

HOW TO CREATE YOURSELF

HOW TO CREATE YOURSELF

SPECIAL EDITION Bonus Chapter
"Protect your Privacy while you Createyourself"

DR. GORDON JONES

How To Createyourself

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Praise for How to Createyourself

"This book will show you what prosperity really is, how the subconscious mind works, and why a sense of purpose is the key to all blessings in work and life. Dr. Jones synthesizes decades of study in personal development and success to ram home the message that we are not pawns in a cosmic game, or irrelevant specs in the universe, but have a unique and powerful role to fulfill. The more you uncover that mission and "createyourself," the more useful you will be to your fellow human beings (and a lot happier)."

Tom Butler-Bowdon

*Author of 50 Self-Help Classics, 50 Psychology Classics,
50 Philosophy Classics*

HOW TO Createyourself

WHAT IS HOW TO CREATEYOURSELF?

The precursor for publishing this book was a workshop on “How to Createyourself” based upon all my previous writings and presentations over the years, and some updated thoughts based upon my latest research and experiences.

WHAT YOU’LL GET FROM HOW TO CREATEYOURSELF

As a student of How to Createyourself, you can expect to take away lots of new knowledge. And, if you go to Createyourself.com you can also expect to...

- **Access exclusive content**, designed specifically for my readers and listeners.
- **Meet new people** who are also interested in learning about How to Createyourself.
- **Make better, more well-informed decisions** with all of your new knowledge.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

As with any coaching exercise, you’ll learn more if you get engaged with the material and actively participate in a

community of peers. Here are a few ways that you can benefit, contribute, and get the most bang for your buck:

- **Be active in the community.** One of the best parts about *How to Createyourself* is that it's not just a book to read or listen to, you're part of a worldwide community. Through Createyourself.com, you can share your thoughts and ideas, and let us know what you're learning as you work through the material.
- **Engage with your peers.** We're all in this together, and we'll learn a whole lot more (AND have more fun) if we help each other out.
- **Ask and answer questions.** Feeling stuck or confused? We're here for you. Share your questions, and we'll help you work through them.

Don't forget; *How to Createyourself* is part of the larger Createyourself.com community. You can register for free. Your engagement with specific information, ideas, and questions about the lessons in our [Workshop Activity Feed](#) will help everyone; and theirs you! You can also start a discussion on a larger topic in the main [Network Activity Feed](#). Especially if you have an idea you need to bounce off more people.

Thank you again for reading or listening to *How to Createyourself*. We're so excited for you to get started.

Here is to your success!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Gordon Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D" and "G".

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Gordon Jones, DHA, MHSA, PAHM, PPM, CBP is a former health care executive turned techie. After graduating from The Citadel with a B.S. in Business and serving two tours in the 82nd Airborne Division USA, he earned a B.A. in Government and International Studies from the University of South Carolina, then his Master and Doctorate in Health Administration from the Medical University of South Carolina.

For his doctoral research, he studied the movement of patients from a personal primary care doctor to a new doctor specifically because the new one would communicate with them through internet-based tools such as online messaging, scheduling, and access to medical reports. At the time, 1999, in the early days of the internet, more than \$3 billion USD would shift from those that would not to those who would adopt such advanced methods of patient engagement. This was the trigger that started Dr. Jones on the path of technology entrepreneur.

“It’s a shame that over 20 years later we still have a long way to go” (Dr. Jones 2021).

Over his 30+ years of digital innovation, entrepreneurship, and business development experience he has founded or invested in many projects including building one of the first national

physician management organizations, the first web-based physician billing company, the first computer-assisted surgery system in the U.S., wearables and IoT, and now emerging technology such as blockchain and cryptocurrency.

He is a Fellow of the iSchool and Entrepreneur-in-Residence teaching Blockchain in Information Sciences, Identity and Data Privacy in the College of Information and Communications at the University of South Carolina. His latest start-up is Validide, which he has co-founded with two USC students/alumni, helping people like you take control of your personal identity information through the use of these new internet-based technologies.

Dr. Jones is also an accomplished athlete being a member of the TL Hanna High School team that won the 4A South Carolina State Soccer Champion in 1980 over the five-time champions, Irmo High (this was TL Hanna's Cinderella story the same year the USA Olympic Hockey team beat the USSR for the Gold in the Winter Olympics). He is a former triathlete, tennis enthusiast, and member of the U.S. Men's Masters Beach Ultimate Team winning Silver in 2004 and Gold in 2007 at the World Championships. Dr. Jones is a biohacker focused on combining farm-to-table all natural organic foods with nutrigenomics and regular exercise to maximize cellular metabolism and nutrient absorption.

"We don't want to just lengthen our lifespans, we want to increase our health span for longevity, even dying healthy," says Dr. Jones.

With his wife, Dr. Jennifer Jones, they have adopted five special children and founded ApparoAcademy.org, a non-profit pre-

school for medically fragile children through an innovative integrated inclusive model preparing children for kindergarten and beyond.

DEDICATION

*To my children,
Amber, Randy, Samuel, Judah, and Capers,
my grandchildren, Penny,
and those coming in the future.*

*Because of whom you are, where you come from, and the hurdles
that life has already placed in your path, you have proven to
have the personal fortitude and persistence to be in this world.*

*I only hope I may provide you with some parental wisdom to
continue your journey from my living several lifetimes as I have
pivoted and adapted through this life.*

*Most importantly, to my wife, Jennifer,
who has been a significant force on my journey in this life,
and our preparing for the next through our faith in God!*



[The Jones Family]

PREFACE



*[The 1980 T L Hanna Senior Powder Puff Cheerleading Squad –
I am front and center]*

HOW CREATEYOURSELF.COM CAME TO BE

Ever since high school, I have been reading self-improvement and success books beginning with, as far as I knew, the classics such as *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill and *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. Later in my 30s, right at the time I was shifting my career from health services to health technology, I was starting to develop some ideas on creating my own tech start-up. This was 1997 when the initial enthusiasm for the internet was bubbling up. One of my favorite authors at the time was Stephen M. Pollan who, together with Mark Levine, published a book titled *Die Broke*.

As Pollan was an attorney and financial advisor, the orientation of the book was on designing a financial model to build your wealth through these four principles:

Quit Today – “No, don’t tell your boss to shove it...at least not out loud. But in your head accept that from this day on you’re a free agent whose number one workplace priority is your personal bottom line.”

Pay Cash – “You should be as conscious of spending as you are of saving. Credit cards should never be used, and debt should only be used as a tool for buying your home or a used car when paying cash is impossible.”

Don’t Retire – “Your work life should be a lifelong journey up and down hills, rather than a climb up a sheer cliff that ends with a jump into the abyss.”

Die Broke – “It sounds terrifying, to ever be broke as the one intolerable outcome to your financial life. And yet, in truth, dying broke might be your best option for a life without fear: fear of failure and privation now, fear of impoverishment in the long run.”

As a matter of fact, we all die broke. Did you hear the one about the man who loved gold? He collected all types of gold in coins, jewelry, ornaments, furniture, bars, and especially the 25-pound large gold bar. By the end of his life, he had given away much of his wealth. And his gold collection? He melted those down into larger gold bars so that, in his words, “He’d be prepared to pay his way into heaven.” Then he arrived at the pearly gates and Peter asked, “What’s with all the pavement bricks?” Peter was amused because in case you didn’t know,

according to Revelation 21:21, “the great street of the city was of pure gold.”

These principles became the basis on which I would develop my *modus operandi* (MO) or my method for building my success. First, I needed to define my “success.” I knew that my success was not going to be based purely upon the money I planned to make for myself, but also the overall life I would be continuously developing until the day I die. As I had learned from all the reading and learning from other great individuals I met in my life or whose works I came to know of, the pursuit of money is not the meaning of life. However, the making of money does lead to attaining some of the things that make life worth living such as a good education, a network of friends and colleagues, and the fulfillment of giving it all back. The other most important aspect of success for me was to raise a family and teach my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren the lessons of life I have learned myself and those who have gone before me.

As you will learn within these pages, I did in fact “quit” working for other people. I had always known that I did not enjoy being an employee, though if you review my LinkedIn profile [<https://www.linkedin.com/in/drgordonjones/>] you will see that I had been an employee for a large portion of my career. There were always underlying reasons that I ended up as an employee. One reason was to get the specific training I felt I needed, because an idea or product I had developed needed incubation in a particular company, or the company needed my help. And I admit that the other reason was that I needed the cash flow!

Even though I have bootstrapped a couple of start-up ideas using credit cards, I have only ever had one or two on which

to operate and never any retailer cards (e.g., Sears, etc.). I don't recommend using credit cards for bootstrapping, but that was the thing back in the early 2000s when starting up a new internet company. Even then, I was diligent about generating cash flow so that I could pay off the balance as quickly as possible to reduce paying interest. As Pollan recommends, credit cards should rarely, if ever, be used, and you should only apply debt to purchase a used car or mortgage on a home, when paying in cash is not possible.

Based upon my genetics through both sets of parents and grandparents, I should easily live into my late 90s without even trying. However, I go a bit further since I know I maintain a purposeful healthy lifestyle and the continuous advances in medical care will count for more. My age statement is that I will live to be 115. So, as regards to the issue around “**don't retire,**” I know I really won't be able to, because whatever money a 401k Roth or social security could potentially provide me will run out well before I am 100 years old, leaving me with another 15 years to fund. I know doctors who have practiced well into their 80s, and I know a lawyer who worked to the ripe old age of 110. We will talk later about ways in which we can generate passive income from investments that will help sustain a longer than normal lifespan, and then be passed onto your children or estate.

Finally, I absolutely believe in dying broke. While I am not a liberal advocating that the government should tax all my wealth and take it to benefit “the society” when I die, I do plan on giving away as much as I can while I am living to enjoy “**The Giving.**” After I die, the remainder will go to the charitable causes that I believe in supporting, not whatever the government thinks is best for my money. My wife and I

currently have a foundation we created to serve and support children with special needs. After we tithe to our church, much of our net proceeds go to supporting the *ApparoAcademy.org*.

The trick is draining the bank at the same time you die, not before!

Now back to Pollan's book, *Die Broke*.

Towards the end of the book, Pollan is talking about how, as a business owner or employee of another business, the business is not you, and your work is not who you are. It's nothing more than an avenue to generate cash flow that leads to profits that then may lead to wealth for yourself. He suggests that we "***create our own Yourself, Inc.***" as a vehicle through which we can start or buy businesses, make investments, conduct joint ventures, etc. He likens this to Warren Buffet's relationship to Berkshire Hathaway, the company he started in the 40s and has grown into a \$315 billion enterprise making him one of the wealthiest men on Earth today and making millionaires of people who invested in his vision early.

In his discussion on this topic, Pollan writes the words, "***I suggest you createyourself, Inc. or become a Mercenary.***" Because I was working on a business idea to leverage the internet, I had come to know the value of buying a specific URL (your website address) for marketing purposes, and it hit me that I should see if Createyourself.com was available. I was astounded to find that it was, and I immediately bought it. I could not believe that during a time when the internet was already being talked about everywhere, no one who was reading *Die Broke* nor even the authors or publisher had thought to buy such a great website address for a business on personal development.

Over the years, I have only used the site as a place to publish blogs and talk about my personal development journey, as well as promote services as an executive and start-up coach. Today, though, we are announcing the launch of the Createyourself.com community and the future Createyourself on Demand service where we will be building up the site to be the go-to place for the best of all in personal development.

The personal development industry is a \$10 billion highly fragmented one with many outstanding models getting little traction and terrible models getting millions of followers. I am not calling out any specific person, guru, or institute here – that is not my purpose. But what I do hope to do is vet out the most legitimate and research-based models with credentialed personalities and provide them here to you through the Createyourself Community. I am hoping that the people interested in self-improvement, team development, and personal mastery over **“yourself”** will come to Createyourself.com as their first go-to site for needed resources.

Through this book, I expect you will learn some lessons that will benefit you in your life and business and enable you to createyourself as you wish.

Please join us in this journey!

Dr. Gordon Jones



FOREWORD

My main aspiration as a mentor, coach, and public speaker is to help individuals fulfill their goals and unleash their greatness. Over the years, I have become known as The Goals Guy developing a reputation as the go-to person by immensely successful entrepreneurs, executives, professional athletes, and even Special Military Forces when they need to step up their execution skills.

As you will learn within this book you are reading or listening to, Dr. Gordon Jones has been a long-time colleague and client of mine. I am the author of Everything Counts and the creator of the 100 Days Challenge. Over the years and through the program, I have met and coached 10s of thousands of individuals who have accelerated the achievements of their goals; and many have shared with me how they have far exceeded their original expectations in so many ways.

Dr. Jones is one of the rare higher achievers.

The data shows that 92% of people do not achieve their life goals. What do the other 8% do? We can learn from Dr. Jones and his new book titled “How to Createyourself.”

How to Createyourself is a widely encompassing approach to developing one's character, which, according to Dr. Jones is the foundation of true and lasting success. Once embedded into one's core values, it provides the mechanism to be able to make the right decisions in any given situation towards achieving one's goals.

Through Createyourself you will find a great resource that will enable you to Createyourself according to your own design. Dr. Jones' personal journey resonates quite well in how we must all learn from our own mistakes, study successful people before us, and commit to our own achievements.

You will learn how a man who overcomes failures many times in his life evolves to create himself into a successful businessman, husband, father, lover of liberty, and Patriot of America. If you are a business person, entrepreneur, athlete, coach, student, mother, father, or someone who simply wants to accelerate your rate of success, play a much bigger game in lesser time, then you will gain great insight into how you may Createyourself from Dr. Jones.

Recommending this book is such an easy task. Dr. Jones came to me to undergo the 100 Day Challenge and you might conveniently think I am here as his mentor. In the period of time we have been working together, I have come to respect his accomplishments and how giving he is in everything he does. He so selflessly shares his wisdom, knowledge, skills, and resources.

Give yourself the gift of picking Dr. Jones' brain and be amazed by his brilliance, kindness, and selflessness by reading this book.

I gave myself the gift. It's now your turn to receive yours.

Gary Ryan Blair

Author of Everything Counts!,
Creator of the 100 Days Challenge, and
Goals Guy of the Personal Strategic Plan

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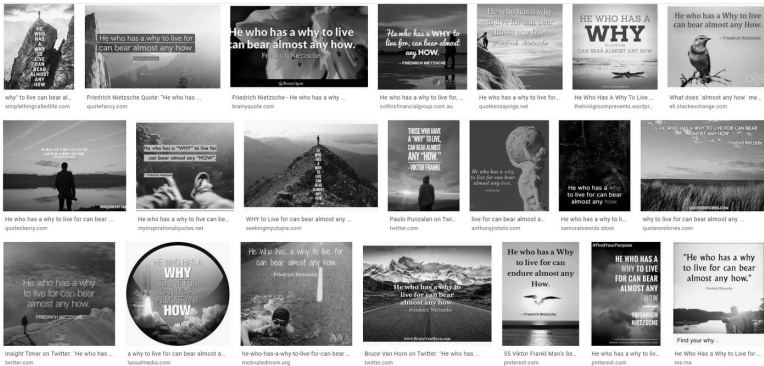
PART I

WHY

“He who has a Why to live for can bear almost any How.”
– Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche is talking about how a person with nothing to live for subconsciously prefers death, but someone who has something to live for, his or her why, continues to live and can endure most anything (HOW) to survive. Well, we are going much further in this book than just “surviving!” We want to create a life that will bring joy to others and happiness (which are much different things) to us throughout our lives.

We start with understanding what the pursuit of prosperity truly means.



If you copy and paste Nietzsche’s quote in Google Images, you’ll see a whole bunch of photos of mountain ranges, beautiful sunsets, and even rocks. Is this truly what people want; does this illustrate their “why” as Nietzsche was expressing?

Certainly, they don't portray my sense of being prosperous except that maybe the people are fortunate enough to see God's nature in action. It's funny, the rocket launch is probably the closest "why" image that Elon Musk would have used – he is the billionaire founder and CEO of SpaceX working hard to get humans to Mars.

Let's talk about our why.

STARTING WITH "WHY"

Why do you do the things you do? Have you ever heard the story of the rich Silicon Valley entrepreneur who was vacationing on a secluded Caribbean Island with his family? Let's call him Steve. Every morning, Steve would wake up early before the others and go for a run on the beach. He would witness the amazing nature coming out of the woods and sea and enjoy the beach and the wide-open space before daylight would bring over the beachgoers. As he ran, he was able to enjoy the morning sea breezes and the fragrance coming from the fresh vegetation of the local flora.

Every morning as he approached a particular part of the beach furthest from the rental homes and the hustle of the hoteliers, he would find a young man fishing and casting his lines out into the waves. The first couple of mornings he just ran by the man, smiling and waving. He noticed that the man would pull in a fish about every time he passed by. Steve was fascinated as he watched the man fight against the fish for a few minutes and then put it into his cooler, bait his line again, and throw it back into the surf.

One morning, on his return by the man, Steve decided to stop and ask him how the fishing was going. This was a bit later in the morning and the man just showed him his catch in the cooler. Steve was amazed that he had caught so many large fish right off the shore in such a short time. He asked the man if he had this kind of catch every morning and the man said yes. The man explained that he lived in a house just up the path in the forest and that he came to this spot every morning to fish before the family wrestled awake. He would go home to have a late breakfast with his wife and children before taking the fish into the market to sell. It was his mode of living that paid for his house and comfort for his family. He would fish, take the catch into town to sell, and return home in the afternoon to spend the rest of the day with his wife and children on the beach.

Steve was amazed, but not at the part of the story you'd think. He was stuck on the ease in which the man could catch and sell his fish. He told the man he was an entrepreneur and started his company from scratch as a small business, much the same way as the man. Then he explained how he was able to grow the company over the many years into a very large company that he recently sold it, allowing him to bring his whole family, adult children, and grandchildren to enjoy this beautiful island together.

He suggested to the young man that he could do the same. Since he was so good at fishing, why not buy a boat to catch more fish faster and sell into the market to make more money. He could then use that money to buy another boat, hire a team to operate the two boats with him, and continue to grow the company to have a fleet of fishing boats eventually. After several years of hard work, he could eventually have such a

large market share that he could build a cannery and sell his fish all over the world.

Now, as Steve explained it honestly, he'd have to work hard, sacrifice more time from his family, and the road would not be easy. Many evenings after working IN his business as a fisherman, he would have to work ON his business as an owner. He would probably have to wake up early in the morning to get the boats out of the harbor first and be on hand while the fish were being processed in the afternoon. But that it would all be worth the hard work when he sold his business for millions enriching his family.

The man listened to all this and even got excited at the prospect as he envisioned how Steve was explaining the roadmap. He could see how his life might change because of the wealth and prestige within the community as a business leader. Then Steve asked the right question. What would you do with all that money?

That is when the young man's smile turned into confusion, and then a minute later into an enlightened look of complete satisfaction. He told Steve, "Well, I would retire to a beautiful island in the Caribbean, live in the forest near the beach where I could fish every morning, spend a little time in town with friends while I sell my fish, and then the rest of the day I would hang out at home with my wife and children."

Of course, the man realized he was already living that dream so why would he need to go through all the headache of building a huge company and endure the displeasure of spending so much time away from his family for a way of life that he was already enjoying. This is true prosperity.

“If we want to feel an undying passion for our work, if we want to feel we are contributing to something bigger than ourselves, we all need to know our WHY.”

–Simon Sinek

One of my favorite TED Talks is the one that launched Simon Sinek’s public career. In it, he illustrates how to create a world in which people will wake up every day, wanting to go to work and at the end of the day, come home feeling fulfilled with the work they have finished. He emphasizes that you too can create this feeling for yourself, but only if you know your “why” in doing the things you do; if you know your true purpose, and you share it with everyone.

Sinek believes you can achieve all the success you desire, build up a great company, or do anything passionately only if you have a firm grasp over your why. This will not only make you feel more qualified and confident to choose your career path or start up your own company, but it will also enable you to create yourself a fulfilling life and attract others to it.

Sinek tells the story about how he started and operated his own small business for several years, wherein the early years he was passionate and loved operating it. But over time as he continued running the business, one day, he just stopped liking it and his life started to seem incomplete. He talks about how people gave him advice like “do what you love,” but he was already doing what he loved. The thing he couldn’t answer was why he was doing what he was doing. That was where he developed the philosophy to create yourself through what he calls “FIND YOUR WHY.”

As the opening story about the fisherman offers, you must answer the question of why you are doing something before you do anything to attempt to create yourself. Whether it is that you're passionate about—your hobby, side hustle, a start-up company, or your lifestyle—it is important for you to know why you are doing any of this so that your heart and mind remain committed to it. That way, you can convey that same ideology to others whom you will want to build relationships with around your why.

In everything you do, you should become obsessed with asking yourself why and then defining the answer before you begin. This will allow you to become an enthusiast and stay motivated over the long haul. Have you ever seen a young child try to attain something they really want that is just out of reach? The child may be unable to reach it today and after a while may stop reaching for it, moving on to something else. But the very next day, when the child wakes, she will go straight for the item again to see if she can reach it today. She will keep trying every day because she has a why. Her why is that she needs to have the item in her hand, put it in her mouth, and even taste it. You see it in that child, you recognize that why, and you become engaged in the process of that child achieving her why. Now imagine that kind of persistence toward your goal to create yourself and how easy it can be to achieve with the knowledge of why. This kind of persistence will only come if you understand your why.

Let me give you some reasons why it is so important to know the why in your life.

The first thing that comes to mind when thinking about “why” is the meaning that it adds to your life. You may have noticed

in my introduction how, before I met Jennifer, I thought my mission was to create new technologies that made providing healthcare better. Through my creativity, I believed innovating was my path not only to wealth but also to having satisfaction with my life, and I was happy with that idea.

Interestingly, it was not until I was married that I began to feel I was not achieving my goals and new responsibilities as a husband and father. I was always working to create new ways of innovating in healthcare and not seeing what my actual purpose truly is. As Sinek also experienced, these feelings were starting to affect all the relationships in my life, especially since Jennifer was bringing in more cash every month than I was, because start-ups don't allow the founders much in pay when they must pay everyone else first until the venture is a success.

But knowing the purpose of your life will give it a sense of meaning and will give you the fire in your soul that you have been searching for. In my case, I had to finally understand that my purpose, my why, was not being defined as a healthcare entrepreneur, but rather a father to my children and a husband to my wife with lessons through them that I could also share with others like you. You are the only person who truly knows you, who knows what you love, what you desire, and that you wish to create yourself. You just need a pathway to do so.

As you develop your why and the sharing of it with others, you will further achieve a sense of belonging as others around you understand why you are doing the things that you do. Through this understanding and their love for you, they will support you in your path more enthusiastically. After you have found your why, it will be easier for you to find your place in life.

Knowing your life purpose and your why will unlock within you your true potential. You will reward yourself when you find your why as your highest productivity will be unlocked and your God-given talents will come out and shine for all to see.

The sense of self is another thing that you will achieve after you have found your life purpose. You will feel as if you are truly yourself after you have established your why, the one you have always been searching for.

A boost in confidence is one of the most prominent traits gained when you find your why because you will know that you are here for a purpose and that your contributions count – no matter what the naysayers say. Finding your life's purpose and aligning your work to it will allow you to contribute greatly to the world and make a significant difference. You will be doing what really matters to you which will give you a sense of accomplishment. After finding your why, you will begin to build a legacy that will make you proud of yourself and everything you have achieved.

Another benefit for those near it is that no mid-life crisis will ever come to affect your relationships. Before you establish a connection with the purpose of your life, over time you may tend to change your relationships in a negative way, as I was doing. The relationships without a why can seem to be stale and even fall apart; this could further affect your professional life as well. You may feel the frustration of not living up to your fullest potential. Once you get to know your why and life purpose, you will begin forming tight bonds with others who understand and believe in your why. This is the start to create yourself, to be a better person all around, and start attracting all sorts of new relationships.

Last but not least, knowing the purpose of your life affects your health and wellness. Not knowing your why can have a tremendous inverse effect on your physical and mental health. You can become exhausted from all the energy you are putting into efforts that are not based upon your why. You may grow irritated with yourself and those around you for reasons that are not their fault. If you are not following your why, you may become depressed which results in adverse effects on your physical health as well. You may look for comfort foods and drink or stop getting outside or going to the gym for regular exercise; this is when you will be in a whole heap of trouble.

The amazing thing about living your why is that it actually gives you more control over your life and happiness, which in turn reduces stress on your body and makes you feel fulfilled and content. Living your life's purpose will inevitably lead to a better you. Now you ask, "How do I find my why, my life's purpose?"

Before you start to develop your why, you need to understand that everyone has one; everyone is provided a purpose that they can be passionate about. Everyone has something they are naturally good at doing, we call it a God-given talent, that not only makes them feel joy but also contributes back to the community. Most people just go after what they think they are supposed to do from the pressures of family or society. Nothing can be farther from the truth. God provides, through the natural order of things, specific gifts making everyone special in their own right. If there is no enthusiasm for this path, they live their lives believing they don't have anything special to offer to the world. In most cases, society has hidden these talents from you. You just need to make a conscious

decision to create yourself rather than listen and depend on others to do it for you. When you commit to finding your why, you will see amazing changes taking place for yourself.

FINDING YOUR WHY

Let's begin helping you find your why by first asking yourself three questions.

- What do you do?
- How do you do it?
- Why do you do it?

People are able to answer the first two questions fairly easily because these are the things that you physically do today. It is a good exercise to go through though because you likely have never really asked yourself these questions. You know what you do and how you do it because you have been doing it for the longest time, but it's so embedded into your mind that you don't think about it much in detail other than how it might not make you happy.

The question of why you do the things you do is the tricky one. They may be the result of circumstances, barriers, family obligations, society constraints, and a whole host of "reasons." Where it needs to come from, however, is from within you instead. Sit down, write out these questions for yourself. Answer the first two questions in as much detail as you can. This is not just your job, but virtually everything you do on a regular basis including habits like drinking coffee in the

morning to why you take a particular route to work every day. This could be quite intense and detailed if you do so in-depth.

If you need more insight, you can ask the people around you what they see. This is good because there is scientific proof that we don't see what we are actually doing and even how we are doing it as accurately as others. They will tell you what and how you do what you do, and they may even tell you why they believe you are doing these things this way.

For example, my BIGGEST fault that many times I don't even know I am doing is, when I get frustrated with something that is not working the way I want it, I tend to cuss under my breath to where I don't even know I am doing it most of the time. However, those around me know I am doing it, and when I do it most. It started early in my life probably in high school, but definitely when I was at The Citadel. When home on a break during my "knob" year (first year), my mom mentioned that she was surprised about the habit I had started. I was embarrassed not really for myself, but my mom is the quintessential Southern Belle and ultimate Ms. Manners! So, I asked her if she would point out the next time she heard me cussing. It wasn't too long while I was enamored with some dumb TV show that she walked right up in between me and the TV and gave me a good smack across the face. You can imagine my shock and surprise, plus it stung. She explained that she had been trying to get my attention to let me know she heard me cussing at the TV, but I was oblivious, so she let me know in the manner any true Southern Belle would when a man disrespected her person by talking in such bad language around her – a good slap across the face!

I still have the problem today even with all the women in my life trying to let me know of their disappointment. I keep asking God for help and end up just having to ask for forgiveness.

Another story to illustrate our Do, How, Why: when Jennifer and I started building our family, we were both working full time and working side hustles to generate more income. This lent us little time to spend in family time. Our first adoption was a 15-year-old who had been in and out of the state foster system most of her life. We knew that she had never really been exposed to a structured family life. One of the most important things every family can do is to eat their dinner together at the same time every night. This not only allows the family to spend time talking and keeping up with each other, but it also creates regularity and commitment to each other in making sure we are all there. It also allows for much more healthy eating rather than buying fast food or eating by ourselves in front of a TV to keep us company while the rest of the family is doing whatever.

With all the work Jennifer and I were doing, we didn't know how we were going to make that commitment. We had to make some changes in our lives to start fulfilling our purpose and commitment to our daughter. We had not actually sat down and defined what we were doing as our why, but it was the first step in knowing how we are doing it.

Now that you know what you are doing and how you are doing it, it's time to establish your why for yourself. A true why must come from your heart and soul where you know you are or will be completely content and happy with how your life is developing. Your why cannot be only about money. Money is only a means to gain value through transactions. Money can

never be a why. Your why is what makes you inspired to be alive. You can use the money to help achieve the why you are pursuing, but it is not the end game.

Your why should start with you and then go forward to become bigger than you. Your why should be about connecting what you are passionate about and then helping others achieve what they are passionate about. Your why should be something that wakes you up every morning with a passion and fire in your eyes, something you are thinking about the minute you put your feet on the ground, all day, and through the night into your dreams. Your why should enable you to create yourself into someone you are proud of seeing in the mirror every single morning of your life.

When you focus your attention on endeavors around your why, they put a fire in your belly to work diligently, share your story, and grow your impact and influence in ways that nothing else can. You don't have to shout it out loud, though that is good for building a social following, but as you demonstrate every day how you are working your why, others will notice and ask you questions. You will start out thinking your why is about you, but what you will quickly realize is that it becomes bigger than you.

Sinek talks about how Steve Jobs used his why to build the Apple company. He presents how if Jobs didn't have a why, Apple's marketing message would be something like this...

What – We make great computers

How – They are beautifully designed, simple, and easy to use

Why – Want to buy one?

Sinek illustrates to us how this is not the way Apple became the world's most valuable company. Instead, based on Jobs' why it was truly like this...

Why – Everything we do we believe in challenging the status quo, we believe in thinking differently

How – The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use, and customer friendly

What – We just happen to make great computers, want to buy one?

The first example is about the money, where the why comes from the money. The second is about the passion that Apple has to create beautifully designed products so attractive to the customer that they are very proud to be seen walking around with one and using it in the office. The money comes from the why and a boatload of money at that in Apple's case.

When a person is full of passion about their why like Steve Jobs was, they are at their most productive, and they add more value, enjoy their work, and have greater professional and personal fulfillment. And yes, people often make more money doing the things where they find greater fulfillment.

As a part of your why discovery, you should take an assessment of your skills, natural talents, and strengths. Just as I did when I knew I wanted to transition out of the military and go into international business. I assessed the skills I had around my passion, and I worked to enhance the ones I knew I would need to develop to make the How more effective. You can look back to your childhood and find out the few things which you

have always been good at doing or enjoyed. Things that may have had you wonder why it is so hard for others. When I had to pivot from going into international business, I looked back at my experiences working at the hospital and with patients. I recalled how much I enjoyed it and how much my work affected the patient's and their family's experiences with the care they received. This enabled me to see that as a part of my why and that going into health administration would be how I could move towards fulfilling my why.

As you look back, are you able to see patterns and opportunities amidst the memories? Are you a creative person? Do you have a knack for politics, or have you been a business minded individual from your early years? Whatever it is, you need to define it because it will help you create your why. You can ask people about yourself, like your siblings and parents. Your parents can tell you in detail about what you were good at in your childhood. Of course, it is not necessary that you are only passionate about the things you are good at, but it is quite rare that someone aspires and ambitions for something they have no natural talent to achieve.

Another aspect of defining your why to create yourself is to understand your personal character. Your character is what defines most of your choices and decisions in life. Your character qualities are based on your value system and what you believe to be valuable. You may not know how to consciously determine your true character and that's what we'll do next. It is not easy to be true to yourself while working to portray a different identity to the world, and in the digital world, we call it your digital identity. Let's briefly cover this topic here. Digital identity has become indispensably part of our journey to creating ourselves. It more than just gives other people

a glimpse of our lives (and businesses) which can either be truthful or fabricated, it can, sadly, be very intrusive. I provide a final bonus chapter for this purpose where you will learn how to control your personal information as you create yourself. I call this chapter *Protect Your Privacy While You Create Yourself* because we want you to be able to take control of the way your personal information is used and shared by various entities; it should not be used to suppress your freedom. You will discover as well that the COVID-19 pandemic has made you, albeit seemingly voluntarily, give up some (or a lot) of your personal freedom. And freedom is crucial in order to create a truthful version of you. More on this in Part X, the bonus chapter.

Going back to our discussion of character development, at the start of your journey, there are some basic useful questions you can ask yourself. The following are the steps you can take to determine and develop your character and work towards truly creating yourself.

Are you honest? Do you tell the truth, whether it is about yourself or someone else? Being honest is the key to create yourself because it genuinely builds confidence in yourself and illustrates to other people how they can trust you. If someone asks you something and you are selective in your response, sometimes making stuff up and only sometimes telling the truth eventually, they will not feel they can trust you. If you don't know the answer to their question, just tell them that you don't have knowledge on the subject. They will respect you for being honest. Do not make stuff up about your life to people; be honest and be direct. You don't have to tell everyone your whole life's story, but when asked directly don't withhold information. A great way to build on that trust is to share your thoughts on failures that you have had in life

and how you overcame them. Everyone fails more than they succeed, it is the natural way of things. So, telling your failure story and how you did or plan to overcome it builds admiration and strong relationships with others.

Are you kind and caring? Showing that you care through generosity and compassion is indeed a defining element of your character, it not only portrays you in a good light but also tells people that they can count on you. I personally can't say that I am always kind, especially when frustrated, but my friends and family know that and are patient with me. They also see that I am caring and compassionate through my actions and that is what they depend on from me. What do your friends and family expect or depend upon from you?

Do you make promises you can't possibly keep? This is actually one of the things that frustrate me the most. It's fairly straightforward, if you don't tend to keep promises then don't make them. People depend on things getting done that others commit to doing. Promises bring the hopes up of people when they depend on a person helping them achieve a goal. When you make a commitment and then let them down, it shows you as extremely irresponsible. This goes for paying your debts on time, keeping confidential matters private, and honoring all your commitments. As the saying goes, if you want something done, find a successfully busy person and ask them. If they agree, they will know how to get it done and it will get done as stated.

Are you a good citizen? Do you obey the laws and respect the authorities? The other day I was taking my sons to school and on auto-drive, subconsciously. I wasn't thinking about where I was, and I had just entered the reduced school speed

zone without slowing down. There also happened to be a police officer there monitoring traffic and he turned on his lights. I looked down and realized I was over the speed limit. I immediately pulled over even before the officer had turned his vehicle around and waited for him to come to my window. I was polite and agreeable and even introduced him to my sons. I accepted the ticket graciously and with good humor and the officer said to me, "I have recommended the court give you a reduced penalty because you have been so cordial." What a sharable moment for my sons to learn! Being a law-abiding citizen makes you a better person and showing that to your children makes you feel good as well.

Another way to be a good citizen includes voting **your** conscious in elections not what your spouse, family, or party dictate to you. Give to a charity your time as a volunteer and not just money. Respect and protect the environment. I promise people like me who get frustrated with people who aren't respectful to our environment (and I'm no tree hugger) get their paybacks. I remember a visit to Walmart, when I was parking, and I watched a lady dump a whole tray of cigarette butts out her door on the ground by her car before she went into the store. That kind of selfish stuff just grates my nerves. I tell my kids all the time to clean up their mess because someone has to do it and it's selfish of them to make someone else do it. I went over to clean up her mess and low and behold discovered that her driver's side window was open. Instead of dumping the nasty load into the trash as I was planning, I politely decorated the interior of her car returning her misplaced property. Luckily, the boys weren't with me on that trip as that might not have been the best lesson to teach them, but I hope she learned one!

Are you being truly who you are? This is the most important thing; to be who you truly are! Don't follow the mainstream if that is not you. You may feel pressure to act in a certain way (like voting how your party wants instead of your way) or do things in a particular manner because that is the way your crowd does it. Being comfortable in your own skin includes being comfortable with the things you do and the way you do them. As long as you are being honest, not breaking the law, not infringing on others' rights, then if someone can't accept you for who you are, they are not worth your time.

Personal character development is the crux to create yourself. We will talk a great deal more about character development as we progress through this book. Knowing your character traits will allow you to gain self-control and enable you to understand yourself better, helping you in determining your why and finding purpose in your life.

Imagine it's a Monday morning. You wake up at 7:00 AM and ask yourself why you want to wake up. You cannot answer that question to yourself truthfully, but you wake up nonetheless and go to work. Throughout the day, you keep wondering what your true purpose in life is. You do some reading on personal development, think about this question for a few weeks, write some ideas down, and believe you know what your true purpose is and what you want to do about it. Then you think about all the risks involved in pursuing your purpose and you chicken out, you give up, and you don't go for it.

There is a natural law that God has provided us, it has to do with enduring the darkness in order to enjoy the light. What most people don't understand is that their direction dictates how long they remain in the darkness before the light. Let's

just take the Earth and Sun as an example. Is it smarter to run west to try and catch up to the light, or run east and meet the light? This also goes for rewards. The natural law does not allow us the rewards without overcoming the challenges that enable us to truly enjoy the reward. Taking the challenge also comes with risks; risks of injury, risk of failure in front of others, and risk of grave disappointment in ourselves, but without the risk, there is no reward!

Did you know that many of our past presidents and British prime ministers grew up in single-family homes after the death of one parent in their childhood? As children, these people depended upon their resilience to take huge risks, especially as they decided to enter politics and pursue the top jobs of their nations. My children each have their own special hurdles that required a great deal of persistence and risk-taking to just be alive today. We are amazed at their will to live and even though they are at an age now to understand the challenges they had earlier in their lives, they do not avoid taking risks but instead find paths to get through the tough times.

I can't say that they are not afraid of failure, they are. But as we remind them of the difficulties they have already overcome, they are willing to try and not allow the potential of failure keep them from their goal. Our children are fortunate in this aspect because as serial entrepreneurs both Jennifer and I are well accustomed to taking risks, failing many times over, and even after achieving success in our endeavor failing still again later. We share these stories with our children, our family, and employees because not only do we believe they may help others overcome their personal obstacles, but they remind us of what we have had to go through to get where we are today. We also know we still have a long row to hoe ahead!

Here are a few things that you can do to get over your fear of change and risks.

Know that failure is necessary. The world will tell you to fear it, that is the darkness, but each of the great people we read about in history failed and overcame to meet the light. If they hadn't, if their success was solely gained through privilege, then we wouldn't be reading about them. They would be boring stories and not the reality we all know is true. Does anyone truly believe even the people born into privilege don't have their own personal fears of failure? Didn't they have to overcome their fear of getting in the water to learn how to swim? They still had to train, learn, and think about how to best win the race or fight their enemies, and then do it.

What is great about failure is that it always creates opportunities; the more you fail, the greater you learn of the world, and the more you learn, the better chance you have to overcome the very next time. Failure, like the darkness, also enables us to appreciate our successes, as we do the light. This is why today's coddling parents who hover over their children so they will never experience failure or challenges are truly harming their children and building huge barriers to their eventual success in life. Instead of fearing failure, even as parents, be excited about it. You don't have to like the failure but now you know you are one step closer to achieving your goals to create yourself.

Don't allow yourself to have self-doubt. Now that you know failure is required to attain success, we can start working on self-doubt. This is beyond fear. Whenever you go against the grain, pursue an idea, or strive for something greater than what the average person will strive for themselves, there will

be people who question your actions, tell you you're crazy, and lead you to doubt yourself. These people are jealous of your strength in trying because of their own fears – so don't listen to them!

I have a client who is selling their business to an employee so the client can move onto another project. The employee and her husband are young, but professionals in the industry. They are being told by their own family and circle of friends that they should not be risking their money buying the business. They are telling them that they don't know what they are doing, and they will fail only because they have failed at something in the past. This is the type of darkness you must run through to meet the light and gain the success you deserve for overcoming it. They did not end up buying the business, which was not just a loss for my client, but a greater loss to the “woulda, coulda, shoulda” couple who may now never sprout their own wings because of their family's opinions and jealousies.

An important thing at this point, however, is to always listen to your naysayers and study if what they are saying has any validity. In the world of entrepreneurialism, we call this “customer discovery.” We tell all our founders that they should actually seek this kind of information. They should learn what specific concerns their potential customers may bring up while they are developing the product, not after. This goes for family and friends. Filter out their naysaying and ask them directly to identify, specifically, their concerns. Then thinking about those concerns, develop a strategy to overcome them. Never allow self-doubt to creep into your mind and sabotage your opportunity. Go with your gut but be smart about it and get the perspective of others so you can learn from their experience and insight to create yourself.

Calculate the risk. Not fearing risks doesn't mean that you just jump into them headfirst without any consideration. Blind risks rarely, if ever, turn out well. It's like randomly penciling in answers on a multiple-choice test for which you never studied. The probability may give you some right answers, but it's unlikely you will have a passing grade. However, if you study carefully the question and contemplate each of the answers provided, you will have a much better chance of passing. The same thing goes into how to create yourself. You must understand your why you want to go into a new direction for your life, then develop the How to become the What you envision.

There are risks you will take and challenges you will have to endure. There are people who will put up barriers and there may even be loved ones who remain behind. This was the casualty of my first marriage while in the Army. We were married for what we thought was love but without truly knowing each other, especially our long-term life vision as individuals and how we attained them as a couple. In the end, our life's visions were much different and for me to achieve mine and her hers, we had to leave each other behind.

A part of developing your path is calculating these risks and developing contingency plans and strategies to overcome them. By having a plan in place, you will generate the motivation you need to fulfill your why and create yourself.

While developing your why in order to create yourself, you will ultimately be pursuing prosperity for yourself and those around you.

PURPOSEFUL PROSPERITY

“Money is only a tool. It will take you wherever you wish, but it will not replace you as the driver.”

–Ayn Rand

You are the driver of your why and purpose. Only you can create yourself!

Who you are today is based upon all the decisions you have made up to this point in your life; the activities you did in high school, the degree you didn't earn in college, the sports you play, the mate you chose, the church you attend, the friends you are close to, on and on. The only choice you did not have is who your parents are and at the end of the day, they are not the reason you are where you are today. You are because of the choices you have made on your journey up to today!

God created us with the free will to make our own choices and due to this freedom to make our own choices, everyone is different. Everyone thinks, feels, and gives meaning to words differently. We value things in our lives according to our own set of presumptions. Some people give value to family, some give it to happiness, others totally to God, while others are attracted to wealth, and of course combinations of all these things exist in every life.

But what is wealth and how does it relate to our prosperity? Wealth is defined by Merriam Webster as “an abundance of valuable possessions or money. It is the state of being rich or materially prosperous. Wealth is a measure of a person's or family's net worth – that is, the measurement of how much a

person has in savings, investments, real estate and cash, minus all debts.” It is based purely on monetary value. Prosperity, on the other hand, is the condition of being successful, flourishing, or thriving. While prosperity is generally viewed in economic terms, it encompasses much more than just monetary value. You can be prosperous in all areas of your life; in your career when you attain tenure as a professor, when you publish a book and have become well known for your area of expertise, your children excel in playing chess and are moving towards grandmaster quickly, etc.; all based upon how you and your family view and feel prosperous.

Regardless of what you give value to, one thing remains the same for all of us, our basic needs.

Our basic needs include air, water, food, and shelter. How we get all these needs in today’s society is through the exchange of money. It is essential for sustenance; it is what drives the economy, and everyone is striving to attain it at some level. Though everyone is looking for it, few like to admit it; meaning everyone acts as if they loathe the concept of running after money though we all are doing so – unless of course, you live in a socialist country or commune. But the reality is that money is important for our survival. I know it is hard to determine this because of how society portrays money to us in two completely different ways.

First, society shows us that money is everything through the celebrity culture, the rich and famous, and Wall Street and Silicon Valley greediness. There are reality shows dedicated to showing off big mansions and fancy cars. Every game show’s winnings are either in cash or prizes.

Second, in a completely different message that treats wealth and related concepts with suspicion and tells us not to feel envious towards them, we see the limitations of money and the potential trouble it causes. Some people might even feel that money is dirty and a corrupter of souls. One of the most misquoted verses in the Bible is “Money is the root of all evil.” That is not at all what it says. Instead, 1 Timothy 6:10 states,

*“For the **LOVE** of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*

It is the love of money and all the problems that come along with being focused on the pursuit of money rather than living life, loving others, and focusing on your family that is the root of all evil.

I want to talk about people who think that your purpose in life and money are two separate things. Prosperity in the form of monetary independence is quite important. Although it is wise not to go overboard with it, it still forms the foundation of our lives in America. I give a talk about money and how it enables us to scale our community’s economy that then raises everyone in our community’s standard of living above what it would have been otherwise. This is basically the story of the United States. Do you realize that the poorest person in America has more than the “middle class” of every other nation on Earth? Money is just a standard way to calculate value and time. When you accept a job that pays you \$8.50 an hour, you are establishing that your time is only worth \$8.50 an hour. If you accept a job that pays you an annual salary of \$45,000 a year, you’re saying that your time is worth only \$21 an hour, and as a matter of fact it’s even less because when you are

on a salary, you are expected to work more than a 40-hour workweek.

If you pursue prosperity in regard to money, it means you can create more value and you will have more control over your life. You will be able to better provide for your loved ones. You will be able to treat yourself well and help your community. The money will enable you to contribute to good causes making you happier, in turn. However, prosperity doesn't always translate into money for everyone. It can mean different things from helping others to being content and happy in your current life. You understand all of this, but we must face the fact that everyone must pursue money at some level in order to survive.

Wealth, money, and riches mean the same thing, and nowadays are often wrongly associated with greed, gluttony, and untrustworthiness. Why is it that people shame the thing that leads them to those things they need now and will want in the future? It is because to obtain wealth and get rich, you must work and make changes in your life. This can be a difficult proposition for most people, but one that EVERYONE can overcome. Most people don't wish to answer the challenge and thus remain lazy finding any reason to justify why they are not rich. The reason wealth is shamed is due to these types of people and their jealousy creating the stigma that if someone seeks wealth, they are greedy and terrible, taking from the poor to get rich – what absolute nonsense. What people ought to be jealous of is not the wealth or prosperity, but instead they should be jealous of the fact that the person has the personal fortitude and discipline to take on the pursuit – ah, but that is better described as envy.

There is nothing wrong with wanting money or having money. What you do with that money is more of what is important. I stress that there is nothing wrong with having money; it won't corrupt you unless you let it. Take Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and Mark Zuckerberg who are three of the wealthiest people in the world. They each have given more than 80% of their wealth to charities while also employing millions of people around the world giving them the ability to generate the money needed to take care of their families. You don't have to give your money to charity, but you can do whatever you think is meaningful to you. Money does not make anyone a bad person, but bad people use the power money gives them for bad things and these are the stories that usually get into the news, not the charitable ones. Those people would be bad whether they had money or not because that is their character.

At the end of it all, finding your purpose and your why is the top priority. If building wealth is a part of your why, or more likely a by-product, there is nothing wrong with that pursuit.

SEEKING PROSPERITY WHILE SEARCHING FOR YOUR WHY

It has become a custom in this country to hate your job and wish that you could do something else. This is why the average employee will have more than five jobs with multiple companies in their lifetime. But even the next job is not going to necessarily be any more satisfying until you find your why and your purpose. I am confident as I tell you that it is okay to include in your why monetary benefits. If your why is that you want a big house on top of the hill, looking down over the city, then go for it. Don't think that it's shallow and not

worthwhile, because it is worthwhile if that is what motivates you. However, I can tell you that attainment is not really where you draw satisfaction. It is in the journey of attainment, but we'll talk about this in a later chapter.

For now, all you need to understand is that money services a need and not just a want. What is fascinating to me is that when you find your why, the money will come to you naturally because you will be able to perform at your full potential. People may shame and degrade you in your pursuit of your why because they think "You are greedy," or "All you do is think about money" and "Why don't you think about other people?" But those people who say these things fail to realize that you are thinking of other things, grander purposes, and a bigger why than they can even fathom.

Don't worry if your why doesn't seem meaningful to everyone else, it should be meaningful only to you. There are many stigmas around wanting to get rich recently developed in the 21st century where common people would curse the 1% as elite but won't work hard enough to use their creative juices to be in that top one percent themselves. People hate their daily lives, but they won't make attempts to change it because it seems like additional work to them. As a matter of fact, these are the lazy folks who are just barely making a living, or the ones watching four hours of TV a day, wasting time playing video games, spending their money on immoral soul sucking activities. They then expect that those who make the pursuit are somehow beholden to giving some of their wealth to them as an entitlement for just being.

It is essential for you to understand the concept of prosperity and the differences it entails from wealth, but that both are a

part of the journey to serve your why and purpose. Everyone has their own ideas about these concepts. We will discuss further my take on the vital concept of prosperity.

WHAT IS PROSPERITY?

The primary meaning of prosperity is a successful, flourishing, or thriving condition, usually expressed in financial respects and good fortune. Prosperity varies for everyone. Some people see it as the ability to own a luxury car, while others may envision being surrounded by great-grandchildren in the aging years. As I described above, everyone thinks differently and has different passions, ambitions, and whys within their own prosperity.

When you are in search of your why as an individual, isn't it a positive add-on if you can monetize your why to an extent where you could be called successful or prosperous? According to the typical social conventions, you can say that you are a millionaire who followed their passion and worked hard to achieve your purpose.

A lot of people who found their why turned it into something they profit from and are better off now for it. Let me give you a few mainstream examples. We already mentioned how Steve Jobs created a tech empire because he found his why through elegant design, attention to details, and quality. Similarly, Bill Gates also discovered his purpose of serving the masses through technology and grabbed it with a vice-like grip becoming the wealthiest man on Earth. These are the people you probably have heard of and read about thousands

of times. Many people who want to remain static argue that these people were fortunate as their calling was lucrative. The world was enjoying a boom of computers and software, and that allowed these people to achieve gigantic success. Although true, luck and timing do contribute to success, but why are there so many other people who thought their calling was technology but never made it as far? Because technology really wasn't their why but instead their vehicle to fulfill their why.

Your why is the driving force behind your prosperity. If you are not connected with your why, and you truly have not defined your purpose, you will never be able to create a billion-dollar empire out of it, nor even a million-dollar one. So, the first thing you have to do is to organize yourself towards your why.

Take Ninja for example. Ninja is the online video game streamer who as a typical teenager had a passion and flair for playing video games. My buddy, Ben Smith, messaged me back in 2018 telling me how obsessed he was with this guy called Ninja. He told me that Ninja was making \$6 million a year by streaming his playing of a game called Fortnite. In 2018 alone, Ninja was mentioned more than any other "athlete" on the planet. He had more social interactions than Ronaldo, LeBron, and Shaq combined. He used his ability and started livestreaming on Twitch gaining massive traction playing a video game online so others could watch. This is a prime example of turning your passion into your job to attain your why. In the beginning of building his following, Ninja had to work 16 hours a day playing and streaming but now enjoys his hobby as his prime source of income. Although Ninja, whose actual name is Tyler Blevins, started as a competitive eSports player for the famous game Halo in 2009, he found his real

success when he followed his passion for live streaming. In 2017, he turned to streaming full time with one thing leading to the next and now he is the most famous gaming streamer the world has ever seen.

The incredible thing is how some people responded when they found out that Ninja was making millions and quickly became judgmental. He started getting hate messages from people in his chat because they couldn't accept his success. They targeted his achievements and what he did with them. They were jealous that he was making money playing video games and secretly wished they could be in his place. Well, they could be if they suck it up and actually try doing what he did, but the thing is they won't be able to stay with it if it isn't a part of their purpose, passion, and why.

There are many stigmas attached to attaining wealth especially when someone becomes rich like Ninja using unconventional means. No one really questions someone who was always wealthy. The questions arise for the person who got rich by putting in the long hours. It boggles my mind how people can make someone who worked so hard for their success feel bad about themselves. Even socialist politician Bernie Sanders is being criticized for earning over a million dollars from a book he wrote and published. I guess his followers thought he should be following his own beliefs that the rich ought to be caring for the non-rich. If you are someone who, by dignified means, has reached a certain level of financial success much more than your peers, people have probably attached a stigma to your wealth simply because they didn't see the hard work you put into achieving it. But that shouldn't put pressure on you. Read on and you will better understand why.

STIGMA AGAINST WEALTH

People love the idea of Robin Hood, taking from the rich and giving it to the poor. It sounds nice, but it is something that should and will stay only in stories and movies. People often falsely believe that rich people with money should have extraordinary responsibilities to justify their monetary situation. It is as if people think that a wealthy individual owes them something for being wealthy, as if it is a mistake of justice that that person is wealthier. People who have wealth are expected to give it away to people who do not deserve it. Society puts pressure on rich people to show their benevolent side and spend on typical “good” deeds. If they find that a wealthy individual spends all their money on life’s comforts only, they make sure to degrade them publicly and try to give them a bad reputation.

I remember one time I was sitting down at an airport terminal and there was this young couple sitting behind me. The guy was reading an article on his iPad. After about two minutes into his article, he leans to his wife and says, “I don’t get these people, they have so much money and people are still sleeping in the streets. It makes me sick.” I didn’t know why he said that, but after I took a curious look over to his iPad, he was reading the Forbes top 100 wealthiest people list. He had those remarks for people who had built companies that employed millions of people, served billions, and worked hard to get to that status. It is well documented how much most of these people give away through their own non-profit foundations. What people don’t understand is that the wealthiest 2,000 people in the world are still only worth \$8.7 trillion out of the \$280 trillion of the wealth around the world. With 7.8 billion

people on Earth today, they could only give away \$1,160 per person. Certainly, the poorest of people on Earth would benefit for a little while with the \$1,160, but with a worldwide per person all income rate of \$10,000, that \$1,160 won't go very far.

So, if driving a luxury car and living in a big house automatically gets you labeled as a bad person, one who is greedy, self-obsessed, untrustworthy, and selfish, it doesn't really matter in the grander scheme of things. With Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and Mark Zuckerberg giving away approximately \$150 billion, they won't even make a dent in the perceived need.

I personally know several billionaires and these specific ones have always presented themselves as givers and not takers (okay most of them)! Most are humble people, not flashy, with no useless boasting! On the contrary, we see a lot of middle-income people be the exact opposite with their pettiness.

Seeking prosperity and betterment is also present in the Holy Bible, so if you are thinking that rich people are bad, then you should understand God's perspective on it all as well.

BIBLE ON PROSPERITY

"The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich."

—PROVERBS 13:4

This verse illustrates that a desire without work will never allow you to have anything, and through diligence, you will

attain a rich life. Wishing will get you nowhere, but hard work with consistent effort will always benefit you in every situation. God sees your diligence and rewards you for it. He doesn't reward empty wishes to someone who is not willing to make the necessary effort; that is not the natural order of things that God created.

The Bible says a great deal about wealth and prosperity. It actually puts forth several vital things you can do to achieve wealth and prosperity in a righteous manner; to earn the money that God wants you to have and use for your family and society as a whole. The Scriptures are very clear and in fact, God's not only okay with us being financially successful, but He wants us to be.

“It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the Sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God” (Ecclesiastes 5:18-19, NKJV).

Do you see it? It's “appropriate” to enjoy the gifts God has provided including wealth and possessions and more importantly, God is the one who actually gives us the ability to enjoy them. God has set some standards around that, though. He wants us to enjoy the fruits of our labor, but only if we've managed our blessings in a way that brings glory to Him. And we should never let our stuff or our pursuit of success become idols competing against our glory to God. God has to remain first in our lives. First Timothy 6:9–10 illuminates this for us: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare,

and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (KJV).

Accumulating stuff just for the sake of stuff takes us down a dangerous road. When we keep our focus on God, though, and use the money for His glory, He blesses us with more. It makes sense! He wants His resources to be in the hands of those who steward them well.

So, if your heart is in the right place with God and you’ve worked hard to succeed, don’t let anyone tell you not to enjoy it. We can be generous and enjoy God’s blessings ourselves at the same time – He wants us to!

The Bible specifically tells us to seek prosperity and wealth while remembering God in our accomplishment, as without him we would not be able to accumulate the wealth. God knows the laws He creates; He knows that if ten people become wealthy and if only five of them are of a generous character to donate to others in the community, even that half will be beneficial for everyone. The question is, do you want to be the one who benefits others or do you want to be the one who gets benefited by others? By the grace of God, with your will and hard work, you can make it through and get everything you deserve.

This journey toward prosperity and success starts with the why. First, find the why and then get the wealth, prosperity, and success you’ve always dreamed about. Don’t let peer pressure from society make you think that your why relates too much

to monetary gains. As I have been mentioning throughout this chapter, it is okay to have financial goals. God not only enables it to happen through his natural law, but He expects it to be shared.

I am here to tell you it is entirely okay for you to think about the monetary side of life for money is a necessity we cannot avoid as long as we exist on this planet within a human-driven world.

So, go for your why regardless of what it is! If you find your passion in making cookies, sell cookies; if your passion is making apps, develop them; if your passion is gardening, then open up a nursery and teach people how to take care of plants. Remember, a job is something you do so you can gather the finances for your own journey, not your boss's. So regardless of what your why is, get out there and create it for yourself.

THE CREATEYOURSELF MINDSET

“You don’t become what you want, you become what you believe.”

—Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey is an American television personality who is one of the 500 richest people of the world. Oprah’s net worth is about \$2.5 billion. She is a true inspiration and role model to many people. Oprah struggled with a troubled and less privileged childhood. She was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi and so poor that she often had to dress in a potato sack to

school where fellow students would mock her due to her poor dressing. She also faced sexual abuse at an early age.

Her grandmother trained her from an early age to plan on being a domestic helper to some wealthy family. Oprah, however, was always positive about her future even after those tough circumstances. Because she learned to read at the age of three, she could always find a new world in her books which helped her in developing a positive mindset. She was determined that she wouldn't spend her life doing what everyone expected and at the age of fourteen she ran off to Nashville, Tennessee to live with her father. There, she completed her college studies and started her career as a news anchor for a local TV channel.

Because she had a particular emotional accent in her journalism, she gained success as a news anchor, but instead emerged as a talk show host in 1978 on a local TV channel. After working the kinks out of her style of show, she started her own talk show named "The Oprah Winfrey Show." This show proved to be one of the most successful and highly watched TV shows of all time even breaking many social and cultural barriers. Oprah believes the reason for her success is positive thinking and law of attraction, which she spoke much about on her talk show. She says, "There is no such thing as failure; failure is just life trying to move us in another direction."

OUR THOUGHTS DRIVE US

There come numerous times in our lives when we lose all hope and believe nothing can change. Oprah's transformation from rags to riches tells us the way we direct our thoughts can

do miracles in our lives. Human beings are considered to be superior to all other creatures because of their ability to think and differentiate. It is a general phenomenon that we humans connect our miseries to particular circumstances and incidents that have happened in our lives. The reality is change comes because of the way we perceive certain situations. External factors can never affect our response until we allow them to.

Consider the example of a person who gets into the habit of drinking alcohol in response to a negative incident in their life. They blame that ordeal to be the reason for developing the drinking habit. They spend their entire time as a victim. In reality, it was their choice to opt for drinking, no one forced them. They could have adopted any healthy habit, like running (if you recall Forest Gump marathons across America). We humans always take the credit for positive things and blame the extraneous components for negative scenarios.

THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

“I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it’s not the answer.”

–Jim Carrey

You must have laughed your lungs out while watching the comedy movies of Jim Carrey. I have.

Carrey is a Canadian American actor famous for his evergreen movie Dumb and Dumber (amongst many others). Can you imagine that an actor well known for making people laugh

was once fighting depression? He has battled with depression and low-level despair for years.

In an interview, he opened up frankly about his experience with the depression medication, Prozac. Carrey expressed, "It feels like a low level of despair that you're in. You're not getting any answers, but you're living okay and smiling at the office...but it's a low level of despair."

Carrey realized that although Prozac was helpful in the short term, it was no more helping him in the long run, so he stopped taking it. He also eliminated all other drugs, alcohol, and even coffee from his routine. He indulged himself in spirituality to generate positive energy within himself. For Carrey, religion became a trench for his mental sufferings. He once stated: "I'm a Buddhist, I'm a Christian, I'm a Muslim... I am whatever you want me to be. It all comes down to whether you are in a loving place or an unloving place. When you are with me, you can't help but be happy."

How his positive mindset made him win the battle against depression is a remarkable example of willpower and determination. If Carrey could overcome his depression by changing his mindset, what can stop us? We only need to be committed to ourselves. Taking control of ourselves is the key to a positive lifestyle.

We cannot buy positive thinking from any superstore. We need to work on our mindset to generate the positive energy within us as Jim Carrey has in his life. It is a mental exercise, and it requires persistence and willpower. The first and foremost step towards developing a positive mindset is to commit that WE NEED TO CREATE OURSELVES. Self-determination

is mandatory because any outsider cannot persuade us to be positive and follow the right path. We must do it for ourselves, and we can start by bringing little changes into our lives.

For instance, we can start every day with a positive affirmation. Considering every day as a new opportunity can help us improve our lives. Regretting the past is nothing but a waste of time. Absolutely, we should learn from our past, but if we relive our mistakes in the past we can never move forward. Nor can we control our futures; we can only strive to improve our present condition which will eventually have a positive effect on our future. Focusing on good things in our external environment is another factor which can direct our mind towards optimism.

Perfection doesn't exist in any walk of life. When we encounter any challenges in our daily life where we overthink the possible consequences which might have no reality, we don't live in reality. We must find the positive aspect in everything we do no matter how small or unimportant it is, even in an unfavorable situation. For example, you are stuck in traffic. Instead of losing your temper, you can utilize that time in listening to your favorite music or talking to a friend. Your anger will certainly not reduce traffic congestion, but it can ruin your day for sure, and others around you. Many situations can turn better only with a positive attitude.

Failure hits our egos to the core. Let's suppose you fail an exam, what is your first response?

- Do you cry?
- Do you detach yourself from the outside world?

- Do you blame external factors, such as your teacher's inability to clarify the concepts?
- Do you hide that you failed?

A majority of us find it very difficult to accept failure or defeat. One of the best ways to embrace failure is to take it as a learning process. Consider the example of J.K. Rowling who is also known as the "Billionaire Author." The author of the famous fictional series Harry Potter was a single parent who lived on government assistance for years. She wrote the manuscript for the first Harry Potter book on a manual typewriter. More than twelve publishers rejected her manuscript. When it was finally accepted, it paid Rowling only £1,500. Even after all the rejections and underestimations, she carried on working on the idea of magic and the wizarding world. Her failures and rejections enhanced her passion even more. Today, Rowling is known as the richest author in the world with a net worth greater than the Queen of England (Rowling is English). If you were an average Joe in Rowling's place, what would you do? You would probably quit trying after all those rejections. Most of the time our egos don't let us explore the learning opportunity in our failures. Embracing failure as enlightenment can help us build a positive life.

Though external factors such as environment and people can affect us only if we let them control us, surrounding ourselves with positive people and mentors is like the cherry on the cake. People with an optimistic approach can lift us up when we lose hope. They energize us by their positive vibes.

DE-CLUTTERING THE BRAIN

“The best way to find out what we really need is to get rid of what we don’t.”

–Marie Kondō

Have you ever seen a machine exploding because it worked more than its capacity?

Our brain is like a machine, when we overuse it to exhaustion it explodes with depression, anxiety, stress, and despair. Research indicates that our minds have about 60,000 thoughts each day. These thoughts involve thinking about the same things repeatedly. We clutter our brains with overthinking, past regrets, future assumptions, and negative thoughts. As a result, our brain becomes congested and generates stress hormones. This may lead to depression or other mental disorders.

In order to maintain our mental health, we need to declutter our minds. The most important step towards decluttering is to control overthinking. Most of the time, a cluttered mind is associated with the past. Poor decisions, missed opportunities, breakups, and past grievances are the things which keep our mind possessed all the time. We must remove these regrets and past memories to relax our minds. Whatever happened has happened. We have no time machine to go back and alter our past. But we can learn from these mistakes and avoid them in the future.

There are certain aspects of our life which we can’t control. Thinking constantly about these uncontrollable aspects makes our brain overburdened and exhausted. We need to

realize that we can't foresee what will come next. Let's take an example of Clara who is overthinking about an upcoming exam. Instead of focusing her attention on the preparation of the exam, she is assuming what will happen if she fails. Clara is not only wasting her time but also obstructing her brain with useless thoughts. We all do this every now and again. Overthinking holds our minds like an octopus wrapping its tentacles around the brain and squeezing the blood out of it. Living in the present is the most effective way to address these issues. Yesterday is gone, tomorrow has not come yet. Today is ours, and only we can make our today better by letting go of negative thoughts.

This example of Clara preparing for her exams provides us with a breakout opportunity to learn some new techniques for studying.

In this technological era, we are bombarded with information all the time. TV channels, social media platforms, blogs, newspapers, magazines, and fiction books constantly clog up our minds with too much and unnecessary information. We don't realize it, but these things play a big role in cluttering our minds. Our subconscious mind keeps this information saved. Limiting information is very important in order to declutter our minds. Setting a limit for the time we spend on social media and TV channels, and unfollowing the blogs which are not contributing positively to our life can help us remove an unnecessary burden from our brain.

An endless to-do list clutters your mind to a great extent. You must accept that you cannot do it all. Prioritizing things makes it easier for your mind to evaluate what is the most important thing to do. Make a short list of your top priorities, and make

sure that a greater part of your brain space is devoted to the things on that list.

Another good strategy for relieving stress and redirecting our mind is aerobic physical exercises like yoga and mental exercise like meditation. Both of these are tried and true for decluttering your mind, but new research finds that to really reduce that mental stress, anaerobic exercises such as resistance training and weightlifting are the better way to go. All of these exercises remove the toxins from your body and mind and hence refreshes you for new challenges and tasks.

Meditation should become a part of your everyday routine. Plan ten minutes out of every day and find a quiet peaceful space to be with yourself and your God as you so choose. Sit back and relax. Close your eyes and listen to your own breath. There is a myth about mediation that you must empty your mind from all thoughts. This is not true at all. Meditation is all about exhaling the negative thoughts and inhaling the positive ones.

As you get used to these daily sessions, you will find that solutions to your problems seem to emerge out of your relaxed state. I believe this is God talking with you and helping you with your problems. Nearly everyone spends way too few moments with just themselves listening for God's word to provide the wisdom we all need for the day. You will be surprised to discover that by doing the right amount of work and leaving the rest up to God, you attract opportunities like a magnet.

CREATEYOURSELF AN OPPORTUNITY

When my wife completed a nine-month program to earn her certification as a neuro-developmental treatment specialist (on top of her PhD, CCC-SLP, and BCS-S: she is probably the only person in the world with all these credentials – not that I’m bragging!!), as you can imagine, being a mother of five, a giving spouse, and the founder of a pediatric multi-specialty speech, occupational, physical therapy clinic, and non-profit pre-school for medically fragile children, she was absolutely worried that she wasn’t making the grade and would never pass the final exams.

Of course, she passed with flying colors, but how did she do it? Jennifer never crammed for her studies; she just thought about them throughout her day and applied her learning to her daily practice. It also helped that one of our sons has cerebral palsy and is deaf (the reason she wanted the training in the first place) where she could apply her learning even at home.

Even if you’re in the middle of your professional life or just starting high school, the following techniques I used when rebooting my career will help you succeed. So, pass them onto anyone you know who is studying for anything – especially children.

What does the word “Will” mean? I think of it as “Opportunity,” but it’s not opportunity knocking. “Will” is the opportunity that is floating around for someone to take advantage of it. Opportunity already exists, all around us, and it is out there for anyone and everyone to grab.

We do not live in a zero-sum universe, but an infinite and unlimited one that is continuously expanding. As long as our minds are open to looking out for opportunities, and we have trained ourselves to recognize that it is, in fact, an opportunity – focus with me now for this is where the “Will” comes into play – we must have the Will to execute, to take advantage, to grab that opportunity, and run with it.

Our opportunities in life start with our formal training in school, on the sports field, on the job, and at both social and professional events. Everything starts with having the desire to excel, the will to pursue, and the courage to persist. Do you have the Will to learn how to be a good student?

Many people today have it in their minds that they are not smart, even those who go on to college. You don't have to be a book smart person to make good grades. You just have to be smart in HOW you will learn your subjects!

No one has the natural ability to learn. Some people can remember a great deal of what they read, but they are not learning the material and understanding how that information affects their world. Most people come up with techniques that help them learn the material, but also make the grade.

This is what we will be discussing now; techniques you can use to take advantage of the opportunities that are presented every day on your path to success.

TECHNIQUE I

How the mind best retains: Study in short bursts of time.

The mind remembers the first and last things inputted intentionally. So, don't study a whole bunch of material all at once over a long period of time – that is useless if you are only going to remember the first five minutes of material and the last. When getting my first undergrad degree at The Citadel, this is how I studied and how I did amazingly bad (as referenced in previous posts). I believed it was because I did not have to work to support myself through school during this period. But when I was earning my second undergrad degree, my master's, and eventually my doctorate, I was working full time at the same time for each. This only allowed me to study in short bursts during breaks, after work, before work, etc. Studying in short spurts became the trick to building the knowledge I needed to make the grade.

So, study in short time frames of 10 to 15 minutes and switch back and forth between subjects to keep your mind motivated and alert. This will also allow you to inter-relate the materials you are learning from all your subjects for a clearer understanding. When we begin to apply what we are learning in the real world, we must understand how all aspects of a project or service will be affected by the environment. This is why many of the best students in a class are the older ones that have been out in the workforce gaining a foundation of understanding about how the world operates. They then apply that knowledge to the lessons they are learning in class. All this helps them know the material!

The Createyourself principle of being a contrarian is to not do what everyone else does; do not follow the example of your peers. No one is teaching them how to study either, so they are most likely studying incorrectly. Some of them may be making the grade, but they are the gifted people or the lucky having had an enlightened teacher or parent somewhere along the way. Others may be retaining the learned material, but they are not gaining understanding so they will lose that knowledge quickly after the exam.

For example: do not outline material in your book with a yellow marker. It makes you lazy and doesn't allow you to learn that specific information. You are saying to yourself "that may be an important point," but you aren't going to absorb it right then because you are telling yourself that you will come back to review it specifically – though you never really do.

The Point of Technique I: hard work and long hours of study do not translate into good grades. Smart studying in short periods with a routine of continuous thinking is what will matter.

TECHNIQUE II

Don't be a back-bencher; again, be the contrarian!

Sit in the front row of class and closest to where the information is being disseminated – that is if the teacher writes it on the board, be near the board; if the teacher speaks it, be near the teacher's desk or podium; if the teacher uses a projector, then have the best view of the screening area. By sitting in the front row, you will have a clear view of where the material is being presented. You will also not be distracted by all that is going on behind you.

If you are taking online courses that are taught live by the teacher, then dress appropriately and turn on your camera. Listen to the speaker and react to what they are saying so that they see you are listening. Not only will this help you listen and learn, but it will also show the teacher you are interested in what they are saying and teaching. Trust me, when the teacher sees the students excited about the subject and their teaching, they perk up, they get excited to teach and that makes them more interesting to you and they share in your enthusiasm.

You will also have the attention of the teacher. You don't have to be the teacher's pet, but being close and showing your interest and attentiveness tells the teacher that you respect them and the information that they are presenting to you. This is the opportunity in the air; you must grab it before it is diluted by all those behind you.

Additionally, when sitting in your chair you must not slouch, and you must not be wearing a hoodie or hat that hides your face from the teacher. You want them to see that you are genuinely interested in their message. Lean forward, focus on what is being said at the front of the class.

TECHNIQUE III

Turn in only neat well-organized work:

Unless the directions explicitly state that you must handwrite your work, use a computer and hand it in printed, if possible. In this age of online courses, you can't really do this, so do it for yourself. Print your work so you can see it and feel it. It will make an impression on you as it will your teacher. The computer is your friend, and it makes all writing legible, automatically assists you with spelling, corrects some

grammar, and structures your paragraphs, indentations, and pages. This is all-important. I use Grammarly on my computer and mobile; it's just plain dumb to not take advantage of today's technology. Search the net for images to embed into the text illustrating your point. If you don't own the rights to the image, just reference where you found it.

TECHNIQUE IV

Steps to learn the material:

1. Get ahead of the game and always read the material before it is taught in class. This will not only prep you for questions the teacher may ask, but you will know when the teacher has missed an issue or point.
2. Read the material out loud; record it on a voice recorder so you can listen to it later (a good podcast app will help there). Both of these sessions will help you visualize it as you speak it and listen to it again.
3. Know your teacher and understand how they teach. Do they use the whiteboard, PowerPoint, handouts, or do they just lecture to the class? Be prepared for how you learn best with their teaching style.
4. When you are studying and you begin to get tired and irritable, the best thing to do is STOP and take a break. You will be more productive by letting yourself absorb what you have already studied than you would if you kept on going. You should still be using the 10 to 15-minute technique even in a major cram series for exams. Chill, put your feet above your head, and let the blood flow back into your brain. Do some yoga or Pilates stretches, breath deep, and/or jog in place to get the cardiovascular system pumping that oxygen from your lungs to your brain. After a few minutes of break time,

get back to your interval study sessions with a refreshed mind. If you need a nutrition boost, do not eat a large amount. Stuffing your stomach turns on the digestive system and takes blood and energy away from your brain to process the food. Instead, eat something small and sweet.

TECHNIQUE V

Right off the blocks:

Attack your studies with a passion right from the start. Don't worry about extracurricular activities like rush week (if you're in college) or new club meetings, etc. Focus on getting ahead in class. The motivation of studying like crazy early on will set a precedent for yourself that you won't want to change.

Do not miss any classes without being well prepared. Know the assignments you will miss. Read and know the material taught during that period so you will be ahead rather than needing to catch up. If you have homework, get it ahead of time and turn it in before you actually miss the class.

Always do your extra credit. Since extra credit work NEVER counts against you, even one point is worth the effort. Usually, extra credit is relatively easy and a huge opportunity you should never miss.

TECHNIQUE VI

Study habits and note-taking:

- Read the text before the class so you know what the teacher is going to talk about.

- Put a question mark by each heading, title, and section, and create a question about it that you think may be on the test.
- Remember that the teacher will tell you some important information about the test in the first few minutes and the last few minutes of class. So, when the bell rings don't just jump up to run out. The teacher may be behind in the lesson and be emphasizing some point as the class is leaving. Be slow to leave so that you will hear and can write down that information. Even if it is only one or two answers it **Will Be** the difference between an A and a B.
- Take down only notes of value – it is much better to listen to your teacher first and foremost. Don't try to write down everything you hear because it is already in your books. Write down only the general issue the teacher is presenting so that you can go to the book later to review what you have already heard them talk about.
- When taking notes use keywords, don't write full sentences. Think Twitter posts.
- As you're reviewing your notes, make up questions you think may be on the test.
- As soon as you get out of class, stop for five minutes alone, rewrite, and review your notes.
- Write the key ideas on index cards or in your smartphone, and study them throughout the day when you are waiting in a line or laying around the house.
- Use both sides of your mind by reading out loud from the book and from your notes.
- Again, sit forward in class and listen to what the teacher is saying. Don't slouch in your seat.

TECHNIQUE VII

Testing – a bit of rehashing earlier thoughts:

As you study, make up your own test questions and pre-test yourself. Get exams from last year's classes and study them.

Do not eat, right before the test.

Take all the time allotted for the test. Most early birds turning in their papers first **DO NOT** make the best grades.

Answer all the questions on the test.

As you come across one you may not be sure of, put down the first one that pops into your mind then put a star by the number and return to it when you have completed all the other questions. Do not linger and waste time on any one question.

Do not stop taking the test until you have answered all the questions and you have returned to consider those you were not absolutely sure about. If you are unsure about any of your answers, do not stop early before your time is up.

If you have time, work backward reading the answers first, then the question. The answers will help you understand what the teacher is asking for in the question and better assist you in choosing the correct answer.

When you are asked to write an essay, write neatly and with complete sentences. Use correct grammar, sentence structure, and proper cases. No text speak!

Make your paragraphs short, two or three sentences, and to the point. However, write as many paragraphs as you can on the subject. Being concise in your thoughts (paragraphs) does not mean the essay has to be short.

If you come across a true or false question – answer it – don't leave it blank. Even if you're not sure of the answer, at the least you will have a 50/50 chance of getting it correct. If multiple-choice, make sure you pick an answer. If you are not sure, pick the one you think the best and put a star by the number to come back to later when you have time to contemplate. But again, DO NOT leave it unanswered as you read it.

DO NOT BE THE FIRST TO TURN IN YOUR PAPER – that person is not the one who makes the “A.”

Trick your mind! Study with a special pen and then make sure you take that pen into the test with you. Who knows, it may well help you recall some answers. In the least, it will become a part of your routine and routine is how we make sure we do what we have to do to succeed every time (baseball players call this superstition).

Do not gamble with your answers; if you don't absolutely know the answer, go with that which enters your mind first. Your best hunch is many times the correct answer.

Double-check your answers before you turn in your test.

TECHNIQUE VIII

Stay mentally and physically fit!

Exercise daily; don't eat a bunch of junk food; don't do drugs or smoke cigarettes.

Concentrate => Focus => Pray => Ask God for guidance (even if your god is Mother Earth)

Be spiritually strong = non-healthy and un-religious people are usually not successful nor prosperous in life – certainly not happy people.

Eat well and increase your IQ by continuously thinking about the new things you are learning and how they affect what you already know. The human memory is perfect. It retains everything we truly learn. It is our ability to recall those memories we must work on. Keep telling yourself that you can recall it. Then use the recognition method to attach what you want to recall to something you can easily bring to mind. Relate what you are learning now to something you already know.

Additionally, study in only bright lights; sit next to a window when studying – not to look out daydreaming, but to get the best light. My first go-around at college, I studied in my dorm room (barracks) with only my desk lamp. What a ditz! Not only did I fall asleep all the time, but I also didn't learn diddly.

Volunteer to edit your friends' papers so that you will get better at writing papers. People who can write the best are usually

the most successful communicators. The most successful communicators get the best jobs.

Build your own personal library. Learn what smart people read and read them. If you read what stupid people read, you will stay the same and not grow. Reference “Yourself on Your Self” later in this book. That’s the way to create yourself a vision.

CREATEYOURSELF A VISION

“The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight but no vision.”

–Helen Keller

If you don’t know Helen Keller, at 19 months she was stricken with fever and rendered deaf and blind. So, for her to make the statement about sight and vision is huge. She ultimately became a world-renowned writer and lecturer envisioning a world without barriers to all human potential.

Visit the website of any renowned company. You will always find a Vision Statement identifying where the company wants to be or what it would like to achieve or accomplish.

A vision statement is not only necessary for companies but also for humans. Vision gives us a direction for our life. Having a vision and purpose is important because it tells us why we are in this world. God has created every soul with a purpose. He has bestowed us with the ability of thinking and analyzing. With the help of these abilities, we can identify our purpose and vision for life. The dilemma of our society today is parents

decide what their kids are going to pursue in their life in too many families. This actually creates chaos in our kids' lives, not a steady path. Vision is not something that others can impose on us. It is the power that motivates us to achieve something in life. We often confuse our goals with vision and spend our entire life in darkness.

Take the example of a boy named William who wants to be a doctor. He studied day and night for his purpose through high school and college. The question is, why did he want to be a doctor? When he has the answer to this why, his vision is clear. Becoming a doctor was his goal because he wanted to create a cure for cancer after losing one of his dearest family members to this deadly disease. This why factor encouraged William to work hard and strive to achieve his goal. A majority of people don't know what their vision is in life. One of the main reasons people don't have a vision is that we don't let our kids use their cognitive abilities to decide their own vision. Discovering a vision is not very difficult. The following are a few of the questions which help us in finding our motivation for life.

- What are you profoundly passionate about?
- What type of work do you find engaging and truly enjoy?
- How do you describe yourself in one word?
- At the end of your life, what will be your greatest accomplishment?

The answers to these questions vary from person to person, but they give us a grander and clearer picture of our life.

When you wake up in the morning, do you feel passionate about going to your workplace? Or do you feel lethargic?

If you have to gather a lot of energy just to get up and convince yourself to go to work, you may be wasting your life. This is your wake-up call to realize that you are not doing that which you are meant to do. There's something deeper you must unearth as to why you seem to be adrift, something deep in your subconscious. That's what this book is for...to help you dig deeper and find out.

THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

“Never finish a negative statement; reverse it immediately, and wonders will happen in your life.”

—Joseph Murphy, *the Power of Your Subconscious Mind*

The subconscious mind is your storeroom of everything that has ever happened in your life. It is like a history book. It records information, details and makes associations so the conscious mind can access these at a later time.

Your subconscious also records your perceptions, beliefs, patterns, habits, and emotions. Do you ever feel sad while thinking about past suffering? Do you wonder why you felt so even when the incident happened long ago? How can it make you feel sad after all these years? The answers are due to our subconscious mind.

Our subconscious is like a computer hard disk, where everything remains saved until you delete it. Even when you put it in the trash heap, it is not fully deleted until you do a memory dump. Understanding your subconscious mind helps you in the process of becoming self-aware. We live half of our

lives pleasing the people around us such as family, friends, teachers, bosses, and colleagues. In the struggle of pleasing everyone else, we neglect our own well-being. We don't have time to observe why we behave in a certain manner. Our past agonies keep upsetting us, yet we never try to remove these memories to create a better and healthy mind.

The subconscious mind keeps a record of every memory, be it good or bad but our conscious mind tends to pick only negative events from that subconscious portal. If we use our subconscious mind in a positive way, it can only help us in living our dreams.

Austrian born American bodybuilder, actor, and politician Arnold Schwarzenegger says:

“When I was very young, I visualized myself being who I wanted to become and having the things that I believed made a better life. Mentally, I never had any doubts about my obtaining those visions. The mind is really so incredible. Before I won my first Mr. Universe title, I walked around the tournament like I owned it. The title was already mine. I had won it so many times in my mind that there was no doubt I would win it. Then when I moved into movies, the same thing. I visualized myself being a famous actor and earning big money. I could feel and taste success. I just knew it would all happen.”

To attract the resources that you need to move forward, you must use the positive memories from your subconscious mind to visualize your dreams. Your subconscious mind provides you all the information required for the self-awareness and self-creation process.

Understand, your subconscious mind is subjective and not concrete, so it is dependent upon your conscious mind to give the input it needs to follow instructions it receives and process them accordingly. This is how channeling the power of positive thinking is crucial for the foundation of your entire thought process.

SELF-LIMITED MINDSET AS A HURDLE FOR SUCCESS

“Are you a fortune-teller? A clairvoyant? If not, why anticipate the worst for yourself? We predict events will turn out in a negative way because our self-beliefs are limiting.”

—Maddy Malhotra

A friend told you about a vacancy in their company. They wanted you to apply for the post. You immediately responded without giving a single thought:

- I don't have enough experience.
- I cannot perform well.
- I will fail the interview, so better not to apply.

You assumed that you would fail the interview without even trying; you proclaimed that you would not perform well before even finding out the details of the job; you told yourself that you don't have enough experience when in reality it is not expertise in a job that counts but instead the ability to learn and adapt that is most important in any employee. These self-proclaimed perceptions and assumptions about yourself are aggregated into what is called a self-limited mindset.

When I first became interested in learning finance and building an investment firm, I knew I should join a firm that would train me in that knowledge. But I let my negative thoughts get the best of me. I applied and did the interview well enough to go to the next level, a test of my conceptual understanding of investment and finance. Oh my, I thought I totally blew the exam, so much so I didn't even call back to get the results and ask about the next steps. Of course, since I dropped the ball and moved on to another opportunity, the company never called me back. One day or evening, I was at a happy hour meetup and ran into the hiring authority. The guy had liked me a lot and asked why I never called back. I was honest and told him my fear. He said that was too bad because he was ready to offer me the job at \$20,000 more than I was already making with a very intense training program included to get me ramped up fast.

Now, I believe that we have a destiny guided by God, so of course, where I am today is where He wants me. So, I take my conscious failure as a lesson learned for myself and my subconscious to take in and also an opportunity for me to pass it on to you.

A self-limited mindset prevents us from achieving many of our goals and is directly linked to our current environment and how well we are nurtured in youth by our parents, teachers, and bosses. Right from our birth, our parents instill their beliefs into our minds which heavily shape our early understanding of the world. As we grow older, we take that foundation, or lack thereof, and develop a more complex set of beliefs about ourselves and the world around us. If we grow up in a negative and abusive environment, we build a lot of self-limiting beliefs

about ourselves. A self-limited mindset often leads to low self-esteem in the majority of people.

Overcoming self-limiting beliefs is necessary to achieve any success in life. If you want to overcome these beliefs, you must first be honest with yourself. Try to figure out what your self-limiting behaviors may be. For example, low esteem leads to statements such as:

- I can't love someone wholeheartedly.
- I can never be successful in my life.
- I don't like to interact with strangers.

The second step after analyzing the self-limiting beliefs is to find out the reason why and how they developed.

Maybe you feel you can't love someone because a past incident extremely hurt you. This incident was absorbed through your conscious and embedded into your subconscious mind hence it prevents you from loving others. You may fit all others into a single frame and see only negative attributes of their character in relation to you. Similarly, your belief that you can never be successful in life might have been developed due to past failures. Trust me, I know this one well. Out of the multiple start-ups I have been involved with over the years, two were fantastic failures leading to a corporate and personal bankruptcy; others were at various levels of "okay", and three were successful enough to classify as decidedly good exits (meaning we did well when we sold, merged, or went public).

Even with all that business and personal failure in my past, I still trying new things all the time and work every day to deploy new ideas into projects and businesses. Nothing is

ever holding me back. When you find yourself coming up with negative reasons to keep you from doing something, you must convince yourself that these beliefs are not true. A failure in the past is real, but that reality doesn't mean that you can never succeed in your life again. Our life is full of challenges, and they even make us better for it. Every day we encounter new trials and tribulations where the only thing that matters is our response to them.

Your self-limiting behaviors, if unattended, can lead to all kinds of fears and phobias. These fears and phobias in return will develop anxiety and stress which then affect your overall life. Fear of failure, fear of losing, fear of doing, and fear of communicating is common in our society. People spend their entire life with these fears. However, overcoming these fears is not impossible.

My son is an example. He is quite fearless in trying new sports or activities except when it comes to picking up the occasional dead roach (because we do spray regularly) off the floor of our home. He will not even get close to it even though he knows it is dead. However, if we don't nip it in the bud while he is young, it could well turn into full-blown entomophobia – the fear of insects or arachnophobia – the fear of spiders of many kinds. Even though my wife and I are both healthcare professionals and realize that a true phobia should be treated by professional counselors, Jennifer and I did not feel our son was at that point yet. So, what did we do? We introduced him to the roach. We pointed out that it was dead. We proved it was dead by spinning it around on its back on the floor. We taught him how to pick it up with a paper towel and talked about the different parts of the body and that even when alive it can't harm a human. As a matter of fact, we talk about our family

emergency plans all the time and if you're stuck in the woods in survival mood, the roach is a great source of protein. The next time we found one, we coached him through the same process. Today, I can't say he loves it when I ask him to pick up a dead roach and throw it away, but he does get it done!

If we always avoid situations that scare us, we will never build up our path to success. A friend of mine, Angela, had a fear of traveling by air even though her job requires her to travel frequently. Every time, days before traveling, she would develop a rapid heartbeat, knots in the stomach, and insomnia. Though she had never experienced any adversity while traveling (most people don't), her fear still afflicted her mindset and her work product. Instead of trying to control her fear, she decided to tell her boss that she would not travel by air anymore. She thus limited her career prospects without realizing the long-term losses. These sudden reactions and decisions show that we aren't controlling our own minds; rather, our mind controls us.

One person that figured out how to get around his fear of flying was John Madden, the famous NFL football player and later even more famous football game analyst and commentator, who did all his travel by train or car. He acknowledged his self-limiting issue and figured out a way to overcome it through alternatives to still build a successful career.

When you don't bother to test out whether a situation is as bad as you expect, you limit yourself. Exposing yourself to your fears can be beneficial in controlling anxiety. If Angela had thought about how air travel is much safer than even driving her car through the neighborhood to the grocery store and that air travel had not ever caused her any harm, she would

have understood that her fear was meaningless. If we continue to avoid the situations that frighten us, we miss the chance to work out our fears and reduce our anxiety.

As I illustrated in the story about my son, learning more about your fears is a highly effective way to overcome them. Keep a record of your anxieties and fears in a journal to jot down when they happen and what happens to you mentally and physically. Then set small active yet achievable goals for you to overcome each time you encounter the fear. This will also encourage you to get out because you have challenged yourself to achieve that smaller goal rather than trying to dismiss the whole issue at once. You can also list the activities that help you when you are likely to become frightened or anxious in the future.

Developing a Createyourself mindset is not an impossible task. Willingness and self-determination are the key factors that you can use to your advantage.

Never let them go!

CREATEYOURSELF FOR MEN & WOMEN

“The moment a little boy is concerned with which is a Jay and which is a Sparrow, he can no longer see the birds or hear them sing.”

—Eric Berne

In June 1968, a momentous labor relations event took place in the United Kingdom that led to a huge shift in the world history of women in the workplace. The female sewing machinists at

Ford's auto assembly plant in Dagenham ceased production in protest against a pay readjustment at the factory. This readjustment exercise not only favored male workers in terms of wages and determining skills, but it also downgraded female sewing mechanists from the skilled production category to a less skilled production category.

This strike nudged the Secretary of the State for Employment and Productivity, Barbara Castle, to intervene and create the Equal Pay Act 1970. It is a popular belief that the sole purpose of this strike was to promote equal pay, but that is not true. The strike's original demand was for recognition that the women who stitched Ford's car seat covers were equally skilled as men. Initially, the female worker's pay was increased to 92% of the male rate with no change in their downgraded skill category. It took Ford another 16 years and a second strike lasting six weeks to completely return women's status as skilled workers.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EQUALITY

Even in the present day, whenever we talk about gender equality, the only thing that comes to our minds is equal pay at our jobs. Though equal pay holds a substantial significance, the concept of gender equality is much broader than receiving equal pay only. Gender equality implies that men and women have equal rights to enjoy socially valued goods, opportunities, resources, and rewards. In the nations where gender inequality prevails, it is generally women who suffer the most. They are excluded when it comes to decision-making and access to economic and social resources.

Gender equality is not a point of concern only for the countries where it prevails. It is a human right and a concern for every individual because no society can develop economically,

politically, or socially when half of its population is disregarded or considered less empowered than the other half.

There is a considerable connection between gender equality and economic growth. You must be wondering how these two factors are related. Let's take an example of inequalities in education and employment. There are several countries where women are not allowed to get higher education. They are excluded from the educational stream which reduces the pool of talent businesses get to sort through. As a result, the human capital in that country declines which places an adverse impact on the country's economy. This is a vicious circle. When women are uneducated, they cannot nurture a civilized and empathetic child. Educated women are fundamental for raising educated humans. As Napoleon Bonaparte said,

“Give me an educated mother, I shall promise you the birth of a civilized, educated nation.”

Education creates greater opportunities for women to work and earn. When women work and earn a substantial income, they become empowered in their homes. Beyond the direct personal benefits to her, the economic literature has pinpointed a number of other advantageous effects for families with educated women such as higher savings, more productive investments, and better use and repayment of credit, all of which are beneficial for the per capita growth of any household.

As noted in the opening of this book, I expressed how accomplished my wife, Jennifer, is in her profession. I believe she has worked as hard, if not harder (because she is much more of a detail person), than me to get where she is in a

career that is made up of 95% or more women, but where men still tend to hold some of the most respected academic and clinical positions. Jennifer's ability to learn and teach others, to create new strategies that benefit her patients as individuals, and her ability to share her vision in a way that engages others to join her, is one of the reasons why I love her so much.

She also brings that same ability to our family. You'll recall that we could not have children, but instead of finding that perfect infant to adopt into our home and family, Jennifer made it clear before we were married that she wanted us to adopt those who would need professionals like us to help in their special development. So, we adopted five children who each had their own special needs compared to their age peers. While I contribute as best I can as a father and husband, it is Jennifer who is the driving advocate in the special care and needs of our children. I don't believe a man could do all that Jennifer does to the level of completeness that she accomplishes.

I believe that other male-oriented countries can produce the likes of Jennifer because the women there are capable, but they first must relax their cultural biases. They must become less specific about assigning jobs to a particular gender and enjoy the benefits of diversity as we do here in the west. When gender equality is present in the labor market, work in society is distributed rationally between all the genders based on aptitude and skill. This means that jobs are offered to the most appropriate person regardless of their gender. As a result, a better economic product comes into the market due to skill and ability.

The rate of inflation increases with a pace faster than the growth in income. When women earn and become independent, they can afford higher investments in the health and education of their children. Families who depend singularly on the income from the males, cannot afford a higher-than-average lifestyle and education let alone entertainment and recreation. When more people earn in a family, the family's lifestyle can improve to a greater extent. But there is a balance that must be managed.

CREATE YOURSELF TO AVOID TOXIC MASCULINITY

“Being a male is a matter of birth; being a man is a matter of choice.”

—Edwin Louis Cole

Our society develops numerous stereotypes that require people to act based on their gender. These stereotypes mess up our entire education and workplace system. Men are expected to behave in a certain manner to comply with society's standards of an “Ideal Man.” We proudly nurture our boys in such a way that tells them that aggression is a crucial part of exhibiting power and proving their masculinity.

They then consider women inferior to them in every way. This is how toxic masculinity emerges. Moreover, the prevailing norms in a society constantly convey to men the following notions:

- Real men don't cry.
- Men should not feel pain.
- Men must not lose to women.

I'll admit to you right now, my wife Jennifer is better than me in almost everything. She has a better memory than I do; she has a smarter work ethic than I do (meaning we both work very hard, but she gets more done better than I do); she can run farther than I can (I am really slow at marathons); and she beats me at virtually every skilled game we play except chess. I know she also has a much higher pain threshold than I do!

Since we know much of the world's stereotypes lead to aggressive behavior in males from the start of their childhood because we believe they are characteristics of leaders, Jennifer and I are working to teach our boys to be men while honoring all other people. Still, it is interesting that even with each of our boys having their own physical or mental challenges, we find them learning behaviors from other boys at school that tend to be exclusionary based upon some outward show of difference or weakness.

Male oriented cultures push men to suppress their emotions and develop thinking that they are born to control all things rather than be controlled. This thinking is wrong in that yes, they should be taught they control their own destiny, but that does not have to be at the mercy of others, especially women. During the marathon of living how society believes men should become powerful and superior to women, we don't realize that this mindset not only grates on our physical and mental health, but we don't succeed in all aspects of life like we would if we accepted that women can contribute a great deal to our success.

The best way to avoid toxic masculinity is to create yourself; just as Cole stated above, "being a man is a matter of choice." The Createyourself mindset aims to steer your brain

towards positivity. Men who adopt this mindset can avoid a less successful life. To do so, we must declutter all negative emotions and the so-called “Ideal Man” benchmarks from your brain. God has created every individual differently, yet we all are equal as human beings. If men were meant to be violent and aggressive, God would never instill emotions in us. Similarly, if women were supposed to be inferior, God would never bless them with intellect and aptitude.

One of the things I had to overcome as a man in my marriage to Jennifer was that I would be taking on a great deal of the traditional “mommy duties” at home. In order for Jennifer to hold up the responsibilities of her career and business, there would be no way she could also do all the house cleaning, the laundry, the cooking, taking care of the dog, babysitting our granddaughter, making the boys school lunches, driving them all over town to activities, etc., etc. Thankfully, God has allowed me to build an entrepreneurial career that enables me with the flexibility to fill in those duties and balance out our family needs.

We all need to believe that we are human, and that God has created us to be in this world for a purpose. This purpose is not to be superior to other humans but instead, our real purpose is to analyze our own capabilities and use them to bring happiness and betterment to the lives of other people who are associated with us. Being men, we are given the physical strength to dominate others, but if we don't use our minds to understand that women can be equal and even superior in other ways, we will never fulfill our true purpose and you can't create yourself.

A problem I see in our society today is that the vast majority of men are also depressed, they just don't realize it. As humans, when we suppress our emotions on a long-term basis, we can become prone to developing major depression. When you ever feel that you are turning heartless towards the needs of others, especially women, then you must drain out all negative energies from your body and try to incorporate as many positive energies as possible.

The Createyourself mindset puts a great deal of emphasis on thinking and meditation. Through meditation, you breathe out all the stress and breathe in the positive relief. When there is positivity within you, you can see a bigger picture of yourself and the world. I am not saying you have to sit down on the ground with your legs crossed humming. What I do is whenever I am doing something that doesn't require focused thought on the project, such as working out or taking a shower, I will turn my mind to my breathing. Sometimes my Apple Watch even suggests when I should breathe.

I will focus on deep breathing to where my lungs feel they can't take in anymore air, hold it for four seconds, then let it out slowly. I only have to do these four or five times to feel the stress release. Not only does this help most anytime throughout the day, but if you have more time to keep it going you will find that after five minutes or so answers to problems you were trying to solve earlier will come flooding into your mind. In some cases, they may be your eureka moment for a great idea you would not have otherwise considered. The benefits of focused breathing go beyond just your health, but also your mental capacity to solve problems.

THE WORLD NEEDS WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

"To heal, men and boys must learn to feel again."

–Melia Keeton-Digby

Without a doubt, women are reforming the business landscape these days. Western studies prove that approximately 52% of managerial or professional positions are now held by women. However, there are many countries in the world where women are still deprived of their right to education and work. It is a dilemma of our society that we expect women to remain fragile and weak the same way we expect men to be strong and courageous. This is not true in any sense.

Women realize that they are not meant to depend on men for their needs and survival. The world is full of examples where women who took a stand changed their circumstances using their own capabilities. God has bestowed women with countless leadership qualities empowering them with the courage to take risks, learn from failure, deal with stereotypes, and fight for their rights. Most women never give up, no matter how hard the challenge, especially when they are supported by the men they love.

Consider the example of Katy Perry who is a renowned singer and a songwriter. Success didn't come her way overnight. She went through consecutive failures and rejections for about ten years before she reached stardom. Her first album sold only two-hundred copies before the record label went out of business. She would afterward lose two more labels. In spite of all the dismissals and failures, she chose not to give up. She embraced her failures and continued struggling. Perry rose to

fame in 2008 with the release of her second album “One of the Boys.” Today, Katy has several business ventures beyond her singing providing a net worth of ~\$330 million (remember, the money is not what makes sure she is happy).

We’ll talk later about several more women who didn’t give up and emerged as role models for the entire world. This proves that society’s vague standards of being weak and strong are not linked to any specific gender. Weaknesses and strengths dwell inside each of us. By adopting the Createyourself mindset, you can explore your strengths to bring positive change in your life and that of others.

God created women to be much more adaptable by nature than men. They then adapt to circumstances easily and mold themselves according to the demands of the situation. Adaptability and change are also a requirement of the modern-day business world. Constant advancements in technology and business challenge the most astute business leaders daily and boards are recognizing the adaptability of women for key CEO roles.

Successful women use this quality at their workplace to inspire their co-workers and exhibit that embracing change is not as difficult as it is deemed to be. They also draw in others by sharing the empathic side of a corporate goal that is harder for men to visualize for others. Women are masters in nurturing relationships. When it comes to building relationships, no one can beat a woman. They tend to have the ability to notice others’ likes and dislikes and use that tendency to build on the relationship. Women’s tendency to develop better relationships with clients and partners can be indispensable in this modern

era of business. Studies reveal that women are more successful as relationship managers than men.

Women enjoy living their lives through a cause that serves the improvement of societal needs. This is why most women leaders are excellent long-term strategic thinkers. They are less inclined to revolve around a short-term strategy if a more sustainable approach can be executed. Women tend to be more patient and tolerant while making decisions and be well organized. This is due to the way women are usually brought up and hence are good at multitasking.

Women tend to be better listeners and give importance to minute details at work. While embracing their emotional selves, their minds still tend to be quite logical and consistent with full dedication to their work. These built-in qualities help make women successful leaders. Additionally, women are socially mindful leaders that serve to foster novelty and creativity for themselves and others. No wonder the fastest growing sector of small business owners in the United States is women.

To my female readers, I want you to understand that being a woman is a blessing of God not only for you but for all of us. Instead of comparing yourself to men competitively, you must strive to bring out your God-given hidden aptitudes and talents to create yourself. By doing this, you will excel beyond most people. Not because you are a woman, but instead, because you are a person with the personal fortitude to succeed and prosper. Our world today needs your leadership and contribution more than ever.

“I think women are foolish to pretend they are equal to men; they are far superior and always have been.”

– **William Golding**

MEN AND WOMEN ARE NOT ENEMIES

One of the biggest problems in our society today is that men and women treat one another as competitors and enemies. The two genders focus their full energies in proving who is superior to whom. This is a never-ending war because, in reality, there is no comparison between them. If we carefully observe the way this world is designed, we realize that men and women are vital parts of each other. It's the yin and yang, the light that needs the darkness, the thrust that needs the friction, the successful requires the failure. We have different abilities and skills which when used collectively, will do wonders.

Men and women are different in a way that they possess contrasting biological and physiological characteristics. However, there is no difference between their mental capabilities. Men and women separately and combined, symbolize two forms of divine energy, the masculine form which is combative, and the feminine form which is subtle. When we grow into adulthood, we feel the need for our significant other. God has designed the entire universe in such a way that when masculine and feminine energies are combined, they bring more than their individual selves.

People tell Jennifer and I all the time how amazed they are at how much we accomplish in our work, with our family life, and in our philanthropy and worship. There is no way either of us would be able to accomplish what we do without each other, but on top of that are the strengths that combine from each other to merit all that we do. Of course, there are also selfish

sacrifices we have chosen to make to free up the time we need to serve our work and build our relationship with our children, and we'll get to that later.

Men are evidently physically stronger, but to the contrary, women represent the ideal of inner magnificence. Most of the time society jumbles this subtlety with weakness which is not true. It is, in fact, more powerful than the most aggressive physical force. We need to understand that subtlety doesn't represent weakness, and physical strength doesn't mean all men are ruthless. For a man and a woman to be complete, they must each possess both energies.

God has given us unique abilities, and it is our primary responsibility to take full advantage of these abilities to pursue our goals. Numerous movements and causes exist today to defend feminism, but the majority of the movements are taken place without understanding the true essence of feminism. Women try to prove men as their enemies, especially in the slightest of the #Metoo movement. As a result, a never-ending debate begins between men and women that has no end. True feminism is simply the quest for the equality of genders. If some women have taken the concept beyond its intention and if some men are against this movement, it doesn't make every man wrong and it doesn't mean every feminist is right.

Benjamin Franklin was one of the founding fathers of the United States. At the time of signing the Declaration of Independence in 1776, he said, "If we all don't hang together, we will all assuredly hang separately."

He meant that unity was crucial to gain victory in the Revolutionary War. Without unity, the Declaration of

Independence was meaningless. Though he said these lines in the context of war, if we apply this logic to the current scenario, it does make sense.

Men and women must realize their equal individual roles and aim to augment each other in their shared struggle to improve life for themselves, their loved ones, and society as a whole. In order to end the abuse of toxic masculinity, men must concentrate on using their dominant qualities for the betterment of society and not for total dominance. We must use our strength to protect and preserve the feminine character and to help women discover their true potential to make this world a prosperous place. Toxic feminist and gender-neutral activists must also understand the reality that God has created to provide a balance between the genders and the need to create yourself through the talents and abilities that God has granted us all.

HOW DID OTHERS DO IT?

“All the wonders you seek are within yourself.”

–Thomas Browne

Do you ever feel devastated when you think about the miseries in your life? It happens to the majority of us. We ask, “Why me?” whenever we encounter problems. We waste a great deal of time in self-pity and self-sympathizing or blaming others, but we hardly try to focus on the things we can do to bring a positive change in our lives. God has bestowed every human being with twenty-four hours a day.

Some people utilize their time productively and make success their destiny, while others spend their entire life complaining about their misfortune. It is human psyche that whenever we go through failure, we blame everything on our destiny. We try to convince ourselves that it is our destiny to experience failure, and nothing good can ever happen to us. William Shakespeare once said, ***“It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.”***

If destiny meant everything, then words like hard work and struggle would never be found in any dictionary. The world is full of examples of people who strived hard to change their lives. They proved to the entire world that constant struggle and patience are the key to success. It’s important to know that triumph doesn’t come overnight; we need to be determined and focused on our goals.

In this chapter, I will share the stories of ten highly successful people who never gave up and changed the world in many respects. These are the people who exhibit how opportunities are often disguised as failures. Your downfalls are a great way to assess your own strengths and weaknesses. Once you are aware of your true potential, you can do wonders. The biographies of the influential people which you will read later in this chapter are my true inspiration. Their endeavors have helped me in creating myself. I want my readers to go through the life stories of these people and create a vision to find your way. Of course, these are brief synopses of these people and you should endeavor to read their full biographies.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Benjamin Franklin once famously said, “Instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle.”

My most favorite figure in history and the example of a “giving human” is Benjamin Franklin whom everyone knows as one of the founding fathers of the United States, but do you know how he reached this pinnacle? Franklin was born in Massachusetts to a family who lived hand-to-mouth, meaning they were very poor. He could attend school for only two years because of his father’s low income. Despite the lack of formal learning, Franklin became an avid book reader in his early childhood. His passion for books equaled any formal education he could have received. His older brother was a printer under whose guidance Franklin learned the tricks of the trade.

At the age of 17, he left his home to explore a new life in Philadelphia where, during his initial years, he worked at several printing shops while he endeavored with inventions and side businesses. Even after facing many difficulties and failures, Franklin never gave up. Still in his teens, Franklin met Thomas Denham and joined him as a merchant. Denham became the father figure and mentor Franklin never had encouraging him to continue to learn and create. In 1727, Franklin formed a group called The Junto Club, nicknamed the Leather Apron Club, to bring together like-minded people who were eager to make their society better. The members loved to read, but they didn’t have enough books available. With the guidance of Franklin, the group began collecting books on various genres creating the first lending library. They also created the first subscription magazine in America, established the nation’s first firefighting organization, the University of Pennsylvania, and

the Philadelphia Hospital. Franklin was also an avid inventor and researcher making discoveries in physics and electricity, inventing the first bifocals, and the Benjamin Stove.

Franklin dedicated his life to the betterment of society and was a leader in drafting the “Declaration of Independence.” In the same year, he was appointed as the commissioner of the United States to France making a grand impression on the King and the people of Paris. In 1785, Benjamin was appointed as the President of the Executive Council of Pennsylvania and selected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 where the Constitution of the United States of America was written. Although Franklin did not complete his elementary education, he was awarded many honorary degrees by various universities in appreciation of his exemplary work for society and humanity.

WARREN BUFFETT

In the words of Warren Buffet, “The first rule is not to lose. The second rule is not to forget the first rule.”

You must have heard Warren Buffett’s name at least once in your life as the richest man in the world. Warren Buffett is one of the most successful investors of all time. He is the chairman, the CEO, and the largest shareholder of Berkshire Hathaway, a multinational conglomerate holding company which is headquartered in Omaha. When the other kids his age were busy having fun, Warren had already set a stage to be a millionaire in the future. He would go door to door to sell candies and soft drinks when he was just six years old. At the age of eleven, he bought three shares of Cities Service Preferred stock and made \$2 on each share. He worked as an investment salesman at his father’s company from 1950 to

1954, and by the age of twenty, he had already saved around \$10,000. He also worked at Benjamin Graham's partnership for about two years.

Within a very short span of time, he had accumulated a good amount of personal savings which he invested in opening up his first partnership business. By the end of 1962, Warren had seven partnership businesses which led him to be a millionaire at the age of 32. In the same year, he merged all his partnerships into one and invested in a textile manufacturing firm called Berkshire Hathaway. Within three years, he took over the entire company. Warren later transformed the business from textile into the insurance sector. He kept on investing in different businesses which helped him develop a great investment acumen. His earnings were over \$2 billion by 2006. In 2008, Warren's name appeared at the top of the Forbes ranking of global billionaires with a net worth of \$62 billion.

JACK WELCH

I often remind myself of this quote by Jack Welch: "When launching something new, you have to go for it – "playing not to lose" can never be an option."

Have you ever heard the phrase "Going from rags to riches?"

Jack Welch is the epitome of the above phrase. He had been the chairman and CEO of General Electric from 1981 to 2001. He grew up in a financially deprived family, where his father was a railroad conductor. Jack began working right from his school days to support his family. He worked as a hawker, shoe salesman, and golf caddy. Despite doing several jobs, Jack still managed to be a good student at school and completed his bachelor's in chemical engineering from the University of

Massachusetts. He then pursued a master's and Ph.D. in the same field from the University of Illinois.

Jack joined General Electrics (GE) in 1960 as a junior chemical engineer in the plastics division. During his initial years at the company, he was not happy with this job because he didn't get the pay raises he had expected. However, he remained determined and consistent in his hard work. Eventually, he was promoted to head of General Electric's entire plastics division. His dedication and endeavor further led him to be the CEO of the company. Jack's leadership and business acumen increased GE's market share manifold. At his retirement, he received a severance package of \$417 million which was the largest severance amount paid to any American CEO in the last decade. He is also the author of the number one bestselling book titled *Winner*.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Abraham Lincoln's words continue to resonate with me today, particularly these words: "Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm."

We all learn in school how Abraham Lincoln, as President of the United States, ended slavery and saved the Union from splitting. However, are you aware of the travails and miseries that this man endured throughout his whole life? Abraham Lincoln is the personification of "Not Giving Up" regardless of how tough the circumstances. He experienced countless failures in his life, but never lost hope; he continued to rise from the ashes, taking a new start. Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln, was a hardworking man. Through his persistent efforts, he had become one of the richest men in the country but lost everything when Abraham was young.

Starting again, the family moved to the frontier in Spencer County, Indiana.

When Abraham was quite young, his mother passed away and his father made him work on surrounding farms to bring in more money. After those experiences, Abraham despised hard physical labor but nevertheless grew up to be a responsible and dedicated man. He strived to improve his lifestyle borrowing some money to start a business that went bankrupt, then he was fired from his job as a surveyor, became a traveling lawyer in the circuit, and ran and lost eight different elections for public office, but none of these failures put him off his journey.

Though Abraham hadn't received any true formal education, he was an enthusiastic reader. He began reading law books to equip himself with the knowledge required to become a self-taught lawyer. In 1836, Lincoln moved to Springfield, Illinois where he was accepted into the bar association and started practicing law with John T. Stuart. Lincoln's career as a lawyer was steadily growing as was his reputation and status. Lincoln played a vigorous role in the alliance of the states to eradicate slavery from the country when due to a twist of political fate, he was elected as the 16th President of the United States in November 1861.

MARGARET THATCHER

A powerful leader by the name of Margaret Thatcher spoke of words that evoked women empowerment which goes, "Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

Margaret Thatcher served as prime minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990. She was the first woman in

European history to be elected a prime minister. During her time as the Prime Minister, she was a staunch conservative. She also was an important leader for democracy with Ronald Reagan in the Cold War against communism and the Soviet Union. She got her nickname “The Iron Lady” from Soviet Captain Yuri Gavrillov in response to her strong opposition to communism.

As Britain’s first female prime minister, she came to power at an unsettled time in the country’s history, as it faced political disharmony and economic recession. Further trials, including the 1982 Falklands War and the conflict in Northern Ireland, helped to define her influential career.

There was an assassination attempt by the Irish Republican Army on October 12, 1984, where a bomb went off at the Brighton Hotel where Thatcher was staying. While it damaged her hotel room, Margaret was fine. She said of it, *“I am in politics because of the conflict between good and evil, and I believe that in the end good will triumph.”*

She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from the United States. As to her success, she said: *“Success is having a flair for the thing that you are doing; [but] knowing that is not enough, you have to have hard work and a sense of purpose.”*

ELON MUSK

Elon Musk has become a household name and he once famously said, “Failure is an option here. If things are not failing, you are not innovating enough.”

Whenever we talk about advancements in innovative technology, such as renewable energy and space travel, Elon

Musk's name immediately enters our minds. Elon is a South African entrepreneur and one of the most prolific modern inventors. He exhibited his entrepreneurial aptitude at the age of twelve by developing a video game for a computer magazine. In 1995, he founded a company named Zip2 which provided maps and business directories online. In 1999, he created an online money transferring tool with the name of X.Com, and it was later renamed PayPal. In 2002, he developed SpaceX to manufacture less costly rockets.

Elon always had a flair for uncovering the possibilities of electric cars which is why, in 2004, he became one of the top funders of Tesla, and later he took over as the CEO of the company. This is how entrepreneurs reach the milestones which are thought to be inaccessible by others. Elon never limited his capabilities by restricting himself to one thing; he continued to explore new outlooks. This made him a billionaire at the age of forty one.

Currently, Elon's net worth is more than \$93 billion. Entrepreneurship is not confined to existing reality; it is about discerning the future possibilities which are not evident to others.

JACK MA

Alibaba's founder, Jack Ma, was no foreigner to sacrifices because he knows the rewards are worth it. He said, "Never give up. Today is hard, tomorrow will be worse, but the day after tomorrow will be sunshine."

If you are fond of online shopping, Alibaba and AliExpress are likely familiar platforms especially if you live in Asian societies. Jack Ma is the person behind creating these platforms that

rival any of the largest companies in the world. Ma was born into a low-income family in China who were professional storytellers through music. From a young age, Ma was keen to improve his proficiency in English. So, he became a tour guide for foreigners to serve his passion for wanting to spend more time with native English speakers and gain better command over the English language.

Ma was one of the first individuals who recognized the internet as a business opportunity. He started his first venture as a language translation agency and then started creating websites for clients. This was new to everyone, but Ma was certain and put all his effort into building his business. Within three years in the mid-90s, he earned nearly a million dollars.

“My job is to help more people have jobs.”

In early 2000, he decided to launch his own idea and founded Alibaba which has taken him to the heights of global fame. The young poor boy who started from scratch became one of the wealthiest men in the world. He also co-founded other similar ventures which were also successful to a great extent; one of these was the e-commerce website called Taobao. Jack has won numerous awards over the years, and his net worth is \$50 billion.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

There’s no introduction needed for a man like Theodore Roosevelt. He once said, “It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.”

Theodore Roosevelt’s name may be unfamiliar to you because of the lack of schools today to adequately teach the history

of the United States. If you turn the pages of history, you will know that Theodore Roosevelt, also known as Teddy Roosevelt, was one of the most distinguished politicians of the United States who went on to serve as the 26th President.

Roosevelt embodied the essence of how to defeat your weaknesses. As a child, he had chronic asthma, and his doctors advised him to pursue some desk job to live a healthy and long life. However, his father encouraged him to beat his disease by changing his lifestyle. He undertook gymnastics and weight lifting, which helped him build a strong physique. After that, Roosevelt became an enduring advocate of exercise and strenuous life. He was homeschooled because of his ailment but was later enrolled into Columbia Law School but dropped out after a year to begin a career in public service.

Life was never easy for him. Roosevelt's wife and mother passed away on the same day which left him extremely shattered. He worked more rigorously to divert his mind from this trauma, holding a variety of jobs over the next several years, including U.S. Civil Service Commissioner under President Benjamin Harrison, New York City Police Commissioner, and Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He was elected Governor of New York and nominated Vice President in 1900.

In September 1901, after President McKinley's assassination, Roosevelt became the 26th president of the United States. He proved himself to be the pioneer of the modern presidency and transformed the horizon of a President by expanding the power of the Executive Office of the President through his declarations, acts, and policies. Roosevelt was one of the most momentous leaders of America who changed the face of the country through the idea of the National Park System and

Central America by starting the building of the Panama Canal. He was honored to receive two of the highest adornments, the Nobel Peace Prize and Congressional Medal of Honor.

J. WILLARD MARRIOTT

More popularly known as Bill Marriott, the man's a real inspiration for his wisdom. He said, "Good timber does not grow with ease; the stronger the wind, the stronger the trees."

When you think about Marriott Hotels, what comes to your mind?

Well, the things that immediately pop into my mind are their iconic "M" logo and their massive hotel buildings. Marriott is not an unusual name for us; it is one of the most renowned international hospitality companies, but do you know who created this company?

J. Willard Marriott founded the family business in the early 1930s. He opened a root beer stand that later became a chain of Hot Shoppes restaurants, and eventually, a Marriott hotel. It was not an easy initiative. Soon J.W. Marriott realized that he didn't know much about running a hotel business. His son, Bill Marriott, also known as, J.W. Marriott Jr., was studying for a bachelor's degree in banking and finance before serving as an officer in the United States Navy for two years. When Bill returned from the Navy, he joined his father's business full time and soon afterward, took over control of the management.

The elder Marriott was quite risk averse. He was not ready to borrow any money to run the business, but Bill thought that the hotel could not be built without it. He began shifting the company's business model in the late 1970s from hotel

ownership to property management and franchising. His strategic decision accelerated the company's growth and expanded its leadership position. In 1993, the Marriott Corporation became Marriott International, the international hotel management and franchising company. Within six years, the business grew into one of the world's largest hospitality companies.

In 2016, Marriott International acquired Starwood Hotels and Resorts for \$13 billion. That deal brought together its Marriott, Courtyard, and Ritz Carlton brands with Starwood's Sheraton, Westin, W, and St. Regis properties. Today, thirty hotel brands fall under the Marriott umbrella in more than 122 countries and territories. Bill Marriott attunes one of his greatest attributes to President Eisenhower. When on a visit to the Marriott Sr.'s home in DC, Eisenhower was given the option to either go outside and shoot quail in the cold or stand by the fire. He turned to then 22-year-old Bill Marriott and simply asked, "What do you think we should do?"

That simple question led to the "four most important words in the English language" to young Bill. Marriott adopted that style of management by asking his people, "What do you think?"

MARIE CURIE

Humanity owes great debt to this woman. A real hard worker, she once said, "Be less curious about people and more curious about ideas."

Marie Curie was born Maria Skłodowska in Warsaw, Poland on November 7, 1867, to her father and mother who were both teachers. Maria proved to be a very bright child and did very well in school herself. Unfortunately, at that time, women

were not allowed to go to university. So, in 1885, she made an arrangement with her sister Bronia. Maria would work as a governess teaching a wealthy family's children in their own home and support Bronia while she studied at university. In turn, when Bronia left and got a job she would support Maria while she went to university. Prohibited from higher education in her native Poland though (then controlled by Russia), they moved to Paris in 1891 so Maria could study at the Sorbonne.

Becoming a towering figure in the history of chemistry and physics, Marie Curie is most famous for the discovery of the two elements polonium and radium. In 1898, she coined the term radioactive to describe any substance that gave off the mysterious rays. In 1911, Marie Curie was given the Nobel Prize for chemistry, becoming the first woman to win a Nobel Prize. But she wasn't finished. She also became the first person – man or woman – to win the award twice. She continued her research of radium but by the 1930s her health was failing and eventually she was diagnosed with leukemia. Marie Curie died on July 4, 1934, at the age of 66.

The famous personalities I introduced to you in this chapter were just as human as you are with the same mental and physical challenges we all face in life. They had no superpowers which they used to transform their lives; all they had was determination and belief in themselves. You must have noticed that every example exhibited a different person with a unique story, yet one thing was common among all; they never gave up. After every failure, they moved on with a new spirit and zeal. If they can do it, why can't you? Why can't we all?

These life stories are only a few of my favorites depicting how defeating the circumstances may be a difficult task, but it is

not an impossible one. Those that take on the challenge and never quit are the ones who succeed. Certainly, these people never blamed others for their failure but adapted their way over the lessons learned.

Rhonda Byrne, the author of the book *The Secret* writes: *“When you want to attract something into your life, make sure your actions don’t contradict your desires. Think about what you have asked for, and make sure that your actions are mirroring what you expect to receive, and that they’re not contradicting what you’ve asked for. Act as if you are receiving it. Do exactly what you would do if you were receiving it today and take action in your life to reflect that powerful expectation. Make room to receive your desires, and as you do, you are sending out that powerful signal of expectation.”*

Victory and defeat are always in our minds; our life works like a magnet. It attracts what we think about the most. If we keep regretting our past and saying “what if” or we continuously worry about the future, we will always end up being distressed and upset. Whatever has happened can never be changed and whatever will happen can never be predicted. The only thing we can do is learn from the mistakes of the past and work for the miracles of today so you can focus on how to create yourself.

The purpose of sharing these examples is to illustrate to you when you are willing to change your direction, continue to understand why you may have failed, and then use that new knowledge to pursue your goals.

Nothing can stop you but death itself.

YOURSELF ON YOUR SHELF

I appreciate the opportunity to share something I am very passionate about – that is my library and the importance I believe the library has in every family's path to success and happiness.

My wife and I love to spend time with friends. One couple we enjoy is also in the healthcare field and adoptive parents of medically challenged children. Per the usual, the ladies go off on their tangent fairly quickly, so with my fellow husband, we were soon on the subject of books we were reading. He, *The Paths Between the Sea* by David McCullough about the building of the Panama Canal, and me, *Once Upon a Time in Russia* by Ben Mezrich about the transition of the fall of the USSR into the country being run by the billionaire Russian oligarchs of today.

We enjoy similar tastes in books; both of us recently completed another David McCullough book, *The Wright Brothers* – I recommend all of David McCullough's books if you have not had the pleasure. This led us to the idea of starting our own Inklings meetup once a month guys-night-out at a favorite brewhouse to discuss what we are reading – what fun, don't you think?

I believe that a well-stocked library full of books, audios, videos, and news clips grants easy access to the world's knowledge, while also a great source that tells others about yourself. In my home office is one full 14' by 24' foot wall of my personal library with several other piles of books under desks and cabinets. In our children's classroom is another 14' by 24'

wall of younger adult and children's books with the adjacent wall covered with a National Geographic map of the world to reference locations they may be interested in as a result of something they've read.

Not nearly as much as we would like, we get invited to friends' homes for a visit. If it's someone we've never visited before, we'll always ask for a tour of the house, not to be solely polite allowing them to show off their home, but also for my curiosity. As usual, we wander from room to room, with wine in hand, as our hosts show us the wall hangings, colors and fabrics, lighting and furniture, flooring, wallpaper, cabinets, counters, and window treatments.

The houses are often quite beautiful and full of family photos and other personal items of importance to our friends, but my focus is always on their book collection. Sadly, more often than not, I am amazed at how many of today's homes not only don't have a dedicated library but barely any bookshelves at all.

Just to focus on aesthetics for a moment, books can be very attractive in design and a wall of books makes the best decorative mural as they are more diverse in color and grandeur in appearance than any wallpaper. But books do much more than just decorate a room, they make it inviting and they give it personality.

I believe a home without books is like a body without a soul – you have everything you need to function but without the essence of being.

Books show themselves as being separate personalities lounging in our reading room and waiting for someone to

converse with them. When I can sit alone in my library, I feel I am surrounded by intimate friends. The knowledge that they are in plain view can be both stimulating and refreshing.

I find books to be my friends, comforters and counselors, repositories of wisdom, sources of ideas, reminders of the past, projections of the future, and guides into a new realm of travels or business.

A good collection of books is like having your own “college of knowledge” giving you access to information that you are interested in with just a glance up to find. Many times, I am thinking about something and wondering where in my library I can gain some insight, and just reading a title will trigger an idea or recall points I found interesting and relevant.

When I visit the home of a friend without books, I feel cheated. Just spending a few minutes looking at my friend’s bookshelves would allow me to learn more about them, their taste, and interests than I could learn in a half-dozen leisurely dinner conversations.

A person’s library speaks volumes, no pun intended, about who they are as a human. A valued and cherished library reflects how you think and who you are today, and who you have been in the past. At a glance, your guests know whether your interests run toward classics or bestsellers, history or politics, literary fiction or travel, fly-fishing or golf, art, or engine repair.

A wildly eclectic mishmash says a lot about you, too – this is what my library looks like! And forget the secret ballot. Your political ideals are right there in plain view. It doesn’t matter whether you’ve had the chance to read the *Secrets of Shelter*

Island by Alexander Green or *Thick Face, Black Heart* by Chin Ning Chu, yet as the mere effort to purchase and intend to read is evidence enough. I try to keep things balanced making sure I read more liberal-oriented books to compare to my extended collection of biographies on our founders and more recent conservatives like Churchill, Reagan, and Thatcher. You might even learn about someone's point of view about government overall if you see the "Federalist Papers" or the book by Morris and Linda Tannehill titled *The Market for Liberty* about how in their view governments stifle freedom and free market societies.

Your core beliefs also sit on your bookshelf. The family Bible says one thing, the Quran another (I have both!). Titles by C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton reflect a subtle theology; Karen Armstrong or the Dalai Lama, a cosmopolitan view; or *The Power of Kabbalah* or *The Celestine Prophecy*, a diversified view.

Of course, not everyone who loves books has them on display. Some, for instance, grow tired of carting them from one address to the next. This leads to tough choices: "should I dump Robert B. Parker or safely jettison P.G. Wodehouse?" In my case, many of my books have lived in 10 or more different dwellings during my nomadic years – more often than not the weight of my post-graduate textbooks was the sacrifice for ease of a move.

Some people over recent years have given up reading books entirely depending on the internet, cable TV, and movies for their news, knowledge, and entertainment.

When the era of the internet kicked into overdrive two decades ago, many prophets of doom predicted that printed material

was at death's door, especially heavy hardback books. And it may well be. For those who insist they are done with paper, the Kindle connects them directly to Amazon's online library. It allows for the immediate purchase and download of your book of choice at a discount to the bound version, and it will hold thousands of books including newspapers and magazines. Or even further, digital is the opportunity to listen to many more books. I am a monthly subscriber to Amazon's Audible service with well over 300 titles I have listened to at the time of this writing.

As a matter of fact, as we digress for a moment, one of my favorite series of books is authored by Tom Butler-Bowdon called the *50 Best Classics Series* where he has gathered up 50 of history's best books on subjects like the Spiritual Classics, Self-Help Classics, Prosperity Classics, and most recently the 50 Best Business Classics. One of the largest single purchases of books for me was when I went on a binge to acquire many of these books on his lists that I did not already have for my own library so that I may read them for myself. Tom does a great job of summarizing the essence of each book, and I recommend you choose one of the subjects you appreciate best and read it. You will get hooked.

Just this evening, I was having an email exchange with Tom when it hit me that today's digital and paper channels of sales end up benefiting the author greatly. When I hear about a good book, I usually listen to the audible version first. If I like it and wish to gain a deeper understanding, I get the Kindle version. If it impresses me enough to hold in paper for my shelf – I buy the book. This is what is amazing for the author... if it is really good, I have bought it three times; half-decent, two times; and

ok as a reference, then once (don't tell my wife as she is the frugal one)!

What I find about the paper form of books is there's something about the tactile experience of handling it that I miss in digital form so much so that I have committed to never giving it up. Who really wants to curl up in front of the fire with an electronic reader? Think of it, if you're a churchgoer, doesn't it just seem a bit sacrilegious to sit in the pew thumbing your iPad to the verse the pastor is discussing? The other problem is that while I can keep the book forever in electronic form, I can't easily pass it on to others to read. Additionally, and back to the premise of this article, no one can see it on my shelf when they are visiting and touring my home, or as my sons like to do – sneak into my office and confiscate one they like because of the cover.

Now, we all know the value and pleasure of reading and how a personal library affords us endless opportunities for something equally important – rereading. Each of our children has their own bookcase in their rooms and we find them rereading their favorite stories over and over.

Because my books belong to me, I get to treat my books with that familiar intimacy that squelches any formality. Books are for our use, not for show. We should have no book in the house we are afraid to mark up or afraid to place on the table, wide open, face up, or face down. A good reason for marking favorite passages in books is that this practice enables us to easily remember the significant sayings important to us during that reading, and the ones we can refer to quickly. Then in later years, when coming across them again, it is like visiting a forest where you once blazed a trail. You have the pleasure

of going over the old ground and recalling the intellectual scenery you discovered in earlier versions of yourself.

Parents should begin collecting a private library for their children to build that lasting flavor, but it is never too late to start no matter your age. Also, don't forget to put in your Last Will in Testament who will get what books from your library, because if your descendants are anything like me, then they will be fighting over the 1st edition *Gone with the Wind*, Winston Churchill's series on the *History of English-Speaking People*, or any of the other great books you have left behind.

Learn well and create yourself through books!

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

“Successful people do what unsuccessful people are not willing to do. Don't wish it were easier; wish you were better.”

—Jim Rohn

Part of your journey to knowing your why is to identify what success looks like for you. How do you define success? What is the first thought which comes to your mind when you ponder what your life would be like in success?

Many of us believe that having fame and a great deal of money is success. It may or may not be true. Wealth can be one of the indicators of success, but it is not the sole representation of being a successful person. Take, for example, a person who inherits a huge sum of money from their father. They are

wealthy, yet we can't categorize them as successful. They may have lived through their father's success in building up his wealth being passed on to the son and while the son may live the life of the successful, statistics show that the third generation will squander any wealth left from the son. Only the grandfather struggled and learned the lessons of success.

A vast majority of people don't reach success because they have the mindset which links success with finances only. They are never clear about their vision and how to serve others that leads to true success. There are no definite criteria that can describe success as that is truly individual. It varies from person to person. Everyone has their own definition of success.

One person can describe success as not having to work nights or weekends, while another person might define it as having a billion dollars in their bank account. The key point is that we must know how to define the criteria of our success. I have learned from my experiences that success has a direct correlation to your vision. If you are clear about your goals to attain your vision, you are more likely to become successful in your life as it pertains to that vision.

People who focus only on the money may have set goals, but they don't have a vision. They are willing to do anything to earn money regardless of their societal interest or personal passions. They may earn substantial money by doing things that don't agree with their passion or values. In this way, their success won't stay long because in everyone's financial lives there are always ups and down, volatility, and unexpected events. These people end up getting frustrated doing what they never liked doing in the first place just to earn the money or build wealth. This is not the way to create yourself.

True success is built upon your character. The attributes of your personality define more of your success than the pursuit of money. Consider the example of Ebenezer Scrooge from the famous book, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, who went from rags to riches due to his hard work in building a business on the back of others. He gained all the notoriety that money could buy him. But this infamy turned him into a rude, selfish, and aggressive person. He disrespected the ones who were not as rich as he, especially those that worked for him. What do we call such a person today? “A scrooge.” They may be considered successful with regard to money, live in the biggest house in town, own many of the businesses in the area, but as a human being, they can never be an inspiration for others.

You have most likely heard of Mother Teresa. She was not a Hollywood celebrity or the CEO of a multinational company, nor was she a wealthy heiress, yet the entire world admires her for her benevolence. She was a Roman Catholic nun who devoted her life to serving the poor and deprived all around the world. She spent many years in Calcutta, India where she inaugurated the Missionaries of Charity, a religious congregation dedicated to helping the needy people of India. In 1979, Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and became an epitome of benevolence. She was fond of saying, *“If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”*

In 1997, Mother Teresa departed this life. Such was the beauty of her character that made her extremely successful in the eyes of the entire world. In 2016, Mother Teresa was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church as Saint Teresa.

TRAITS OF THE SUCCESSFUL

Becoming successful is not simply a matter of luck. It is about devoting the time to learn a skill and then practically applying the knowledge you gained. It requires you to stay adherent to what you want to pursue even in the face of adversity and potential failures along the way.

As I have said, success doesn't have any specific criteria. It is different for each individual according to their own perception. However, there are a few key traits that are common in almost every individual who strives to accomplish something in their life. Develop these traits and make them a part of your daily routine. You will see a noticeable change in the way you perceive success.

OPTIMISM

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

—Winston Churchill

When you strive to accomplish your well-defined goals, success follows you automatically. But there is no magic wand to help you in achieving your goals overnight. It takes hard work, consistency, and optimism to reach the milestone of success. It is pivotal to stay positive and determined. The world is full of examples of people who devoted their energies to accomplishing their goals and never gave up. Being optimistic signifies never losing hope no matter what. If failure and rejection agonize you to the extent that you give up on trying

again, success is not meant for you. Successful people always view failure as an opportunity for learning.

Stephen King is a *New York Times* bestselling novelist who emerged in the horror and fantasy genres with his books *Carrie*, *The Shining*, and *IT*. Much of his work has been adapted for film and TV. Life has not always been easy for King. His childhood was fatherless and his first job out of college was as an English teacher. He spent the initial years of his writing career broken and struggling. He had to live in a mobile home along with his wife who was also a struggling writer. Even after working multiple jobs to support their family, the couple had been financially deprived. They couldn't even afford to pay their telephone bill. King received sixty rejections before selling his first short story, *The Glass Floor* which earned him only \$35. Even after all those rejections, King never gave up on writing. He would constantly pen down his imaginations and develop them into terrifying stories.

In 1973, King finally sold his first book to become a bestselling novel; *Carrie*, the tale of a tormented teen who gets revenge on her high school peers through death and destruction. The book touched the heights of success after it was published the following year and was made into a blockbuster horror movie with Sissy Spacek as the lead character, then a Broadway play, and a feature film remake in 2013. This success enabled King to stay devoted to writing as a full-time job and the first to attain 30 novels as number one best sellers and his movie *IT*, now the highest-grossing horror movie in history. My favorite was *The Shining* with Jack Nicholson.

However, King has always said that the success of his novels has not been because of the terror factor, but instead how

he sees we are all essentially hopeful of humanity with a fundamentally romantic worldview. *“There must be a huge store of goodwill in the human race. If there weren’t, we would have blown ourselves to hell ten years after World War II was over.”*

He believes in all those sappy, romantic things like children are good, good wins out over evil, it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, etc. He sees a lot of the so-called “romantic ideal” at work in the world around us. It’s this core optimism King has in humanity rather than his ability to terrorize us that makes him so loved by readers and moviegoers. And his ability to stick to his purpose has driven his success.

INTEGRITY

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Integrity refers to performing your work with a high level of honesty and consistently staying adherent to your moral values and ethics. This is one of the vital attributes of a person’s character. American television personality, Oprah Winfrey, defines integrity as: *“Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody’s going to know whether you did it or not.”*

People who are honest and practice moral principles in their lives are considered reliable and trustworthy. Whether they are wealthy or not, their integrity makes them successful in

every walk of life. They have the ability to win people's hearts by their code of conduct.

In the previous chapter, we talked about the struggles that Abraham Lincoln faced throughout his life. Even after all the hardships and adversities, Lincoln never gave up on the path of honesty and morality.

As a result, Lincoln is well-known even more than a century after his passing. A few days after his death, Lincoln's canonization began. His life was compared to Jesus Christ. He was portrayed as a self-made man, the liberator of the slaves, and the savior of the Union to the worshipping public. In 1982, forty-nine historians and political scientists were asked by the Chicago Tribune to rate all the presidents through Jimmy Carter in five categories: leadership qualities, accomplishments /crisis management, political skills, appointments, and character/integrity. Abraham Lincoln stood at the top of the list.

Those who are considered a role model even after their demise are the real successful people.

PASSION

"Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

–Harriet Tubman

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, success is greatly linked with your goal. When you know your goals clearly, it creates a passion inside you. You leave no stone unturned in accomplishing your goal. This passion keeps motivating you

to reach the peak of accomplishment. In fact, you only strive to follow your passion and success chases you itself.

Whenever I talk about passion and success, the most famous name that comes to my mind is Walt Disney. He was the creator of the renowned cartoon character Mickey Mouse (initially known as “Mortimer Mouse”). His achievements in the world of animation earned him numerous awards and international fame. Disney had a passion for drawing right from his childhood. He developed his skills as a cartoonist at an early age and sold his first drawing when he was only seven years old.

He devoted most of his life to his art. He was even willing to work other jobs just to fund his passion. His love for drawing and animations kept enhancing as he grew older. He faced multiple failures on his way to turn his passion into his success. Disney launched several unsuccessful animation companies before coming up with Mickey Mouse in 1928. Disney earned 26 Academy Awards out of 59 nominations, including four in one year, giving him more awards and nominations than any other individual.

Of course, he is also the creator of Disneyland in California and Walt Disney World Resort theme parks in Florida and his company has grown international resorts in Hong Kong, Japan, and France. The mission of The Walt Disney Company is to entertain, inform, and inspire people around the globe through the power of unparalleled storytelling, reflecting the iconic brands, creative minds, and innovative technologies that make them the world’s premier entertainment company.

POWER OF VISUALIZATION

“Visualize the most amazing life imaginable to you. Close your eyes and see it clearly. Then hold the vision for as long as you can. Now place the vision in God’s hands and consider it done.”

–Marianne Williamson

One of the most distinctive traits of successful people is their power of visualization – especially sports successes. They stay positive and never give up because of their failures. They believe in the law of attraction which is to visualize an image in your mind and make it yours. When you read most interviews of athletes on their ultimate success, more often than not they say they had visualized it since childhood. By consistent visualization of this image, it will be attracted to you. When you have a goal to achieve something in your life, you must focus your entire attention on your goal. You must visualize in your mind that at a certain period of time you will accomplish your goal. When you are optimistic about this achievement, your dream begins turning into a reality.

Remember that visualization is effective only when you also work hard to turn it into reality. Let’s consider Jim Carrey’s experience. He is a Canadian American actor, comedian, screenwriter, musician, producer, artist, painter, and cartoonist. He is renowned for his bouncing humorous performances. But he was not born with this talent. In the early 1990s, Carrey was an unfamiliar struggling actor. To stay driven and encouraged in his career, he decided to write himself a check for \$10 million for “acting services rendered.” He dated the check for 1994 and carried it in his wallet for daily inspiration.

In 1994, Carrey was amazed to know that he would reap exactly \$10 million for his world-famous role in *Dumb and Dumber*. Today, Carrey is one of America's most successful and highest paid movie stars. He credits his constant visualization as the means of his success.

HABITS OF THE SUCCESSFUL

"If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception; it is a prevailing attitude."

—Colin Powell

Success is a term broadly based upon the interpretation of the individual. I refer to it as a customized factor that can be altered according to your choice and interest. From a student's point of view, scoring good grades in exams might be termed a success. From an entrepreneur's perception, building a business empire can be described as a success. People who have a philanthropic mindset feel themselves successful and accomplished when they work for the well-being of society and the people associated with it.

Most people believe that they are successful only when people adore them. But the reality is quite different. Success creates a sense of satisfaction and self-fulfillment inside you. If you are wealthy and well known, but living a restless life, this wealth and fame can be of no benefit to you and actually may be detrimental.

If you want to become successful, then adopt the traits of successful people. You must instill some healthy habits in your life which will help you in exploring new and wider horizons of prosperity.

PEN DOWN YOUR GOALS

Once you are certain of what success means to you, the next step is to create some workable goals for yourself. Though dreaming about what you want to achieve is healthy, it will not pave a road for you. To turn your dream into reality, you must make plans with a specific time frame and then begin working on it. If you believe that becoming the CEO of any renowned organization is a success, you will have to develop a proper plan of how you will reach this position. Write down your goals, give yourself realistic timeframes, keep yourself accountable for these goals, and decide what ways you will adopt to get there.

DEVELOP A CONSISTENT WAKE-UP ROUTINE

All human beings have only twenty-four hours in a day. We decide how we utilize these hours. Successful people have the same amount of time as everyone else. The only difference is how you utilize your time. Mornings are always powerful and full of energy. When you wake up early in the morning, you have ample time to plan and work for your goals. It is not necessary to build up a hectic morning routine with a protein breakfast and an hour's jogging. The only thing that really matters is developing a consistent wake-up routine.

Make a commitment to yourself that you will never hit the snooze button. I put my alarm clock on the other side of the bedroom near the bathroom door, so when the alarm goes off, I get out of bed, walk to the clock, shut it off, and instead of

turning around and walking further, I just keep going on into the bathroom to splash my face!

You should also incorporate a healthy detoxing glass of water in your morning routine as the first thing, to awaken your body, blood flow, and digestive system. You can develop the habit to make a to-do list every morning and set specific goals for that particular day. Keep a check on your everyday performance. All these things will help you in staying focused and determined.

AVOID OVERUSING SOCIAL MEDIA

With ever-changing technological advancements, social media has become a dispensable part of our lives. Yes, I said dispensable or wasteful. Most people waste precious time checking their notifications and liking their friends' posts. People have developed social media addiction to such an extent that they use these platforms even during their working hours which affects their productivity and also steals time from their employer.

If you want to achieve your goals according to the time frame you have set, you must limit your use of social media. The same time can be better utilized in reading informative articles and books, attending seminars, or participating in workshops to gain more knowledge shared by successful people.

WORK ON SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Learning is a never-ending process. Keep working on your skills and try to learn new things that make you prominent among other people in your field. Reading biographies of famous personalities will not only enhance your knowledge but it will also motivate you to be even more passionate about success. Always stay updated about the current trends prevailing in the

market. You can pursue different certifications to learn new skills and polish your existing skills.

INCLUDE EXERCISE IN YOUR ROUTINE

Exercise and meditation are the best ways to declutter your mind from stress and worries. Similar to the morning routine, it is not necessary to incorporate a difficult exercise routine into your life.

A simple yet brisk fifteen-minute morning or even evening walk can do wonders for your physical and mental health. It removes harmful toxins from your body and generates new energy within yourself. It won't help you lose weight or get stronger, but it would be a start to a more intense exercise regime to continuously increase your intellectual powers.

LEARN FROM FAILURE

I have mentioned in the above paragraphs that successful people don't give up when they encounter failure or rejection. To them, every rejection and failure bring an opportunity to learn something new. Your failures tell you what you must not do again. They help make you clear about your strengths and weaknesses.

So, learn to embrace your failures and pick yourself up after each rejection. Failures serve as a ladder that you must climb to reach the top.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FINANCES

No matter how prosperous you end up financially, you must set the habit of keeping a check on your spending. Many times, we buy things which we really don't need. When you review your spending on a daily basis, you will develop a fair idea

about where you are spending most of your income. You will also get to know which unnecessary items you have bought in a specific span of time. It is one of the easiest goals to reward yourself with. If you make a self-commitment to save a few dollars every month, you can treat yourself with something you like at the end of the year. Handling your finances efficiently is one of the strongest skills you can develop.

As there is no set of standards for success, there is no limit to healthy habits either. Everything that leads you to optimism is a healthy habit that can help you in creating yourself.

PART II

**CREATEYOURSELF
IN ACTION**

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”

–Joel A. Barker

WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD, WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST DREAM?

For most children, the greatest aim is to get some toy, colorful stationery, or their favorite chocolates. As they grow up, their desires and dreams also enhance. They begin fantasizing about their future. If you ever get a chance to talk to an adolescent, ask them their plans about their career. Most of them will have a goal such as becoming a doctor, engineer, artist, chef, technologist, and so forth. However, if you ask them why, a majority of them will not have a clear answer to this question. This is not confined to adolescents only. Many of us spend a huge part of our lives without knowing the answer to this why.

This why is your vision which gives you the direction for your life. A clear vision is vital to keep you motivated throughout your life. Let's assume you want to become a singer. Have you ever asked yourself, why do you want to become a singer?

The reason can be anything. You may want to earn stardom or money, or it is simply because singing is your passion, and it gives you pleasure. There is no one-size-fits-all answer. The vision varies from person to person. The only important thing is that you must be aware of your vision in your life. When you know the reason for your goal, it becomes easier for you to chase it. Your vision ignites a fire inside you, which keeps you encouraged throughout the entire course of your life.

Most people live their life like a constructor who tries to erect a building without an absolute design and layout. They don't have a clear vision for what the building will look like nor the details of how it will function within their life. They work merely on the basis of assumptions and estimations. They allow external circumstances, events, and people in their surroundings to determine their destiny. Instead of creating a unique purpose for their lives, they choose to go with the flow. However, this approach can never lead them to the road of success. True success originates with a vision for every area of your life that comes together to create yourself. A clear and precise vision is a strong motivator for constant progress and improvement in your life towards attaining that vision.

WHY IS HAVING A VISION IMPORTANT?

Goals play a constructive role in stimulating your attention and thought process; likewise, vision imparts the purpose of having these goals. Every individual is unique in their own way because God has designed every human with distinct talents and abilities. It is your greatest responsibility to discover the purpose of your life and devote all of your energies to fulfill it.

FOCUS

Vision equips you with the potential to fixate or focus with absolute attention on a particular objective. When you are focused, you are less likely to get distracted by the activities which are not productive for you such as an addiction to drinking or drugs, or just laziness. A vision opens up your mind to see all possibilities you have to produce a bright future for yourself and your family.

ENERGY

Your vision drives energy within you. It creates an image in your mind, which constantly inspires you to work towards your goals. You are more enlightened about prioritizing things in your life. It becomes easier for you to grow your network because you can identify the type of people who can help you in reaching your goals.

Eventually, it shapes up positive and healthy habits within you.
Vision is the catalyst that transforms stagnancy into action.

POWER OF MENTORING

One of my favorite authors on the subject of productivity and mentoring is Harvey B. Mackay. My favorite is *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty* where Mackay helps you understand the importance of building relationships you can turn to during moments of crisis, but that you can't build that true relationship at the time of your crisis. You have to develop meaningful connections well before you need them. He explains how doing for others will always return to you. In it he tells the story of how he mentored a foreign college student studying business and politics at a university in Minneapolis. After the student had graduated, he had returned home, and they had lost touch with each other.

Years later, Mackay was working to expand his envelope business into a new country and his local office was having a hard time with all the permits and approvals they needed to set up there. Mackay flew over to meet with the Senior Minister

responsible for allowing foreign businesses to operate in their nation.

As Mackay was walking into the room, he recognized the Minister as the student he had mentored years before, and more importantly the Minister remembered well all that Mackay had done for him while in the United States.

Needless to say, Mackay got what he needed to enter the new market.

ENDURANCE

Vision not only flames up a spark for your goals, but it also fuels your endurance. You'll never give up because you are definite about your destination. You'll keep going even when the circumstances get tough and challenging. A defined vision will strengthen you to move forward when you feel you want to quit.

Tyler Perry is an American actor, playwright, filmmaker, and comedian. Perry struggled with a disruptive childhood. He endured extreme physical and sexual abuse at the hands of his father. He was kicked out of his school because of his poor academic performance. His traumatic circumstances lead him to attempt suicide twice. Even after all these adversities, he eventually built up his dream career as a stage artist.

At the age of 23, he moved to Atlanta and engaged in several jobs to finance his stage career. In 1992, he wrote, produced, and acted in his first theater production, *I Know I've Been Changed*. Perry invested all his savings into the show, but it

failed miserably. The run lasted for one weekend, and only thirty people came to watch. However, Perry was determined about his vision. He didn't quit and kept up the production. He worked harder with different jobs often sleeping in his car to get by. He kept striving for six more years and finally on its seventh run, the show touched the heights of success. It was truly a breakthrough for Perry's career. In 2011, Forbes listed Perry's name as the highest paid artist in the entire entertainment industry.

His current net worth in 2020 was one billion dollars.

The first step to create your vision is to identify your core values, passion, aim, and how you visualize your life. You can begin by asking yourself, "Where do I see myself in the next ten years?"

The answer to this question will clarify your destination.

Now you have to choose the path to reach your destination according to your aptitudes and interests while building the skills you will need to make that vision a reality.

ROLE OF TAKING RISKS IN SUCCESS

"Life always begins with one step outside of your comfort zone."

—Shannon L. Alder

If you want to achieve something extraordinary in your life, you must step outside of your comfort zone. You must strive to

overcome the fears that keep you from reaching new heights. When I was to join the Army after graduating from The Citadel, I didn't just want to be a regular GI Joe, I wanted to be a part of the historic and elite fighting force – the 82nd Airborne Division. On my path to getting there, I had to make it through Jump School. I ended up loving jumping out of airplanes that when I was assigned to Ft. Bragg, the 82nd Airborne Division's HQ, I was not satisfied with jumping only every eight weeks which was the normal training schedule for the division.

I found out that the nearby air force base had a special unit that was responsible for testing new aircraft that paratroopers can jump out of effectively to get into combat. I became friends with the unit and whenever they had a new test aircraft project, I would be one of the “jump test dummies.” Think about it, we were not testing new parachute types, we were testing new aircraft. This included new cargo planes like the C5A, the C17, and the C130E, but also updates to the Blackhawk, Huey, and Chinook (my favorite) helicopters.

I was stationed at Fr. Bragg for two tours where according to the jump schedule I would have only made between 24 and 30 jumps. By the time I left, I had 293 jumps under my belt, and I experienced many more types of aircraft! Whatever you are visualizing, you will find a path to get it done!

Whether it is the apprehension of performing onstage, investing money to grow your own business, taking a chance to find your true romantic partner, or jumping out of an airplane, life's most fulfilling experiences come only as a result of taking risks. The vast majority of us are too reluctant to withstand the uncertainty that goes along with taking risks. We are unwilling to take risks because of the uncertain outcomes and the fear

of potential failure. When we are faced with a challenging situation, our minds are flooded with innumerable questions such as:

- What if I freeze during the onstage performance?
- What if people mock me?
- What if I lose all my investment?
- What if I get rejected?
- What if I crash and burn?

These unlimiting “What ifs” will lead you nowhere if they turn into fears. You must confront them to develop the confidence you need to overcome them. If you don’t and you let them get to you, you will end up losing hope even before trying. If you are truly passionate about your goals and vision, you must not let the fear of losing stop you from trying. Those who are fixated on the risk will not have the outcome they desire, but instead they will fail. I want you to try something, its kind of like the “is your glass half empty (negative thinking) or half full (positive thinking), but instead with traffic lights. When you are driving down the road and you know a light has been green for awhile before you get there, do you say, “don’t turn red, don’t turn red”? Or do you say, “stay green, stay green”? Whether or not it changes doesn’t matter, but your outlook on the situation and the way you are thinking (and praying) does have an impact on your life.

“The master has failed more times than the beginner has even tried.”

–Stephen McCranie

Many people perceive failure as something negative and bad. But this is not true. Failure works as an essential tool for

building character and understanding. It makes us robust and more resilient. Taking risks never signifies you will succeed every time; the risk will lead to some failure, and you should expect them. But overcoming these failures intensifies your capacity to recover quickly and helps you condition your mind to deal with such difficulties.

AMERICAN ENTREPRENEUR

Mary Kay Ash, who was an American entrepreneur and founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, lived in the era when it was believed that women were created to stay at home. She dared to break the stereotype by taking advantage of it, underground.

Mary Kay had become frustrated because of the gender discrimination in the organization she worked after yet another man whom she had trained got promoted over her. So, she decided to resign her job despite needing money to raise her family (her husband had died recently). With the help of her sons and life savings of \$5000, she started her own cosmetics business in 1963. She was aware of the risk associated with her decision; however, she went ahead with it because she was determined to change her life, and more importantly she wanted to change the lives of women across the country.

By creating her cosmetics enterprise into a home-based business for women to sell to other women, she lifted them up out of the discrimination and dependence of traditional organizations.

She wrote several books including *Mary Kay: The Success Story of America's Most Dynamic Businesswoman* (1981), *Mary Kay on People Management* (1984), and *Mary Kay: You Can Have It All* (1995). She writes: "We must have a theme, a goal, a purpose in our lives. If you don't know where you're aiming, you don't have a goal. My goal is to live my life in such a way that when I die, someone can say, she cared."

It is all fine and dandy to have a dream, but it's the execution that differentiates the doers from the dreamers. While the dreamers sleep and wait for the right moment to take action, the doer rises to make the current moment the right one and proceed with the action. Risk-takers are more likely to be successful because they do not limit themselves.

They are eager to change their destiny and try their luck.

RISK-TAKERS

"Great things happen to those who don't stop believing, trying, learning, and being grateful."

—Roy T. Bennet

The following are some of the traits which distinguish risk-takers from ordinary people.

THEY VIEW RISK AS AN ADVENTURE

Risk-takers are the ones who don't feel comfortable performing the same task repeatedly. They are full of zeal and enthusiasm to explore new horizons. They have a desire to reach the peak of success by passing through all challenging situations.

THEY ARE DETERMINED

People who take risk are courageous through their determination. They are never ready to give up, no matter how tough the circumstances. While others withdraw or resign themselves to their current circumstances, the determined are self-motivated and enthusiastic about staying firm. This makes them a true inspiration. They have leadership qualities because they set trends that others follow.

THEY ARE EAGER TO LEARN

Knowledge is vital to success, and risk-takers are well aware of this fact. They are always willing to learn new skills because they have a desire to grow. They believe that knowledge can help them in navigating future steps, actually reduce their risks by learning from others, and sail through difficult waters.

THEY PURSUE SUCCESS

Risk-takers know that success doesn't come to life as a gift. You have to quest for it constantly. Risk-takers view their life as a game. They first learn the rules and then strive to play better than their rivals. They know that as they pass through each level, they will have to go through even more difficult and challenging ones. As they progress forward with velocity, the powers against them grow. They know to continuously upgrade their skills, build upon their endurance, and develop an ironclad mindset to progress through amassing levels of difficulty.

THEY VIEW FAILURE AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Fear is a mental block that obstructs people from accomplishing their dreams and becoming successful. This fear is a part of every human. However, risk-takers teach themselves how to

overcome failure and not fear the potential consequences. They are practically unstoppable because risk-taking has strengthened their will to keep on going no matter how challenging the situation.

THEY DREAM BIG

Risk-takers are fulfilled with dreaming big. Risk-takers want to get more after attaining something worthwhile from previous actions they took. The reward is tenfold to any failure they may have had in the past. With every risk comes the will to be above average and trudge into newer and undefined territories.

THEY ADAPT TO CHANGE

There is nothing stagnant with risk-takers. They are always open to learning new things. One of the two mottoes on my *LinkedIn* profile is: *“Be brave enough to suck at something new!”*

Risk-takers don't like staying stuck in their bubble. They want to explore the world and hence are ready to enhance their knowledge by indulging in different activities.

BTW, my other motto is: *“Get off the couch.”*

HARDSHIPS CREATE VISION

Creating a vision is not an overnight task. Many times, people get confused while they are creating a vision for their lives. You may be faced with different factors that can blur your vision. For example, you want to become a writer, but when you ask yourself why, you don't have the definite answer for which you're looking. This may shake your belief about your

goal, which can result in a wrong decision misdirecting you from your vision.

Similarly, some people have several aptitudes and interests at the same time. When they work on defining a vision, everything seems to be scattered, and they can't focus on a single path. When you encounter a similar situation, you should answer a few questions for yourself, which will make decision-making easier.

DOES YOUR VISION FILL YOU WITH PRIDE?

This is one of the most important questions to ask yourself when you create your vision. Let's assume that your goal is to become a certified public accountant (CPA). The reason behind this goal is you have an interest in math, accounting, and business. You believe that by adopting the path of a CPA as a profession, you can improve your lifestyle while you help others in their business. So, in actuality, your vision is not becoming a CPA but instead "improving your lifestyle." Most people build their vision based on their skills and flairs of the times they are exposed. But the true question is, does your vision make you feel proud and satisfied? If the answer is yes, then go ahead and work tirelessly to live that dream. However, if asking this question to yourself doesn't galvanize you, you may be on the wrong path, and you need to reevaluate your decision.

DOES IT REFLECT YOUR CORE VALUES?

Core values are the fundamental beliefs of an organization or person. They serve as guiding principles that help you in forming your behavior and attitude. These values play a vital role in differentiating right and wrong. There are no standard core values or beliefs. They vary from person to person and organization to organization based on religion, culture, and customs.

However, love, integrity, peace, respect, freedom of choice, and so forth are the values that are common in almost every society. When you construct your vision, you must ensure that it is compatible with societal values and especially the law of the land. If your vision is to earn money, and you employ unfair means to reach your goal, you can never be perceived as a successful person. Similarly, if your efforts to attain your goal are causing undue harm to the environment because you are not using the latest technology, you must revise your goals and vision.

Stepping out of your comfort zone is always a good idea, but you must adhere to your values before taking the next stride.

ARE YOU READY TO ENDURE FAILURE?

Many people are enthusiastic about their dreams and goals. They work tirelessly to reach new heights. When they encounter their first failure, they get extremely heartbroken and give up on their dreams. You must bear in mind that achieving success is never immediate. You have to work constantly to turn your dreams into reality. If you are not willing to embrace hardships and failures, you can never live your vision. The world is filled with examples of people who had confronted innumerable rejections before they became successful. Therefore, it is necessary for you to understand that failure, and without climbing up the ladder with failure, you cannot attain success. It's the natural law of the world.

ARE YOU HONEST ABOUT THE REASONS BEHIND YOUR VISION?

We spend more than half of our lives trying to please others. With the emergence of the internet and social media, we are now keen to get the validation of others. We want others to praise and appreciate us. In this short-term euphoric feeling to match what we believe society wants from us, we ignore

ourselves. We set our goals and visions based on societal perceptions.

Let's say you decide to become an actor because you believe people will admire you that way. This is not a visionary attitude. You must be honest with yourself about your aspirations and preferences. If you ever feel that your vision no longer excites you, take a moment, and rethink it. Don't try to fool yourself, for being honest with yourself is your greatest responsibility because only you are in charge of your life. Choices and expectations of other people from your surroundings must not affect or alter your goals.

Humans are full of emotions and feelings. Many times, we lose hope and want to give up when we experience constant setbacks. Feeling distressed and dejected at times is quite normal. However, we should strive to be strong enough to rise from the ashes until we make it to our destination. Keeping yourself motivated is crucial. When you feel demotivated and discouraged, you can adopt the following measures to overcome your despair.

- Talk with positive people who have been through a similar situation.
- Avoid negative and toxic people as much as you can.
- Read books and articles about the real-life stories of successful people.
- Attend seminars and grow your network.
- Write down any depressing thoughts in a diary.
- Then toss them away or burn them.
- Exercise and meditate daily.
- Divert your attention to other interests for a time to regain your motivation in attaining your goals.

ACTIONS ARE THE PREREQUISITES OF SUCCESS

Many people have goals and dreams, but only a few achieve them. Defining your vision is indeed a significant step; however, it is not the only thing that will bring success your way. If you spend a good amount of time creating a vision but don't take action, you are only wasting your time. Success doesn't just fall in your lap. Successful people understand that taking risks is vital to turn their dreams into reality. We should always keep working without focusing too much on the outcome. Failure doesn't make you a loser but never trying truly shows that you are not a winner.

It is not necessary to win every time. Sometimes a loss can benefit you more than a victory does. Jeff Bezos is the founder and CEO of Amazon. He says,

"I knew that when I was 80, I was not going to regret having tried this...I knew that if I failed, I wouldn't regret that. I knew the one thing I might regret is not ever having tried. And I knew that would haunt me every day."

Your mind and heart stimulate you to work hard through the struggle only when the outcome is unknown. Humans keep moving ahead out of curiosity. If the results are already known, there is no point in striving to create yourself.

PART III

**SPIRIT OF
CREATEYOURSELF**

HOW DO YOU DEFINE PROSPERITY?

Most of us believe that wealth and prosperity are interchangeable terms. This is not true!

Wealth might be one of the factors which are calculated into defining our prosperity, but this is not the only aspect. Prosperity refers to the state of being WELL. You may be rich and can afford all the luxuries of life, but that doesn't mean you are happy or healthy. Being well entails enjoying your life to the fullest in every aspect such as health, relationships, work, spirituality, and so forth. Accumulation of wealth doesn't guarantee success and happiness in your life.

Now you might be wondering how you can achieve prosperity. I have a simple answer to this question. If you want to become more prosperous, become more spiritual.

LET'S FIRST UNDERSTAND WHAT SPIRITUALITY IS.

People often relate spirituality with religion. Your religious beliefs and practices may help you in becoming spiritual. But not every religious person is necessarily spiritual. Abiding by the laws and rules of your religion and dutifully participating in activities sponsored by your faith organization does not mean you are living spiritually in your faith.

Spirituality is all about finding the true meaning and purpose of your life. It is about connecting yourself to the divine forces which are larger than yourself. I have encountered numerous people in my life who spend much of their time worshipping God, yet they are not spiritual in their true connection with

Him. They don't have that deep bonding with the divine power of God. Being spiritual means focusing on who you are and your relationship with God and the reason you exist in this world. It is not doing the works that sound good to you and others.

As you develop purpose in your life that is aligned with your spiritual connection to God, you will become more focused and directed towards that purpose. There is a boy named Adam. His parents introduced him to Christ and raised him in a Christian church, but now that Adam is older, he doesn't fulfill his religious duties regularly. He doesn't go to church every week. He doesn't congregate with other believers regularly. However, he does have a strong faith that his creator is responsible for everything that happens in his life. He knows that he has been sent to this world to help other people with their adversities and miseries. Every day he talks with God about his pursuits; he thanks Him for providing his daily needs and he asks Jesus to be with him throughout the day and help guide him in his ways.

It's interesting for Adam because not only does he have people mocking him for believing in Christ and communicating with God, but there are also those who are "religious" that berate Adam as well for not attending church or publicly doing "good works." But Adam's spirituality is genuinely great and his belief in God grand. He knows there is more than just what this world sees in Adam. Adam is incredibly happy and satisfied with his life, and he believes he is quite prosperous, and that this is because he believes God is with him.

I am a follower of Jesus Christ where I believe He is the Son of God who died for my sins, but even those of us who call ourselves Christians have difficulty living as Jesus expects us to live. This is what non-believers debate us about, especially

when we knowingly sin. They say, “how can you do that when you are a Christian?” Our response is that we are all sinners. That choice was made for us by Adam and Eve when they rejected the opportunity to live how God intentionally created us. But He did give us free will and the choice to make our own decision. The problem was that it was the first two humans created with free will that made the wrong choice for themselves and all of their descendants – us.

Those who are saved because they have accepted Jesus as their Savior and that do hold the Holy Spirit in their hearts are being spiritual in the context above.

As spirituality relates to wealth, we read 1 Timothy 6:6-10, again as it is written, *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*

You should understand from this passage that if we are not living our spiritual path, even if we believe in our Creator, the riches we gain will always be a burden to us and give us more than our fair share of trials and tribulations. The burden tempts us to live not as a happy, healthy, and prosperous person, but instead, **LOVE** of the things that money brings will be our destruction. Just research how many of those who have won lotteries are now broke financially and their families are a mess because of the greed that ensued from that rapid wealth given.

It is not in having wealth that corrupts the mind, it is desiring the wealth over everything else in our lives like God, family, friends, or humanity itself that is found to be sinful.

In this chapter, we will talk further about spirituality and its absolute need to truly be human.

WEALTH AND SPIRITUALITY CAN GO HAND IN HAND

“Money cannot buy peace of mind. It cannot heal ruptured relationships, or build meaning into a life that has none.”

—Richard M. DeVos

In the previous chapter, we talked a lot about vision. Dreaming about a lavish and luxurious lifestyle is your absolute right as a human. However, there are people whose only dream is to make gobs of money. They LOVE money and make it their god. They are ready to do anything to become wealthy. They don't care about right or wrong morality. They have no guilt in adopting any unfair means to get money. Eventually, they may become rich, but they lose the true purpose of their lives.

When you know the meaning of your life, wealth may follow you just as well. As a matter of fact, the more passionate you are about the work you do, the more likely you are to attract wealth. Take the example of a woman named Jessica. She is a financial adviser. Her job enables her to earn a good income, but she doesn't enjoy it. However, Jessica has had a passion for fitness and good health throughout her life. It gives her health and pleasure. She decides to share her passion with

others through her own blog and help others understand the advantages of fitness and good health.

She is finally fed up with work and decides to quit her job and pursue her dream. Her family and friends naysay her that she may end up living a poor life. Jessica believes that her happiness comes first, and she devotes her time and energy in creating her blogs and videos. She also becomes a fitness trainer. People like her ideas and enthusiasm. Eventually, with her hard work and dedication, she becomes a star. Though she doesn't earn as much money as she used to earn as a financial advisor, now she is much happier, and she loves what she does. She doesn't have to drag herself to her workplace each day, instead, she is now more energized to bring a positive change in other peoples' lives. Prosperity is not confined to your financial well-being. If you have good health, loving and caring friends and family, and quality sleep, you are more prosperous than billions of people in the world.

Perez Hilton is an American blogger, columnist, and media personality. Perez was famous for ridiculing celebrities on his website PerlezHilton.com. His humiliating gossips and articles offended many celebrities and he never cared about any of the controversies he created. In 2010, Perez was involved in a project against gay-bullying called "It Gets Better." He asked numerous celebrities to support his cause, even ones he had berated before. This request triggered Khloe Kardashian to raise her voice against Perez. She called him out as her "personal bully." She said it seemed quite hypocritical that a person who himself had repeatedly bullied her and other celebrities was involved in an anti-bullying project. Khloe's words became a massive wake-up call for Perez. He recreated himself into a positive person from then on. He changed the

tone of his articles, he turned from rants to raves, and even though he lost readers and revenue he became clear about his meaning of life and used his understandings to help even more people. He is now involved in the music and fashion industry and stated in an interview with Deepak Chopra, *“I’m happier than I’ve ever been before.”*

In the Bible, God focuses on the purpose of life, which is to have faith in God and help others to understand His truth. He says, *“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*
Luke – 6:38

It is a universal truth that if we help others, we will be blessed ourselves. This blessing is not confined to financial gains only. It comes in love from others, peace, and true prosperity. Perez Hilton gave up on his money and fame because he realized that people were not happy with his mortifying attitude. As a result, God not only bestowed upon him with prosperity but also with the love from people who once despised him.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SPIRITUALITY IN CREATING YOURSELF

Spirituality varies from person to person. Most people believe that strengthening your connection to God is the first step to spirituality, but it takes the connection and continuous conversation with our creator to become truly spiritual. This then helps you create yourself in ways to serve others passionately. Spirituality also provides us with several benefits to our mental and physical health.

As noted, the world is a place of trials and tribulations. We are met with numerous hardships and afflictions throughout our lives. When we are not mentally strong, we feel dejected and heartbroken. We cry about our failures and lose hope. However, spiritual people have faith that everything happens for a reason though that reason may not be theirs. We believe hardships build our endurance and make us more determined to achieve our goals. We don't (always) feel stressed and out of control in tough situations. We don't cry and complain about our misfortune. We try to uncover the reasons behind our failure, learn them, and work towards our improvement. These things create positive energy within us, which results in a healthy mind and body and prosperity.

When you are mentally strong and stable, your body generates hormones and neurotransmitters which are helpful to your physical and mental health. They help in blocking pain and regulating blood sugar, hydration balance, and blood pressure in your body. They strengthen your immune system resulting in a more disease-free and improved lifestyle.

Spirituality has a direct relation to happiness. When you are clear about the purpose of your life, you live a more meaningful life. You don't hold false expectations of yourself. You live in the present and strive to make your current moments better. Most people that end up getting depressed are those that keep regretting their past mistakes, or they are constantly worried about their future. A spiritual person knows that they can't change their past and that their future is not totally under their control. Therefore, they focus on enjoying present moments and preparing their minds on how to handle the future crises that are inevitable.

Spiritual people tend to be more successful in developing strong interpersonal relationships. They are less self-centered and instead are more empathetic and open to listening to others for better understanding. They welcome suggestions because they believe in a difference of opinion and how the perspective of others can help in their decision-making.

HEALING POWER OF MEDITATION

Meditation is an old practice of training your mind to focus and shift your thoughts in a positive direction. People used to always link meditation with eastern religious traditions, and focused prayer time is a form of meditation. Today, as people become more aware of its benefits, they make it a part of their daily routine regardless of their religious preferences. This practice helps you in nourishing your mental capabilities. Many people believe that in meditation, it is mandatory to empty your mind of all thoughts. This is not true. The human mind can never be emptied. Emphasizing too much on not thinking about anything makes you even more stressed and exhausted. Meditation is all about relaxing your mind. It's about breathing in the positive energy and breathing out the negative energy. This is when your mind is free to create new ideas or find that solution to a problem you have been trying to solve for a while.

Most of us are habitual in multi-tasking. We spend our entire day doing different things simultaneously. This practice has a direct negative impact on our ability to concentrate. If we don't practice on how to focus, we make it more difficult to accomplish tasks required to gain a goal. Especially in this

technological era where we are excessively attentive to social media, video streaming, and texting. We can't fully concentrate on our daily tasks because we are tempted to check our notifications and comments or push out a post. Instead of practicing how to concentrate, we are practicing distraction. Eventually, we lose the ability to perform at high levels in any activity. Meditation is one way to practice focus and concentration. It's a solution to this problem that has crept into many people's daily habits. Meditation lets you forget worldly affairs for some time and concentrate on yourself only. With regular practice, you will notice that your concentration and attention improve to a great extent. Humans today are not aware of their true powers; they let their bodies control their minds. Meditation helps you in reversing this process, opening up your mind and enabling it to control your actions.

People become addicted to alcohol, drugs, vaping, and food because they have little or no control over their mind nor body. Meditation increases your self-control. People start using addictive substances because they are stressed or depressed about some aspect of their life, and they want to relax their mind thinking these activities do that for them. In actuality, they make it even harder to relax. Instead of taking a fifteen-minute smoke break, try a meditation moment. Meditation is a heavenly way of relaxing your mind. When your mind is relaxed, you gain control over your body and emotions helping to suppress your desire to eat or partake of these substances.

When we are stressed out, we don't breathe properly. As a result, less oxygen is absorbed into our bloodstream allowing toxic substances to build up within our organs. This not only blocks the efficient function of our body, but it leads to their deterioration. A huge part of meditation is all about mastering

your breathing. When you focus on breathing in deeply and purposely exhaling out, you exhale not only the harmful toxins from your body but also any negativity you may be feeling flows out of your mind as well. Regular practice can improve your cardiac health to a great extent.

David Lynch is an American filmmaker, director, and artist. He is known for practicing meditation and he says he has been doing it since 1973 without missing it for a single day.

“When I had my first meditation, this inner bliss revealed itself so powerfully – thick happiness came rushing in. And I said, ‘This is it.’ There it was. And everything just got better and better.”

David previously suffered from anger and depression in his early film career. His younger sister suggested he look into meditation and that simple daily activity completely transformed his life. Within two weeks of practicing meditation, his anger was lifted away. David says, *“It just keeps on growing. I think the ability to catch ideas grows, and the enjoyment of doing almost anything grows. An awareness, a clarity grows. A bigger picture starts to form—bigger and bigger. And you seem to know certain things more and understanding starts to grow more and more. And people seem familiar. Everybody starts looking pretty good. The world starts looking better [3].”*

POWER OF PRAYER TO CURE YOUR WOES

Though every religion has different customs and traditions, the basic idea of all is to spread peace and love. No matter

which religion you belong to, if you trust your creator and put all your faith in him, life becomes less stressful. When we pray, we are communicating with God. In prayer, we can share all our worries and agonies with Him. We believe that He has the power to solve our problems. But prayer only works when we have blind faith in God. If we dangle between hope and despair, we cannot achieve the desired results. Prayer is all about letting go of your worries. If you have doubts and uncertainties while praying, you are telling God that you don't believe in His divine powers to help. It is interesting how we usually get what we expect. When we have absolute faith that God will answer our prayers and help with our troubles, He does in some form or fashion. On the contrary, if you think that your anxieties will never end and that God doesn't care about you, you will always find yourself battling with problems that don't have any solutions, or that the answer you get is not the truth.

Prayer is the path to develop spirituality within yourself. People who pray regularly with absolute trust experience many benefits in their lives. When you pray, you believe that God oversees whatever happens in your life. He has the power to alter your life. As a result, it helps you in reducing your ego and self-centeredness. It creates a sense of humbleness and modesty within yourself. You become more sympathetic about people and devote yourself to help them. And that, my friends, is the true way to create yourself.

It is human nature that we cry over our problems; we are naturally selfish. When we forget how truly blessed we are to even be a living being, we can't realize the truth. Through prayer, we pay our gratitude to God for all His blessings, and we understand how to be happy and content with what we

have been provided. We realize that our problems are far smaller than those of most other people. It helps us develop an appreciative behavior and we feel the urge to help others with this understanding. Through helping others you truly create yourself.

CREATE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK ON LIFE

We face numerous issues and complications in our day-to-day lives. Daily prayer promotes the habit of looking forward to a better tomorrow. When we count our blessings every day, we realize that our problems are nothing as compared to these boons. A positivity emerges within our minds, which takes hold of our entire lives.

In the Bible, God says,

“And Jesus answered them, ‘Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be taken up and thrown into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

—Mark 11:22-24 ESV

Mark Wahlberg is an actor, producer, and former rapper. Right from his childhood, he became addicted to drugs because of a lack of attention from his parents. He struggled through a rough period for a long time. However, he had an urge to transform his life. He turned to God in the hope of developing

some change. As his relationship with God grew, he began to experience amazing positive changes in his life. It helped him quit his drug addiction. Mark says, *“I pray every day and try to go to church every day. My faith in God is what makes me a better man.”*

SPIRITUALITY LEADS TO SUCCESS

As we discussed in previous chapters, money is not a true indicator of success. If you are rich and not happy, you are not successful. A successful person is the one who lives a happy, healthy, and content life. When you dive into spirituality, it becomes your road to success. It helps you in controlling your emotions, improving your overall health, and developing a positive perspective of life. You feel more energetic to work towards your goals. Your spirituality doesn't let you lose hope in difficult phases. It ignites a fire inside you to strive for more. Even if you feel distressed at times but you immediately seek help through meditation or prayer, you will always have a way to control your mind and emotions.

PART IV

**THE ROLE OF
THE UNIVERSE IN
CREATEYOURSELF**

How do you feel when someone praises you? I bet you just recalled the gleeful feeling when someone praised you for your work. Now think about this...

How do you feel when someone criticizes you? Quite the opposite of glee, I think.

We all feel happy and delighted when we are appreciated for something. A powerful positive emotion grasps our entire existence. We feel energetic and encouraged. On the contrary, when we face undue criticism, we feel discouraged. Many times, people lose their self-esteem when they have to deal with extra criticism.

Have you ever thought about why some words change your entire state of mind in a matter of seconds?

Certain words have the power to affect your mood and behavior. Nothing is random in this universe. Every aspect of the universe is governed by some unwavering and constant principle, which is known as the universal law or the law of nature. The universe supports our growth and existence in many ways.

There may be many universal laws in existence, but we will focus on those that are relevant to humans. In this chapter, I have outlined four such laws, namely, the law of attraction, the law of vibration, the power of beliefs, and the law of gratitude.

Universal laws are real and intangible, they are the creation of God. You may or may not believe in them, but they do affect you in one way or another. Take, for example, the idea of a supreme being. Some people believe in God's existence, others don't. Those who believe, give different names to God according to their faith and religion. However, God remains God, a higher supreme power above and beyond all imagination. By whatever name you call Him, he remains who He is, unfathomable to the human mind and the creator of all universal laws.

We all follow these laws by default whether we believe in their existence or not or that of a divine creator of those laws; no matter what, they exist! But what if we made ourselves aware of these laws? We could prepare our minds and shape our thoughts the way we want, and as a result, we can get that which we desire.

Before we start, let me stress again my belief that not only has God created these laws so that life may exist in the universe, but God is also these laws. So, when we talk about them, know that we are empowered by God who enables us to do all things (Philippians 4:13).

LAW OF ATTRACTION

"Think the thought until you believe it, and once you believe it, it is."

—Abraham Hicks

I wanted to quote Ms. Hicks (**Esther** calls herself **Abraham**) here because like her book *The Law of Attraction*, she wants

you to believe that the law of attraction is something new to everyone. But the truth is the law of attraction has been known since biblical times. One of the most basic principles in the Bible is “with God, all things are possible.” The law of attraction is God and yet all these New Thought self-help gurus like Ms. Hicks leave out the Biblical perspective on the law of attraction.

The universe has the power of transforming our thoughts and ideas into reality. When we concentrate on the positive things around us and have specific goals to accomplish, we find countless ways of achieving them. Some people view this universe as a beautiful place, full of opportunities, while others see only the bad to keep whining about their miseries and the adversities they must overcome at every turn. Per the law of attraction, you can achieve everything imaginable despite the difficulties life entails.

You may be thinking that you don’t always get what you desire. So, does that mean the law of attraction doesn’t work for you? The answer is quite simple. Most of us focus more on what we don’t have rather than what we want. This is the key! What you focus on is what you get and how you frame that focus is also very important.

The way the law of attraction works is illustrated as follow”: when you are driving down the road and you are on a time schedule. You are approaching a light while it is still green praying “don’t turn red, don’t turn red.” This is the wrong perspective. The law of attraction becomes aware of the “red” but doesn’t register the “don’t.” I know, I know, this is a bad illustration, but stick with me. If you were to focus on saying “stay green, stay green, please,” then the law of attraction

would become aware of “green” even though it doesn’t register “stay.” Again, this is just an illustration. God doesn’t care about a stop light.

Let’s understand this through another example. Eric is an artist. He loves painting and sketching. His dream is to hold a huge exhibition of his work. However, he has never actually arranged an exhibition because he feels that his work is not as good as that of a professional artist.

He has a goal and desire, then why doesn’t the law of attraction help him?

The law of attraction is certainly working for him. It always shows its effects. However, in Eric’s case, it is working in a negative way because he believes in the negative. Though he desperately wants to achieve success, he holds back because of the “What Ifs” in his mind. He thinks he is focusing on his goal, but in reality, he is always concerned about:

- What if I fail?
- What if people don’t like my work?
- What if I suffer financial losses?

The law of attraction illustrates results on the basis of your most powerful emotions. So, the first and foremost step to reaping its positive benefits is to channel your emotions and thoughts in a positive direction. Once you have decluttered your mind from all destructive beliefs, this law will begin displaying its productive outcomes.

Steve Harvey is an American comedian, television host, producer, radio personality, actor, and author. He is one of the

most active advocates of the law of attraction yet he and his wife, Marjorie, are both professed Christians “putting God front and center in their lives.” He links his success with his belief in this law. He is one of the biggest fans of the book *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne. In one of his shows, Steve said, *“Like attracts like. You have to understand you are a magnet. Whatever you are, that’s what you draw to you. If you’re negative, you’re going to draw negativity. When you are positive; you draw positive energy. You’re a kind person? Most people are kind to you...If you see it in your mind, you can hold it in your hand.”*

Steve says that most people focus too much on figuring out how something can work for them. He said that if we really want to experience the power of the law of attraction, we should forget about How. We need to concentrate on a simple mantra which is, “ask, believe, and receive.” If we want to achieve something, we must ask for it with a firm belief regardless of how it will happen. It will open up several ways for us to reach our milestones and receive what we want [1]. (P.S., if you have not heard Steve Harvey’s Introduction of Jesus Christ, then you must search for it on YouTube!)

There is no hard and fast rule entailing the effects of the law of attraction in your life. You just need to create a mental image of your dream and draw all your energies to it. In the previous chapter, we had an in-depth discussion about spirituality, prayer, and meditation. You can simply incorporate any or all of these to attract positive energies in your life.

Take, for example, Beyoncé. She is an American singer and songwriter. In an interview on *60 Minutes*, she revealed that when she jogs on the treadmill, she places a picture of an Academy Award in front of her on the treadmill screen. She

keeps her ultimate goal in front of her all the time she is working to achieve it.

She envisions herself achieving her goal standing up on the stage in front of all her peers and the world, which develops positive energy inside her to struggle harder than before [2]. So far, she has won twenty-three awards. Beyoncé is proud to be the most nominated woman and the second-most-awarded woman in the history of the Grammy Awards [3].

THE POWER OF VIBRATION IN THE UNIVERSE

“If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency, and vibration.”

—Nikola Tesla

Have you ever operated the radio in your life?

Anyone who was born in the new millennium would find a radio quite a unique device probably because it went quite out of use by the dawn of the new century. However, those of us who have been around for more than two decades know the intricacies of just about everything that blares music, from a radio, MP3 player, right down to CDs, DVDs, and iPods.

A radio, specifically, works with waves and each wave has a different frequency, also called a vibration. When you tune a radio receiver to a particular frequency, you can pick up a specific signal. The Federal Communications Commission assigns a particular frequency to each radio station. You must tune into a said frequency to listen to your favorite channel.

This frequency mechanism is not confined to radio stations alone. Everything in the universe vibrates at a particular frequency. Our thoughts, emotions, actions, and even the words we speak transmit a specific vibration into the universe. Our vibrations play a vital role in shaping our lives. We know the idea of vibrations as the law of vibration. Like a radio receiver, we pick up signals according to the frequency we tune in. If we want to bring the desired change in our lives, we must shift our thoughts and actions into the correct direction to achieve our goals.

One of the best ways of changing the frequency of your vibration is eliminating negative or toxic people from your life. Your family and friends influence your frequency to a great extent. People who are always upset and whining about the difficulties they face in life have a low vibration. On the contrary, people who are happy have a much higher frequency. Try to include your role models in your life. We all have an ideal example of someone that we want to become. If we are not there yet, someone we know has made it to that ideal point. If we have such a person in our lives, we can resonate with their frequency because we want to become like them.

If you want to become successful, spend time with people who are successful in their lives. If you can't find such people in your area, you can choose to read books about them or watch videos of successful businessmen and entrepreneurs. You will learn to tune into their frequency. You will begin applying the principles they follow in your own life. If you want to become healthy, get into the frequency of people who are fitness buffs. Your life will gradually steer you into your desired direction.

Just like Newton's third law of physics states, "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction," all the laws of the universe hold equal importance. When we turn a blind eye to the natural laws of the universe, we often experience adversities, resistance, misfortune, pain, and lack of direction. Whether we believe it or not, universal laws impact our everyday lives to a great degree. We often don't understand the reason behind our hardships, but understanding these laws is of vital importance to overcome the miseries of our lives.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU BELIEVE

"Believe it can be done. When you believe something can be done, really believe, your mind will find the ways to do it. Believing a solution exists paves the way to the solution."

—David J. Schwartz

When people criticize us for our inability, our feelings get hurt. We may try to figure out the reason behind their perspective, but we rarely realize that we are likely the biggest critics of ourselves. When we don't believe in our own abilities and skills, our negative perception of ourselves can become so strong that we never realize our true potential.

People with this type of thinking often say the following lines to themselves:

- "I can't do it."
- "It seems impossible."
- "People won't like my idea."

Instead, say the following lines to yourself:

- “I can do it!”
- “It’s possible!”
- “People will like my idea!”

Do you feel the difference in the vibration that each of these sentences carries when you compare them with their negatives? You can live the same difference in your own life once you begin believing and saying the right things to yourself.

Many people have great ideas about how to make the world a better place, but most kill them before even trying it out. They become so consistent with the negative thoughts that it becomes a trait of their personality. They accept their mediocre lifestyle because they don’t believe that they can change anything, much less the world with their idea. When life brings trials and tribulations, most give up because they think that it is their destiny. But if everything was under the control of luck and fortune, why would God have blessed us with intellect and free will.

We don’t realize that our beliefs today determine the rest of our lives. What we believe today shapes up what we will become tomorrow. Michael Jordan once said,

“You have to expect things of yourself before you can do them.”

Thomas Edison, the founder of General Electric and thousands of patented discoveries, didn’t come up with his ideas overnight. It took him years of struggle and failures in many ways to reach success. Self-belief and consistency played a

big role in his success. Where did he get this belief? It is well known that one of his teachers once told him that he was too addled (stupid) to learn anything. So, his school didn't give him this belief. Perhaps, he already had it and even when a child he was more focused on his ideas than those of his teacher. This is the power of beliefs. Certainly, his mother played a role. "My mother was the making of me. She was so true, so sure of me, and I felt I had someone to live for, someone I must not disappoint." He was a scientist and though not an atheist, he did not believe in a "personal god," so he had to develop within the ability to believe and create himself.

Imagine how many people out there are as smart as Edison but give up trying because they didn't believe in their own potential. After experimenting for years, some say through more than 10,000 experiments, Edison finally invented the light bulb. No one knows the teacher who had demoralized him, but everyone knows Thomas Edison and his company that still exists today as General Electric. Edison once said, "*I have not failed 10,000 times. I've successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work.*"

IMPORTANCE OF GRATITUDE

"I was complaining that I had no shoes till I met a man who had no feet."

—Confucius

Do you ever feel that you don't have enough luxuries to live a comfortable life?

We often have such feelings in our heads. There is nothing wrong with wanting more to improve your standard of living. However, in the marathon of receiving more, we become ungrateful for the blessings we already have.

If you want to create yourself anew, you must learn to be grateful in life. You have to continue to strive and yet stay thankful for what you have achieved so far. We must all be happy with what we have today while keeping up the effort for improving our lives.

When you are grateful, you stay positive and delighted with your current achievements. You don't compare your life with others. Comparison is at the root of an unsuccessful life. When we focus on what others have, we feel sad and distressed. Our sadness creates negative energy, which lowers our frequency of vibration. Eventually, we become self-centered and materialistic. We lack empathy and compassion. I have learned from my personal experiences that happiness is not necessarily having a lot of money. It's only when you have peace of mind, you automatically feel happy and energetic.

Whenever you feel disenfranchised or dejected, get a sheet of paper and write down every possession you have including your loved ones. Your parents, siblings, children, and friends count as your blessings so they should be at the top of your list. As you continue writing your list, you will find many things that you generally take for granted. If you live in an affluent country like the United States, you should know that we are less than 5% of the population of the world but we hold as possessions more than 25% of all the man-made stuff in it.

There is a great article by minimalist [3] Joshua Becker, author of the book *The More of Less* where he lists the amazing statistics of how much stuff western citizens own. Here are just a few:

- The average American household owns more than 300,000 items
- The average size of that house has tripled over the past 50 years to 2,426 sq. ft.
- Twenty-five percent of those with two-car garages don't have room to park the cars inside
- One out of every 10 people still have to rent offsite storage
- The average American woman owns 30 outfits "one for every day of the month"
- The average American family spends \$1,700 on clothes annually, while they throw away 65 pounds of clothing per year (that does not mean given away)
- We have more TV sets than people and watch them eight hours a day per family
- We spend more on shoes, jewelry, and watches per year than on higher education
- Over the course of our lifetime, we will spend a total of 3,680 hours or 153 days searching for misplaced stuff
- Home organization is an \$8 billion a year industry
- The British don't fare any better where the average 10-year-old Brit owns 238 toys but still only plays with just 12 regularly

No matter how long or short your list from this exercise, you should feel amazed at how blessed you've become. That knowledge alone should create the energy you need to keep your spirits high.

Michael J. Fox, a Canadian American actor, author, and film producer truly believes in the importance of being grateful to lead a happy life. Even after he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1991, he still believes...

"I wake up curious every day, and every day I'm surprised by something. And if I can just recognize that surprise every day and say, 'Oh, that's a new thing, that's a new gift that I got today that I didn't even know about yesterday,' it keeps me going. It keeps me more than going. It keeps me enthusiastic and grateful."

PART V

**THE CREATEYOURSELF
JOURNEY**

Imagine you are traveling to Niagara Falls from New York City in a comfortable touring bus. The plan is to stay off the expressway and drive through the Upper Delaware Scenic Area then over to the various National Forests and Wildlife Management areas of inner New York State through the Alleghany then into the Upstate around Buffalo to get to Niagara Falls. This trip will take you about fifteen hours. The only rule on this trip is that you must keep your eyes covered the entire journey. You can only open your eyes when you reach your destination.

How will you feel during the trip?

Will you enjoy it?

You will most probably find this journey tedious and boring. It seems pointless to continue such a monotonous trip. You would likely feel that you wanted to get off the bus and return home. You are missing out on all the beautiful sights between New York City and Niagara Falls that produce the allure and charm of the journey you planned. It will be hard to get to know new people and you'll miss most of what would make your experience unforgettable. Instead, your journey is not enjoyable. After only a few hours you feel exhausted like the journey will never end.

Your life is like a never-ending journey. Your goals are the destinations along the way for you to enjoy and your dreams are of the things you learn, create, and share with others. Too many of us believe our journey seems to be too tedious; we feel

lethargic, and we want to give up because we believe others have an unfair advantage and their lives are easier than ours. People tend to view the marathon of achieving our goals as the point, so they focus too much on overcoming the hurdles and attaining the results. We often forget to enjoy the moment of the journey and open our eyes to all that is provided to us in the present. A singular concentration on the destination blurs out the beauty of your journey. Setting goals is indeed necessary but being too centered on the outcome may make you lose interest in your goals and when you have difficulty overcoming barriers you will tend to give up.

THE JOURNEY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE DESTINATION

“Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome.”

—Arthur Ashe

One of my friends from earlier days, named Jessica, was habitual in eating too much junk food. When she finally realized its impact on her health, she had already gained a great deal of weight. Her motivation led her to set a goal to lose twenty pounds in six months. She changed her diet and joined a fitness center. She began working out hard and lifting weights. She was determined to start losing from the first month. However, after about five weeks, she found that she hadn't lost a pound. Her weight was still the same. It was quite disappointing for her. Even after completely changing her lifestyle, her weight hadn't fallen. She tried to figure out the reason on her own, but she couldn't understand. She talked to her fitness trainer Mike,

and he said that she would probably see the results from the second month. She became even more concerned about her goal now. All the time, she kept pondering over how fat she looked. Another month passed, but she still didn't lose weight. Finally, she decided to give up on her struggle. She returned to her unhealthy lifestyle and stopped going to the fitness center. When she didn't appear in her fitness class for three days in a row, her fitness trainer called her to find out the reason. Jessica told him everything. He asked Jessica to meet him.

When she went to meet him, he said, *“Jessica, you are too focused on the end results that you can't see the benefits your fitness journey has blessed you with.”*

Mike made her realize the positive changes he had seen in Jessica's life. She had never noticed how active she had become ever since she had changed her lifestyle. Exercise and a balanced diet had also helped her in improving her work productivity. She had made new friends at the fitness center, and she was healthier both physically and mentally than before, but Jessica hadn't noticed all these improvements in her life because all she cared about was how much she weighed.

Many of us act similarly at almost every stage of our lives. As we spoke about in the breakout section, Createyourself an Opportunity, we spoke about how some students are always worried about their grades, outshining classmates, and making their family proud. In this struggle, students tend to forget to enjoy actual learning in the class. They may get the desired results, but they don't enjoy their long academic journey. We should be continuously learning as a never-ending part of our life's journey. When parents pressure their children to earn the

highest grades no matter what, they are falsely teaching their children that it is all about the grade and not the knowledge gained nor even that the process of learning is the most important aspect of school, not the grade. Children that wish to please their parents then focus on the grades and feel they are failures when they don't.

For me, my parents quit worrying about my grades in high school. They were pitiful. I don't even know how I was accepted at The Citadel, though I believe it was because of my grandfather who graduated in 1929 and served in the South Carolina National Guard for 30+ years. My Citadel career was also not stellar. I enjoyed all the other aspects of The Citadel, in particular, its proximity to The College of Charleston where all the girls were, and the Charleston area beaches. It finally dawned on me while serving my third year in the 82nd Airborne Division that I didn't want to soldier my whole life. This is when it finally triggered for me to be interested in my studies and to focus my learning on something interesting. For three more degrees (yes, I had to get a new start with a second undergraduate degree), I had finally gotten it and even though I worked while going to school, I loved every minute of it.

Most of the time, we become obsessed with success because we love being praised. I was out of the house and on my own, so I was doing it for myself. We live our life for society's validation or that of our family. However, we need to understand that success is the byproduct of the journey. Success is the endpoint, whereas the journey to success is a long expedition. We must strive to shift our focus from the finish line to our present state.

Our journey is a combination of lessons, experiences, failures, joys, emotions, and relationships with others. As you read about other successful people, you will come to know that their life was full of struggles and failures just like everyone. But their struggles make them stronger rather than a deterrent. Failures they may have encountered enabled them to discover the right path to success.

So can you! I truly believe that those who grow up in tougher environments have a much greater opportunity for success than the spoon-fed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE JOURNEY

When we hear about someone's accomplishment, the first question that emerges in our minds is, how did they do such a great feat?

If a chef is always worried about how the food tastes while they cook it, they are more likely to make blunders and ruin the savor. However, if they pay their entire attention to the proven recipe, they will automatically get the best results. People who understand the importance of the journey will reap rewards such as:

ABILITY TO DEAL WITH MISTAKES

In today's fast-paced world, most people are obsessed with perfection. We don't want to make any mistakes, and if we do, we try our best to cover them up. People who are mindful of the significance of the journey understand that mistakes are an inevitable part of life. They don't fear failure. They know

that mistakes and failures educate them and help them grow in their lives. When we are focused on a specific outcome, the fear of failure doesn't let us experiment. Taking risks drives you to a better outcome than the one you were actually pursuing.

CONTENTMENT IN THE PURSUIT

Success is a journey rather than a destination. When we concentrate on the process, we feel exhilarated about trying new ideas and grabbing opportunities. We enjoy every stage of the journey and try to learn a new lesson at each step. At the end of the process, we are equipped with numerous skills and a great new experience.

FEWER OBSTRUCTIONS

When we are stressed about delivering results, we feel burdened and pressurized. We desperately want to prove our point, and many times, we find shortcuts to achieve the desired result. It may help us in the short term. But in the long run, it can negatively affect our efficiency. When we devote ourselves to the process, we eliminate the noise of external factors. Instead of being anxious about winning or losing, we are more interested in gaining mastery in our pursuit.

LOCUS THE CONTROL

Focusing on results, like grades, reduces our control over the outcome. Not because we don't need to have tiny successes at each step, but the more we worry, the more we become prone to actually making bigger mistakes. External factors such as time, weather, and people begin taking a toll on us. Do you know what a "locus" is? It's a curve formed by all the points along the way to satisfying a particular equation, the relationship between the coordinates of each point along the line moving according to mathematically defined conditions.

As humans, we have an internal locus of control that desires higher self-esteem, empowerment, and all together, success in the meaningful life we all believe we are to have. We just need to understand that there is an equation we are solving for and make sure our condition is defined so we may produce the desired solution. Knowing we are on a locus path allows us to see where we made a mistake, correct for it, and get back on our journey.

HAPPINESS

When you are more concerned about the process than the results, you feel happy at each step of your journey. We make plans for our lives, but things usually do not turn out the way we want. So, instead, we must not be defined by the outcome of our work but rather the journey of getting there. All the experiences, lessons, and relationships we gain during our journey are the most important parts of our success. The journey is what leads to happiness for us humans, not the outcomes.

When I was in high school playing soccer my senior year, our team was only in its second year of existence. Our coach had never coached soccer, so we were all in with only one year of experience at the start of our second. We had no expectation that year but to have fun playing soccer for our high school, the TL Hanna Yellow Jackets – a 4A school. By the time the state playoffs started, we were four wins and four losses, and we were amazed when we played a team we had lost to earlier in the season and won to move onto the next round. That just kept happening for us until we found ourselves in the South Carolina State Championship against Irmo High School (also the Yellow Jackets) who had won the previous five State Championships.

We got there through sheer will and determination with no expectation of the outcome. I remember one of the games where our goalie was unable to play due to an injury so as the second-string goalie, I had to move from my first position as the right fullback to “keep” the ball. I had drilled and even played a couple of halves as goalie during the year, but certainly not at the level needed for a state playoff game. We just did what we had to do. While the forwards were doing their job in making goals, I ended up stopping 17 shots-on-goal which was unprecedented for a second-string, second-year goalie in the playoffs.

In the Championship game, the Irmo team was impressive but our whole first-string defense was strong and keeping the ball from the goal, but so was Irmo’s. In the last five minutes of the game, we were still scoreless, zero-zero, when our forwards scored. For the last five minutes of play, we sandbagged our defense bringing everyone downfield to keep Irmo from scoring. When the whistle blew, we had won the State 4A Soccer Championship against the historically dominating team in the state. This just happened to have coincided with the US win over the USSR for Winter Olympic Gold in Hockey – both Cinderella stories!

So, how does this story lead to happiness, not because all the seniors received full soccer scholarships to the colleges of our choice; none of us did! Not because any of us went on to play professional soccer; none of us did. Not because our coach was now known as the best soccer coach in the state; he would even say he wasn’t. Not because from that point on the TL Hanna Yellow Jackets became the dominating soccer program in the state; no Irmo kept that claim. So what?

Well, it's the confidence that the experience built up within each of us as individuals that through determination, diligence, and luck we can accomplish anything even those things not envisioned or expected. And this one perspective of our lives can lead to happiness!

FAILURE TEACHES YOU LIFE-CHANGING LESSONS

“Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing.”

—Denis Waitley

Ben Saunders is an English polar explorer, endurance athlete, and motivational speaker. He has skied more than 3,700 miles on polar expeditions since 2001. He holds the record for the longest human-powered polar journey in history and for the longest solo Arctic journey by a Briton. In 2014, Saunders trekked to the South Pole and back on foot. He and his partner covered 1,800 miles in 105 days. They broke the record for the longest human-powered polar journey. However, this journey was full of obstacles and challenges. They had a limited amount of food rations with them. After reaching almost halfway, they realized that they had gotten short on food. Saunders and his partner cut back their food consumption to half of what they were supposed to eat. As a result, they became hypoglycemic and developed hypothermia. Within the next few days, they completely ran out of food. Running out of food was a huge failure. However, they both decided to call for help and a resupply of food. Getting external assistance was never a

part of their plan and disqualified some of their pursuits, but they felt that a healthy journey was more important than reaching the goal with all their energies drained and having to be rescued instead. In an interview with the National Public Radio, Saunders said,

“I don’t regret calling for that plane for a second – but getting external assistance like that was never part of the plan. And it’s something my ego is still struggling with. This was the biggest dream I’ve ever had. And it was so nearly perfect. But that cliché about the journey being more important than the destination, there’s something in that. The closer I got to my finish line, the rubble rocky coast of Ross Island, the more I started to realize that the biggest lesson that this very long, and very hard walk might be teaching me is that happiness is not a finish line. If we can’t feel content on our journeys amidst the mess and the striving that we all inhabit, the open loops, the half-finished to-do lists, the could-do-better-next-times – then we might never feel it.”

We face similar situations many times in our lives. The fear of failure and rejection shatters our ego. We find it quite challenging to accept defeat. Saunders and his partner cut back their food consumption because they didn’t want any external assistance. They didn’t like to be called weak. However, they realized that their health and life were more important than their status in the history books. This experience taught them more about the significance of proper planning.

Every mistake and failure teaches us a valuable lesson. Rejections by others give us insight into our strengths and weaknesses. Humans make mistakes because God has designed us in such a way that we make our own choices. In the journey of life, we make plans, meet different people, take

risks, and so forth. Every failed plan tells us that we could have done better. Every egotistical person we meet teaches us that not everyone is trustworthy. Every risk we take makes us stronger and more resilient. To me, failures have always proved to be a blessing in disguise.

You can only learn from your failures when you understand the value of your journey. I know I am a risk-taker, likely too much of one. My wife would probably concur. I have always pursued the ideas that formulate in my mind and make sense to others. They haven't always worked out and not just because they ended up being bad ideas, but more often than not it was the execution process. The team you build around yourself also matters a great deal. In life, I am very fortunate that I have a partner who absolutely compliments my strengths while also understands the pursuit is who I am. Throughout my whole life, I have been able to crawl out of the holes I have dug for myself. It actually amazes me when I think about some of them. I put credit into two places. First and foremost, God must surely have a plan for me as I should have died at least four times from my antics. Second, I am continuously studying and remaking myself based upon the knowledge and experiences of my past and those that I learn from others through reading and studying others.

Before reaching your destination, you always have the opportunity to make up for your mistakes and get back on your path. Your end game is the end of your life and what will satisfy you when looking back. When you realize you made a mistake, you can't jump back and correct it, but you can adjust the equation so that you will get back on the locus. The activities along your locus are the successes and failures that help you

answer the equation. Shifting your focus from an endpoint to where you currently are, broadens your perspective.

If a painter was worried about the outcome while painting, they would never utilize their true potential and creativity to develop a masterpiece. Every failed brush stroke motivates them to try something different. It took Leonardo da Vinci four years to complete the Mona Lisa. Not because he was distracted, but because he knew he needed to think about his technique and adjust as he learned something new. He wasn't painting a portrait of some aristocrat, so he wasn't on anyone's timeline but his own. He knew he wanted to make this a masterpiece, but he wasn't happy with the way it was forming and so he needed to learn new techniques or create new tools to get her the way he envisioned her, and he loved being that way. When you enjoy your work and focus on the points along the way, you'll attain your desired long-term outcome.

Your fundamental virtues shape your personality.

- Who do you like to spend your time with?
- A rude, arrogant, and humiliating rich friend?
- Or
- A friend who is not wealthy but quite respectful and fun loving?

I bet you would love to be with the fun-loving friend. So, would I. We all like to be surrounded by those people who give us positive vibes.

It is a dilemma of our society that we consider wealth as an indicator of success. If someone is rich, we think they are successful. If someone is not financially sound, we believe

them to be mediocre no matter how talented and intellectual they are. However, this is not true. Money can be one of the parameters of success, but it is not a sole measure. Success is not confined to receiving awards and winning medals. It emerges from your inner values and morals. Following fundamental virtues define how successful you are in the journey of your life.

WISDOM

Wisdom refers to the quality of having good judgment and making sound decisions that are beneficial for us and for others too. Wisdom enables us to discern things correctly. When we face challenging situations, wisdom helps us in deciding when to react and how to react. Manly P. Hall says,

“Wisdom lies not in seeing things, but seeing through things.”

JUSTICE

Justice entails respecting the rights of every individual in society regardless of their caste, religion, and financial status. Justice also includes self-respect and the true regard for your own dignity. If someone humiliates us or anyone else in our surroundings, it is our duty to speak up against it. Justice also involves freedom of speech and respecting others’ opinion even if you don’t agree with it.

FORTITUDE

Fortitude refers to courage and resilience. It enables us to make the right decision in the face of difficulty. With the ever-changing technological environment, people are moving towards a sedentary lifestyle. It leads to not only physical health problems, but it also creates severe depression and anxiety issues. Therefore, we easily give up when we encounter

adversities. In the journey of life, we often have to make tough decisions. However, most of the time, we are unprepared to deal with life's inevitable disappointments. Fortitude enables us to stay firm and determined, no matter how hard the situation is.

SELF-CONTROL

Self-control is the ability to control your emotions. Many times, our desires tempt us to choose a path which is not favorable for us. Self-control enables us to suppress our temptations. It enlightens us to focus on logic rather than fantasies. People who have self-control are able to make efficient and reasoned decisions.

LOVE

Love is the most essential and fundamental virtue. Love incorporates empathy, compassion, kindness, generosity, loyalty, and forgiveness. When our heart is filled with love and compassion for people in our surroundings, we automatically adapt to other fundamental virtues. Love involves loving and taking care of your own self too.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

A positive attitude plays a vital role in forming your entire personality. When you are optimistic, you have a broader outlook on your life. Failures, rejections, and challenges don't distress you. You are able to pick a positive lesson from all hardships and trials. You are open to suggestions, and you believe that there is always room for improvement. In addition, you enjoy everything you do and forget about results.

INTEGRITY

Integrity is the practice of being honest and adhering to strong moral principles. It involves being truthful to not only others

but also to yourself. Integrity helps you in winning people's trust. They believe in your words. Being trusted is the biggest success one can ever achieve.

GRATITUDE

Gratitude refers to being content with what you have. With the ever-growing social media trends, people have forgotten the value of gratefulness. We compare our lives with that of others and then become upset and disappointed. Lack of gratitude instills negativity within us. We develop a whining attitude, which reduces our self-esteem and self-confidence. God has blessed every individual with different qualities and abilities. When we are grateful for our existing blessings, it creates a positive emotion inside us. We feel energetic and motivated to strive for a better life.

We get this life only once. Whining about the things we don't have will only lead to disappointment and sadness. Our life is like an empty canvas. We are in charge of making it either colorful and bright or dull and monotonous. As we discussed in the previous chapter, according to the law of attraction, life turns out to be how we perceive it. If you stay positive and enjoy the present moments, life will bring you even more joy and delight.

“Sometimes we make the process more complicated than we need to. We will never make a journey of a thousand miles by fretting about how long it will take or how hard it will be. We make the journey by taking each day step-by-step and then repeating it again and again until we reach our destination.”—Joseph B. Wirthlin

PART VI

**STRATEGIES TO
CREATEYOURSELF**

“Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.”

–Pablo Picasso

Most of the time, we are definite about our choices. We are well aware of our potentials and strengths. However, we can't succeed.

WHY?

Because our entire focus is on **WHAT** our goal is rather than **HOW** to achieve that goal. Though goal setting is a crucial step for being successful, it is not enough. You can accomplish your goals only when these strategies, plans, and actions follow your goals. Once you have set your goals, the next steps are to decide how you will achieve them. Following are some of the steps which are necessary to turn your goals into actions:

- Break your goal into small goals so that you don't get frustrated and worn out.
- Set a deadline for each small goal and try to overachieve it.
- Once you have set the deadline, identify all the possible ways you can adopt to attain your goal.
- Choose the best alternative and implement it.
- Review your performance. If you believe you are doing well, continue with your action. If you think it is not giving you desired results, revise your plan.
- Repeat the above step until your final goal is achieved.

In your journey to create yourself, it is always beneficial to get ideas from successful people. Every individual has a different mindset about success and achievement. When you meet accomplished people and know about their struggles, it broadens your perspective and mental capabilities. Your thought pattern grows, and your mind can chase better options to reach your goals.

One of the best ways to grasp the ideas from successful people is to read the books they have authored. Over the last thirty years, I have read thousands of amazing books about success by renowned business executives, politicians, inventors, and everyday people who persevere through extraordinary events. They all have shared what they have experienced in their lives. These books have not only widened my vision but have also transformed my definition of success.

“Two heads are better than one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction.”

—C.S. Lewis

NAPOLÉON HILL'S THINK AND GROW RICH

“When the last page of Think and Grow Rich was read, the hand which put the book down on the table was a different hand. The man who then stood and walked out into the world was a different, a changed man.”

—Earl Nightingale

After the Bible, *Think and Grow Rich* is the greatest book to influence the lives, accomplishments, and fortunes of more people than any other work of its kind. Throughout the world, there are millions of successful men and women, all races and creeds, and in all lines of work and industry who are where they are today because they once read or listened to Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*, and then most importantly, applied its principles.

Because the copyrights of the book are in the public domain and there are now dozens of versions of the book in publication, in audible form, and now even the movie *Think and Grow Rich: The Legacy*, we can only guess that over time a half a billion people have been motivated to create their path in life based on the principles that Napoleon Hill discovered and illustrates to us through this work.

As you have learned earlier, I started my intentional self-development journey when I was in the Army in the '80s. I don't know the exact date when I first discovered *Think and Grow Rich*, but it was of enormous help to me in my decision to create the path to accomplishing my goals in life – designing and executing them. It set my thinking straight, clearing the path to the point I had no other direction to go but to “think.”

So, what is the secret that Hill discovered and illustrates through this amazing book? Why has this book, out of all the millions of self-help books, remained the one that all others reference? Of course, I never met Napoleon Hill, but his story is one of a lifelong journey best expressed by his friend and fellow personal development pioneer, Earl Nightingale.

“He [Hill] certainly was not the first man to be appalled at the poverty and seemingly endless struggle and lack of direction he saw about him as a boy and as a young man, nor was he the first to write on the subject, but he possessed two unique, highly developed abilities seldom found in one man. The first was in the manner in which he approached his subject. Napoleon Hill went after the answers to achievement in the same way a scientist seeks to open to the light of reason, a secret of nature. He went after the solution to accomplishment in the same way Thomas Edison discovered the solution to the electric light, relentlessly, indefatigably, implacably until the truth which had been there all the time was revealed to him. His second important ability was the knack or skill of writing about his findings in such a way that it was instantly understood intellectually, but what is perhaps even more important for this particular subject, understood emotionally as well.”

The reason *Think and Grow Rich* (TAGR) has withstood the test of time is because it rests on the pure God-given foundation upon which may also be found every accomplishment of man, the clear unchallengeable fact that everything begins with a state of mind to discovery. That a person may start with nothing but an idea and then through structured thinking and organized plans achieve anything he or she puts their mind to accomplish.

To start our journey through TAGR, we have to understand the simple truth, the principle, or philosophy which lies in the supporting structure of this work. Whatever you are building must be based on **truth**, if not, you will end by having traveled the wrong path and built a foundation of sand rather than rock, resulting in shattered dreams. Without truth, nothing can withstand the test of time.

As Hill emphasizes thinking, we must understand that thoughts are actual physical things manifested in our minds. They take up brain matter and burn energy the body produces. This is an incredibly powerful thing when blended with definiteness of purpose, persistence, and a burning desire for their translation into reality. Wise people have been saying this for millennia.

“The truth is that the human mind is as real an organism, as any muscle in the body, but far greater in potential power. Like muscle fiber, it can be strengthened to lead on to unimagined conquests.”

– Charles A. Cerami

So, this then is the truth on which TAGR is based. If you know what you want, and if you want it strongly enough to muster the kind of persistence that simply cannot be stopped, you will most certainly achieve it. By controlling your mind, you can control your destiny here on Earth. With thinking as our foundation, let’s talk about Hill’s famous 13 proven principles to riches as found in *Think and Grow Rich*, remembering, of course, that riches are not really just money. Your riches are whatever it is you happen to want to manifest in your life – a loving wife and family, a successful business, a non-profit that serves your community to the fullest, athletic achievement, and really just about anything you desire.

Now, learn the thirteen principles, recall the lessons you have already learned in this book on “How to Create yourself,” and apply them to your thinking and life.

BURNING DESIRE — THE FIRST PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

Desire is the starting point for all achievement, the first step toward your riches. This is also the first stumbling block

because too many people will tell themselves, “I know what I desire, but can I get it?”

We’ll get into this business of doubt later, but once and for all, let’s clear up this point. This point of whether or not you accomplish that which you desire with all your heart is best expressed by Emerson who wrote, “There is nothing capricious in nature, and the implanting of a desire indicates that its gratification is in the constitution of the creature that feels it.”

In other words, humans would not have the desire unless we were capable of achieving it. God has provided each of us with a built-in governor where our desires are modified by our abilities and our mindset. Whatever it is that you desire with all your heart, whatever you can imagine in your mind, know and understand all that it can and should be yours. Hill cites example after example of why your burning desire is nothing more than an accurate picture of what you will one day become. So right here, right now, firmly establish in your mind that which you desire more than anything else and you “may” have it.

A good way to determine whether or not you really have a burning desire is to examine the way you go after it. If you go after that which you think you desire tentatively, timidly, in an attempt to play it safe, you don’t have a burning desire at all. I tell all of my students, if your desire is not the last thing you think about before you shut your eyes at night and the first thing you think of when your feet land beside the bed in the morning, you won’t make it. “You can’t get to second base if you keep one foot on first” (Earl Nightingale).

But if you're willing to burn your bridges behind you and say once and for all, this is it, this is what I will do and I will never retreat, I will never go back, then you have the sort of desire that can only end in success. It takes this kind of resolve to keep picking yourself up after the hurdles and falls you will encounter on your journey to create yourself.

While these principles will work for anything you may want; let's say your desire happens to be more money to better care for your family and provide for a secure future. Napoleon Hill gives us six definite practical steps to follow:

First – Fix in your mind the exact amount of money you desire. It is not sufficient merely to say, "I want plenty of money." You must be definite as to the amount. In this thought and statement, there's a psychological reason for definiteness which will be described in another principle.

Second – Determine exactly what you intend to give in return for the money you desire. There's no such reality as something for nothing. God's natural law dictates that we must give in order to receive.

Third – Establish a definite date when you intend to possess the money you desire.

Fourth – Create a definite plan for carrying out your desire and begin at once whether you're ready or not to put this plan into action.

Fifth – Write it all out as a clear, concise statement of the amount of money you intend to acquire, name the time limit for its acquisition, state what you intend to give in return for

the money, and clearly describe the plan through which you intend to accumulate it.

Sixth – Read your written statement aloud twice daily, once just before falling asleep at night and once just after getting up in the morning. You may just keep it by your bedside for convenience. As you read, visualize, feel, and believe yourself already in possession of the goal.

It's important that you follow these instructions to the letter. This is by far the most important of the thirteen TAGR principles and this chapter of Hill's book ends with these words:

“Through some strange and powerful principle of mental chemistry, which she has never divulged but God has expressed, that truth of nature wraps up in the impulse of strong desire something which recognizes no such word as impossible and accepts no such reality as failure.”

FAITH — THE SECOND PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

While most associate “faith” with religion, we hold faith in all things. We have faith that the Sun will rise (actually that the world will rotate), that the water from the city pipes will be clean and potable, that our car will start in the morning to take us to work, and so on. You never would have even thought of your main desire unless faith were tugging at your mind. So, even when you find it difficult at times to have faith in yourself, you can be certain and have faith in the truth that these principles work.

Napoleon Hill writes, “Faith is a state of mind which may be induced or created by affirmation or repeated instructions to the subconscious mind through the principle of conscious

autosuggestion.” Conscious autosuggestion simply means a suggestion by you yourself to you yourself, just as an autobiography is a biography written by the person it’s about. By getting a mental image of yourself already having accomplished your main desire over and over again, you will muster the faith you need to take on the challenge. Faith is vital to all accomplishments.

The emperor Napoleon Bonaparte said, “All-scholastic scaffolding falls as a ruined edifice, before one single word ‘faith.’” Even inventor and mathematician Blaise Pascal said, “Faith affirms many things, respecting which the senses are silent, but nothing which they deny, it is superior to their testimony but never opposed to it.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, “The beginning of faith is the beginning of fruitfulness; but the beginning of unbelief, however glittering, is empty,” and August Wilhelm von Schlegel put it like this, “In actual life, every great enterprise begins with and takes its first forward step in faith.”

Have faith that you can accomplish that which you seek because you would never have envisioned it and decided upon it unless it was meant for you to accomplish. In his chapter on faith, Napoleon Hill gives us this self-confidence formula. Say to yourself:

First – I know that I have the ability to achieve the objective of my definite purpose in life, therefore, I command in myself persistent, continuous action toward its attainment, and I here now promise to bring such action.

Second – I realize that dominant thoughts of my mind will eventually reproduce themselves in outward physical action and gradually transform themselves into physical reality. Therefore, I will concentrate my thoughts for 30 minutes daily upon the task of thinking of the person I intend to become, thereby creating in my mind a clear mental picture of that person.

Third – I know through the principle of auto-suggestion any desire that I persistently hold in my mind will eventually seek expression through some practical means of attaining the object itself. Therefore, I will devote myself 10 minutes daily specifically to the development of self-confidence.

Fourth – I have clearly written down a description of my definite chief aim in life and I will never stop developing sufficient self-confidence for its attainment.

Fifth – I fully realize that no wealth or position can long endure unless built upon truth and justice. Therefore, I will engage in no transaction which does not benefit all whom it affects. I will succeed by attracting to myself the support I wish to use and the cooperation of other people. I will induce others to serve with me because of my willingness to serve with them. I will eliminate hatred, envy, jealousy, selfishness, and cynicism by developing love for all humanity because I know that a negative mental attitude toward others can never bring me success. I will cause others to believe in me because I will believe in them and in myself.

Just in my re-reading of TAGR so that I could write this summary for *How to Createyourself* readers, I was struck all over again by this chapter on faith, particularly the examples of how some

of the world's greatest men have accomplished what appeared to be impossible through faith.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” – Hebrews 11:1

AUTO-SUGGESTION — THE THIRD PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

This chapter in TAGR tells us how, through repeated suggestion, the subconscious mind can be put to work for us. It is the faculty of being able to concentrate your mind on your burning desire until your subconscious mind accepts it as fact and begins to devise ways of bringing it about. Following the repeating of your vision two or more times a day as suggested will engrain your goals in all your being.

For me, this process is where most of my ideas manifest themselves in me as sudden flashes of thought or inspiration, guidance. These are “eureka” moments as illustrated in the story of Archimedes who while taking a bath and relaxing visualized the discovery of solving the formula for the circumference of the circle and the key, now represented as the number Pi. He jumped out of the bath and ran onto the streets still naked loudly shouting to the king, “Eureka!”

The instructions of repeated suggestion will now be summarized with the six steps from the second chapter:

First – Go into a quiet spot alone, close your eyes, and repeat aloud so you may hear your own words reaffirming the written statement of the goal you intend to attain. As you carry out these instructions, see yourself already in possession of your goal. Your written statement of your purpose should be something like the following: If it's monetary-based, then “by

the first day of January [2022], I will have in my possession \$\$\$ in income that will have come to me in various amounts from time to time during the period between now and then. In return for this award, I will give the most efficient service of which I'm capable, rendering the fullest possible quantity and the best possible quality of service in the capacity of... (and here describe the product or service you intend to sell or whatever it is you do for a living)." Continue with, "I believe that I will have this income in my possession. My faith is so strong that I can now see this income before my eyes. I can touch it with my hands. It is now awaiting transfer to me at the time and in the proportion that I deliver the service, I intend to render in return for it. I have defined a plan by which to accumulate this money and I will follow that plan to accomplish my goal."

Second — Repeat this program night and morning until you can see in your imagination the goal you intend to achieve.

Third — Place a written copy of your statement where you can see it throughout the day from morning to night and read it just before retiring and upon arising until it's been memorized. As you carry out these instructions, you are applying the principle of auto-suggestion, which is embedding in your heart and soul the desire and effort it will take to attain the goal.

SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE — THE FOURTH PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

"Before you can be sure of your ability to transmute desire into its monetary equivalent, you will require specialized knowledge of the service, merchandise, or profession which you intend to offer in return for fortune" (Napoleon Hill).

Here, Hill is making a very important point. Knowledge is power only to the extent that it is organized into a definite

plan of action and directed to a definite end. Perhaps you may need much more specialized knowledge than you have the ability or the inclination to acquire at this time. If this is true, a point we shall cover soon is that you may bridge your weakness through the aid of your mastermind group. More on this later, but for now, realize that you must learn all you can about your specialty yourself as that is the primary way you can turn your vision into reality. Set aside a definite amount of time every day for learning more about what it is you will need to understand to attain your goal. Take the courses that are offered on your subject and associate with people who know your business well.

IMAGINATION — THE FIFTH PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

The imagination is literally the workshop wherein all plans are fashioned and created uniquely by a person. The impulse or the desire is given shape, form, and action, through the aid of the imaginative impulse of the mind. It has been said that man can create anything he can imagine. [I have a talk I give on how almost all of the gadgets imagined for the series *Star Trek* by Gene Roddenberry have over the past forty years been brought into reality.]

As Hill teaches us, “Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve. Man’s only limitation lies in his use of his imagination and subsequent motivation to action.” The great leaders of business, industry, finance, and the great artists, musicians, poets, and writers became great because they developed the power of self-motivation to bring into reality their imaginations.

Napoleon Hill with W. Clement Stone wrote another book that expands on this subject called *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude*. Check it out.

As you go about your daily work, think constantly of ways in which it could be done better, more efficiently; think of the changes that are inevitable, can they be made now and if you feel limited, hear the words of the famous architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, when he said,

“The human race has built most notably when the limitations on them were greatest and therefore when most were required of the imagination to build at all; limitation seemed to have always been the best friend of architecture.”

As you build your future from this point onward, don't concern yourself with limitations, but remember that they may be your best friends as they require you to engage your imagination to rise above them. As Henry Ward Beecher, a renowned clergyman, author, anti-slavery activist, and reformer in the 19th century when ministers played a prominent role in American life, said, “The soul without imagination is what an observatory would be without a telescope.”

ORGANIZED PLANNING — THE SIXTH PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

“You have learned that everything man creates or acquires begins in the form of desire” (Napoleon Hill).

Hill states that “Organized Planning is the Crystallization of Desire into Action.” Now that you have decided on your desire, your goal, let's organize the plan for its on-time achievement. The desire has taken its first step in the journey from the abstract to the concrete through the studio of the imagination

where strategies for its transition are created and organized. Earlier, you were instructed to take six definite practical steps as your first move in translating the desire for whatever you want into its physical equivalent. Now we must form definite practical plans through which this transformation may occur.

First – Ally yourself with one or more persons, a group of as many people as you may need for the creation and carrying out of your plan or plans for the achievement of the goal you've established, making use of the mastermind principle. This is important.

Second – Before forming your mastermind group, decide what advantages and benefits you may offer the individual members of your group in return for their cooperation. No one will work indefinitely without some form of compensation, although this may not always be in the form of money.

Three – Arrange to meet with the members of your mastermind group at least twice a week and more often if possible until you have jointly perfected the necessary plan or plans for the accomplishment of your goal.

Four – Maintain perfect harmony between yourself and every member of your mastermind group. Keep in mind these facts: First, you're engaged in an undertaking of major importance to you. To be sure of success, you must have plans which are faultless. Second, you must have the advantage of the experience, education, native ability, and imagination of other minds to make it happen – **YOU CANNOT DO IT ALONE.**

This is in harmony with the methods followed by every person who has risen above the average. Work at this until you have a

well-executed formal plan for reaching your objective. In this way, you're never confused or wondering what you should do next. Every morning, you know exactly what you're going to do and why. It is in this chapter of TAGR that Hill gives us his Eleven Qualities of Leadership:

1. Unwavering Courage
2. Self-Control
3. A Keen Sense of Justice
4. Definiteness of Decision
5. Definiteness of Plans
6. The Habit of Doing More Than Paid For
7. A Pleasing Personality
8. Sympathy and Understanding
9. Mastery of Detail
10. Willingness to Assume Full Responsibility, and
11. Cooperation

This chapter on organized planning is one of the largest and most important in the book. It goes without saying that a person without a plan to follow is like a ship with no course set — “no place to go but with the probability of disaster.”

DECISION — THE SEVENTH PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

TAGR mentions a survey taken of 25,000 men and women who had experienced failure revealing that the lack of decisiveness was near the top of the 30 major causes of their failure. Hill states, “Decision is The Mastery of Procrastination.”

Procrastination, the opposite of decision, is a common enemy for all of us. Hill's survey of several hundred people who had accumulated fortunes well beyond millionaire disclosed the fact that every single one of them had the habit of reaching

decisions quickly and of changing these decisions slowly when or if they were changed at all. People who fail to accumulate success without exception have the habit of reaching decisions too slowly, if at all, and of changing their minds too quickly and often.

Having a definite objective makes reaching prompt decisions that much easier and faster. Hill gives many examples in TAGR, one of which is the story of Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company that still exists today. One of Henry Ford's most outstanding qualities was his habit of reaching decisions quickly and changing them slowly.

This quality was so pronounced in Ford that it earned him the reputation of being obstinate. It was this quality that prompted Ford to continue to manufacture his famous Model T, "the world's ugliest automobile" when all of his advisers and many of the purchasers of the car were urging him to change it. Perhaps he delayed too long in making the change, but the other side of the story is that his firmness of decision yielded a huge fortune before the change in model became necessary and the company's certainly much better for it today.

When you make up your mind, stay with it! The majority of people who fail to make the grade are generally influenced by the opinions of others and easily swayed. They permit the newspapers and the gossiping neighbors to do their thinking for them. Opinions are the cheapest commodity on Earth.

Listen to your mastermind group but keep your own counsel when you begin to put into practice the principles we're describing here. By reaching your own decisions and following them, take no one into your confidence except the members of

your mastermind group. This is why you must be very careful in your selection of this group only choosing those who will be in complete understanding and harmony with your vision and purpose.

Close friends and relatives, while not meaning to do so, often handicap others through opinions and sometimes through ridicule. Thousands of men and women carry inferiority complexes with them all through life because some well-meaning but ignorant person destroyed their confidence through opinion or ridicule of their dreams. If a decision is worth anything at all, it's worth sticking to until it's been completely achieved.

PERSISTENCE — THE EIGHTH PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

Hill defines persistence as the power of will and desire properly combined to make an irresistible pair – “The Sustained Effort Necessary to Induce Faith.” In uncounted thousands of cases, persistence has stood as the difference between success and failure. It is this quality more than any other that keeps the majority from great accomplishment. They'll try a thing, but as soon as the going gets tough, they fold. Experience with thousands of people has proven that lack of persistence is a weakness common to most people.

It is a weakness that may be overcome by diligent effort. If you are to accomplish the desire you've set for yourself, you must form the habit of persistence. Things will get dark, and it will seem as though there's no longer any reason to continue, everything in you will tell you to give up and quit trying, and it's right here that the “grownups” are separated from the “youth,” the strong-minded from the weak.

It's right here that if you go that extra mile that the skies will clear, and you'll begin to see the signs of the abundance that is to be yours because you had the courage to persist – through persistence will come success.

Persistence is a state of mind; therefore, it can be cultivated. Like all states of mind, persistency is based upon:

One – Definiteness of purpose and knowing what you want!

Two – Desire

Three – Self-reliance

Four – Definiteness of plans

Five – Accurate knowledge and knowing that your plan is sound

Six – Persistency through habit

Seven – Willpower

Eight – Cooperation, sympathy, understanding, and harmonious cooperation with others develops persistency

POWER OF THE MASTERMIND — THE NINTH PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

No two minds ever come together without thereby creating a third invisible, intangible “driving force” which may be likened to a third mind. You may have noticed in your experience that by discussing something with another person, you suddenly

get good ideas as a result of this interaction; ideas you would not have gotten without this association.

It is in this section that Hill describes the importance of forming a group of individuals, sympathetic to your desire, into a mastermind group to be made up of two or more individuals.

Most good ideas are born in an individual mind as a result of having met in committee. Associating with your mastermind group is not meant as a means of letting others do your thinking for you, far from it. It is to stimulate your own thinking through the association with other minds, and theirs with yours to their benefit.

No one knows everything. The more sympathetic minds you get together, and by sympathetic, Hill means working for a common purpose, the more related information is going to be available. Great ideas are a compilation of related information, so pick the members of your mastermind group with care. Make sure they are people you respect and who are hardworking and conscientious as you. You may have a lot of fun and even better you'll all reach your goals just that much sooner with enthusiastic thrill.

ENTHUSIASM — THE TENTH PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

Originally titled, “The Mystery of Sex Transmutation,” Hill himself talks about how ignorance on the subject of sex by the general population has skewed any discussion on how the power of sex brings into being a state of mind that can be used to “transmute” or transfer one element or form of energy into another. Over time, this term has evolved to be defined by enthusiasm or that which comes from the channeling of all bodily drives into positive, worthwhile efforts. It is in this

chapter that Hill describes the importance of the spouse (in his case woman) in the achievement of a worthwhile goal.

It seemed quite significant to Hill that practically every great leader was a man whose achievements were largely inspired by a woman – today it is just as important in reciprocation; when things get tough, and you can count on your spouse. You may be deserted by what you thought were friends, but if you’ve got a good woman (spouse) by your side, you’ll never be alone.

Hill said, “She’ll be willing to start over again if necessary and she’ll give you the new enthusiasm that comes through her faith in you.” Having someone to love is having someone to share your success and accomplishments, to give you the praise that all of us need from time to time. A person can become successful without a spouse and family, but all the real joy is taken out of it. Take care of your spouse and children as your greatest assets and they will you for life.

SUBCONSCIOUS MIND — THE ELEVENTH PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

The subconscious mind is the “connecting link” that consists of a field of consciousness in which every impulse of thought that reaches the objective mind through any of the five senses is classified and recorded, and from which thoughts may be recalled or withdrawn as letters may be taken from a filing cabinet. It receives and files sense impressions or thoughts, regardless of their nature.

You may voluntarily plant in your subconscious mind any plan, thought, or purpose, that you desire to translate into its physical or monetary equivalent. The subconscious acts

first on the dominating desires which had been blended with emotional feeling such as faith.

Your subconscious mind works night and day through some procedure known only to God. The subconscious mind draws upon the forces of infinite intelligence for the power with which it voluntarily transmutes one's desires into their physical equivalent, making continuous use of the most practical media by which this end may be accomplished.

You cannot entirely control your subconscious mind, but you can voluntarily hand over to it any plan, desire, or purpose, which you wish transformed into concrete form. No one yet truly knows all there is to the subconscious mind, but we do know that it is incalculably powerful and can solve our problems if we go about using it the right way.

The best way is to hold in your conscious mind as often as possible, a clear picture of yourself already having accomplished your goal. You know what you want, define it clearly and then project it on the video screen of your mind. Hold it there; see yourself doing the things and holding the things you will have when your objective has been achieved.

Do this as often as possible as you go about your daily work and particularly at night just before you go to sleep and the first thing upon waking. As you do this, your subconscious will begin to lead you in the most logical ways toward your objective. Don't fight it. Follow your sudden hunches, the ideas that come into your mind, knowing that it's your subconscious trying to get through to your conscious mind. If you keep at this, you'll be amazed and delighted by the wonderful ideas that just seem to come from nowhere. To interject here a moment,

if you interfere with this process by ingesting mind altering or numbing substances, you will impede this miraculous process. So, take heed to put your vision and desires first before anything that may create roadblocks to your success.

In the next principle, we'll talk some more about this sixth sense that seems to serve the lives of great men and women. Seemingly miraculous to the average person, it is nothing more than the fulfillment of their burning desires through the power of their subconscious minds.

A man could work steadily at his job for 40 years and not accomplish as much as is possible in three or four years through the proper working of this principle. Everyone's subconscious mind is continuously working but if you fail to plant your desires into your subconscious mind, it will feed upon the thoughts which reach it as a result of your neglect and the environment around you. We all are living daily in the midst of all manner of thought impulses which are reaching our subconscious mind without our understanding. For the untrained and unintentional, most of these impulses are negative, but for those who have learned the power of the subconscious and are intentional in their thinking, these impulses become primarily positive.

Through this reading, you are already engaged in working to help shut off the flow of negative impulses and to aid in voluntarily influencing your subconscious mind through positive impulses of desire. As you accelerate this thinking, you will possess the key which unlocks the door to your subconscious mind. English politician and writer, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, wrote, *"The man who succeeds above his fellows is the one who early in life clearly discerns his object and toward*

that object habitually directs his powers. Even genius itself is but a fine observation, strengthened by fixity of purpose. Every man who observes vigilantly and resolves steadfastly grows unconsciously into genius.”

The keyword from Bulwer is “unconsciously”; know what you want, decide once and for all that it will be yours, remain steadfastly on course, propelled by faith, and your subconscious / unconscious mind will do the rest.

THE BRAIN ITSELF — THE TWELFTH PRINCIPLE OF TAGR

Hill writes that the brain is “a broadcasting and receiving station for thought.” If you had access to all the wealth in the world and took a penny, you would be doing exactly what you very probably have been doing in the use of your brain. Nothing in the world is more pitiful than the misunderstanding by the average person of the power of his or her brain and the minds to which it is connected — the conscious and the subconscious.

You own in your brain the most marvelous, miraculous, inconceivably powerful force the world has ever known. Take for example the fact that the number of lines (synapses) which connect the brain cells with one another equal 125 trillion. It has been determined that there are about 100 billion cells in the average human cerebral cortex. It is inconceivable that such a network of intricate machinery should be in existence for the sole purpose of carrying on the physical functions of incidental growth and maintenance of the physical body.

This is the mechanism that has given us the supersonic airplane, our deep rocket probes into outer space, the sciences, the arts, all that we know and use today, and we’ll use tomorrow, have hatched from this small gray mass each of us carries around

on our shoulders. Do you, can you doubt even for a moment, that it can bring you and yours everything you want here on Earth?

Of course, it can! Give it (your brain) the job you've decided to accomplish and watch it handle it.

THE SIXTH SENSE — THE THIRTEENTH AND FINAL PRINCIPLE TO TAGR

The sixth sense is “the door to the temple of wisdom” and can be described as the sense through which infinite intelligence may and will communicate voluntarily without any effort from or demands by the individual. This principle is the apex of the TAGR philosophy.

It can be assimilated, understood, and applied only by first mastering the other 12 principles. The sixth sense is that portion of the subconscious mind, which has been referred to as the creative imagination. It has also been referred to as the receiving set through which ideas, plans, and thoughts flash into the mind. The flashes are sometimes called hunches or inspirations.

The sixth sense defies description. It cannot be described to a person who has not mastered the other principles of this philosophy because such a person has no knowledge and no experience with which the sixth sense may be compared. The sixth sense is not something that one can take off and put on at will.

Ability to use this great power comes slowly through application of the other principles we've outlined. Many individuals come into a workable knowledge of the sixth sense even before the

age of 40, but more often the knowledge is not available until one is well past 50, and this for the reason that the spiritual forces with which the sixth sense is so closely related, do not mature and become usable generally except through years of meditation, self-examination, and serious thought, but begin to develop it now by applying the principles we've talked about here.

Remember, man can create nothing, even himself, if he does not first conceive of in the form of an impulse of thought. Man's thought processes begin immediately to translate themselves into their physical equivalent, whether those thoughts are voluntary or involuntary. To keep fear and indecision out of your mind, you must concentrate on the mental picture of your goal, your greatest desire, so it may be manifested into your reality.

Think and Grow Rich, in its many forms from book to audio, carries more endorsements by great people than any other secular book of its kind ever written (the Bible has more). Many from those who knew of its truth before even TAGR was written and revealed through Hill's research to those who have followed TAGR using these truths to gain their own great success since it was first published.

TAGR has proven it can change many millions of lives and these principles can help you create yourself as well. Understanding and applying these principles can bring you anything and everything you want in life for yourself and your family. So, create yourself out from the average, from the mediocre, and chart your course of the dream you have in your heart and materialize through your thinking into reality.

These 13 principles will never let you down as long as you use them, apply them, share them, and continuously leverage them in your thinking to create yourself.

TOM HOPKINS'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Tom Hopkins is a sales legend. He is known as one of the best trainers in salesmanship. However, success didn't come overnight for him. He was a college dropout. He had to do some mediocre construction work to support his family. However, it was not something he would enjoy doing. Tom believed that he could do something better, so he switched to real estate salesmanship. The first six months of his sales job were not quite fruitful for him. He could see only one sale during this period. However, with his persistent struggle and hard work, he began achieving the milestones of success. Eventually, he became one of the most successful real estate salesmen.

Tom has authored eight books. One of his most famous books is *The Official Guide to Success*. He has mentioned eighty-one success strategies in this book. It is one of my favorite books. I would like to share a few important features from this book that will help you in redefining your way of success.

DO THE MOST PRODUCTIVE THING

One of the most important things Tom suggests in this book is that we should always focus on doing the most productive thing. It doesn't imply that we should always keep working. Productive things refer to something which is not only beneficial for us, but it can also help us in getting closer to our goal. Sometimes, the most productive thing we can do is sleep.

When we are exhausted because of our stressful work routine, a good slumber can help us revitalize. You can read a book or watch a movie to refresh your mind, or you can simply write your thoughts down on paper. The idea is to do something which releases your stress and stimulates your motivation to strive for your goal.

SELF-INSTRUCT YOURSELF

No one can instruct and guide you better than YOU yourself can. Self-instructions are basically the repeated thoughts that can transform your perception of yourself. Let's take the example of a young child who loved playing with sockets and naked wires. His mother always warned him not to touch these things. However, the child never gave an ear to his mother's advice. One day, he got a minor electric shock while playing with the socket. From that day onwards, the child never touched any bare wire or socket. Every time he sees a wire, he reminds himself,

"I must not touch the wire because it can hurt me."

This self-reminder will always keep him away from such harmful experiments. This is how self-instructions work on every individual. When we keep reminding ourselves about something, our mind automatically gets programmed for it. For example, if you want to quit your smoking habit, you should self-instruct yourself,

"I can quit smoking to live a healthy life."

When people advise us constantly about something, we feel annoyed. However, when we instruct ourselves, we feel motivated and enthusiastic. Tom recommends writing down

these self-instructions so that you can stay determined and mindful.

WORK SMARTER RATHER THAN HARDER

Another success strategy by Tom is to work smarter rather than harder. Hard workers are those who follow the steps that are conveyed to them to perform a certain task. However, smart workers strive to find better and efficient ways to do the same task in less time. Not only does it increase their productivity, but they can also utilize their extra time to overachieve their goal.

CUT YOUR CHAINS TO YESTERDAY

Many people see failure as the end of their goals. It is not true. Failure is mandatory for success. If you don't fail, you don't get the opportunity to learn and know more about your strengths and weaknesses. I have seen a lot of people in my life who keep whining about their past failures and rejections. You can never change what has already happened. However, you are in charge of improving your present. It is always better to think logically and try to grasp a lesson from your failure.

STOP FORCED WORK

A majority of people want to work only to earn money. Most of us get involved in the professions we don't like. It is forced work which may help you in earning money, but it will always leave you exhausted and worn out. When you do something you don't love, you always feel overburdened and take comparatively more time to complete it. On the contrary, when you do something you love, you never feel drained because you enjoy doing it. It feels more like an activity to you.

Money and success automatically follow those people who turn their passion into their profession.

BRIAN TRACY'S MAXIMUM ACHIEVEMENT

Brian Tracy is a Canadian American motivational public speaker and self-development author. He grew up in a financially deprived family. He was a school dropout, and he worked some laboring and sales commission jobs to support his family. However, he was not as successful as he wanted to be. Brian always wondered how some B were successful while others were not. He avidly began to read books on selling techniques, and what could make salespeople the best. He applied the tactics he learned from these books to his job. Gradually, his performance improved, and within the next six months, he became one of the top salespersons in his company.

He has authored more than seventy books. One of his most popular books is *Maximum Achievement*. This book entails ideas, concepts, and methods that can help you unlock your individual potential for personal excellence.

THE MASTER SKILL

In his book, Brian mentions that when he became focused on what he wanted, he realized that he had a master skill that could produce wonderful results across his life. It was his ability to set goals and achieve them. He was determined to be successful. When he steered himself to a particular path, he learned that he could control the direction of his future. According to Brian, we all have this master skill of programming ourselves to achieve our desired outcome. Brian believes that

we all have the ability to channelize our thinking. We achieve what we believe we can – either good or bad.

BECOME AN EXPERT GOAL SETTER

Brian describes that most of the time, people can't succeed even after having goals. The reason is we do have goals and dreams, but we are not goal setters. Having a goal and setting a goal are two different things. Goal setting is an entire process that involves identifying your true interests, setting a goal in line with your interest, writing it down, and focusing your entire energy on achieving it. One of the greatest benefits of goal setting is that as you reach your goals, you feel your destiny is in your control. It improves your self-esteem and keeps you motivated throughout your life.

PEACE OF MIND

Brian emphasizes a lot of happiness and peace of mind. Goal accomplishment is only worth it if you don't have to compromise on your peace of mind and happiness. Not feeling happy even after reaching your milestone depicts that you couldn't identify your true interest in the first place. It happens when we are under the pressure of people in our surroundings, such as family and peers. We see our lives from their perspective, and hence, we have no accurate idea about our own preferences. One of the most effective ways to ensure happiness and peace of mind is never thinking about society's validation while analyzing your preferences.

It dilutes the goal-setting process, and we fail to specify what we actually want.

SUN TZU'S ART OF WAR

“The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy’s not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable.”

–Sun Tzu

I have *The Art of War* sitting on my desk next to my Bible. It is one of the oldest books on military strategy and warfare. Sun Tzu was a Chinese warrior writer who wrote this book in 500 B.C. One of the most significant attributes of this writing is that even after centuries, the maneuvers presented in this book are applicable today.

Unlike the standard layout of contemporary novels, Sun Tzu segregated this book into 13 different sections. Each section represents a specific game plan and tactic of war. It is quite popular all around the world because most of its lessons can be linked directly with other competitive fields such as business, sports, or even your personal life. The key points of Sun Tzu, from a business perspective, that I have learned from this book are as follows.

CONQUER YOUR RIVAL BY STRATEGY

The chief objective of any business should be to conquer its rivals by a legitimate strategy, not by conflict because conflict is eventually destructive to everyone. Defeating the competitors requires vigilant and comprehensive planning, and a focused yet flexible business strategy. Flexibility refers to being adaptable to ever-changing aspects such as

social, political, and economic factors. Keeping aligned with advanced technology is also crucial in standing out in front of competitors. This strategy works in your personal life too. Participating in fights can make you stressed out and shift your focus from your goals.

ALWAYS BE PREPARED IN ADVANCE

It is not a wise decision to keep waiting for things to go wrong. Companies should be prepared in advance for any circumstance such as a sudden change in demand or a competitive move from one of their rivals. It is only possible by continuous analysis of market trends, customers, and competitors. Similarly, in your personal life, you should train your mind for dealing with challenges. Life is full of trials and hardships. The more resilient we are, the easier it is to face adversities and succeed.

TRAIN YOUR EMPLOYEES AS BUSINESS PARTNERS

“Treat your men well, and train them thoroughly.”

–Sun Tzu

This one-liner statement of Sun Tzu taught me the principal rule of managing a business successfully. Your potential to establish a team out of your employees is what makes you a successful business leader. You must train your team in such a way that they own your business. They must envision the company’s future with you. Forming such teams requires a great deal of dedication and insight. You must take care of the well-being of your employees to keep them motivated.

DON'T LET UNCONTROLLABLE FACTORS CONTROL YOUR BUSINESS

One of the biggest lessons that I gained from Tzu's book is to face business challenges. In every situation, whether favorable or unfavorable, there lies an opportunity. You can't really change some elements such as environmental factors or any defective government policy. But you can certainly alter your plans according to the prevailing situations instead of crying over them. It is a leader's quality to convert the threats into opportunities.

THE 10 RULES OF SAM WALTON

Sam Walton was the founder of the famous American multinational retail corporation, Walmart. He believed that running a successful business comprised of 10 simple principles. These rules helped Walmart become the global leader in the retail industry. Out of these ten rules, **seven** are the ones that can help you in becoming successful in both personal and professional lives.

1. **Stay committed to your work** – Commitment refers to being in love with what you do. Being passionate about your work and goal is the key to success.
2. **Treat your associates as your partners** – When you work in a team, each and every member plays a significant role in steering you towards success. Therefore, you should always value your team members and share the fruit of your success with them.
3. **Motivate your team members** – Motivating your team members or your employees is the best way to

incorporate them into your goal accomplishment journey. Motivated employees or team members will treat your goal as their own. Hence, you can get better results in less time.

4. **Communicate everything to your partners** – Your employees, team members, or anyone who is a part of your goal journey must get accurate information about what you want to achieve. Trusting your team members is essential to keep them enthusiastic.
5. **Appreciate your partners** – Appreciation always works like an energy drink. It boosts you up to strive even more. Your team members, employees, friends, mentors, and everyone who guides you in the correct direction deserve appreciation. Giving due credit to the people for their contributions is a vital ingredient of success.
6. **Celebrate your success** – When you reach your milestone in your goal accomplishment journey, always celebrate it. It is the best way to feel happiness. Similarly, take your failures as a lesson and don't get distressed about them.
7. **Listen to your team members** – Always value those people who contribute to your success. Listen to their ideas and feedback and try to incorporate them as and when needed.

I have mentioned only the key learnings that I have gained from these renowned businesspersons. I recommend that you read these books to have a clear understating of success. We are fortunate that we live in a technological era. You can always use the internet to read about successful personalities.

You can also listen to the podcasts and watch motivational videos as a part of your goal setting.

LEADING TO CREATEYOURSELF

“The secret to success is good leadership, and good leadership is all about making the lives of your team members or workers better.”

–Tony Dungy

What do you think makes a leader?

The most common definition of a leader which we have learned from our elementary school is...

- A leader is someone who leads a group.
- Or the one who is followed by the people.

Although this definition depicts an accurate literal meaning of the word leader, does it describe the true essence of who a leader is? To me, it doesn't. This definition creates a question in my mind.

WHY DO PEOPLE FOLLOW SOMEONE?

If I want to be a leader or I think I am already a leader and I ask you to follow me, will you?

You will likely not. It is not enough to tell someone that “I'm a leader. Follow me.”

People will question, why should I follow you?

I have spent a great amount of my time finding the answer to this why.

What I have learned is:

A leader is the one who has the vision to improve not only their own life but also the lives of people in their surroundings and community.

A leader is the one who works for a cause to bring a positive change in society.

A leader is one who is selfless and thinks about their followers more than they think about themselves.

When you are determined to sacrifice for the well-being of society, people automatically start following you. A true leader doesn't have to plead with people to follow them. Their actions make people walk behind them.

One of the most inspirational leaders of all time is Nelson Mandela. He was one of the most selfless people I have ever read about. He was the civil rights leader in South Africa who raised his voice against apartheid. It was a system where non-white citizens were discriminated against whites and did not have equal rights. Nelson Mandela fought against this system. He was so determined that he spent about 27 years of his life in prison due to his protests. It was indeed his selflessness and love for the people of his community. He was ready to sacrifice his life, but he never agreed to bend on his principles in order to be released. Millions of people followed him in his noble cause. After years of struggles and endurance, his efforts paid off, and he became the President of South Africa in 1994.

Whenever we talk about leadership, most people think that it is related to business only. This is certainly not true. Leadership

is a skill that is vital in every aspect of your life, be it personal or professional. Consider the example of Nelson Mandela. His cause had nothing to do with the business or corporate world. However, his leadership skills and vision made history.

THREE AUTHORS ON LEADERSHIP

Once you have identified your style, it becomes easy to understand whether or not your style is suitable for a particular cause.

I have learned a lot about leaders and leadership through thousands of books and programs. The three of my most favorite authors are:

- Dale Carnegie
- Stephen Pollan
- Napoleon Hill

DALE CARNEGIE

You might have heard about the famous book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Dale Carnegie was the one who authored this book. If you haven't read it yet, I would suggest you add this book to your priority list. Dale belonged to a financially deprived family. He worked as a traveling salesman to support his family. Dale always had effective communication skills, which made him a successful salesperson. He took advantage of these skills and joined the YMCA as a public speaker. Within a short span of time, his classes became extremely successful. He wrote one of his most famous books *How to Win Friends and Influence People* in 1936. It was one of his bestsellers

because people loved the ideas he presented in his book. Even after over seventy years, this book is renowned and serves the purpose of a guidebook for people who want to develop leadership skills.

STEPHEN POLLAN

One of the most important aspects of leadership is decision-making. A great leader must know how to make effective decisions that can not only benefit them but also their team. Stephen Pollan is one of America's most trusted financial advisors and mentors. He has authored more than a dozen books. He is a best-selling author, and his books revolve around effective decision-making, especially the ones related to finances.

As a matter of fact, Stephen Pollan was my inspiration for Createyourself back in the late 90s when I was reading *Live Rich, Die Broke*.

NAPOLEON HILL

Napoleon Hill is one of America's most popular self-help authors. One of his renowned books *Think and Grow Rich* has helped millions of people in exploring a new and broader outlook on life. If you haven't read it yet, add this book to your to-read list too. Napoleon grew up in a poor family. However, he was always determined to change his lifestyle. He began his writing career at the age of thirteen. He was a mountain reporter for a local newspaper. He eventually emerged as one of the most read motivational authors.

Developing leadership skills is not an overnight task. You have to work thoroughly to overcome your weaknesses and capitalize on your strengths. Even if you are a good leader, you

should never stop working on improvements. A great leader creates a positive environment in the workplace and at home. The environment where everyone can share their opinions confidently. It increases their team's or employee's productivity, and they feel more motivated to work for a collective goal. Similarly, a positive environment at home solidifies the relationship and creates a sense of harmony among family members. Those people who have a peaceful environment at their home can utilize their skills better to achieve their vision.

I want you to make this your goal to discover your leadership potential and start working on it from today.

We dive deeper into Hill's book, *Think and Grow Rich*, later.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Apart from our workplace, we play different roles in our lives simultaneously, such as the role of a parent, sibling, child, spouse, friend, and mentor. Every role demands leadership skills. For example, being a parent, you must be skilled enough to guide your children for a bright future. You must encourage them to work for a goal. You should know how to direct your children to the correct destination. Children who have parents with leadership skills become more confident and assertive in their lives. When a child is young, they are powerless and entirely dependent on their parents. If their parents don't know how to ignite a fire in their children to set goals, they lose their direction. They go where their life takes them to because they don't have a definite vision. Similarly, if you have

leadership qualities, you and your spouse can work collectively for a better lifestyle.

ARE LEADERS MADE?

There is always a never-ending debate on whether leaders are born or made. Some people believe that those leadership qualities are God-gifted and can never be developed by ourselves. On the contrary, other people think that anyone can grow these skills with hard work and persistence. I agree with the latter. You can have an entirely different opinion than mine, and I truly respect it. I think everyone has the ability to become a great leader. We simply have to nurture those leadership qualities and keep practicing.

Following are a few ways that I have practiced in my life. These ways can help you develop and improve your leadership skills.

BE ORGANIZED

Being organized and disciplined is the first step in developing leadership qualities. A leader has to be an inspiration to other people. Your followers judge you based on how organized you are. If you can't meet the deadlines and manage your time well, your team members will never trust your skills. To gather and inspire people for a cause, you must learn how to maintain discipline. In the last chapters, we talked about the importance of deadlines in goal accomplishment. If you are not self-organized, how can you convince your team members to meet deadlines?

TAKE RISKS

Leadership is more than just completing your assigned task. From the perspective of business, you have to step out of your comfort zone to defeat your rivals. Your unwillingness

to take risks shows your lack of confidence. It exhibits that you are afraid of failure. A great leader never fears failure. They know that failure and rejection is an integral part of the change process. All the successful people and great leaders have endured years of failures before reaching their desired milestones. Blow your apprehension away and begin thinking out of the box.

LEARN TO FOLLOW AND LISTEN

A true leader is never fearful about yielding power and control to others. To them, their cause and vision are more important than their position. They always respect others' opinions and are open to listening. When someone disagrees with them, they try to figure out the reason and logic behind this disagreement instead of being offended. For example, being a parent, you should always welcome the opinion of your children instead of thinking that you know it all. It creates confidence in your children. They trust you and share everything with you because they know you will listen to them. Similarly, as a spouse, you should embrace the difference of opinion because no two people can think exactly alike. When you speak, you generally repeat what you already know. However, when you listen to others, you get an opportunity to learn something new.

KEEP LEARNING

One of the most important qualities of a leader is that they are always willing to learn. They believe that learning never stops. The world is another name of change. With the ever-changing technology and trends, every day brings a new concept. Old theories are replaced with modern-day findings. They transform the way of performing various tasks. For example, before the emergence of computers and software, people recorded everything manually. They had never imagined that

technology would replace their manual systems. Those who accepted this change and learned the advanced ways could keep pace with the world. However, those who thought they didn't need to learn anything were left behind. This continues with every new technological advancement.

RESOLVE CONFLICTS

A great leader doesn't believe in getting into conflicts. They think that everything can be resolved with discussion and dialogue. If their team members are involved in a quarrel, instead of favoring any one party, they have a table talk and try to understand why the conflict arose in the very first place. Moreover, even if they have a difference of opinion with some team member, they don't hold personal grudges.

Though these are not the only ways to be a good leader, these are some fundamental techniques that can help you a great deal in transforming your personality.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

As I mentioned, I believe everyone has leadership qualities. We just need to release them. Everyone is an individual with a different leadership style that affects the followers. There are three basic leadership styles with many subcategories. Before you begin working on your cause, you need to identify which leadership style you have and whether or not you can change it.

AUTHORITARIAN OR AUTOCRATIC

This style is all about dictating to your followers or team members what to do and what not to do without giving an ear to their opinions. It was a successful business style about a century ago. However, today, people think differently. The

authoritarian style has become quite unpopular with time. People like to follow those leaders who respect their ideas and point of view. This style can be implemented on rare occasions when deadlines are strict and being autocratic is the requirement of the situation. But then the leader must bounce back to a less dictatorial style.

PARTICIPATIVE OR DEMOCRATIC

This is the most popular style of leadership because it includes shared decision-making. The leader not only presents their own ideas, but they also seek their followers' opinions and recommendations. This is the most popular style in modern days. With the emergence of social media and the internet, people are now more aware, and they want to be listened to.

DELEGATE OR LAISSEZ-FAIRE

A Laissez-faire style of leader delegates the authority of decision-making to their followers. If the team members are productive, it can prove to be the best style. However, if the leader doesn't keep a close watch, it can destroy the entire cause. This is not usually the style that launches a new company or idea. But later, many startup founders of now big companies will delegate the entire responsibility of the business operations to the upper management. They will remain the figurehead and founding visionary, but they don't usually make the daily decisions but instead often approve the final decisions.

12 RULES OF LIFE

The *12 Rules for Life* by Dr. Jordan Peterson

I was pretty much complete with this book, ready to go to final editing and formatting when I came across the audible version of Dr. Peterson's book, *12 Rules for Life*. Dr. Peterson has become a lightning rod over reality, or the lack thereof, in the media and by many people. I found virtually every point Peterson raised and referenced SPOT-ON (to claim a British/Canadian colloquialism), and I have watched many of the videos out there with the response from listeners. He and I are aligned in our thinking and this book has expressed it beyond measure.

There is great understanding here that every human being will benefit upon hearing; and for those who only love the "briefs," I provide them below, but it will behoove you to read, or preferably listen, to every word of the whole book — especially for those soon-to-be or current parents. The ideas are expressed through in-depth psychoanalytical theories but also entertaining stories and his thoughts on some of the reasons humanity includes the darkest of secrets.

RULE 1 — STAND UP STRAIGHT WITH YOUR SHOULDERS BACK

Peterson talks about how our brains are constantly manufacturing serotonin to help us regulate our mood, confidence, and energy. He shows how there is a relationship between serotonin and our status in life stating, "As you climb up the social or self-esteem ladder, your serotonin will increase, so shouldn't we work to increase serotonin first, in order to make positive progress? It can't hurt."

I have always believed that one of the most fundamental ways to hold myself up physically to me and visually to others and subsequently improving my serotonin output is to stand up straight with my shoulders back and my chest up and out.

When teaching my class, it is a regular question from my students from only a few minutes of my introduction: “Were you in the military?” They can see in my stature that I have confidence and I don’t back down where there is a fight or debate to be had!

Peterson advises before you dive into all the other hard work of Creating yourself, you can start here for a quick and easy start. *“You’re not only a body. You’re a spirit. Standing up physically implies and demands standing up metaphysically. It’s voluntarily accepting the burden of Being. Your nervous system responds in an entirely different manner when you face the demands of life voluntarily.”*

RULE 2 — TREAT YOURSELF LIKE SOMEONE YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR HELPING

Peterson starts off by illustrating a point of how people are better at caring for their pets than themselves. Why do you think that is? He even cites the statistics showing we are more likely to fill a prescription drug the vet orders for our pet than the doctor orders for ourselves.

He says the problem may lie in our worldview, how humans can be so cruel, unfair, fearmongering, and how we secretly live in shame because we willingly participate in all of it. He suggests we instead focus our worldview, not on the negative, but on the fact that humanity has been incredibly productive and achieved great feats of advancement. Then believe in your own ability to be productive, achieve well, care for others, and better manage the role you will play to make this world a better place.

“You need to determine where you are going, so that you can bargain for yourself, so that you don’t end up resentful, vengeful, and cruel. You need to articulate your own principles, so you can defend yourself against others’ taking advantage of you. You must keep the promises you make to yourself, and reward yourself, so that you can trust and motivate yourself.”

RULE 3 — MAKE FRIENDS WITH PEOPLE WHO WANT THE BEST FOR YOU

It’s a sad fact that sometimes, people choose to stay in a place of misery instead of putting in the hard work to grow and change. Peterson talks about how it is hard to distance yourself from those who can be deadly to your growth and then, instead, surround yourself with healthy people who will not tolerate your destructiveness. They will encourage you when you do good and punish you when you do not.

“Loyalty is not identical to stupidity. Friendship is a reciprocal arrangement. Choose people who want things to be better, not worse. It’s a good thing, not a selfish thing, to choose people who are good for you. It’s appropriate and praiseworthy to associate with people whose lives would be improved if they saw your life improve.”

RULE 4 — COMPARE YOURSELF TO WHO YOU WERE YESTERDAY, NOT TO WHO SOMEONE ELSE IS TODAY

In other words, do not envy others for who they are nor what they have.

Peterson’s point is that we all have internal critics, and while brutal, are necessary. The problem is, we tend to categorize every aspect of ourselves as either a success or a failure. After an extensive discussion about this notion, he suggests that if

you're not a good athlete, then be a good writer. If you're not a good writer, then be a good parent. Judge yourself based solely on your attempts to make this world a little bit better, but don't compare yourself to who someone else is today, only compare yourself to who you were yesterday and see if you advanced yourself or not.

“What if it was the case that the world revealed whatever goodness it contained in precise proportion to your desire for the best? This doesn't mean you can have what you want merely by wishing it, or that everything is interpretation, or that there is no reality. The world is still there, with its structures and limits. But you can dance with it, and maybe even lead, if you have enough skill and grace.”

RULE 5 — DO NOT LET YOUR CHILDREN DO ANYTHING THAT MAKES YOU DISLIKE THEM

As you have learned, we have adopted five special children; four are still living with us and the oldest is living in her own home with our granddaughter only a mile away. As you can imagine, not only are adopted children emotionally reset upon adoption — but it is also not all hunky-dory. As special children who had to fight harder than any of us just to survive their first year of life to live today, they have a persistent ability to go after whatever it is they want. This often erupts and disrupts in all places and times.

Whether you have, had, or will have children or not, all of humanity is affected by the billions of public meltdowns every day. Usually, they are conducted by toddlers still learning their boundaries, but also by other children who are special, or their parents never taught them their boundaries. Children are insanely difficult as Peterson points out! But the all-

important job of parenting must be done. Sometimes it hurts to discipline your child, to assert power over them, to fight for hours over something as simple as eating dinner (my wife Jennifer is a feeding disorder specialist, so she must deal with this both in her clinic and at home, now even with our own granddaughter)!

But as Peterson points out in this 5th rule, there is something that will hurt much more in the future for your child – being a poorly socialized and ill-adjusted adult. When a misbehaving and obnoxious child at a party is ignored by everyone and even doted on by the parents – that is not a good sign for the future for the children or society in general.

The biggest point I recognized from this rule is that parenting with a partner is especially important. Not just so you can avoid burnout, but your partner can be your emotional conscious and help avoid being too harsh or even abusive to your child in return. There is no way that Jennifer and I would be able to raise our children if we were separated. Even though we both work, we also both parent equally all of the children (and grandchildren). With the extra burden of their special situations, it's a constant challenge.

As you will see at the end of this book, we had already simplified the rules of the family and the principles we all strive to adhere to and live by before reading this chapter of Peterson's book. We, of course, relished in the guidance as a win for the Joneses.

“A child who pays attention, instead of drifting, and can play, and does not whine, and is comical, but not annoying, and is trustworthy, that child will have friends wherever he goes. His teachers and

parents will like him. If he can be happily instructed, he will thrive in what can be a cold and unforgiving hostile world. Clear rules make for secure children and calm and rational parents. Clear discipline helps the child, the family, and the society establish, maintain, and expand the order that is all that protects us from chaos, where everything is uncertain, anxiety-provoking, hopeless and depressing.”

RULE 6 — SET YOUR HOUSE IN PERFECT ORDER BEFORE YOU CRITICIZE THE WORLD

Now you may ask me, “Dr. Jones, how is your home working these days?” as I write and publish this book to the world. Well, we can definitely improve, but I am also trying not to be too critical of the world and others in my effort to help share my experiences. We are human, fallible, and even sinful in our nature — so that takes a great deal of work to overcome. I expect that Jennifer and I are not creating the next Columbine shooter as one of the examples Peterson uses to illustrate the most terrible acts of violence on humanity committed by those who had undergone terrible mistreatment in their youth.

But he points out that such evil experiences in youth can have the capacity to birth goodness and righteousness, not just the desire to pay the abuse forward. In your own life, you might be finding that the constant grind, endless news cycle, and the pressure of an angry society is making you bitter and resentful. This is exactly why we don’t watch TV in our home. We only stream healthy movies and shows when it’s family time together.

Instead of blaming the world outside, Peterson suggests we consider our own circumstances; learn where we can make small changes to improve our own personal experience; and

figure out how we can take better advantage of our current situation. We do that by first setting our own house in perfect order before we criticize the world. If we all did that, things could fix themselves.

“After some months and years of diligent effort, your life will become simpler and less complicated. Your judgement will improve. You will untangle your past. You will become stronger and less bitter. You will move more confidently into the future. You will stop making your life unnecessarily difficult. You will then be left with the bare tragedies of life, but they will no longer be compounded with bitterness and deceit.”

RULE 7 — PURSUE WHAT IS MEANINGFUL (NOT WHAT IS EXPEDIENT)

Peterson points out the obvious to us, that life is primarily made up of suffering and to most of us the simplest thing to do about suffering is to pursue pleasure at every turn — have sex, do drugs, drink to intoxication, and take without giving a hoot back. But that does not end our suffering, it only exacerbates it more. Peterson explains that humans figured out a different way to deal with it and that has built our society of today. What is that discovery of ours? We can make sacrifices and delay gratification in order to develop a better future for ourselves; bring meaning to our lives.

The hard thing is that living a life filled with meaning requires putting aside instant pleasure. It means knowing we each have a responsibility to ourselves, and to others, to build a better world for us all. We do this by making sacrifices for the greater good and ourselves, in order to pursue what is meaningful (not what is expedient).

“There are many problems that money does not solve, and others it makes worse. Rich people still divorce each other, alienate themselves from their children, and suffer from existential angst, and develop cancer and dementia, and die alone and unloved.”

RULE 8 — TELL THE TRUTH — OR, AT LEAST, DON'T LIE

So, you don't want to hurt someone's feelings, or you want to avoid certain situations, so you don't tell the truth. You don't necessarily lie, you just don't tell the truth. This can cause you and others all sorts of messes in the future. Have you ever told a lie, or “untruth,” and then sometime later someone asks you about the situation knowing what you said then? Embarrassingly, you can't remember because it wasn't the truth and you just made up an answer to get through the situation.

Yes, sometimes you'll have no idea what to say to a person, so the best thing is to just tell the truth. Don't be timid or shy about it, tell it with strength, confidence, and genuine caring. This will not only keep you out of trouble later when you can't recall what you said, but it will also build trust in others who know you will always tell the truth.

“It is our responsibility to see what is before our eyes, courageously, and learn from it, even if it seems horrible. This is particularly important when it challenges what we know and rely on, upsetting and destabilizing us. It is this act that informs the individual and updates the state. Nietzsche said that a man's worth was determined by how much truth he could tolerate.”

RULE 9 — ASSUME THAT THE PERSON YOU ARE LISTENING TO MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING YOU DON'T

We have all been on both sides of the type of conversation where you or the other person is just waiting for your turn to talk. This really is rude and even a problem I struggle with when I am passionate about the subject. The problem with it is, we don't learn anything new and beneficial when we aren't listening.

While my mantra is “While I Teach, I Learn,” I don't really learn when I am talking. I learn when I am studying the subject before I teach, but even more effectively, I learn from those I am teaching when I listen to their ideas in response. Peterson tells us we should instead, practice the skill that will take us far for the rest of our life: active listening.

Listening, understanding, and responding well is critical for your learning, growth, health, and more importantly, the health of your community. Always assume that the person you are listening to might know something you don't – because they always will!

“Carl Rogers suggested his readers conduct a short experiment when they next found themselves in a dispute. Stop the discussion for a moment and institute this rule: Each person can speak up for himself only after he has first restated the ideas and feelings of the previous speaker accurately, and to that speaker's satisfaction.”

RULE 10 — BE PRECISE IN YOUR SPEECH

Now we know from the lessons above, we're supposed to listen and always tell the truth. But why is being precise in our words even more beneficial? Peterson says it's because

when things start to fall apart and your world is turning into chaos, the best remedy is to put into words what exactly went wrong, how it specifically hurt you, and what you need to do to recover from it.

Being precise in your speech, speaking courageously, and with truthful words can eliminate much of the crushing anxiety when things are unknown and undefined.

“Say what you mean, so that you can find out what you mean. Act out what you say, so you can find out what happens. Then pay attention. Note your errors. Articulate them. Strive to correct them. That is how you discover the meaning of your life. Tell those around you who you are. Narrow your focus, and gaze attentively, and move forward, forthrightly.”

RULE 11 — DO NOT BOTHER CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE SKATEBOARDING

When humans are in a healthy state of mind, they don't try to minimize their risks. They seek to optimize them to their benefit. Humans are happiest in a sweet spot between safety and skill, pushing themselves to learn and grow without going off the deep end knowing that the worst is just getting hurt a bit along the way. Being overprotected and too dependent is the death sentence of personal success.

As indicated in the title of the rule, every skateboarder is taking the scary risk to become competent and powerful at skateboarding. If helicopter mom is hovering overhead, the child will not take the risks needed to become a better skateboarder. This same type of risk-taking is required to become a strong man or woman. By participating in the natural hierarchies that exist within a society that as a whole

seeks to move upward, “all ships float with the tide!” Don’t be afraid to be afraid. Do scary things and don’t bother children who are learning these lessons in real time when they are skateboarding.

“We feel invigorated and excited when we work to optimize our future performance while playing in the present. Otherwise, we lumber around, sloth-like, unconscious, unformed, and careless. Overprotected, we will fail when something dangerous, unexpected, and full of opportunity suddenly makes its appearance, as it inevitably will.”

RULE 12 — PET A CAT WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER ONE ON THE STREET

As a psychologist, Peterson illustrates well how fragile humans are most of the time. He finds it shocking that we aren’t in a state of paralyzing fear at all times with all the craziness around us – especially when all we have to do is surf the internet or turn on the TV (what’s that anymore?). Our lives are filled with pain, disappointment, and loss, and then maybe a little joy and happiness sprinkled in to appreciate the difference. And then, of course, we die.

Peterson says if you think too much about that, you’re headed straight to the abyss. So, how do we cope? He also says people are very, very tough, and if you focus on the simple and the good you will be able to make it through. *“If you aim for the stars, deny tragedy from ruling over your life, and take advantage of the small opportunities for peace, you will be okay.”*

JORDAN PETERSON

About the man that I do respect, I can’t say it much more concise than *The Guardian’s* opinion of Peterson in their review of his book:

“The Canadian clinical psychologist Jordan B Peterson has, in recent years, become an internet celebrity, producing a slew of videos and interviews on all manner of political and social topics. He is acerbic, combative, and openly contemptuous of his opponents, particularly Marxists and “Postmodernists,” for whom he harbors a special animus. He is an enthusiastic and prolific culture warrior, who has no truck with “white privilege,” “cultural appropriation,” and a range of other ideas associated with social justice movements. His reluctance to call transgender people by their preferred pronouns (unless they ask him to) has earned him a reputation as a transphobe, and while his views have marginalized him within the academic community, they have bolstered his reputation in conservative circles.”

The reason the media and academia don't like Peterson is that he speaks the truth, and this is why his books are bestsellers, his live presentations are sold out, and he has 3.83 million subscribers of his YouTube channel.

One thing I do want to point out about this book is Peterson's extensive reference to the Bible and use of biblical stories to illustrate his points of each rule. One particularly interesting quote comes in the discussion where humans are inherently bad all the way from the beginning with Adam and Eve. He asks what is to be done by people to resolve this and he speaks of Christ's life and death as an example of how to live and even sacrifice ourselves. His solution is that we follow Christ's example and try to make the world more like heaven than hell.

“I knew that the cross was simultaneously, the point of greatest suffering, the point of death and transformation, and the symbolic center of the world.” – Jordan Peterson

EVERYTHING COUNTS AND THE 100 DAYS CHALLENGE

“Until you learn how to predictably and consistently convert goals and intentions into successful outcomes and do it quickly ...you’re going to struggle all of your life.”

–Gary Ryan Blair

Through his book *Everything Counts!* and his award-winning video coaching program *100 Days Challenge*, my personal coach, Gary Ryan Blair, believes passionately in the enormous, untapped potential that resides within each person. He sees there is a worldwide chronic disconnect between formulation and execution of people’s goals. Individuals can set great expectations for themselves that often bear little resemblance to the results they achieve.

The root cause of the disconnect between idea and actual performance is that most people do not have a strategy execution process. To experience quality in every aspect of our lives, we must do little things correctly so that each action produces a quality result.

In *Everything Counts!* Blair explores 52 strategies and concepts that make the ordinary life exceptional. From his book, he then expanded those into 100 five-to-eight-minute videos delivered over 100 days of the challenge. You can learn more about the *100 Days Challenge* on Createyourself.com. Below, we will explore only sixteen of them.

LEADERSHIP COUNTS

Leadership is all about one enduring quality: character. While many leaders possess the drive and competence necessary

to lead, far too many lack a moral compass. These types of leaders tend to be self-serving and sabotage the spirit of a project. As these people assume greater power and authority, an Achilles heel of pride and arrogance is created eroding the trust of followers. True leadership is about choosing service to others over self-interest. Leaders exist to protect cherished values and core beliefs, sustain and inspire hopes, and help drive positive results for all.

FOCUS COUNTS

The guiding principle that should drive your every decision is the law of focus. Everything you think, say, and do is either taking you closer to or further away from it; therefore, it must be your key decision-making criterion. Focus can be defined as your ability to keep your thoughts and actions trained on achieving a goal; a picture in your mind's eye of something you want to be, have, or do. Your focus captivates your attention and provokes an irresistible sense of optimism and faith for the future. Focus is a strategic asset that drives all results.

QUALITY COUNTS

To pursue quality is to aspire to perfection. While perfection is unattainable, the passionate pursuit of perfection is what drives quality and fosters ongoing improvement. True quality is only achieved through continuous improvement in performance that ensures the highest standards. If you intend to be competitive, then quality must become an obsession.

PLANNING COUNTS

A well-defined plan, properly executed, is your ticket to success. You significantly increase your odds of winning in any endeavor if you know who you are, what you want, where you are going, how you will get there, and what you will do when

you arrive. Though it may seem like common sense, this fact is often overlooked. Your life will not go according to plan if you do not have a plan. As tedious as it may seem, effective planning ensures a greater sense of security in yourself and the actions necessary for success.

VISION COUNTS

You will never be greater than the vision that guides you. Vision is the capacity to see the invisible that inspires people to do the impossible. If compelling, that vision can change your life, family, business, community, and even humanity. In fact, vision is the only thing that has spurred major changes in the world. Throughout history, great accomplishments have begun as a single individual's vision of what might be. Clear vision is an essential component of high performance. The more lucid the vision, the more power and confidence it generates.

TEAMWORK COUNTS

Teamwork is the ultimate competitive advantage, even for your personal development. It plays a determining role in the success of any process, and is far more important to success than strategy, finance, and technology. Teamwork consists of two or more people coordinating their activities to accomplish a common goal or purpose, a strong sense of interdependence, and a shared accountability with certain qualities.

INNOVATION COUNTS

The essence of strategy lies in creating tomorrow's competitive advantages faster than anyone can mimic today's. The widespread adoption of networked technologies and open standards is removing barriers of geography and accessibility. Anyone and everyone can participate in the innovation

economy. All genuinely great innovators share two common traits:

1. They have an almost fanatical desire to get out front and stay there.
2. They are determined that if anyone is going to render their products or services obsolete, it will be themselves.

REWARDS AND RECOGNITION COUNT

The goal of rewards and recognition is to feed motivation and to define excellence. Those being recognized for excellence serve as models for their colleagues and leaders in their area of discipline. They also serve their customer, whether internal or external, to the best of their ability.

CHARACTER COUNTS

There is no higher praise than to say a person shows good character. Your own character is comprised of those principles and values that give your life meaning, direction, and depth. They constitute your inner sense of right and wrong. Character functions as a moral compass: unshakable, rock-solid principles that define beliefs, that specify the dos and don'ts of behavior, and that point the way to excellence. Character is not something you can fake; you either have it, or you don't. People will forgive a great deal: incompetence, insecurity, or even bad manners, but they will not forgive a lack of character.

EXCELLENCE COUNTS

Excellence never occurs by accident. To become the person you were meant to be, everything you do must be done with the single purpose of achieving excellence. What exactly is excellence? It is the process of continually growing and

improving yourself and your life. Everyone has the potential to achieve excellence, but it requires that a price be paid.

PASSION COUNTS

Far too many people act as though comfort and luxury are the chief requirements for a successful life, when all they really require for happiness is something that makes them feel passionate. Passion is hard-core devotion to a person or cause; it infuses life with meaning, joy, and unbridled enthusiasm.

PERSEVERANCE COUNTS

Growth of any type requires personal struggle. In the face of stern obstacles and setbacks, you need to keep going, however tempting it might be to give up and let go of your dreams. Perseverance is a force that keeps you moving toward your goals. It doesn't matter how slowly you go, as long as you don't stop. As long as you are willing to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes, no one will be able to keep you from reaching your goal.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNTS

Every morning when you wake up, you should embrace the idea that there is something about you, your life, or your business that could be improved. Each day offers an opportunity for improvement, and each moment serves as an opportunity to advance or to retreat in the pursuit of your goals. Personal development is a lifelong pursuit because your life is a work in progress. You never totally arrive; there is always another way you could become better. The process ends only when you run out of time.

SIMPLICITY COUNTS

Complexity is the curse of the digital age; it interferes with clear thoughts and gets in the way of any attempt to achieve personal productivity, customer delight, or corporate profitability. On the other hand, simplicity is associated with beauty, elegance, purity, and clarity. Simplicity is a virtue worth striving for, but it is hard to attain. In fact, without conscious, sustained effort focused on simplicity, increased complexity is almost certain to manifest itself.

JOY COUNTS

An essential part of your journey is the pursuit of happiness, but happiness does not mean you have joy! You are accountable for all that you do, as well as for the pleasures you fail to enjoy in your lifetime. Contrary to popular opinion, it's perfectly okay to have fun in everything you do. It's not selfish, insensitive, or self-centered to want a joyful life. Joyful living is truly the good life. Your work, along with the things you do in your personal life, should be done because they bring you joy, not because they serve some serious purpose. If you are not doing something that is enjoyable, you should look for something that is.

FAILURE COUNTS

Success depends on a constant stream of small, and occasionally large, failures. Failure is not merely the output of an unsuccessful activity; it is also the input for a successful one. Failure is a temporary condition that applies to a particular situation, time, or place. If you don't let it devastate you, it can be an opportunity for learning, for recovery, and for the demonstration of character. Unfortunately, when most people encounter failure, they tend to concentrate on the pain that

this failure has caused, instead of examining the reasons why it has occurred. The most dynamic and progressive people make productive use of failures. These people view specific failures as the unavoidable consequences of both action and change. They see failure as essential to success.

Finally, Ryan wants us to never forget the golden rule of excellence: Everything you say, every thought you have, and everything you do either brings you closer to your ultimate goal of excellence, or it pushes you further away from that goal. Everything has bottom-line consequences. Because everything counts, start focusing today on the little things that lead to big results tomorrow.

PART VII

PROSPERITY

How do you define prosperity?

According to Collins dictionary, *“Prosperity is a condition in which a person or community is doing well financially.”*

I know most of you will agree with this definition, even I do. Financial stability is truly the most important indicator of prosperity and success. However, being financially sound is not the only factor that enables the measurement of prosperity. With the years of experience, I have learned that: *“Prosperity means being rich.”*

Now the question arises as to the difference between being rich and financially stable. Richness doesn't necessarily mean that you have a lot of wealth. Richness is a broader term that involves your finances, your health, your lifestyle, and the people you have in your life. If you don't have lots of money, but you are living a peaceful life with so many loving and caring people around you, you are rich and prosperous. On the contrary, if you are financially strong but you don't have a healthy lifestyle, you can't call yourself prosperous. To me, prosperity is something that allows you to sleep peacefully at night. I am fortunate to be able to lay my head on the pillow and be out within five minutes. My wife hates that about me, but it's always been true.

If we talk about prosperity in a broader sense; there are unlimited factors to discuss. However, in this chapter, I want to share my point of view about prosperity with respect to business and wealth.

PROSPERITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Do you believe a person who works a nine-to-five job can be prosperous?

You might have a different opinion, but to me, the answer to this question is yes; but to others it varies from person to person.

For some people, it may be a yes while for others it is a no.

However, when you work for someone else, the criterion for success and prosperity becomes quite restricted. There are some predefined standards to get a promotion. You have to wait for a certain period of time before you can jump to a new and upgraded position. No matter how hard you work, you get the pay raise and performance bonus as per the company's policy, but you can't grow the way you want to because you have to abide by the rules and regulations.

When you are an entrepreneur, you have the edge to define prosperity in your own way. As I said earlier, prosperity is something that makes your life peaceful. When you run your own business, you have the choice to decide what gives you peace. It can be the money you earn, flexible work time, opportunity to travel, or authority. You don't have to follow the rules because you are the one who makes the rules.

In the following lessons, we will talk about the things to do to start an entrepreneurial lifestyle, which in my mind is really the only way you can control your destiny.

Everything starts with a dream.

If you are determined to start your own venture, you can certainly do so but merely dreaming is not enough. You must take practical steps to turn your dream into reality.

START WITH YOUR GUMPTION!

In the previous chapters, we have thoroughly discussed the importance of having a vision in life. Similarly, when you start your own business, you must know where you want to be, how you are going to get there, and that you are motivated to act on it – this is what I call “gumption.”

Imagine how you would like to see yourself after ten years.

As a billionaire? Famous personality? Or the owner of a chain of retail stores?

The list is never-ending. However, the important thing is you are clear about your why. A definite and obvious vision is the first and foremost thing to launch a successful business.

Consider the example of Steven. K. Scott. He is one of the New York Times best-selling authors. His most popular book is *The Richest Man Who Ever Lived*. He is a multi-millionaire who actually went from rags to riches. He was a mediocre wage earner who switched nine different jobs within the first six years after graduating college. He couldn't keep any job for more than six to eight months. The main reason behind his frequent switches is he was not focused.

One day, one of his friends suggested he read a chapter from the book of Proverbs every day and apply the learnings to his work. Steven did and soon he realized that he did have a vision of what he wanted to do with his life. After nine failed jobs, he started a business with Bob Marsh. The new company had only \$5000 in start-up capital but within nine months, their sales had grown to nearly one million dollars a week.

He says, “In my failed jobs after college, I never had a clear and precise vision of what I wanted to achieve. It’s not surprising that they only lasted less than a year or produced only minimal income. On the other hand, in my tenth job, I had a very clear vision for my first project. I created a detailed road map of my goals and outlined the steps and tasks that I needed to complete to achieve those goals and fulfill that vision. The result? Within six months of starting the work, our sales skyrocketed from a thousand dollars a week to more than a million dollars a week [1].”

Steven and Bob would never have been able to accomplish this without vision, a plan, and the gumption to execute on that plan.

STUDY YOUR POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

Let’s assume that you are clear about your vision. You have a great idea of launching a new business, and you have already set your goals. However, when you offer your product or service to the market, no one is willing to buy it. Why? My question to you would be, did you study your potential customers?

You probably didn't study about your potential customers, or if you did, you didn't listen to them and adapt your offering to benefit their needs. In the start-up world, we call this your Customer Discovery process.

Most people start their businesses based on the assumption that it is a great idea, and everyone will love it. That may work sometimes, however, things don't work that way most of the time. Before starting a business, it is mandatory to know whether people will buy your product. You must be aware of the following:

- What is your unique selling proposition?
- Is a similar product already in the market?
- What value will customers drive from the product?
- If it's a unique product, do people really need it?

Businesses don't achieve success based on assumptions. Successful companies spend a huge amount of money on research and development, but you don't really need to spend that much on Customer Discovery. The purpose is to get insight into your consumers' demands and preferences. You can even conduct a simple survey on LinkedIn or Facebook to get their feedback. In my latest start-up, we hit up the Kaufmann Foundation's 1 Million Cups network. 1MC are meetups in local cities across the country to listen and give feedback to local start-up entrepreneurs. Due to COVID-19, all 1MCs went online and made it even easier to pitch at cities all over. This is one of the ways where the digital world does more good than harm, when you are able to connect to people who willingly take a moment to provide you the information that you need. Just be cautious in sharing your personal information online and using other people's; I specifically talk about this in the bonus

chapter called *Protect Your Privacy While You Createyourself*. I'm sure even after COVID-19 there will be entrepreneurial communities online that will do the same thing. Find them, pitch them, listen, and ask questions.

Heck, even multi-national corporations should trial and listen to their customers.

In 2002, a few months before the 2003 Cricket World Cup in South Africa, PepsiCo launched a new drink called Pepsi Blue. Despite the aggressive advertising and promotions, the product was a huge failure. The main reason, as it turns out, behind the failure was consumers found the neon blue color of the can artificial and unappealing. Moreover, the drink was supposed to taste like berries, but instead, consumers reported that it tasted more like cotton candy with a berry-like aftertaste.

It was something that customers didn't really need and, in the end, didn't want either. PepsiCo shut down production immediately before wasting any more money, time, and reputation. [2]

INNOVATION IS THE KEY

Everything starts with your mind.

One of the best strategies to be successful in the business market is innovation. When you bring a product or service to the market that is unique and has never been introduced before, you get the first-mover advantage.

However, as we discussed above, innovation can only be successful if it caters to a particular customer need. If your potential consumers don't need the product, you can't succeed no matter how advanced the techniques you use. Innovation should go hand in hand with thorough market research and customer discovery.

When Southwest Airlines entered the market, the airline industry was highly competitive and capital intensive. That didn't bother Southwest Airlines which targeted a segment that other airlines had not focused on before. They launched short-haul flights at the lowest possible prices. Instead of serving the free meal and preferred seating, the airline offered its passengers a free packet of peanuts to munch during the short flight and promoted itself as the peanut airline with "peanut fares."

The idea was a huge hit because customers saved a lot of money and endured only very small inconveniences. Within a short period, Southwest Airlines became the world's largest low-cost carrier [3].

MANAGE MONEY LIKE THE WEALTHY

"Financial peace isn't the acquisition of stuff. It's learning to live on less than you make, so you can give money back and have money to invest. You can't win until you do this."

—Dave Ramsey

Dave Ramsey is one of the best-known financial gurus in America. His parents were in the real estate business. After

graduating college, Dave also got into the real estate business. By the age of 26, his real estate portfolio was worth \$4 million. However, his success was short-lived, eventually even filing for bankruptcy. Unlike many others, Dave didn't lose hope after this huge failure because of his faith and connection with God.

His relationship with God and the teachings of the Bible led him to help people manage their own finances by launching his own personal finance counseling company called the Lampo Group. Within a few years, his company grew from only 37 students to more than 350 memberships. Dave also launched a radio program focused on personal finance, called *The Ramsey Show* to help people solve their personal finance problems. Today, he serves millions of people, helps families get their financial lives back in order, and in doing so has personally amassed a net worth of over \$55 million [5].

WHY DO YOU WANT TO EARN A LOT OF MONEY?

The most common answer to this question is we want to improve our lifestyle. While that is a great goal, improving lifestyle is not an overnight task. In my experiences, I have learned that if you spend like you are wealthy, you can never become wealthy in the long run. Many times, we spend all of our hard-earned money to make our lifestyle luxurious, and then all that "stuff" goes away. But this is not the way wealthy people build wealth. They don't just spend money like they are wealthy showing off to their community; they manage their money effectively, investing in returns that will grow them into financial wealth.

Following are a few ways which can help you manage your money:

- When you “feel” like you have enough money, you may get tempted to buy things which you really don’t need. Instant gratification may give you temporary happiness, but it can’t help you to become wealthy in the long run.
- Always understand the difference between your needs and your wants. If you can’t control your wants, you can’t manage your wealth well. For example, if you already have a car to get to the office, there is no need to buy an expensive car to replace it. Instead, you can invest the same amount of money in investments that will grow your money for when you really need it. In the words of Warren Buffett, “If you start buying things that you don’t need, you may soon have to sell the things you need.”
- Make a habit of saving at least 20% of what you earn for the rest of your life. Never compromise on this habit no matter what. Start today!
- Saving is, indeed, a great habit but it can’t help you alone. The value of your money declines with each passing day. If you keep saving but don’t invest, it may help you in accumulating a huge sum of money, but your purchasing power will decrease. Therefore, always invest your savings to make more money from your money. Some of the investment options include investment bonds, mutual funds, index funds, cryptocurrency, and other securities. You can also use your savings to start your own business.

Though there are countless other ways to manage your wealth, the above four methods can be your foundation to create a wealthy life.

DIVERSIFY YOUR SOURCE OF INCOME

You may have heard the phrase, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”

It illustrates that as an entrepreneur, you should never invest all your money in one project. Business is a risk. Sometimes your product or service becomes a huge success; sometimes a total loss is a result. When you invest in diversified projects, you can minimize your risk greatly. Whether it’s your own business or investment in capital funds, diversification always helps you in overcoming losses. If one product or service fails, the other can make up for your lost sales. It increases the chances of long-term sales and profits.

General Electric is historically one of the most renowned and diversified companies in the world. Apart from electronic products such as appliances and lighting, the business is involved in healthcare, credit banking, aviation, oil and gas, and renewable energy. The company’s total revenue is more than \$100 billion [4].

PART VIII

**CREATEYOURSELF
THROUGH COMMUNITY**

“Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.”

–Booker T. Washington

According to you, what is the most important thing in your life?

It is a subjective question, and there is no right or wrong answer to it. You have every right to decide what is important to you. However, after years of experience, I have learned that for each of us, only one thing is important no matter how we achieve it.

Do you know what it is?

It's JOY.

Some people want to earn lots of money; they think it will bring them happiness. Some people fantasize about having a big house; trust me, you end up taking it for granted then despising it because you have to pay to keep it up. Some people want to become famous; that is most always short lived. Some people want to travel and explore the world; now you're talking – nothing can be more humbling than seeing how the rest of the world lives. Behind all these wants and desires is a human's ultimate goal of achieving happiness. We want money because it enables us to buy more things which we believe ultimately drives happiness and satisfaction. A child wants their favorite toy because of how they feel happy

when they play with it. A retired individual loves lounging and traveling because it makes them feel peaceful.

Many times, despite having all the luxuries of life, we feel down and low-spirited.

Why is it so?

The reason is we don't know what our true source of happiness is. As a matter of fact, what we should really be pursuing is joy rather than happiness. We keep chasing material things, but we have no idea that real happiness, or joy, comes with inner peace, not material goods.

You might be thinking of where to get this joy. Well, I have the answer for you.

Search your community and find a person who has little to no money and buy them a meal or food for their family. Observe the feeling of gratefulness and glee on their face. It will automatically fill your heart with peace and joy.

Jennifer and I started our own foundation and started up the non-profit faith based Apparo Academy. We use our money and the funds we raise to serve the needs of medically fragile children who are restricted in their activities due to the fragile nature of their medical condition. This requires they are homebound in normal circumstances which actually stunts their growth both physically and socially. This also dramatically affects family life especially when one parent must stay home to care for the child. By providing a pre-school with all the medical and therapeutic services they need daily, we can now focus on their learning and adapting to an

everyday environment they will encounter later in life. This not only benefits the child and the family, but it serves the community by allowing the parents to work and contribute. It also prepares the child for normal activity once they enter kindergarten reducing the resources the public school system (your tax dollars) would otherwise need to provide... thus serving the community.

Along with our mission-driven church activity, Apparo Academy is how we serve the community that brings us joy.

When you serve your community and help the needy people in your surroundings, you are helping the whole community indirectly.

Also, your giving brings God's blessings back to you with never-ending joy.

Amen

GIVING TO CREATE YOURSELF

"Gratitude is riches; Complaint is poverty."

—Doris Day

Imagine you buy a beautiful gift for one of your best friends. You are exhilarated thinking about their possible expressions. However, when you present the gift to them, they don't exhibit any happiness or gratitude. It seems they are taking your affection and care for granted. How will you feel?

Most of us feel bad in such a situation. The first thought that appears in our minds because of this cold response is “How ungrateful they are.”

Feeling hurt by someone’s ungratefulness is pretty natural. When we buy something for someone out of affection, we expect them to become happy. We want them to praise us for our efforts and manifest gratitude. When things go against our expectations, we feel disheartened.

However, do we ever ponder over how ungrateful we ourselves are?

God has blessed us with countless bounties in life. However, a vast majority of us take all these blessings for granted. Most of the time, we focus on the things that we don’t have rather than being thankful for the ones we have. If we fail an interview or lose a competition, we keep whining for days. We become overwhelmed with self-pitying. As a result, we end up feeling depressed and anxious.

Do you know what the best way to overcome anxiety and gloom is?

Start counting your blessings and become grateful for everything you have. It will automatically steer your life towards positivity, which is an indispensable part of how you create yourself. If you don’t think you’re blessed, then imagine yourself living in Sub-Saharan Africa: Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia, or Madagascar, where every day they live afflicted by economic fragility, conflict, and violence; without the most basic necessities of life.

Now the question arises, what actually is gratitude? There is no standard definition of gratitude. If you look it up in the dictionary or search on the internet, you may find numerous definitions and explanations. However, with years of experience I have learned that...

Gratitude simply means a sense of appreciation and praise.

Gratitude is not a word used much, but its benefits are endless. People who regularly practice gratitude experience positive emotions, have a peaceful sleep, are compassionate and kind, and even have strong immune systems. Gratitude eliminates stress from your life. Gratitude doesn't need to be expressed only for big achievements such as a promotion at work or winning a lottery. You can become thankful for something as simple as a glass of fresh orange juice. Similarly, gratitude is not confined to material possessions and situations only.

You can and should be thankful to the people who are always there by your side, such as your family and friends.

The main purpose of integrating gratitude in our lives is to bring positivity and happiness. If you are eager to experience these feelings, apart from practicing gratitude, you must ponder becoming a giver. In fact, it is one of the best ways to be thankful to God for all the bounties you are blessed with.

Imagine you have no money, and you have to sleep on a hard and rough surface with an empty stomach. How would you feel? This idea is quite painful, isn't it?

If I ever were to encounter such a situation in my life, I would probably not be able to sleep at all. How can someone have a

peaceful sleep on the rough cold ground, especially while also starving? It is certainly an unpleasant thought. However, our society is full of deprived people who don't even have enough resources to buy food for themselves and their families. They have no option other than sleeping on hard surfaces with empty stomachs.

If God has blessed you with the luxuries of life, you are responsible to take care of those who are financially unstable. In the previous chapter, we discussed a lot about the importance of giving back to the community. Helping others financially is one of the best ways to give back. In the Bible, God says...

“So be sure to give to the poor. Don't hesitate to give to them, because the LORD your God will bless you for doing this good thing. He will bless you in all your work and in everything you do. There will always be poor people in the land. That is why I command you to be ready to help your brother or sister. Give to the poor in your land who need help.” – Deuteronomy 15:10

Helping others not only brings prosperity into society, but it also blesses you with an infinite sense of fulfillment and gratification.

YOUR SPENDING SHOULD BE ALIGNED WITH YOUR VALUES

Remember those rights and wrongs your parents and teachers taught you when you were a child? We all learned in our childhood that lying is a bad habit. Similarly, we were also taught that sharing our lunch with a friend is a good practice. The sense of recognizing right and wrong and practicing it in your daily life is called a value.

Love, respect, honesty, integrity, fortitude, and compassion are some of the core values of life. These values spread positivity and kindness in society. When we earn money and become financially stable, it becomes our obligation to spend our money in a way that is consistent with our values. For example, if you use your money for bribing or buying designer drugs, you are going against the core values of life. You steal a deserving person's right when you use your money for bribery. When you spend your finances to buy illicit drugs, you break the laws and contribute to societal degradation.

With wealth always comes the responsibility to spread goodness in your surroundings. Being a giver is beneficial for society and should be the ultimate goal of your life.

John C Maxwell said, *“When values, thoughts, feelings, and actions are in alignment, a person becomes focused, and character is strengthened.”*

INCORPORATE GRATITUDE INTO YOUR LIFE

As I mentioned in the previous article, you don't need to wait for a big occasion to be grateful. You can incorporate it into your life right now. One of the best ways to practice gratitude is by journaling every moment that makes you feel happy. For example, every night before going to bed, think about the little moments of the day that made you feel good. They could be as simple as...

- My mother gave me a hug in the morning when I was leaving for school

- My roommate prepared a delicious dinner for me after a long tiring day
- My spouse gave me a shoulder massage to make me feel relaxed because I was extremely stressed
- My best friend at work and I had a lot of fun today during our lunch break
- One of my assistants served me a cup of hot coffee when I really needed a jolt

Write down these moments in a notebook. Make it a part of your routine. At the end of the week or month, go through your notebook. You will be surprised that your week or month was so full of amazing moments. We often forget these little moments of joy. We relish them as a privilege but never become thankful for them. We think that gratefulness is only associated with getting what we want or a special gift. This is not true. We should be grateful for everything God has blessed us with. Such as

- A house to gain shelter
- Family and friends for community
- Good health
- A peaceful night's sleep
- The ability to buy the things we want beyond what we need

If you think you are one of those people who has spent a huge part of their lives focusing on the things they don't have, you don't need to feel regret. In fact, this is the best time to redesign your thinking and begin practicing gratitude in your life. You can even feel thankful that you bought this book, even better if someone gave it to you as a gift because it helped you realize the importance of gratitude. I am grateful that you're

compelled enough about your life to buy it and enable me then to share more with others. It all goes around in the cycle of life and to benefit from it all we must feel gratitude.

Let's have a look at Camila Mendes's stance on the importance of gratitude. Camila is an American actress renowned for her role as Veronica Lodge in the famous teen drama series, *Riverdale*. Okay, okay, you're asking how the heck do I know about *Riverdale*?! Well, the long story short is the characters are all based on the Archie comics of my era. Anyway, when Camila was struggling with depression and anxiety, one of her co-stars, Madelaine Petsch, gifted her *The Five-Minute Journal*. It is a journal that was launched in 2013 to boost happiness in five minutes by incorporating gratitude into the reader's life. There is even a mobile app now for *The Five-Minute Journal*. When Camila began journaling the things that gave her happiness, she noticed a remarkable change in her life. She posted on her blog...

"Madelaine gave me this gem last week when I was feeling stressed and anxious and all over the place, and I had no idea I would love it this much. Sometimes I focus way too much on the negative, like many of us do, and too easily, I forget to give value to all the amazing things that have happened in my life. There is so much to be grateful for that we should be acknowledging on a daily basis. This career comes with a lot of pressure and stress, but I've dedicated my entire life thus far for achieving this goal, and I will never take my dream-turned-reality for granted. Many more goals to be achieved, but I will never let my ambition interfere with my gratitude. And neither should you! Sincerely soft, soft always, yours softly [1]."

SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY IS IMPORTANT

How would you feel if you are in trouble, but no one came forward to help you out?

You would feel dejected, right?

You may disagree with my opinion. However, a general observation is that when we are in need, we expect people, especially our family and friends, to help us out. Our society is full of those people who are deprived, but few are there to lend a helping hand. As a result, they feel disappointed and left out.

We, as a member of a community, are responsible for taking care of those who are in need and troubled. Communities prosper only when their members own them and take responsibility for caring – NOT leaving that responsibility to the government. One of the purposes of our lives is to serve others and bring happiness to their lives. When God has blessed you with bounties and luxuries of life, you have the responsibility to share your blessings with the people in your community.

Giving back to your community is not only beneficial for society, but it is also instrumental for creating yourself. Let's have a look at that.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE

As I said earlier, the ultimate aim of our lives is to feel joy and peace. When we give back to our community, it poses quite positive impacts on our mental and psychological health.

You'll feel good that you have the capability to help others. When you see the problems and sufferings people are facing, you become positive and grateful for the blessings you have been given. When you know that you are not the only one who has hardships and tribulations, you feel less stressed. It can give you purpose to live your life. Involving yourself in a cause to bring improvement in society is one of the best ways to reduce depression and anxiety.

SOCIAL ADVANTAGES

Helping our community increases a sense of responsibility and awareness inside us. It allows us to strive for making our society a better place. Even the smallest activity can bring a big positive change. It helps us widen our outlook on life. We get the opportunity to meet different people and talk to them. It gives us a chance to find people with common interests. Eventually, it expands our network of people that is beneficial for us in every life.

COGNITIVE ADVANTAGES

As you meet different people and make new friends, your life experience grows. When you involve yourself in addressing the needs of society, your communication and interpersonal skills grow. It helps you to develop problem-solving skills that will help you in critical thinking of all phases of life, be it personal, professional, or social.

Celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio, Bill Gates, Elton John, Beyoncé, and Carrie Underwood are always ahead when it comes to serving the community. Carrie Underwood is a popular American singer, songwriter, and actor. She is a firm believer in giving back to the community. She is well-known for her valuable charitable work. In 2009, Carrie created the C.A.T.S.

Foundation to serve her hometown Checotah, Oklahoma and the surrounding areas. This organization aims to improve the local school systems. It works on projects such as updating computer labs to helping students become equipped with technological education. It also works for the improvement of music and health education. Moreover, the organization runs an animal shelter with the aim to create awareness about the importance of spaying and neutering, pet adoption, and general pet welfare [1].

Carrie also supports The Humane Society, PETA, and the United Service Organization. She says, “Everybody has the power to do something, to be a contributing force. I would rather people look back on my life and say, ‘She made the world a better place.’ We can all do things like that, and I believe that when opportunities arise for you to do good, you should do good [2].”

BE OF SERVICE TO OTHERS

and success will find you!

Earlier in this book, we had a detailed discussion about success. As you know now, success is not always defined by money and wealth. Success is greatly linked with your feelings. It is a subjective term, and its definition varies from person to person. For example, getting good grades on an exam may be a big achievement for you, but at the same time, it may be quite unimportant for another person. You can never set any fixed parameters for success. However, when you dedicate

yourself to the service of others, success automatically finds you.

How?

In the previous chapter, we discussed Nelson Mandela. He devoted his entire life to the betterment of society. He had no desire to be famous or successful. He just wanted to break a stereotype and eliminate injustice from African society. Nevertheless, today he is known as one of the most successful leaders of history. His dedication and enthusiasm towards a noble cause made him successful.

In the above paragraphs, I mentioned the advantages of serving your community. If you go through that segment of this chapter one more time, you will get to know that all these advantages actually reflect your success. Let's elaborate on that thought for a moment.

Leading a depression-free life is no less than a blessing. When your mind is free from stress and anxieties, you can become more focused on achieving your goals. Your short-term goals will eventually lead you towards your vision, which is your success.

- When your network grows, it becomes easier for you to find work or business opportunities. Hence, your path to success becomes wider.
- When you learn from the experiences of others and begin thinking strategically, you become efficient and can contribute more to the prosperity of your organization. It is indeed your success.

- By working with other people in your community, you get a chance to discover your hidden potentials. Things that once seemed to be impossible can now become your expertise.

Above all, when you selflessly help people in your surroundings, your heart is filled with divine joy – a feeling hard to put into words. Through joy, you will start to experience peaceful and restful sleep. Joy and peace are the most important ingredients for success. No amount of money can give you the pleasure that the smile of a deprived person can.

Start playing your part by finding some way to give of yourself, not just your money, but your time and thoughtfulness.

WAYS TO HELP YOUR COMMUNITY

One of my all-time favorite Chinese proverbs is: *“If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody.”*

We have talked a lot about the importance of giving back to your community and the benefits associated with it. However, you might wonder what some of the ways are that you can be helpful to your community. Well, the list is never-ending. Nevertheless, the following are some of the ways that can help you be more productive for your society.

VOLUNTEER

One of the best ways to support your community is to volunteer your skills and abilities to a local organization. You can become associated with a hospital, school, church, animal shelter, seniors home, foster care, or any other organization that you think needs your help. This world is full of people who are waiting for your attention.

DONATE BLOOD

Another best way to give back to your community is by donating blood. This is a cause to save lives and humanity. Every day, local healthcare organizations and blood banks need blood for heart surgeries, leukemia treatments, emergency care for a car accident, and so forth. A pint of blood from you can contribute to saving the life of one or more people. (P.S. – donating a pint of blood every two months actually helps you purge toxins from your body and benefits your health span longevity as you generate a new pint.)

BECOME A MENTOR

Look around your surroundings, and you will find a lot of people who need someone to guide them. You can utilize your knowledge and experience to mentor someone for their education, career, or work. This little contribution can do wonders.

ARRANGE A CLEANUP

Every society needs regular cleanup for its streets, public parks, and beaches. Being a member of a community, we are responsible for keeping our area clean. Not only is it necessary for the beautification of your society, but it is also vital to maintain your health and hygiene. All you need to do

is gather some friends and buy some garbage bags, rubber gloves, brooms, and other necessary cleaning accessories. This initiative will inspire others as well to join you in this noble cause.

BECOME A FOSTER AND/OR ADOPTIVE PARENT

As you have learned through this writing, my wife and I have adopted five children out of the foster system. There are hundreds of children in your immediate area who need someone to take care of them. These neglected children crave the love of parents whether you foster them for a period of time or adopt them into your life... well for life! You can change the life of a child by giving them a home and family. I will not lie, it is a difficult task, but it is not impossible. You can contact your local child services agency that oversees the foster care system to know about the entire process.

BECOME A GOOD LISTENER

It may sound a little weird to you, but it is not. Many people undergo depression and anxiety because they have no one to listen to them – just listen. They keep suppressing their emotions and desire to open up. Many times, people don't discuss their issues because they have a fear of being judged. Raise your hand towards those people and become a good listener. It won't cost you anything, and it can be really valuable for those who need a good friend.

When you give back to your community, don't see it as you are doing people a favor. Instead, understand that it is your responsibility. God has blessed you with skills, wealth, and luxuries so that you can play your role in bringing a positive change in society.

“Community service has taught me all kinds of skills and increased my confidence. You go out there and think on your feet, work with others and create something from nothing. That’s what life’s all about.”

–Andrew Shue

PART IX

**WRAP UP TO
CREATEYOURSELF**

“Self-analysis requires reconsideration of who we think we are. Self-awareness requires us to reassess where we came from and where we are going.”

–Kilroy J. Oldster

How to Createyourself is not just a book. It’s a complete guide about discovering your NEW or I should say your ACTUAL self. This book aims to propel you to have a look at yourself. It will serve as a means of catharsis for you.

Now, when you have read all the chapters of this book, I want you to take out some time for yourself and think about what you want to do in your life. You must be honest and sincere with yourself while answering this question. Take as much time as you want, it’s your life. Once you are clear about what you want to do, the next step is to identify why you want to do that particular thing. Discovering your why is the crucial part of *Createyourself*. Why is your vision. If you don’t find an answer to this why, it depicts that you are actually unaware of your purpose in life, and as we have learned, without definiteness in purpose, we will be nothing.

The purpose of writing this book is to help you declutter your mind. After detoxifying your mind, you need to think about what you actually love to do. The best way to discover what you want to do in your life is to think about all those productive activities you enjoy doing. The real purpose of your life is hidden inside the things you love doing.

Once you have identified your what and why, you can revert to section 2 of this book. Section 2 is all about bringing those changes into your life that can steer you to a new and positive life. If you want to create yourself, it is mandatory that you go through section 2. The first time you read it was to gain a general perspective. However, now you will read each sentence of this section with respect to your vision.

WILL HELPS YOU SEIZE AN OPPORTUNITY

You must have heard the famous proverb: *“Where there is a will, there is a way.”*

Make this proverb your mantra. Many times, we feel that things are impossible. However, if you can think about something, you can certainly find ways to do it also. Many great inventions were only a dream before they turned into a reality. A half-century ago, no one had ever imagined that there could be something called video calling, now everyone is doing it to connect with work colleagues and family.

When you are determined to do something, the universe finds ways for you to do it. Recall the law of attraction. If your mind ever traps you by making you think that “You can’t do it,” you should immediately get into a counterargument with your mind. Make it believe that you can do it.

Before starting your Createyourself journey, you must adopt the following:

- Stop whining about your past and worrying about your future
- Set short-term goals to realize your why
- Surround yourself with people who lift you up
- Learn to say no without explaining yourself
- Invest some serious time in self-love and soul searching
- Make some “me time” daily
- Revise the way you look at the world around you
- Erase jealousy and all negative feelings from your mind and heart
- Believe in yourself. You have the ability to change your life.

Take these points, adapt them to your way of thinking, print them, and stick them where you will see them daily. Eventually, you won't even have to read these points daily to motivate yourself, just seeing them flashed before your eyes as you glance around will trigger them out of your subconscious and into your active conscious thinking.

How to Createyourself is extremely beneficial for our current and future generations. We live in a technological era. We are generating terabits of data every day where social media platforms are full of fantasizing posts and images that capture our attention. The data is just that, meaningless information. People are easily overwhelmed by these posts and begin comparing their lives with others that are truly all fake.

This book can be one of the best gifts for others in your life, your children, their teachers, and your friends who have not lived up to the potential you know they have in their true selves.

A credo of this book is:

“Your Next Life is Opportunity Pursued.”

The first stage requires you to think about what you want to do in life.

Once you’ve identified that WHAT, dig deeper to understand why. Why do you aspire to do this particular thing?

THEN LISTEN, READ, RETAIN, AND HOLD

In today’s world of podcasts and audiobooks, there is no excuse for you to not listen to areas of interest and absorb the experiences and ideas of others through audio. I listen to at least two hours a day. Instead of music while I am working out in the morning, I listen to the Wall Street Journal podcast and then flip over the current book I am listening to if I am still exercising. The other hour is during breaks from work or while driving in my car. Yes, my kids are getting educated too! They even ask questions about what I am listening to, giving me the chance to live up to another credo of mine...

“As I Teach, I Learn.”

Those that you find interesting enough to dive deeper into, you can buy as a digital book enabling you to read anytime, anywhere. Those you find truly compelling and life-enhancing, you should buy as a physical version to hold in your hands while you read and place in your library, so you know exactly where it is when you want it again. You learned about this in our lesson on “Yourself on Your Shelf.” That knowledge will be on your shelf for you to get a glance of while thinking and the

opportunity to trigger its lesson to help solve a problem you are currently working on.

As I mentioned, ramp up quickly on all topics through the *50 Classics Series* by Tom Butler-Bowdon, in particular, his series on *Success, Self-help, Spirituality, and Prosperity*. In each of these books, Tom does a great job in pulling the essence out of the best 50 books written in each genre. By reading just these four books, you will have been exposed to the best of 200 books with more ideas on how to create yourself. Just as I have done, you will then be able to buy the original volume of the books you wish to listen to, read, retain, and hold.

Read biographies of great historical figures and I recommend two of my favorite authors in this arena: David McCullough and Walter Isaacson.

Continue your journey actively by participating in Gary Ryan Blair's *100 Day Challenge*. The 100 day challenge is a rapid goal achievement system that helps you to "Win. Bigger. Faster." Through a daily series of five to seven-minute videos narrated by Gary himself, you get everything you need to drive greater results in just 100 days than most people do in 10 years or even their whole lifetime. Send me a message on LinkedIn and I'll see if I can get you a discount on the program.

If at any time while on this journey you realize you have any bad habits or life-threatening addictions, get help to get them under control. The only way to create yourself is to control your life. Being addicted to alcohol, drugs, pornography, video games, and/or gambling is detrimental to attaining your goals and pursuing a life of prosperity. Addictions kill time as they always become your priority over when you should be doing

an activity that improves your life – like spending time with your family, or waking up at 5 a.m. to write, or coming home from your job to work on your hobby or side-hustle that could replace your job's income and allow you to generate a living off what you love to do.

Love your family and closest friends. Tell them you love them! Especially to those with whom you do not get to spend the time you would like. Your family and friends are the only people who are going to love you for who you are when you are in the doldrums or when you attain prosperity. They are the only ones who will put you before them just as you put their lives before yours. Family is everything and truly the only thing you need to be prosperous in this world.

Keep working on your life. When you stop exercising and working on your health, your body starts to atrophy, meaning it begins to deteriorate into unhealthiness. The same thing happens with your life in general. If you don't continuously work to improve your life, you will begin to fall back into that which you have already grown out of. To create yourself is to always advance towards your pursuits, to stretch your goals, to learn new things about this world, this universe, and this beautiful life that God has given you. Overcome all self-limiting thinking. That is you holding yourself back, not God and not the world. Whatever your mind is telling yourself is "your truth." Only through changing your mind can you create something new. To truly create yourself, you must keep the pursuit alive in your mind.

Finally, the number one greatest personal development book in the history of man is the Bible. It is the most widely published book, the most translated, and distributed throughout the

world. Not only does 33% of the world's population use the Bible to create themselves as Christians, but both the Jewish and Islamic faiths reference books of the Bible in their religions and discussions about faith. Get a copy for yourself and read it. As you grow in faith, you will grow in purpose and strength with the will to create yourself.

When you give of yourself to God, you will feel the Holy Spirit in you helping you to create yourself into all that you wish to be.

JONES FAMILY PRINCIPLES

As we wrap up my thoughts on *How to Create Yourself*, I'd like to share our thinking when Jennifer and I were first married and starting the adoption process for our first child, Amber. We started defining not just house rules we would like to instill in our children to make living together a pleasant environment, but further thinking of ways we could raise up our children to live the attributes and develop the character traits that we know are held true by our belief in man and our faith in God.

Below are the Jones Family Principles we developed and have hanging on the wall in our kitchen. If you take away nothing else from this book, you should at least think about these principles and how you may apply them in your *How to Create Yourself* journey.

“Honor your father and mother, [brother and sister], so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”

–Exodus 20:12

WHAT THE JONES FAMILY BELIEVES

We, the Jones family, believe that God loves us and has demonstrated His love to us in many ways, including His example through the life of Jesus Christ that guides our attitudes and behaviors.

Therefore, seeking to please God and to hold up our family as witnesses, we enter into and agree to pursue the following principles in our relationships with one another – as well as with those outside of our family.

- We believe in the importance of respecting, honoring, and affirming one another.
- We believe in the importance of expressing warmth and affection towards one another.
- We resolve to believe the best about one another.
- We strive to maintain an atmosphere of trust. When trust is broken, we will provide the opportunity for trust to be regained.
- We believe in the importance of truth and integrity.
- We shall pursue maturity in our spiritual lives, evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- We resolve to provide support and encouragement to one another in both good times and in bad times.
- We value spending time together.

- We believe that everyone in our family must make contributions and at times, even personal sacrifices to benefit the family, keeping us all healthy and strong.
- We resolve to display a spirit of generosity towards one another.
- We resolve to maintain our family values and follow our moral code.
- We will follow and act upon the Jones Family Rules below.

HOUSE RULES

If it's empty, fill it!

If it's open, close it!

If it's out, put it away!

If it's messy, clean it up!

If it's broken, fix it!

If after you have tried and you can't do any of the above yourself, then report it to your elders!

HOW LIBRARY CONTRIBUTES

In the age when the wealth of all human knowledge and culture can be accessed through a tile-sized tablet, most people would assume that we no longer have any need for a library in the home. But as I pointed out earlier in our

discussion of *Yourself on Your Shelf*, the printed book holds its appeal as an artifact, a memento, or an artistic creation, and those who own these objects will want them displayed safely and attractively as we do in our home in both my office and our children's education room. I find it amazing that just their physical presence inspires our children to read more on their own. Of course, our kids seeing their parents read is also inspiring to them! We also have one whole wall covered with a mural sized National Geographic World Map so they may visualize the places they are reading about – at least on this world!

Being digital does not at all indicate a decline in literacy. In fact, the members of Generation XY&Z are avid purchasers of books. Just as we should not “judge a book by its cover,” we should also not assume that a New York Times Best Seller will even be printed on paper.

Remember, as you preview the collections of books in your friends' homes, you'll understand how they tend to reveal something about the personality of the family, or at least the particular collector. In fact, you may want to look at your own collection and see if it is conveying a message that meets your approval and philosophy of life. For me, I purposely read (and listen to) books that I know are opposing viewpoints from mine as this is the only way I can confirm my convictions while also loading up the ammunition when an opposing view is in a debate with me. (I do this with radio as well, flipping back and forth between Rush Limbaugh and *NPR*.)

When compiling the bibliography of my personal library a few years ago (thanks to the help from my daughter, Amber), I thought to follow the organizational scheme of Thomas

Jefferson's library where his 6,487 volumes eventually became the foundation of the Library of Congress in 1815. He divided his collection into categories of memory, reason, and imagination, placing at Jefferson's fingertips the span of his multifaceted interests. My personal library is by no means as extensive, and I have broadened the categories to genre and added two more sub-categories to define each book.

Here is a link to the most up-to-date version, but since first accounting for my acquired books, I have at least another 340 titles I need to amend to update this list.

Title, Author, Date, Genre,

Inventory of my library.pdf

PART X

**BONUS CHAPTER:
PROTECT YOUR
PRIVACY WHILE YOU
CREATE YOURSELF**

As mentioned earlier, here is a bonus chapter with a special discussion on how to protect yourself, your privacy, and your identity while you create yourself!

“Digital identity is bigger than the identification of an individual. It’s about the data we create in the digital world that is associated with our identity.”

—Don Tapscott

Executive Chairman, Blockchain Research Institute

WHAT IS OUR IDENTITY?

Your identity is much more than your name and a picture on your driver’s license. It is everything we do in our daily life, both in the physical world and online.

COVID-19 has accelerated everyone around the world to be more digital. The problem is, we have given more control over our identity and privacy to the world’s GAAFTM surveillance kings like Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Twitter, and Microsoft, and of course, our governments.

Meanwhile, our identity data records are locked in banks, big corporations, hospitals, governments, and other third parties where we must ask permission of them to use our own Personal Identity Information (PII) and Person Health Information (PHI).

We rely on these third-party centralized organizations to prove “who we are” and “what we own” – but we do not control them, they control us.

Let’s just take the current state of the worldwide COVID-19 crisis and how it affects the security of our identity and is leading to more surveillance of our private lives.

COVID-19 GAVE YOUR PRIVACY AWAY

COVID-19 opens the door for the surveillance state.

Have you been on a plane yet since the pandemic started? Are you living in a city or nation that is requiring you to prove the status of your health with COVID-19? Back in the fall of 2020, I took Jennifer to the mountains of Vermont for her birthday and some time away from the boys.

It was amazing to us when the restaurants asked us where we were from and how long had we been in Vermont. Unbeknownst to us, the state of Vermont was actually “closed” to South Carolinians. Thank God we flew into Boston, rented a car with New England plates, and drove through New Hampshire to get to Vermont. Luckily, all the hotels were so desperate for business they didn’t report us, but the first restaurant we tried to book a reservation at did ask and denied our seating. From then on, we spoke little to staff and told no one from where we hailed. We spent most of our time hiking in the woods anyway and it was beautiful seeing the leaves change in the fall.

Now, it’s even worse and not just because we are from the freedom loving state of South Carolina, but for everyone!

For example, if you live in New York City, your mayor Bill de Blasio has instructed city authorities to require vaccination proof for indoor dining and fitness gyms. In California, officials are creating a “supposed” opt-in version of the COVID-19 tracker app already used in Europe. President Biden recently announced sweeping new vaccination requirements for federal workers to sign affidavits attesting they’ve been vaccinated or else they must follow new rules on mandatory daily masking, weekly testing, and social distancing. The military is now requiring the vaccine to be a part of every soldier’s vaccination record.

Please, don’t misunderstand me. I’m NOT saying vaccines don’t work or that people shouldn’t get vaccinated but as a believer in the Constitution of the United States and wary of Tuskegee style government experimentation, I say everyone should have the freedom to choose to get the vaccine or not. As a Doctor of Health Administration and a Certified Infection Track and Trace Specialist for the South Carolina State Guard, we can talk for days about the pros and cons of the existing COVID-19 vaccines and the way the state is managing the epidemic.

That, however, is not the point of this special chapter.

It’s worse than you think.

WHEN YOU LOST THE RIGHT TO BE UNKNOWN

The problem with all these mandates to get the vaccine is the digital tracking that is involved in proving to your government, employer, gym, or restaurant IS what I want to warn you about.

For years, we've been mindlessly walking into the world of the digital surveillance state – one in which the GAAFTM and/or the government tracks, monitors, and records everything we do 24/7 because they want to know where you've been and who you may have been exposed to over a period of time. With this pandemic, my worst fears of the future regarding our privacy have become pronounced to the point of active concern. Even if you're pro-vaccines, the current vaccine passports being used should worry all of us. We'll look at why they're just the start of a much more invasive system of tracking and surveillance in our daily lives.

Imagine you have an important flight to catch for business in another city, but when you arrive at the airport to check your bags the young man at the baggage counter says you can't board your flight or any other flight for that matter because your "social credit" score is depleted. You argue that you must catch this flight, but he is adamant saying, "government orders; you're on the 'no fly list' for the next twelve months."

You may believe this is nuts, but this is exactly how the social credit system works for the Chinese Communist Party government to control all its citizens. The Chinese feds award points for being a good citizen and they dock points for being "anti-social." You didn't participate in the community parade last month, the street cameras caught you jaywalking, you missed paying your loan to the bank, or you even got docked for reading the wrong book you bought from Alibaba (China's Amazon).

This system requires you to show a type of barcode called a QR code when you want to board a plane, train, or rent an automobile. If it shows a low enough score, you're not allowed

to board, ride, or drive. You might only be allowed to travel by bus. Too low a score and you'll also be blocked from staying in certain hotels or even getting a job working for the Chinese government or state-run businesses (which is most of the larger companies nowadays).

You say, that won't happen here in the U.S., but I say what China and even other western nations are doing today could very well be starting tomorrow in your nation wherever you are living. This is where the pandemic comes into play as the catalyst for our federal and state governments to roll out these Chinese-style digital tracking systems. The pandemic is the perfect use case for the U.S. to test these invasive surveillance measures. People fear getting sick, they fear for their family and even their communities. So, while you're willing to put up with governments suspending civil liberties, restricting activities, and dictating requirements, the next step is the rollout of a "digital health passport," a required app on your smartphone that captures all your basic information.

The pandemic is accelerating a trend that has been in motion since mid-90s when everyone started to adopt digital technologies into their daily lives. Remember the launch of the World Wide Web where everyone believed it would be a huge boost to the economy and stock prices shot through the roof? But it turned out to be a bigger boon to companies like Google and Facebook, and the government allowing them to track you using Big Data and monitoring everything we do all the time. There are plenty of examples.

Imagine being carded at a restaurant when they need to know if you are "of age" to buy an adult beverage. When giving the waiter or bartender your physical state ID, you are releasing

your personal information when you really don't need to nor should you. You are allowing that person to learn your name, your home address, and your actual birthdate when all they need to know is that you are over 21 or of age to have an adult beverage.

The same thing happens when you are applying to multiple colleges or several prospective employers who are checking your personal background information to determine if they want to accept your application.

Today, this information is provided via a bunch of paper documents, plastic cards, or online forms gathered from one centralized institution to another releasing more of your personal information than you need to reveal and building multiple databases of millions of profiles called a “honey pot” of information that all criminal hackers want to get a hold of for nefarious reasons.

In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article regarding the difficulty the food and beverage industry is having finding employees, they wrote about how restaurants are digging deep into their HR system, reaching back years, to see who had applied for jobs in the past. They spam them with emails asking if they would still like a job – even five years later. This is exactly the problem we have today with what is called retention of data and the lack of your right to be “unknown.”

In 2013, National Security Agency (NSA) contractor Edward Snowden released documents showing how the agency was monitoring Americans' communications in a massive digital dragnet. Heck, they were even caught tracking the German Chancellor through her own government secured

mobile phone. There was Facebook's scandal with Cambridge Analytica affecting the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and if you watched the Netflix documentary titled, "Social Dilemma," you learned from former developers with Google, Twitter, and Facebook how the companies give away their applications and services for free so that you will agree to allow them to track everything you do.

Most people take the loss of privacy as a reasonable price to pay for such convenience, but what they don't understand is that by enabling these companies to capture their data, they use it to make huge revenues and grand corporate valuations by selling the data to advertisers and market research companies. It's not even limited to the free products. Millions of people use the latest in surveillance devices such as Amazon Echo, Google Nest, and Amazon's Ring facial recognition doorbells.

Have you been sitting around just chatting with your friends about everything under the Sun and a couple of days later some ad pops up in your Facebook feed directly relevant to your discussion? You think about it, and you know you didn't search or post about your conversation then. This type of stuff is just happening.

In her book, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, Shoshana Zuboff talks about this as a new form of economic oppression that has crept into our lives. The concept of surveillance capitalism is how advertising companies, first led by Google's AdWords, realized the opportunity and financial rewards of using personal data to target you more precisely. Zuboff explains how surveillance capitalism exploits and controls human nature to capture your attention and motivate you to act with

as little thought about the purchase or action as possible. In other words, they know you so well they can turn your wants into needs so you will buy immediately.

So, why should you care?

As both the Netflix documentary and Zuboff have illustrated, if you use these free apps and services, then guess what? **“You Are The Product.”** You should not like the idea of living in any version of totalitarian China and if you’re reading this in Europe, you are already required to validate your COVID-19 status if you want to eat in a restaurant... drink at a bar... stay at a hotel... or get on a train or plane. The same restrictive regime measures are not far off in America. This may be good for fighting the pandemic, but more importantly to freedom and privacy loving people, it also sets a dangerous precedent and provides a slippery slope to more invasion of privacy.

PRIVACY PROTECTION WITHIN YOUR CONTROL

What if we could put control of your identity and the protection of your privacy in your hands?

The good news is, I will present a solution an international community of developers has been working on that we can all get behind to protect our identity and preserve our privacy while also sharing data that may help public health.

Since the middle of 2020, I have been working on three projects that are focused on moving the internet towards the adoption of what we in the identity verification and privacy

industry call “Self-Sovereign Identity” or SSI. The broadest of these projects is the Trust Over Internet Protocol or ToIP and it’s being developed within the Linux Foundation, the non-profit organization that brought the world the first open-source operating system for computers to counter the proprietary systems of Apple and Microsoft. ToIP is developing the protocol standards for the whole of the internet to resolve the issue of protecting your identity while you are surfing the web, playing an online game, or streaming a YouTube video.

Because the Linux Foundation does not control the internet, no one really does, it will be our decision as individuals and organizations that use the internet every day to adopt these ToIP standards. If we do, this will bring to us all the options to prove we are real humans, who we are as a person, while hiding our identities as we surf and buy from the digital world.

The second project combines the two issues we’ve been talking about, your personal identity, privacy, and proving your status of COVID-19. We have been taking the governance of the ToIP protocol and applying them to the creation of what is called the Good Health Pass.

The Good Health Pass is a collaboration of many international organizations that wish to enable individuals to comply with required COVID-19 status demands in a format that is acceptable to the requestor (government or business) while also protecting the identity and privacy of the holder (you) of the credential. We have published these open standards free to anyone to adopt.

This leads to the third project I have been working on and that is developing a digital wallet that you can use to protect your

identity and hold not only the Good Health Pass credentials but any type of credential that is verified and built using the same standards including your state ID or passport.

The company we have incorporated to bring this wallet to you is called Validide. Validide is leveraging blockchain technology, cryptography, and artificial intelligence to empower people across the globe to take back control of their own personal information using what are called verifiable credentials from issuing authorities. This way you can control your identity and personal credentials with immutable (meaning unchangeable) proofs so others can trust the information you are providing them without some “trustworthy third party.”

Validide is a cybersecurity and data privacy company focused on helping individual people move their identity from the paper ID world to today’s advanced digital world, both safely and securely. Paper IDs like your state driver’s license and your international passport are still the most convenient to use in most cases, but they are not secure, and they don’t allow you to determine how much of your personal data, like your full name, home address or birthdate, you would like to keep private.

The McKinsey Global Institute illustrates the need for Validide and ToIP, where half of the world’s population who are online have no secure digital identity, and one billion people lack a legal ID of any kind. The other 3.4 billion have their personal information spread all over the world in banks, government databases, Walmart systems, the GAAFTM, and now the hacker world’s dark web. Even in my home state of South Carolina USA, nearly a quarter of our population is under or unbanked because they cannot prove their identity to the level of which

the banks must approve them through their required “Know Your Customer” identity verification processes.

With companies, countries, and employers around the world beginning to require COVID-19 status, we started working through the various Linux Foundations and other decentralized identity communities to adopt the standards of SSI where we cryptographically protect your personal information in a decentralized private storage system on your phone that you can (ultimately) use anywhere.

If this ideal to de-identity yourself interests you, especially in your journey to createyourself, please reach out to us at [Createyourself.com](https://createyourself.com)

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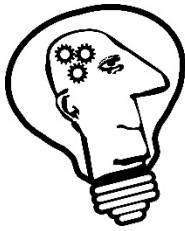
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