

Step One

SELECTING THE MATERIAL

“Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away”

– *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

- Is there something that you are struggling to change?
- Are you thinking about a career change perhaps, or a relationship or lifestyle change and you're unsure where to start?
- Could you benefit from a little direction and the kick-start you need?

If you want to change and have decided that enough is enough, then start with **massive action** today.

A definition of massive action:

Taking, not thinking about, but *taking* a focused step towards achieving your ultimate goal . . . and following it with another . . .

Massive action = focused action, taken one step at a time.

One thing I decided early on is that we can either change or not: we can continually face obstacles and do nothing about them or we can learn ways to avoid them. Although I am unsure exactly when or where this decision was made, I know that making it has been one of the most influential conscious

thinking patterns in my life, and possibly the reason for my success thus far.

How many times have you heard the phrases, “I can’t change,” or “I don’t know where to start,” or “It’s too hard”? These are incantations we hear every day, all around us, and it begs the question; why do we resist change? Why is it that we resist change and put up with daily difficulties, struggles, and unrest instead: why is it that we put up with these things rather than making changes to create a happier, healthier life? The answer is quite simple; change is misconceived to be difficult. Change is *not* difficult. All it takes is an understanding of *why* you are resisting change and, armed with that understanding, you will be able to change your thinking within a split second, without any conscious thought; and changing your thinking is all it takes to change your world.

So why do we consider change to be so hard? My tried-and-tested theory is that it’s not change that is hard but the ability to accept that what was done in the past was not the most beneficial way of doing it. Our biggest psychological challenge is not to change but to accept that the way we have responded to change in the past may not have been the most productive response. Change is a bespoke action. For example, just as we all have different strategies, methods, and approaches to making a cake in order to get the end result we want, the changes *you* need to make are specific to you, your circumstances, and the end result you want. Continuing to do the same things in the same way will bring you the same end results . . . if you want your cake to come out differently, you need to try a different method and approach

when making it. Once we have accepted that whether or not to change is a choice, change can become a fluid, conscious choice, not something that happens as a result of pressure, resistance, or the feeling that things have gone on beyond what they should.

“You’ve got a lot of choices.

If getting out of bed in the morning is a chore and you’re not smiling on a regular basis

. . . try another choice”

Steven D. Woodhull

One thing to accept now is that your subconscious mind has the ability to radically change your thinking patterns through the slightest changes in your everyday language. These slight changes can have consequences that show the power of the human mind and its abilities to adapt to your thoughts. For example, look at the two statements below:

- “I’m going to cut my coffee consumption and drink more water.”
- “I’m going to try to cut my coffee consumption and drink more water.”

Which statement is most likely to bring the desired outcome? The inclusion of the word “try” in the second statement, although only a slight change, is enough to dilute the power of the statement enormously: either you are going to do it or you are not, *try* is neither one!

“Do or do not” Yoda

When you use the word “try,” there’s already an expectation of failure in your thoughts. This creates an internal failure state which, when allowed to become the norm, will push your mind to achieve just that – failure.

Avoid making the assumption that life will not give you what you want or deserve because, in most cases, what you aim to get is exactly what you’ll get.

Making a change can be easy once you know exactly what it is you really want to change, but failure to change can be very much like an internal prison; the real person locked inside, unable to exit, stuck within the boundaries of the body and unable to see the light emanating from the world of opportunities it holds. So how do we change this situation; how do we break out of the prison? The answer lies in changing your view of yourself and the world around you. Just as a prisoner will put pictures of the outside world on their cell wall to remind them of the positive things in their life, your mind will paint and put up pictures of your *perceived* failings on its inner walls to remind you of everything you see as negative in your life, thereby keeping you trapped in that world – unless you change what you see.

The importance of identity

Answering the question “Who are you?” gives you the material you need to begin laying your rock solid foundations. To give yourself the best possible start, your answer must describe the person you are on the inside, not the physical person others can see on the outside. Knowing who you *really* are, not who

you think you *should* be, or who someone else thinks you should be, provides you with the all-important cornerstone on which to build a temple that will last; a lasting legacy.

When we look at some of the most successful people in modern culture, we often gauge their success by their wealth and material possessions. However, if we explore the inner mind of those with a truly remarkable legacy, we discover that their material wealth is merely a by-product of a much deeper, more admirable, attitude and approach to life. My wife and I have often discussed what we would like to leave behind as our lasting legacy, and for us this would not be physical belongings but memories. In our world, the true meaning of success is not found in accumulated material possessions but in the story of our life.



Task

Take a moment now to create your own **legacy statement**. What, for you, represents the true meaning of success and how do you want to be remembered after you're gone?

My legacy Statement

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.....
.....
.....
.....

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Keep in mind that your legacy may change, and that's fine. Each new stage in your life may change your view of the world around you, but the words you write above must be an accurate reflection of your thoughts and intentions today, now, in this present moment of time.



Think . . .

Think back to the person you were when you were at school
. . .

- How did you view the world then?
- How has your view of the world changed since then?

The way you view yourself and the world around you today is based on your past learning. Just as you have learned to read the words on this page, your mind has learned how to read a version of your internal beliefs . . . but have your beliefs about the world changed?

“Things do not change; we change”

Henry David Thoreau

As we go through life, our learning processes progress with age and we begin to view things differently. The way you see things is based on the importance of those things to you in your life and the path you have taken. That path is determined by the pictures you have put up on the inner walls of

your mind, and those pictures produce the behaviours we see as personality traits. The thoughts you hold in your mind are reflected in your reality, meaning that the person you are on the outside is a direct reflection of the person you are on the inside. Changing the images in your inner world has the power to generate instant changes in your outer world.

"A man who views the world the same at 50 as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life"

Muhammad Ali



Task

The next time you are out with friends or meeting someone for the first time, spend a few moments observing not only what they are saying but *how* they are saying it. Around 55 per cent of everyday communication is non-verbal and our body language can speak volumes without saying a word. Pay attention to their behaviours as well as their words and consider how those behaviours may have evolved as a result of their past experiences. Listen also to their words and notice those they say with passion and excitement and those they say with a tone of negativity.

This way of processing a person is something we do every day without conscious thought. It is also the way you communicate with yourself, and it's what makes you strive to change or stay the same. The way you observe others is the way others observe you . . . you can change the way others see you by changing the way you see yourself.

“To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly”

Henri Bergson

Your world, your reality . . . but is it?

The way you view yourself and the world around you today is based on your past learning – this is true, but is *your* view of yourself and your world a *true* view? We all take in information through our senses – sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and sensations – but we don’t all take in information from a shared environment or event in the same way. This means that *your* view or experience of an event is not necessarily the same as someone else’s view or experience, even when in the same location at the same time. A good example might be the way two people describe a road accident they both witnessed. One person might describe the sounds they heard – the screeching of brakes etc. – while the other might describe the sights they saw – the colours of the cars etc. – and neither one has noticed what the other did, meaning they’re unable to verify each other’s version of events even though they both witnessed the same accident! We take in information differently so we *experience* things differently. Another example might be the shared experience of a new theme park ride . . . one person might describe the experience as the most exhilarating and fun thing they’ve ever done, while another might describe it as the most terrifying never-to-be-repeated experience they’ve ever suffered!

We all take in information from the environment and situation we’re in, but we all process it differently. The way we

process it is going to be influenced by our past experiences; our past *learning*, and this is how we each decide how we're going to think about the experience or how we're going to act in response to the experience. The information we take in is effectively filtered through our existing memories and measured against our established beliefs, values, and attitude to life. We create a picture of the experience in our mind's eye and choose words to internally describe the way we "sensed" it to form an internal representation of the situation or happening in our own mind. In the above theme park example, the person who enjoyed the ride created a positive internal representation based on what they sensed, whereas the person who didn't enjoy the ride created a negative internal representation based on what they sensed. In other words, a positive internal picture of an experience generates positive feel-good emotions, but a negative internal picture generates negative "feel-bad" emotions, and this continues to be the case each time you recall the experience.

Our senses are believed to take in around 2 million bits of information per second, but we can only consciously process around 134 bits of information per second. This means that the huge amount of information we take in every second is being subconsciously filtered to help us sort the information we need to consciously pay attention to at any given moment. The filtering process can be explained through the **NLP Communication Model**:

Deletion – without the ability to delete the information that's of least importance in any given situation, you'd "blow your mind" with an information overload!

Deletion is essentially a process of dropping unnecessary sensory input to a level that your conscious mind can “take in” and manage.

Distortion – when we distort information, we effectively “shift” it to create a different version of events or reality; we see things differently. For this reason, distortion plays an important role in allowing us to make “dreams come true” by giving us the imagination and motivation needed to plan ahead and *see* the future we want.

Generalization – it’s our ability to generalize that allows us to draw enough information from just one or two experiences to come to a general conclusion about any subsequent related experiences. For example, the experience of *not* enjoying one or two theme park rides allows you to make the generalization that you do not like theme park rides! This means that generalization can be an efficient way of learning, but it also means that one experience can be *over* generalized to become a limiting “lifetime” experience; phobias for example.

Each one of us will **delete**, **distort**, and **generalize** the information we sense at any given time in our own way, explaining why no two people are guaranteed to respond to a shared experience in the same way. *Your* internal representation determines *your* version of events!

Values, beliefs, and honesty

My father has been a massive influence throughout my life. He is a man who works hard and plays hard; a man who is

respected by his friends and family, and a man who overall has many, many good qualities that most aspire to have. His reputation, I believe, is a direct reflection of the man he has become internally. As a role model, he displays the important cornerstone quality of knowing exactly who he is and what he stands for in life, not who he thinks he *should* be. His life has been built around a reality that has turned out to be a direct reflection of the “who” he is rather than the “what” he is.



Think . . .

Ask yourself . . .

- **What** have you become?
- **Who** are you to become?

As a parent, it is my job to set ground rules for my children; to teach morals and values, to motivate and support their aspirations, and to fill their heads up with the common knowledge they need for daily living. It is also my job to mould them and guide them in a positive direction.

My wife and I have built a solid foundation for our children in everyday family life by ensuring they have a positive

daily routine they can rely on. No parent can teach their child or children everything they need to know in a one-off, one-size-fits-all session, but it's our responsibility as parents to ensure that a progressive learning process is in place, allowing each child to take on board the important principles of life at each new stage of childhood. We help them to build on strong foundations by teaching them right from wrong; teaching them how to behave in different environments; teaching them good manners; teaching them to be respectful of others; and, every bit as importantly, teaching them to respect themselves . . . and we do this by being positive role models ourselves. Children learn by example so it's important that our lead as adults is one that will help them to grow up with the ability to make good decisions for themselves. Of course, children are children, and they can't be expected— nor should they be expected — to behave like adults all of the time. Unacceptable behaviour has consequences, but not all “naughtiness” is deliberate. As parents, we have to make sure our children know what *is* acceptable before reprimanding them for doing otherwise. None of us can know what we don't know . . . until we know!

I see it as extremely important that I remain consistent in my approach to teaching my children the value of life. I give them pep talks on the important aspects of life on a regular and constant basis, and it's through this that we come to understand how our own childhood and past experiences are reflected in our adult lives. Changing our view of ourselves and the world around us today can be a process of strip-

ping back our life and our accumulated belief structure to the basics.

In simple terms, the subconscious mind needs the same careful attention that a parent would give a child. Just as a parent provides shelter, security, nutrition, and positive guidance, the same must be applied to the subconscious. In each case, the positivity in the environment helps to form a solid foundation on which to build.

“Be what you are.

This is the first step toward becoming better than you are”

Julius Charles Hare

The real you . . .

When defining the real you, and breaking down your real purpose, it's likely that you'll discover a mix of two or perhaps more “people” within a single description. These are the “characters” that make up your personality. However, your mind can become confused when being too many people . . . imagine trying to rehearse for a play and having to remember the scripts for two or three people; how long do you think it would be before the message became jumbled and one turned into the other? Your conscious mind works in a similar way, so it makes sense to simplify things by effectively reducing the number of “characters” you have, combining all of the positive traits in each character to form the true you.



Task

The discovery of the *true you* and the **WHO ARE YOU . . .**

This exercise is designed to utilize and draw together all of the positive traits in each of the different characters currently playing a role in the *whole you* to develop your own “lead character role” as the *true you* . . . the “star” role! Research has shown that personality traits are hereditary, highlighting the importance of identifying and understanding the beliefs you have inherited about yourself and your world.

You may be wondering why it’s important to know the one true character of you, but the answer is simply that *character* is what you rely on when facing challenging situations. While it’s true that certain aspects of your personality may already shine through under certain circumstances, it’s your *true* character that will ultimately carry you and support your change. You only need to think of expressions such as “strength of character” to realize that it takes an understanding of the *true you* – the *real you* – to forge the strength of character you need to know *who* you are and not *what* you are. Unfortunately, most people struggle on through life with too many characters in play, making their character disjointed and unstable, and without any real strength to carry and support them through change.

By combining all of the positive aspects of your separate characters, you define the *true you*:

- Begin by dividing your characters into separate areas on a sheet of paper. So, for example, if you have four

distinct characters you would divide your paper into four squares or columns. Make sure you have a big enough sheet of paper to allow room for writing more in each area.

- Now spend five minutes listing all of the positive traits in each of your characters. Remember, this exercise is for *you*, no one else, so write down the positives as *you* see them, not what others may see as a positive in your character. For example:

<p>SHY Reserved Observer</p>	<p>VICTIM Non-confrontational Thinker Lazy</p>
<p>CONTROLLED Organised Methodical Stable</p>	<p>DOMINATING Winner Passionate Energetic Intelligent Engaging</p>

- Once you have created your lists, draw out a circle and write “True Me” at the top. Spend a further few minutes rewriting the positive traits into the circle and make sure they are exactly how you want to be known – both internally and externally.

You have now collated all of the words that make up the perfect you, so it’s time to step into that person; it’s time to use the power of **visualization** . . .

- Close your eyes and see yourself in a mirror; as you stare into the mirror, see a reflection of you with all of

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the traits you have listed in your “true you” circle; notice how you look, how you act, how confident you are, and how you seem to be complete. Notice all of the small things you wouldn’t normally notice unless you were *really* looking – there’s no rush, so this can take as much time as you need.

- When you are confident that the reflection you see cannot be any better than it is, take a step into it; step into the reflection. As you step in, notice all of the feelings pulsate through your body; experience the emotions unlike any others you have ever felt before, and feel an internal warmth knowing that you have finally found the optimum you: the *true you*.
- Now spend a few moments visualizing your thoughts and behaviours as the *true you*: notice, internally, how this person . . . this *you* . . . behaves, and notice the benefits that being this *true you* will bring: observe how you will operate within the days, hours, and minutes to come.

Who decides what you can and can’t do?

Our culture has instilled the belief in most of us that success, change, or alternative ways of thinking are beyond our reach. This belief structure became apparent when my son returned home from school one Friday afternoon. During the day’s lesson, each of the children had been asked what their parents did for their occupation. Joseph, being just 5 years old at the time, explained that his daddy was a bestselling author and worked with people to make them feel better. Now, not being the stereotypical therapist, I would imagine it difficult on first

impression to second guess that as my career choice but, to my amazement, the teacher thought nothing of questioning his answer in a disbelieving manner. After explaining to Joseph that his teacher's response was simply based on her own beliefs about what was possible, and not a representation of what it was possible for him to achieve, I began to think about a way to re-educate and introduce the teacher into the world of possibilities.

That weekend, as part of Joseph's extra-curricular activities, we set about producing his very own self-published book. It took only two weeks for the first draft copy to arrive and, after taking it into his school, Joseph was presented with an award for creativity. He deserved it; but as parents, it is our duty to encourage our children to challenge the beliefs of others and not to accept the limitations of others as their own. We must all discover our own limitations for ourselves. I share this story not just to prove how strongly we are controlled by our limitations, but to show how powerful our restrictions can be if we make a conscious choice to accept our path and fail to alter it for the better. Who knows, Joseph's teacher could have a bestselling book of her own hidden away within her mind . . .

Accepting risk and failure

The most common reason why many people fail to change is that they fail to lay their first brick: they stop, often with brick in hand. You only need one brick to start building but building can only begin when you lay it.

So what is stopping you from changing?

- . . . too much hard work?
- . . . not enough time?
- . . . pure laziness?
- . . . or the fear of failing; *your* failing?

Failing to lay the first brick is failing to take massive action; it's failing to make the essential differences in your life that will give you the solid foundations you need to begin building the life you want. The longer you fail to make those differences, the longer you will carry around with you a sense of being unfulfilled each and every day. Life is a self-fulfilling prophecy: the more *you* change, the more the change in your life; the more you stay the same, the more of that very same you will enjoy!

Just as a building planner looks at the potential of a piece of land and builds an image of the completed project in their mind, your success can be visualized in the same way at this foundation stage. You can create a mental image of your finished temple, your legacy, and you can begin to draft the plans. Just as the project manager on a building site needs a detailed step-by-step plan to build upwards from foundations, you need your own detailed plans to follow to get you from where you are now to where you want to be.

However, if you have ever watched any property building or renovation programmes on TV, you will know that things don't always go to plan . . . projects rarely get finished within the predicted time frame, and they invariably come in way

over budget. But, in the majority of cases, they *do* get finished. The people in question *lay the first brick* and the process of building their dream begins. Now imagine what would happen if those same people started out with thoughts of “What if it all goes wrong?” or, “What if we’ve made a mistake in our plans?” What would happen is – nothing! The first brick would never be laid and their dream home would remain nothing more than a muddy field and some drawings on paper. Laying the first brick means accepting that there are risks and that things *could* go wrong but, crucially, it also means accepting that just because things could go wrong, it doesn’t mean they *will*. There are no guarantees, but one thing that is *for sure* is that if they don’t lay the first brick, their dream cannot become a reality.

Of course, those who succeed are those who build onto rock solid foundations, not sand, but also those who have the right mind-set as they lay the first brick. Without the right mind-set, the first hiccup in the building process is likely to lead to tools being put down and everything on-site grinding to a halt. As the tools go down, thoughts of, “This is too hard,” or, “This is never going to be finished,” take over, meaning that the project may be abandoned totally or an attitude of corner-cutting and “good enough” slips in. Either way, the end result is that every effort is effectively a wasted effort.

“If a job is worth doing, it’s worth doing well”

Proverb

The potential to fail only exists because the potential to succeed also exists. With the right mind-set, thoughts of,

“What if this doesn’t go to plan,” can be replaced with thoughts of, “What if this *does* go to plan.” If you are able to focus your thoughts on failure and create a mental image of what that failure will look like for you, you are also able to switch your thoughts to focus on success and create a mental image of what that success will look like for you.

It’s the *vision* of a successful build that keeps a project manager on track to achieving it. Each step of the building process is planned, but it’s *accepted* that things don’t always go to plan. With a clear image of the desired finished project in mind, a project manager can deal with building hiccups as and when they occur, and create a new plan to get from where the hiccup has taken them to where they want to be . . . and can still get to, *if* they keep their tools in hand.

Stepping stones . . .

Planning and visualizing your success could be termed by some individuals as setting yourself a goal. In the building example above, it’s the project manager’s *goal* to create a finished building that looks exactly like the architect’s drawings. He has a clear image of the finished project in mind, so he has clear goal to aim for. However, I am not a great fan of goals for the simple reason that goals seem so terminal! There’s a finality about goals that suggests once they’ve been achieved, that’s it – job done. For me, it’s not about the destination, it’s about the journey . . . it’s all about the legacy.

Of course, we all need points of reference to aim for in order to know we’re heading in the right direction, but I choose

not to refer to those points as goals. The problem with goals is that you can set them and then *not* achieve them, and I struggle to see where this type of premeditated failure can be of benefit to you on your journey towards success. Your journey will always be on track if you are congruent in your intent and your actions. To build a lasting legacy you must learn from your past, prepare for your future, and, most importantly, live in the present by doing your best at any given moment . . . but more on this later. For now, the process of building begins by laying the first brick and then laying the next, and the next. For this reason, and for the purposes of this book, I'm choosing to use the term stepping stones rather than goals. Stepping stones keep you moving . . . and movement is exactly what you need. Remember, it's all about the journey, not the destination, and when you have stepping stones, you can keep on journeying across a never ending pool of water – there is no *one* destination to reach.



Think . . .

Take a moment to think about the following and come up with your own answers . . .

Diets never work – why?

My answer is as follows: diets never work because individuals set themselves a goal, and once they achieve that goal, they revert back to their previous bad habits. The goal becomes a

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destination, and arrival at that destination signals *job done* and a return to old ways.

Legacies work – why?

My answer is as follows: legacies work because choosing to leave a legacy represents a lifestyle choice; and every change remains a lasting change because each one forms an integral link in your on-going journey.

New Year's resolutions don't work – why?

My answer is as follows: New Year's resolutions fail because they have no longevity. They are target (destination) driven as opposed to lifestyle driven. And, if you're really honest with yourself, what is it about January 1 that makes you think change will magically happen on that date? Why not the June 5, or the November 8; why not NOW?

You're already there . . .

When you learn to visualize yourself standing on each new stepping stone on your journey, you learn how to get into **the state of already having**. This is a great tool to use when you want to change mental aspects of your behaviour, meaning your attitude and the way you think about things. Getting into the state of already having allows you to experience the “reality” of being the person you will become as you reach each stepping stone and having or doing the things each stepping stone represents. You *already have it* so you can experi-

ence the thoughts and emotions of being there; you can take in the view of the world you now have as you look out from the new vantage point.

The concept is simply that if you want something, it's useful to get into a state that reflects already having the something you want. However, a word of warning: getting into the state of already having is an effective *mental* exercise and should not be taken literally as a physical exercise. For example, if you want a supercar but can't afford one, avoid going out and getting one to experience the physical state of *already having*. You see, no amount of positive thinking or visualization is going to change the way the finance company sees things – and it's unlikely that the finance company will accept your explanation of “just getting into the state”!

How's the view?

A vision board is a great way to remind yourself of the *true you* and also the person you are to become. Remember, perfection is not found in having nothing more to add but in having nothing left to take away, and your vision board should represent the *nothing left to take away* version of you and your life. Everything on your board must be positive . . . a reminder of what you want, not what you *don't* want. The images on your vision board represent the view of yourself and the world you will see as you stand on each stepping stone, and looking at those images is a great way to get into the mental state of already having.



Task

Make it a daily ritual to look at your vision board and visualize the life you will have as a result of your change. This is something that can be done first thing every morning or last thing at night, and it can even be done as you sit on the train on your way to work. Taking the time to visualize your life in this way is an effective way to remind yourself of who you are to become and experience the state of already having.

All change . . .

Being able to experience a state of already having is a powerful tool to have in your “tool kit” and being able to *change* your state whenever you choose to is equally powerful. Throughout the course of a normal day, your state is more than likely changed by certain *triggers* that you may not even be aware of. For example, there may be a certain piece of music that can instantly change your emotional state when you hear it; the music is the trigger that changes your state. This is something that the producers of “music for exercise” MP3s and DVDs use to full advantage by selecting “high energy” tracks that inspire listeners and viewers to get active . . . and buy into more of their products!

Your task is to discover the triggers that generate a positive emotional change in you. Whether it’s a music track or an image on your vision board, you need to identify the triggers

that allow you to move away from a negative state and return to a positive, vibrant, and energetic state. From this point forward, this positive state is going to be known as your *true state* and finding the triggers that put you in it will allow you to get into it whenever you face a situation that requires focus, strength, and clarity. Your triggers must be things that generate a positive change in your state every time, without fail, and it's knowing what those triggers are that allows you to keep moving forwards when things are not going to plan. Your triggers effectively help to prevent you from putting down your tools when thoughts of "This is too hard" enter your mind.

States strategy . . .

As humans we are built in a way that leads to us being the most resourceful we can be at any one time.

The different states are:

- **Action State** – this is your adrenaline rush; your super state! It's in your action state that you make the most radical changes as it's in this state that you are likely to take action outside of your usual character. For example, this could be committing to a parachute jump even though you have a fear of heights or of flying, or perhaps standing up to someone who would normally intimidate you.
- **Sleepy State** – this is your Friday afternoon state! It's in this state that you just want to relax and sit down;

you are looking forward to simply doing nothing, perhaps opening a bottle of wine, ordering a takeaway, and generally zoning out. This state is the ideal state for recharging your mind.

- **Thinking State** – this is your lost in thought state; a state in which your mind wanders and minutes can turn into hours. This state is usually reserved for reflection and methodical thinking.
- **Parental State** – you don't need to have children to adopt this state! It's in this state that you start to think about changes in your career, relationships, or any other significant elements of your life. This state involves a lot of internal talk and generally an internal questioning and answering process.
- **Relaxed State** – this state is usually only achieved when you spend a period of time outside of your usual environment. For example, it usually takes a few days of holiday time to *truly* unwind and get into a relaxed state, but you can also experience this state through short bursts of deep relaxation, or during massage or hypnosis.
- **Dancing State** – this is your “just want to let my hair down” state! This state is usually experienced after a stressful time, and when pent up energy is bursting to get out.

Take a few moments to think about the above states and how each one might affect your day to day life. Recognizing the different states makes it possible to begin changing your state to adopt the frame of mind that will be of most benefit to you at any given point in your day . . . and on your journey.

Getting into state

You can get into any state you *choose* – you just need to decide which state it is you wish to anchor. Be clear on the reasons *why* you want to recall this state and then accept that once triggered, it may be hard to change.



Task

List the reasons *why* you want to want to trigger this behavioural state, including all of the positive benefits it will bring. It's important to use positive words, focusing on what you want *not* what you don't want.

- Go back in time in your mind and think of a situation or event in which you experienced the state you want to recall. Remember the way you felt; what could you see, hear, smell, and taste . . . relive *every* detail but avoid focusing on variables such as the weather conditions or the ages of the individuals in the images you create.
- Now list everything you remember about what happened. How did you feel before, during, and after the event? Be specific; the specific emotions or feelings will become your strategies for recalling this state. If you have more than one situation or event in mind, duplicate the process and run them in parallel.
- It's now time to think about the state *trigger* – the visual or kinaesthetic reminder that triggers the state

(Continued)

response. It's worth noting that you will have a preferred trigger aid. For example, if you use phrases such as, "Did you see that?" or "Seeing is believing," then you will likely find it more beneficial to use a visual trigger. If you find yourself using phrases such as, "That felt amazing" or "I won't believe it until I touch it," then it's likely that you will benefit from touching something to trigger a response.

A good friend and mentor once told me, "The power is within the red dot," so finding your trigger is finding your own red dot . . . or your own "lucky foot"! However, it's important to think ahead. Make sure your trigger is something that's appropriate for use in public places or in controlled environments such as business meetings . . . not everyone will be comfortable with the appearance of a lucky foot! Utilize objects you would normally carry around with you or things that wouldn't look out of place. For example, a good friend of mine uses gum to trigger his action state.

- Now rewind the event and double-check that you have listed all of the exact feelings and emotions; start to add more life to the event by adding more detail about what you saw, heard, smelled or tasted as appropriate. Allow any emotions to flow, perhaps allowing your eyes to close for a moment as you enjoy the powerful recollection.
- As you flow through the event, notice the starting point of the state, the peak point, and the point at which it begins to reduce.

**This – led to – this – led to – this – led to –
this – peak – led to – this . . .**

- Follow this process again; flow through the event again and notice the key points of build-up and peak. As you reach the emotional peak this time, **look at** or **touch** the trigger.
- Repeat a further five times until the trigger is embedded within your neurology; repetition is an essential part of the exercise.

Once you have completed this task, it's time to test how effective your trigger has become. But, before you do, spend a moment away from the triggered state – perhaps read the last line backwards or do anything mundane that will break the wanted state.

- **Test your trigger** – now you have set the trigger, it's time to fire it! Take two deep breaths then fire your visual or kinaesthetic trigger. As you do so, notice how quickly your body can return to the desired positive state.

To push this exercise further, or to intensify the experience, you can stack the anchors. The principle is the same but rather than listing the emotions from one event, use the trigger for a number of events or situations in which you experienced similar (as close as possible) emotional strengths.

Actions speak louder than words . . .

On the subject of triggers, it's worth noting that affirmations are commonly promoted as a way of changing your state. An internal chant of “I can do this” or “I am a winner” *can* bring

about a positive change in state, but an affirmation can only ever be effective when it's said with a purpose. When Andy Murray became the first British male Grand Slam tennis champion for 76 years, in 2012, he admitted to “having a word with himself” in the restroom mirror when he took a mid-match comfort break! He looked at himself in the mirror and told himself that he could win. His words focused his mind on what he wanted and what he was going to go back out and *do* to get what he wanted. This form of affirmation can, and did, promote a positive result, but it must be noted that the words spoken were said with the purpose of promoting positive *actions*. Great care must be taken to avoid incantations that focus on what you *don't* want.

Select the right ground on which to build your foundation

Remember, *making a change can be easy once you know exactly what it is you really want to change*. When you recognize the *true you*, you also recognize the changes you need to make to create the life you really want.

Your commitment to change is your commitment to having a better life.

We can complain about many things that appear to be fixed, but are your current circumstances *really* fixed? Are you *really* stuck with the life you have rather than the life you want? When you recognize your *true state*, you recognize the things that inspire you in life; the things you feel passionate

about, and the things that generate a positive change in your emotional state. If your current circumstances are *not* conducive to being in your true state, are you *really* unable to change them?

For example, let's say you currently live in a rural area and you now recognize that it's being in the heart of a busy city that brings you to life – or vice versa. Now, I recognize that upping sticks and moving is not always an easy option, and that having children in school or a partner in employment creates many restrictions and limitations, but if you recognize it as a move that would improve your current life, what is there to stop you looking into the steps you would need to take to be able to make the giant leap? There is *nothing* to stop you, only your own imagined fears . . . *what if it doesn't work out; what if I fail?*

This brings us full circle to the question asked earlier: **what is stopping you from changing?**

- . . . too much hard work?
- . . . not enough time?
- . . . pure laziness?
- . . . or the fear of failing; *your* failing?

Why not turn your focus around and question what would happen if you couldn't fail: what if you only achieved the best for you, and what if life was planned to give you all the successes you deserve?

Recognizing what you want to change is the first step towards making that change. Someone once said to me . . .

If you live life to achieve a good life, you'll get an okay life; if you live life to achieve a great life, you'll achieve a good life; if you live life to achieve an awesome life, you'll achieve a great life.

You, and only you, can set the bar in terms of how you're going to live your life. Remember, knowing who you *really* are gives you the material you need to begin laying your rock solid foundations. You are not the person you thought you were; you are a lot more than that. It's a common misconception that we are simply the person we are seen as on the outside, and we're generally measured by the wealth of our belongings – or the “*what*” we are rather than the “*who*” we are – but true wealth can only ever be truly measured by the thoughts and the smile you can produce on the inside.

Selecting the material checklist

- Commit to taking **massive action**
- Accept that change is a choice
- Accept that things do not always go to plan
- Identify the *true you*
- Identify your *true state* triggers
- Choose to focus on the journey, not the destination