music still in you. You can create an extraordinary business. Do not focus on how hard it is to play your music. Focus instead on the success and happiness your music can bring you.

In business and in life you must choose between *blame* and *responsibility*.

Overcoming challenges begins by accepting responsibility. Blaming makes you feel better in the moment. You feel entitled to a life and a business without any suffering. This focus on feelings, on rights without responsibilities, and on past causes never leads to success and inner peace. The only path to overcoming challenges is to change your focus from what caused the problem to how to solve the problem.

**These three lessons can help you understand and overcome challenges while transforming your work and life from ordinary to extraordinary.**

Freedom, responsibility, and purpose are the values that emerge from the three lessons of learning. Using those values, you can transform your work and your life from an ordinary place where you are overwhelmed by challenges and problems into an extraordinary place of success and happiness. PE

*Steven Steinberg is a dentist with Parkinson's disease who shows that extraordinary living is a choice. He is the originator of The Path to Becoming Extraordinary. Visit [www.speakingofvalues.com](http://www.speakingofvalues.com) or call 847-800-5918.*

**ACTION: Overcome your challenges.**

# Be Your Best

Don't get too comfortable.



by Jon Gordon

**T**IGER WOODS, OPRAH, AND Bill Gates have *fame, power, influence, and wealth*. So why don't they live lives of blissful ease and endless fun? Because they are the best at what they do, and the best are never comfortable with where they are. They desire to improve, and this naturally creates a healthy discomfort. They seek new ways to learn and grow—and the process is rarely fun and easy. They drive toward constant improvement.

You can follow the path that leads to success if you possess focus, initiative, dedication, and positive energy.

I need to dispel *six myths* about winners—about what it takes to get to the top. Buying into these myths keeps you from achieving your brand of success:

**Myth 1: The best know a secret formula.** There is no secret recipe. The best take action every day and do common things with uncommon focus, dedication, and commitment to excellence. They know what they want and they want it more. They pay the price that greatness requires.

**Myth 2: The best are chosen or born that way.** In reality, the best become the best through their actions. Many people have potential, but few ever bring it to fruition. The best focus on the fundamentals until they master them. Often what separates the best performers from the average ones is not talent but *practice*. It may take a decade (or lifetime) of practice to become great.

**Myth 3: There is a huge gap between the best and the rest.** Actually, the gap is small. It's the little things that separate the best from the rest. The best are not that much better—they are just a little better at the important things. What makes Walmart successful is not just the low prices—they *do 100 things 10 percent better*. That 10 percent puts Walmart miles ahead of the competition.

**Myth 4: The best don't have any fear.** In reality, the best *do* feel fear. They simply learn to overcome it. They don't let fear of failure to define them and their actions. They accept the risks, face their fears, and overcome them. Hence, they seize the moment and move beyond their fear. When all eyes are watching, the best sense that this is the moment they've been preparing for. Rather than

hide from pressure, they *rise* to the occasion. As a result, they *define the moment* rather than let the moment define them. Don't run from fear; face it and *embrace* it. Don't let fear rob you of your love and joy for life; let it push you into the moment and inspire you to live well.

**Myth 5: The best focus on winning.** In reality, the best don't focus on *outcome*—they focus on the *process* that gets them there. To create success, you must focus on the process that produces it. For example, Organic Valley—a provider of organic dairy products, produce, meats, and other natural foods—grows dramatically each year, and yet they don't have an *outcome* goal. They focus on *purpose* and *process*, and this fuels their growth.

**Myth 6: Success breeds success.** Actually, *success breeds complacency*. Coaches and leaders often dread success more

than failure. A team will have a successful season or players a great year, and when they return next season they think all they have to do is show up and enjoy the same results, forgetting it was the hard work, focus, and process that created their success. The moment you think you've arrived at the door of greatness is when it gets slammed in your face. Always be innovating, offering something new, staying humble and hungry.

To be the best at what you do, *never* allow yourself to rest on your laurels. Being the best is uncomfortable. So forget past glories. Focus on growing, improving, and innovating today. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it. **PE**

Jon Gordon is a speaker, consultant, and author of *The Energy Bus* and *The No Complaining Rule*, and *Training Camp* (Wiley). Visit [www.jongordon.com](http://www.jongordon.com).

**ACTION:** *Be your best.*

## PHYSICAL • ACTIVITY

# Physical Activity

It can benefit you at any age.



by Lynda Ransdell, Mary K. Dinger, Jennifer L. Huberty, and Kim H. Miller

**D**ESPITE THE WELL-DOCUMENTED BENEFIT of physical activity to preserve physical function and health and reduce the severity of chronic diseases, only 8 percent of adults ages 65 to 74 engage in 10 minutes or more of vigorous physical activity three or four times per week. And 77 percent of Americans over the age of 65 do not engage in *any* physical activity, perhaps mistakenly thinking that physical activity is not safe for them.

Most older adults, even those with medical conditions and chronic diseases, can safely participate in physical activities with a few precautions. However, increasing older adult physical activity presents unique challenges. Some programs have been effective in the short term; but to develop an effective *long-term* physical activity program, you need to understand factors that predict participation and adherence.

**Self-efficacy, or the confidence you have to perform an activity, is a strong factor.** Programs should help people build their confidence through mastery of the activity. This can be achieved by

starting at a low intensity and gradually increasing intensity (very important for frail older adults). Improvements in fitness and or health that result from physical activity enhances self-efficacy.

To promote long-term adherence to physical activity, programs need to be designed so older adults move from a supervised, or center-based, setting to the home, where they can self-regulate to make physical activity part of their lifestyle. Behavioral counseling can help older adults transition from center-based to home-based activity. Through counseling, older adults can develop a plan of action for making physical activity a part of their daily routine.

**Having a positive attitude toward physical activity** is another factor influencing participation. If the activity is positive and enjoyable, older adults will be more likely to continue to exercise. **Past participation also predicts future participation.** For those who have a negative

attitude toward physical activity, **provide positive images** depicting the activity using role models with similar limitations entices people to participate.

**Receiving positive reinforcement or social support from friends and family also facilitates physical activity**, particularly for women. **Positive comments** strengthen self-efficacy and enhance adherence to exercise. Design programs to create a *positive environment* with support from family and friends. **PE**

Lynda Ransdell, Mary Dinger, Jennifer Huberty, Kim Miller are coauthors of *Developing Effective Physical Activity Programs* (Human Kinetics). Visit [www.HumanKinetics.com](http://www.HumanKinetics.com) or call 800-747-4457.

**ACTION:** *Get engaged in physical activity.*

# Mind Blindness

Overcome it now with EQ.



by Travis Bradberry

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME you were able to fully enjoy what's most important in life? I'm talking about the deep reflection that sends tingles down your spine, deflating the size of your daily hassles. For me, it's the feeling I get when I arrive home after a long day of work and gaze into the eyes of my newborn son. Whatever your moments are, they are times that leave you thinking, "This is what it's all about."

Today, about 80 percent of Americans average at least 40 hours on the job, half of them put in 50 or more hours each week, and one-third canceled a summer vacation due to financial concerns. People still holding jobs want to keep them, and they're spending more time at the office to make sure their presence is felt.

## Running Blind

We all know that time spent at work is rife with stress and challenge, but few realize that blindly diving into your work actually *reduces* your job performance. Why?

Consider Steve Whitley. Steve is a seasoned project manager who starts each morning with a 10-minute cup of coffee. Actually, he spends just 30 seconds of it drinking. He squeezes massive gulps in between clicking through emails, jotting down voicemails, and rummaging through a stack of documents. Some mornings, he doesn't even take in the panoramic view through his 14<sup>th</sup> story window.

Powering through your day without stopping to contemplate your behavior is running blind. Steve invests little time in self-reflection and often finds himself denying his fatigue, chasing lofty goals at the expense of his health, and failing to fulfill the needs of his employees. Steve takes obsessive precautions to ensure her team doesn't make any mistakes. At a meeting, he details tasks for each team member to accomplish, and then decides to take care of half of them himself without telling a soul.

Why would Steve create this stress for his team? He's wired to do so. In the face of a threat or danger, we're

built to do one of two things: 1) run fast in the opposite direction, or 2) stand our ground and fight. Deciding on a rational action during a heightened state of emotion is secondary to our survival instinct. In Steve's case, he's fighting like a champ. Any person will respond to a project deadline with at least mild anxiety. Even if he isn't completely aware of it, Steve is likely to feel that his job is threatened by the chance of failure—and he lacks total control over how and when all tasks are completed.

Steve micromanages his staff when his emotions get the best of him. Everything we experience passes first through the emotional part of our brains (the limbic system). A trigger



event, such as a new deadline to meet, is "felt" by the limbic system before we have any rational reaction to the circumstance. So, we fully experience the anxiety, exuberance, or irritation of a moment before the rational part of the brain chooses the direction to head in response to the situation. Steve reacts to his anxiety about trusting the abilities of his team members. He is likely unaware of this emotion, and doesn't recognize the impact of his actions on those around him.

Steve needs to build skills in understanding and managing emotions to improve his performance, and the performance of his team. He needs emotional intelligence.

And Steve is not alone. Few of us can accurately identify our emotions as they happen; most of us struggle to handle the conflict and stress at work. Without understanding our emotions as they happen, the stresses of life and work soon impede our performance and halt our personal progress.

## Taking the Blinders Off

Mind blindness happens when we lose focus on the circumstances that surround us and let defining moments drift by beneath our awareness. Emotional intelligence helps you to see what, when, why and how your thoughts and emotions influence your actions—and then to manage the pivotal responses needed to stay productive and do more with less.

As you increase your emotional intelligence, you'll experience a profound difference. Your brain cells grow new connections that facilitate new behaviors. A single brain cell can grow 15,000 connections to help it communicate with its neighbors.

By practicing new EQ skills, you strengthen the communication between the parts of your brain that are responsible for feeling emotions and thinking rationally. This physical change helps you—when faced with deadlines—to delegate responsibilities and resist the urge to micromanage.

## Awareness Builds Performance

Emotional intelligence (EQ) explains about 60 percent of your job performance. The four EQ skills—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management—impact your performance because they are embedded in everything you do and say each day. Self-awareness is a critical first step to increasing EQ. You can't choose a new course of action if you don't even know it's there.

You can make major leaps in productivity by simply measuring your EQ and increasing those skills you need the most. EQ tests are useful because you need an objective evaluation of your behavior. A test paints a clear picture of your behavior—what you do and say each day.

When we released the *Emotional Intelligence Appraisal* seven years ago, it quickly became the bestselling EQ test. It's a fast, accurate, and intuitive measure of EQ. The new edition pinpoints the behaviors that bring your EQ score down the most, and shows you how to improve in these areas. Once you've practiced with your EQ strategies, it lets you test your EQ a second time to measure your progress. If you enjoy using these features, the emotional side of your life and work will no longer be obscured from sight. PE

*Travis Bradberry is an award-winning author, and president of TalentSmart.*

**ACTION:** Cultivate your emotional intelligence.

## Top Success Principle

### Take control of your behavior.



by Jack Canfield

**I**N MY BOOK, *THE SUCCESS Principles*, I teach 64 lessons that help you achieve what you want out of life. These are keys for taking 100 percent responsibility for your life and your leadership of others.

When people ask me for *the single most important principle*, I share a simple formula. For years, I've taught top leaders and thinkers this formula to help guide their decision-making and pathway to success. Successful leaders keep this principle in mind daily: E + R = O (Events + Responses = Outcomes).

Every outcome you experience—whether it's success or failure, wealth or poverty, wellness or illness, intimacy or estrangement, joy or frustration—is the result of how you've responded to earlier or events in your life. Great leaders don't just know this instinctively—they make it a habit to respond in ways that generate the outcomes they want, even during tough experiences or events beyond their control.

If you don't like the outcomes you experience, you can make two choices:

**Choice 1: You can blame the event for your lack of results.** You can blame the economy, lack of money, support or education, racism, gender bias, your wife or husband, your board's attitude, or your employees and colleagues. There's no doubt all these factors exist, but if they were the deciding factors, nobody would succeed—and we'd have leaders without direction, focus, and solutions. For every person who fails, there are hundreds of people who face the *same circumstances* and make it.

**Choice No. 2: You can change your responses (R) to the events (E) until you get the outcomes (O) you want.** You can change your thinking, communication, pictures you hold in your head, and your behavior. That's all you can control anyway. Sadly, most of us are so engrained in our habits that we never change our behavior. We get stuck in our conditioned responses to our spouses and children, our colleagues, customers, clients, or students.

When you gain control of your thoughts, images, dreams, and behavior, you will realize measurable results that you want. If you don't like your outcomes, change your responses.

## Make It a Habit to Ask for Feedback

As a leader, you can't work in a vacuum. In larger roles, you must ask for and use feedback. In fact, you need feedback more than anyone else. It's what helps you respond appropriately to events in pursuit of *desired outcomes*.

If you want to have a supportive relationship with your team but they are angry with you for neglecting their needs, what do you do? Get mad at them for being upset?

Your goal of having a supportive relationship is telling you that you may have gone off course. To get back on course, listen and take the appropriate action. Open up lines of com-

munication and act like a true leader.

How can you better deal with feedback? Ask for feedback in a safe space. Don't be vague about what information you want. Ask for it in specific terms. Ask how you are limiting yourself, how you can improve, and what it will take to get back on course. Trust your gut feeling about things, listen to what others are saying, and look at the results of your actions. Once you know the truth, you can take action to improve—and everyone will be better for it. **PE**

*Jack Canfield is co-founder of the Chicken Soup for the Soul brand and an authority on peak performance.*

**ACTION: Know and act on objective feedback.**

## EMOTIONAL • MOOD

## Change Your Mood

You can do it in 70 seconds!



by Carole Lynne

**W**HATEVER PROBLEMS YOU face, you can more easily solve them when you are in a better mood. When your mood falls, you can pick it up fast (in 70 seconds) with the HappyU exercise!

In the HappyU exercise, you have 10 seconds for each of the seven parts.

Within 70 seconds, you'll be feeling much better. Your mood is your responsibility. If you tend to be negative or depressed at times, the HappyU exercise can help you to change your mood from sour to sweet! So, try it, and repeat as often as needed.

**H = Hope for Happiness.**

Without hope, you have nothing. You need hope to get through life's difficulties. As you repeat *Hope for Happiness* for 10 seconds, remember people whose problems are far worse than yours. Even if your problems are the worst, you must have hope of finding solutions.

**A = Accept Life.** As you repeat *Accept Life* for 10 seconds, focus on how life's experiences take you up and down. You can learn much from those who have physical disabilities, and yet lead productive and happy lives. So, accept life with all its colors and situations. Take a deep breath now and feel how alive you are. As you accept life and its challenges, you'll have the energy to help yourself and others.

**P = Picture of Happiness.** Visualize a color, flower, person, beach, spiritual symbol, or any other image that can quickly change your mood. It's true: a

picture is worth a thousand words. Replace your images of catastrophe with images that bring happiness.

**P = Play a Song.** In your mind, play a song or any sound that makes you happy. Listen to the birds, sound of a waterfall, the laughter of a child, the sound of a harp, or play your favorite song in your mind. Music is always a mood lifter.

**Y = Yearn for Happiness.** Feel your yearning for happiness in life. Do not demand happiness or beg for it.

Yearning and aspiring for happiness broadcasts your intentions. As you yearn for happiness, you create the

space within the soul to receive true bliss. With this bliss, you'll be inspired to make good choices for yourself and your world.

**U = Unite with Life.** Life has its ups and downs, depressions and elations. Your difficulties are part of the yin and yang of life. As you repeat

*Unite with Life* in your mind for 10 seconds, you sense that you are part of the whole of existence. You have a spark of the *Divine Consciousness*, access to the psychic inner voice that connects you to the Divine. In ancient times, *psychic* meant *soul*. You are born with a cosmic connection to soul energy. As you open up spiritually, you can give more to yourself, family, and community.

**In the last 10 seconds, do as you like.** Customize this exercise. Find a way to change your mood in 70 seconds so that you can *have more fun* and help the people around you have more fun. A HappyU will be inspired and motivated and love each day.

This exercise is fun—and it works! **PE**

*Carole Lynne is the author of Cosmic Connection: Messages for a Better World. Visit [www.carolelynneconnection.com](http://www.carolelynneconnection.com) or [www.carolelynne.com](http://www.carolelynne.com).*

**ACTION: Practice changing your mood in seconds.**

# Be Leader-Minded

*It starts with leading yourself.*



by Deniz Senelt

**W**OULD YOU FOLLOW THE leaders you admire to places that you would not go alone if you suspected they were not capable to lead themselves? Do you watch them close up? Take them as role models? Wish you could switch roles? Effective leaders set a good example in the eyes of followers.

Tom Peters says: “To lead effectively toward excellence, you must *know* yourself and *lead* yourself.” To do that, you need to start leading your mind. Great leaders use their mind in a powerful and effective ways. To lead by example, start with yourself.

What can you do to put your mind to better use? Here are some practical tips that you can apply in your life.

**Dominance.** First, you need to be aware of the dominance of your brain. Your brain is composed of two sides; right-brain dominance brings an emotional and creative approach, whereas left-brain dominance brings a logical and analytical approach. We operate best when both sides work in harmony. This was the secret of Leonardo da Vinci; he used both sides of his brain in harmony to accomplish creative work even in an analytical way.

To discover which side of your brain is dominant, think how detail-oriented you are. Right-brain dominant people see shapes while left-brain dominant people see details.

The impact of dominance becomes visible when you are under stress as the non-dominant brain hemisphere switches off! For right-brain dominant people, left-brain functions are lost under stress, when they’re needed most.

**What can you do to develop the use of both sides of your brain?** I recommend *Brain Gym* and *Brain Savers*. Do you exercise to maintain and develop your physical condition? And do you use Screensavers to support your computer? Why not use some effort to pump up the potential of your mind!

Movement stimulates the motor cortex of the brain, stimulating the senses and thought areas. All movement is good because it creates interconnections within the brain. Cross-lateral activities, wherein you use both sides of your body simultaneously, are called *Brain Gym*,

as they put both sides of the brain into action. Movement activates thinking. *Brain Savers* keep the brain on high level. When your brain is stimulated by a challenge or a novel experience, new connections form between neurons, which form permanent neuron pathways if properly reinforced. Playing chess, making puzzles, traveling, learning a language trigger this process.

Some more easily applicable *Brain Savers* are: change your watch to the other arm; change the ring tone and color of your mobile phone; dial numbers with your other hand; turn upside down the picture on your desk.

## Goal Wind Formula

Your goals’ wind will fill your sails to make you reach your success. Earl Nightingale said, “All you have to do is know where you’re going. Answers will come to you of their own accord.” Follow these steps: 1. Know what you



want—set your goals. 2. Have a burning desire to achieve your goals. 3. Program your goals into your *subconscious mind*. 4. Take action to accumulate the experience and knowledge so that you are competent enough to achieve your goals, when opportunity knocks.

The *Goal WIND Formula* is this: **Wait** for it to happen (*believe*). Ignore contradictory thoughts. **Never** doubt yourself (*expect*). **Dominate** your mind with your goals. This formula is in line with the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt; “The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.”

## Connect with Your Mind

The Mind’s Language is *visualization*. Create a pictorial version of the goal that you want to achieve, first in your mind! Because seeing is believing. When you visualize something using the five senses, it will directly go into your mind. So, if you are planning a meeting in your mind, you need to visualize step by step, including the details that would touch your eyes, nose or ears—thinking the warmth of the air in the meeting room, the smell of the air, the noises at the background,

the smile on the faces of the others, the feeling you have when you close the deal the way you want. Using visualization this way, connections between the brain cells are formed and you create a physical *pathway to success* step by step.

At that point, what becomes important is your capability of concentration. Focusing attention will empower whatever you do, because where the attention goes, the mind power follows. The Reticular Activating System in our brain is our antenna or radar, which attracts things we focus on, to us.

If you can control your brain rhythm, synonymously if you can relax and lower your brain wave frequency, all this mental connection with your mind will be stronger. When relaxed, you have more control over yourself. Using your breathing as an instrument, you can bring yourself to a relaxed state.

Breathe in deeply for two minutes and feel breathing out the tension or worries. Relax your shoulders and facial muscles, scan your body for any tension in the muscles, and relax those muscles.

In this relaxed state whatever you think will affect yourself more strongly. That’s why you need to take care of your *inner voice* as the mind moves in the direction of your currently dominant thoughts. Your self-talk has 1,200 words per minute, so you need to ensure that your inner voice uses positive statements only, with no exception. Negative thoughts secrete inhibitor chemicals that block or limit the flow of electro-chemical impulses. Positive thoughts secrete neuro-transmitters that facilitate thinking, learning, and creativity. As Henry Ford said of the *power of positive thinking*: “Whether You Think You Can or You Can’t, You Are Right”.

## Rituals for Practice

Creating some useful practice rituals helps you to lead your mind. Rituals work because of the meaning that you attribute to some action, which becomes bonded with it and it results in the same way each time. Just like using a “lucky” pen, crossing fingers, or knocking on wood. To start practicing, create a private area for yourself visually in your mind. Go there mentally every morning just after waking up and every evening before sleeping, to be on your own working for yourself in your mind.

Leading your mind will enable you to lead effectively toward excellence. Now is the time to start practicing. **PE**

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**ACTION:** Cultivate a leadership mindset.

# Your Brain's Wiring

Is it a personal asset or liability.



by Jonathan Picoult

**Y**OUR MIND IS REMARKABLE. The mind's ability to receive, process, and interpret data is unparalleled. Just understanding a simple sentence requires brainpower beyond what we can replicate with the most advanced computers.

Your brain can also ignore and filter out information to avoid being overwhelmed by data. By filtering data, your mind ensures that its limited processing power is focused on information that matters, not on background noise or peripheral sound, flicker in room lighting, and shifting shadow. Your mind filters out extraneous sensory input, enabling you to focus.

But your mind's filtering action can also be a liability, since cognitive filters can suppress information needed for good decision-making. At their worst, cognitive filters become *biases*. This often occurs when you desire to confirm a hypothesis or support an assertion.

For example, if you're convinced that a BMW 3 Series is the car to drive, you'll start to spot *the* car everywhere—and this serves to validate your bias.

When you are strongly attached to a particular vision or belief, you tend to filter information and focus on evidence that confirms your convictions. If left unchecked, this dynamic can lead to *groupthink* and affect all your decisions and judgments. You may, for example, think that your new idea will be the elixir for all your problems, unwittingly glossing over all reasons why it won't.

Attempts to simplify the interpretation of data can also color how you evaluate others. If your assessments are to be fair, objective, and constructive, you need to consider: What results did they achieve? How did they achieve them? What were their motivations and intentions? Your mind tends to focus on the failures of habitual underperformers and the successes of high performers.

You need not be a victim of cognitive filters and biases. You can counter their influence by keeping four tips in mind:

**1. Poke holes in your ideas.** When exercising judgment and making decisions, seek *confirming* and *disconfirming* evidence—be it against a preconceived notion, an evolving hypothesis, or your intuition. You may determine that your

hunch was right, but don't leap there before challenging your assumptions.

**2. Assign someone else to poke holes in your ideas.** If your filters and biases on a topic are strong, you can't play your own devil's advocate. And when people know you have strong opinions, they're reluctant to question your perspective. So, designate someone to act as *chief contrarian*. This helps eliminate groupthink, ensuring that at least one person challenges your view.

**3. Recognize and commend those who engage in healthy debate.** Ensure people feel comfortable raising concerns and objections. You can cultivate such trust and rapport by recognizing, publicly and privately, the value of vigorous, constructive debate. If you gloss over the debate phase, you may well encounter unpleasant surprises in your execution.

**4. Keep an open mind when evaluating performance.** Knowing that it's hard to root out personal biases and filter in assessing performance, recognize when filters and biases taint your assessments. Be open to the possibility of average contributors taking their performance to a new, higher level—or, of strong performers experiencing a sustained downturn. Strive to deliver fair and honest evaluations that are based on results achieved and behaviors demonstrated.

Counter-acting your mind's filters and biases is about striking a balance in how you collect, assimilate, and interpret information. You can still go with instincts, intuition, and leaps of faith—if you avoid decision-making pitfalls. **PE**

*Jon Picoult is a consultant who studied Cognitive Science at Princeton. Email jpicoult@aol.com.*

**ACTION:** Avoid decision-making pitfalls.

MENTAL • IDEAS

## Smell of an Idea

Great ideas are attractive.



by Edward de Bono

**A**T AN EARLY STAGE in the decision-making process, creative people can detect the *smell* of a new idea. This motivates them to pursue and develop that idea.

An idea which does not seem very interesting to anyone else can have this special *smell* for a creative person. This seems to be a sort of instinct in the way it operates. It is not, however, an instinct but a judgment built up from a lot of experience.

At the start of an idea, difference is a point of interest. Something which is different, or even the opposite, of the normal will always be interesting. Whether that interest develops into something practical is another matter.

The purpose of any new idea is to show value and benefits. Any idea which at an early stage suggests large benefits is always worth hearing and pursuing. The benefits must, however, be made very clear.

An idea that has no obvious benefits is not a creative idea. It is not much use delivering an idea and hoping that there may be benefits somewhere.

An idea which immediately seems practical is always attractive. We can see how the idea can easily be put into practice. Practicality covers many aspects. The idea must be practical and

feasible from a mechanical and scientific point of view. The idea must be practical from an 'acceptance' point of view; the people who are going to be required to implement the idea must accept the idea.

A simple idea is always attractive. The idea may be simple to introduce. The idea may be simple to operate. The idea may replace existing complexity with simplicity. The 'smell' of simplicity is always enticing.

There may be good ideas which will only work in very special circumstances. There may be good ideas which will only work for a certain class

of people, for example people with little money but big ambitions.

Not every idea has to be universal. There may be niche ideas which serve that particular niche very well. Such ideas may be worth implementing. In terms of the 'smell of an idea', however, niche ideas are not very attractive. If the niche

is spelled out very clearly, then the idea can be seen to be valuable. It should not, however, be left to the listener to work out the niche where the idea does have value.

Robust ideas are attractive—ideas that will work even when not fully implemented. This means that the ideas will work even outside the best circumstances.

Creative ideas and lateral thinking help to improve your performance. **PE**

*Edward de Bono is the founding father of lateral thinking and is a leading authority on creative thinking as a skill. www.thinkingmanagers.com.*

**ACTION:** Detect and develop your best ideas.

# Boost Others

And you'll rise also.



by Steve Farber

ONCE I RECEIVED AN EMAIL from a distressed young manager who was trying to lead his team and create a strong work ethic and a culture of camaraderie. When necessary, he said they would band together and work 10 to 20 hours a day at times to solve a problem or meet a need. His wife would cook for everyone and bring food to the office. They felt like a family, he said, committed to doing great work and devoted to one another's success. No one ever complained. At one point, he'd even forgone his bonus so his employees could collect theirs.

But then the company went through a downturn—resulting in a re-organization, a shift in the structure. He still had a job, but his position was eliminated. New management with old ideas came in to oversee the function.

"Now," he wrote, "I just sit at my cubicle, web surfing, at the same company where I once worked 39 hours straight with my team to make things right. I'm not a quitter; I don't want to leave. But I feel stripped of everything we've done. How can I get back up?"

## What Should I Say?

Even though I'd spent the last 20 years coaching leaders, I was loath to respond. After all, I had only sketchy details about his situation, and it was presumptuous of me to assume I could help him with a few pithy words of advice. Nonetheless, I felt that it could make a huge, positive difference in Ken's life—and in the life of those he worked with—but it wasn't the kind of advice you'd expect.

It's become a cliché to say that we live in unprecedented, challenging times. But the truth is, the world of work is always challenging. That's why they call it "work."

No matter what organization you work in, you've had to deal with obstacles, issues, and barriers, and self-centered bosses who took all the credit and none of the blame and could care less about you. Or, worse, they hoped that you'd fail, and took great pleasure in your struggles because they felt it made them look stronger.

Or perhaps you worked in a company that, even though populated by terrific people, was so obsessed with the bottom line and shareholder value that you were forced to make decisions that compromised your ability to serve the customer. As people grew more frustrated, the customer satisfaction levels plunged, making you even more frustrated.

You may have been in a place that was hyper-competitive to the point of paranoid, risk-averse and political to the point of stifling. You've no doubt spent some time and energy navigating your way through the challenges that come from trying to lead in these



conditions. It's just the price you pay for being human.

Now, add to that the current, sucking implosion in the economy, and it's easy to see why, with all our efforts to be positive and productive, you still get knocked down from time to time.

Your knee-jerk reaction in times of crisis is to hold on tighter, to be more cautious in your actions and more protective of your resources. You think that your way out—or up—will come by shoring up or hoarding what you now have.

## Greater Than Yourself

There is, however, a more powerful course of action, which—though counterintuitive in hyper-competitive times—is based on a timeless reality:

Your greatness as a leader lies, paradoxically, in your ability to cause others to be greater than yourself.

**So, your best way out of a leadership challenge or crisis is not to focus on your own peril or rut, but, instead,**

**to reach out and try to boost someone else over your head.**

This idea—a variation on the "do unto others" sentiment of the *Golden Rule*—also applies to the workplace. So I told this young manager: "Instead of wallowing in your own despair, pick someone at work to invest in, with the intent of making that person greater than you are. Be a coach, guide, or mentor in the truest, most personal sense of the words by choosing someone to be your GTY (*Greater Than Yourself*) project, and see what that does to your own predicament and state of mind.

## He Took My Advice

Maybe it was out of desperation, but he took my advice and agreed to the challenge. Two weeks later, he wrote to say that he'd thought deeply about our conversation and had come to realize that before he could lift someone else up by sharing his knowledge and experience, he needed to be sure that he had learned the right lessons from the recent team trauma.

So he'd met with his boss, and asked for feedback on how he could have acted differently, what he may have done to contribute to the problem, and how he could be a better leader in the future. "The 30-minute meeting turned into a two-hour confessional," said Ken, which resulted in him learning some hard, "gold lessons" about himself.

"Now," he continued, "I've already started to work with a member of my team who wants to be a manager. And I'm taking a vow," he said, "to make the people around me better—as I continue to grow myself. I'm going to teach my children about this, too." Ken, it seems, has gotten his energy back, and he's well on his way to getting back up—by lifting someone else.

## Find Your GTY Project

We're all human, just like this young manager. And just like him, we all get bashed down from time to time. Next time, try to resist the temptation to pull yourself up by the proverbial bootstraps, and reach out to pull someone else up, instead. Go find someone to be your GTY project, and ask them to do the same.

And don't be surprised if—through your example—your team or the entire organization rises to the new gold standard of leadership. PE

*Steve Farber is author of Greater Than Yourself: The Ultimate Lesson of True Leadership, president of Extreme Leadership, is a consultant and speaker, and author of The Radical Leap, and The Radical Edge.*

**ACTION:** Find someone to be your GTY project.

## Value Your Experience

Stay relevant in work and service.



by Captain Karen Kahn

**M**ANY PEOPLE NOW PLAN to delay retirement due to the economy. Many find it difficult to pay the mortgage or rent, and contribute to their IRAs.

If this scenario hits close to home, you may discover that changing careers, re-entering the workforce, or serving others is a matter of *reselling your experience* and adjusting your viewpoint.

Starting over at any age is never easy. Here are seven tips to help you:

**1. Start with a realistic plan with goals, tactics, and timelines.** Developing such a plan requires that you complete necessary supplemental training or education, including certifications or apprenticeship programs. Don't set impossible goals for yourself. You didn't achieve your status overnight, so don't expect to transition to something else with minimal effort. Make a careful, considered transition with well-timed steps that reflect realistic plans.

**2. Cultivate a supportive network and mentor relationships** to help you work your plan, stay the course, and find opportunities. Learn what the new career entails. Network with friends, family and others to gain referrals that help you meet your goals. Cultivate relationships with people who can help you with future employment, making repeated contacts, if necessary to strengthen the networking bond.

**3. Focus on key assets that differentiate you**, such as maturity, which substantiates your *experience* and *credibility*. Younger people don't possess the same maturity. Highlight this bonus trait.

**4. Use your age as an advantage.** Being "too old" to work or serve is mostly a state of mind. See age as a *competitive advantage*. As a seasoned worker, you'll have more real-world wisdom and experience, making it easier for you to be an asset to individuals, teams and organizations. Your background can help you bring new or time-tested ideas and team-building skills to the table and unite different generations of workers. Seek to impress prospective employers with your maturity, good sense, attention to detail, and concern for providing high-quality service. An excellent performance will make them want to hire you. What's left unsaid can often unlock an elusive job opportunity.

**5. Show flexibility.** If you have trepidation over reporting to a younger person, you'll need to overcome this feeling. Show that you are there to learn from and work you're your team members—regardless of their age. Strive to work well with younger employees, displaying teamwork and cooperation.

**6. Stay current.** While experience and maturity give you an edge, you need to stay current with technology relevant to your career. Besides work experience, you need skills with online social networking (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and be familiar with current computer programs. Use current situations to show the value of your skills.

**7. Use your experience, knowledge**

**and skills to help people who know less.** Let them feel you are excited to share your knowledge and skills with them. Mentor students in how they can apply your knowledge to benefit their pursuits.

Don't forget to laugh at yourself; success comes with occasional disappointments, jealousies, and rumors, along with new experiences and rewards. Use your assertiveness, creativity, flexibility, perseverance, and courage to enjoy each step along the way. Assess your available resources and determine what you will sacrifice to realize your dream. **PE**

*Captain Kahn is a career counselor, activist, a pioneering female pilot, and president of Aviation Career Counseling ([www.aviationcareer counseling.com](http://www.aviationcareer counseling.com)), and author of Flight Guide for Success.*

**ACTION:** Use your experience in service to others.

## SERVICE • VOLUNTEERISM

## Work Hard

Donate and serve.



by Patrick Lencioni

**R**ECENTLY I RECEIVED A NOTE from a woman who asked me to explain why I believe that socialism is a bad idea, especially in light of our values to love our neighbors, care for the poor, and avoid selfish, materialist lifestyles. I confessed that as a youngster, I thought socialism sounded like the best ways to run a society because sharing and caring and compassion are the right ways to live.

As I matured, I began to understand how the reality of socialism radically differs from the theory, and that even the theory has fatal flaws. At the end of the day, there are two big reasons why socialism is a really bad idea.

**First, socialism just doesn't work—at least not for long.** Most people won't keep working hard for the *greater good* if they don't receive the fruits of that work. The *free-loader effect* is the tendency of people to do less work when they realize they won't see more in return.

Over time, socialist societies experience *decreasing* productivity, risk-taking, and innovation, along with *increasing* tax rates, government programs, and expectations. When the economy falters, those expectations can't be met.

Unfortunately, by the time people realize this, it is often too late for them to try a different approach, since there are more people who expect benefits from the government than there are

people who pay for them. And thus begins a descent to economic and motivational malaise. Ironically, the people who socialism is supposed to help—the poor—only grows because they are joined by more people who drop out of the shrinking middle class.

**Second, socialism diminishes the dignity of human beings.** In socialist societies, people grow more dependent on government for their well-being and less confident that they are capable and responsible for themselves. This is a recipe for *cynicism, fatalism and depression*. Government's larger role inevitably crowds out faith in God. That was the intent of men who invented *socialism, communism, and Marxism*. Social-

ist countries experience a drop in the faith of people, and ironically, a decline in charitable giving, volunteerism, and civic-mindedness. Socialism creeps in as we accede to higher taxes, more government programs, and the false lure of getting *something for nothing*.

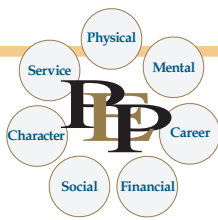
**What might you do if you want to act on your desire to do good and make a difference?** I suggest: Work hard. Create jobs. Treat people with dignity and love. Give generously of your money and your time to good charities and directly to certain people in need. And demand that our government compassionately provide effective programs and services for those who are *truly incapable* of providing for themselves.

But never support a program, tax, or proposal that makes you feel good but ends up making the lives of the very people you seek to help more difficult and dependent. **PE**

*Patrick Lencioni is author of The Five Dysfunctions of a Team. Visit [www.tablegroup.com](http://www.tablegroup.com).*

**ACTION:** Always give your best effort.





# GOAL GETTERS



When I first decided to stop joining the lunch bunch who complained about how bad business was and instead made up my mind to set some strong goals and accomplish them, I wasn't well received. In fact, I was called a snob, big shot, and show off. Some people muttered, "Who does he think he is?" as I passed by.

Sadly, few people will cheer you when you determine to have a positive attitude. Why? Most people you meet are stuck in a negative mind set. You are living in a culture of negative thinking. In fact, if you're a positive person, you are likely considered suspect, or a bit strange!

## Negative News and Attitudes

Negative attitudes are insidious and usually begin early in life as your self-image and life understanding is formed through the words and actions of your family. Later negative feedback can continue through your peers, neighborhood associations, co-workers, and the bad news you hear daily.

Negative thinking is a powerful raw force that sets on fire any possible good in your life. It colors everything you think about, say, and experience. It's a depressive "grey lens" through which you view a distorted life picture.

A negative attitude blinds you to new opportunities because you see only roadblocks and obstacles; focus attention on your weaknesses rather than your strengths; and convince you that the deck of life is stacked against you. You'll develop a critical judgmental attitude toward others. You actually become immune to good news!

## Habit of Positive Thinking

In contrast, a habit of positive thinking has an incredibly positive effect on how your mind works. It ignites a creative spark that shows you new and innovative ways to reach your goals. It shuts out distractions that would draw you off course. It helps you identify a purpose for life and fills you with enthusiasm and the joy of living.

When you have a positive mind set you believe the glass is half full. You see possibility where others see only problems. You see the good in others; believe for the best; press on when others give up; experience increased energy for your goals and sleep well at night knowing you've given your best effort. Having a positive attitude makes life worth living!

Positive thinkers are only different in one way from negative thinkers. They made a choice! They decide to be positive. No matter what causes you to form a negative attitude, you don't have to keep it. You have the power to make the change. One of your greatest gifts is the ability to choose. By making the decision to have a positive mind-set, you take an important first step—but you'll need to take many pro-active steps to achieve your goal. You'll need to re-program yourself with positive thoughts and images.

## Begin with Affirmations

I suggest you begin by writing out some positive affirmations for yourself and say them aloud each day. For every action (or thought), there is an equal or opposite reaction. If you are fearful, write an affirmation that states you are full of courage; if you feel helpless, your affirmation should be about competency.

Encourage your mind with CD's and inspirational books; surround yourself with friends who are on the same positive journey and encourage each other. Practice, practice and practice some more by cultivating a positive mindset in all you think, do, and say. In time old negative thought patterns will be replaced with fresh, positive new ones!

No other habit can exert more power than the habit of positive thinking; everything you desire to accomplish in life depends on it. Your future is decided only by what you believe you can do and have. You attract what you think about. Why not make it something wonderful!

—Paul J. Meyer, [www.pauljmeyer.com](http://www.pauljmeyer.com)

# PersonalCOACH



## Gain Momentum

*You can then achieve goals.*

by Jill Koenig

**H**AVE YOU EVER SET A GOAL AND THEN TOOK little or no action toward its achievement? If so, you're not alone.

The world moves fast these days. We can now send information world-wide via email in a millisecond for free with an internet connection. Things that used to take years to do just 30 years ago, can now be achieved in months, weeks or days. You can achieve your goals now faster than ever before. So there has never been a better time to go after your goals and dreams. Want to learn a new skill? There are tools and resources at your fingertips within seconds. Just google it. Want to start a new business, learn a new language, write a book? Thanks to the internet, you can connect with others who have similar goals or who have done it already.

*I started my goal-setting business with little investment.* My first do-it-yourself web presence, GoalGuru.com, cost \$10! It was all I needed to start my blog, a newsletter, and share my knowledge and coaching experience globally. I had clear goals, a compelling mission, and enormous energy and determination. I would let nothing stop me.

During the same time I launched my business, I had friends and acquaintances who wanted to start a business, but it's been two years and they haven't started anything yet.

The big difference between them and me is momentum. I set my goals, took immediate massive action, started the journey, and have taken action daily since then. What I lacked in knowledge, I made up for with massive action—momentum. What I lacked in finances, I made up for with massive action—momentum. What I lacked in skill, I made up for with massive action—momentum. *Massive action = Momentum.* I didn't wait for everything to be perfect, for the economy to be right, for circumstances to line up in my favor—I just started and took massive action.

Whatever you want to do, whatever goals you aspire to achieve, whatever dreams you yearn for, you can have them. But not if you don't begin and commit to taking massive action today. You don't have to get it right—you just have to get it going. What you lack, you can make up for with massive action.

*What can you do today to meet your goals?* Take the first step and revise your plan as you go. Do it. Get momentum. Live your dreams. **PE**

*Jill Koenig is a top goal strategist, best-selling author, peak performance coach and speaker, an expert on goal setting, time management, and business success. Visit [TheGoalGuru.com](http://TheGoalGuru.com).*

**ACTION:** Take massive action to meet goals.

# Pinch Yourself

You made the ultimate cut.



by Patrick Chisholm

**Y**OU SHOULD PINCH YOURSELF daily for being one among 6.5 billion persons to live now on earth—because the chances of you ever living were *infinitely remote*.

At the time you were conceived, there was a frenzied struggle of millions of sperm cells vying to find a single egg cell. Perhaps a million made it into the uterus, a few thousand swam to the entrance of the Fallopian tubes, a few hundred of those made it to the vicinity of the egg, and just one—the one carrying half the genetic blueprint of you—penetrated the egg. Had any other cell made contact, someone genetically similar to you would have been born—but it would not have been you! So, you are infinitely lucky to have a life.

## Savoring Life

You are one among billions—nay trillions—of potential humans who ended up having a life. Whether you believe that happened out of chance, fate, or predestination, you are exceptional. Just as a winner of an Olympic gold medal should relish that feat every day, so should you for making it here. Savor your incredible achievement daily.

This says a lot about other people, too. The infinitely low odds of any one *particular person* being born should make you to look upon every person with a certain reverence. We all made it into an exclusive club here on earth. And we all should regard each other with the dignity and respect. It's so easy to take life and things for granted. Since your chances of ever experiencing life were so low, savor every moment. Feast your eyes on the sky, earth, animals, and people. Listen to the sounds of nature. Feel the breeze on your skin or the warmth of the sun—knowing that you were close to *never experiencing any of it*.

We hear stories of people having a brush with death, who later have a new appreciation for life and live every day with new vigor. As you had a close brush with never existing, that's the way you should live your life as well.

*Such an attitude makes the ordinary become extraordinary.* Mundane, routine things take on new meaning. You realize that it is only you, among *billions of potential humans*, who ever get to

experience life. Viewing life in this way also helps you to cope with tragedy.

*This mindset also helps you accept yourself as you are:* your traits, physical appearance, mental ability, predisposition for a disease, or other condition. If you had a different genetic make-up, you would not have been you. A different person would have been born instead. So what would you prefer—life with all of its flaws, or no life at all?

You may never reach the top of your field, but you already prevailed in one of the most intensely random and competitive struggles known to nature: conception. The reward: the opportunity to commingle with the other winners.

As one of the fortunate few, learn about and experience as much of life as you can. Read books or watch shows

about the geologic wonders. Get a telescope to eyewitness the marvels beyond our earth. Get a microscope to observe what is too small for the naked eye to see.

*Be thankful that you were born into this day and age.* You were given the ultimate gift—never take it for granted! Celebrate life. Relish it. Marvel at it. Give thanks every day for your life. Take advantage of all life has to offer. Take every chance to get the most out of life. Contemplate how close you came to never witnessing any of it. Above all, treat other people with the respect and dignity that come with knowing that they, too, made the ultimate cut. **PE**

*Patrick Chisholm is creative director of Accentance, a video production company in Chantilly, Va., and a former columnist for the Christian Science Monitor.*

**ACTION:** Show gratitude for your life.

## INSPIRATIONAL • BLESSINGS

# Count Your Blessings

This exercise improves your health.



by Patricia Wheeler

**H**OW'S YOUR HEALTH AND happiness? If you're like many people, not so good in light of economic challenges. The Hans Selye Foundation reports a 23 percent increase in anxiety disorders and a 29 percent increase in insomnia-related complaints this year.

Will all just go away when the economy gets better? No, the effects of stress have a long tail. Holmes and Rahe, creators of the *Stressful Events Scale*, find that people who accumulate many stress points in a two-year period show increased vulnerability to serious illness for the next two years!

*My client Ron is no stranger to stress.* A successful Vice President, he took a promotion that moved him from one coast to the other. Since his daughter had less than two years until graduation, the family decided not to join Ron.

Four months into his new position, his company faced market challenges and a downsizing, during which Ron lost several members of his team.

I coached Ron in navigating these changes, building the capacity of his team and delivering results. But even though he was dealing with a difficult situation very well, Ron was feeling anxious and sleeping poorly. As Ron found, the culture and performance of a team affects the stress of its members. Team culture affects the health of team

members: Those who experience a poor team climate are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety.

Most of us spend more time thinking about how to correct something that's gone wrong, or that we fear may go wrong, than we do basking in what goes right. We tend to think hard when we feel thwarted. This tends to minimize satisfaction and maximize anxiety.

We tend to remember incomplete and unsatisfying outcomes longer and in greater detail than we recall completions and successes. We're hard-wired for this. So if that's our neurological "default setting," what's the antidote?

## Try This Exercise

Being attuned to what goes well in your life ensures that you appreciate



your blessings and promotes optimism. I invite you to try this exercise: For a month, before you go to bed, write down three things that went well that day—even if these things seem relatively small or significant. Enjoying a tasty lunch or a pleasant conversation might make the list. Savor each of your items—and do it daily.

When Ron did this exercise, he began sleeping better, had more energy to face challenges, and was less focused on missing his family, more attuned to the positives in their video chats and calls. He felt more resilient and could respond proactively to stresses. The exercise worked so well that he made counting his blessings a part of his life. **Make this exercise part of your life.** **PE**

*Patricia Wheeler is an executive and team coach and Managing Partner in the Levin Group. E-mail Patricia@TheLevinGroup.com or call 404 377-9408.*

**ACTION:** Count your blessings daily.