So why is it that some people can make changes and some are stuck? Why is it that some people can get on with their life after facing some extreme event and others will stay within the shadows for many years?

These are questions that have inspired me for many years, and they have sent me on a quest to find the answers. Is it possible to control your thoughts and *really* bring about a positive change? Do the people who successfully make changes hold a clue or a secret? No; they simply take the massive action needed to implement the change and they continue along that path.

As an action junkie, I love the gym and I love running; I often take my dogs down to the beach in all weathers to just run . . . Forrest Gump style. The positive feelings generated as a result of this action push me to achieve more on the next run, and then the next . . . just one step at a time.

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One step at a time . . .

When you work on the basis of taking one step at a time, anything is achievable. I promise you this; if you *take* action and you *keep* taking it one step at a time, anything is achievable – no matter how small those action steps are. What you can achieve has nothing to do with your current standing, but everything to do with the one to which you aspire.

A motto I live by is: **"It's not where we start in life, but what we do with life that counts."**

> *"It matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be"*
>
> J K Rowling

Nothing is unachievable if your mind is given a map. Just as you wouldn't start a journey without knowing the destination, your mind must be given specific tasks that act as map coordinates in order to guide you to the right place. What this means is that getting to where you want to go is based on knowing where you have already been . . . or, if you think of it another way, everything you achieve is a direct result of everything you have already seen. Your journey will take you from "who" you are to "who you are to become" but, as you learned in Step One, it's not about the destination, it's about the journey, so the number of steps you take to cross *your* pond on *your* journey is ultimately *your* choice. Of course, knowing "who" is waiting for you on the other side makes every step you take a whole lot easier, but care must be taken to ensure that every step is a step in the right direction. Before

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stepping away from a situation that seems unimportant, test the step against your values first.

Can you really achieve it?

The information we use to gauge our future is based on the environment we are placed in at this very moment . . . and it's more information than you think!

Look around you right now . . .

- How is the environment you're in affecting you?
- What could you do to change the visual aspects of the world around you?
- How would changing the visual aspects change the way you think?
- Would it change the way you think?
- How could you improve the environment you're in?

As any "home makeover" presenter on daytime TV will tell you, changing the environment in your home can be as simple as changing your colour scheme or rearranging your furniture. Whether or not you subscribe to the idea of feng shui, it's fair to say that even small changes in your living environment can lead to big changes in your overall mood, with time spent in the "new" environment giving you an emotional lift.

In Step Two, you learned that by changing your inner world, your external world will change all by itself. ***If you can change the way the world looks then the world will look at***

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you with a completely new set of eyes. Using the above "home makeover" example, there have been occasions when the owner of the home feels so dissatisfied with their environment that they want to sell up and move. It might be that the rooms feel too small, too big, too odd-shaped, too conventional . . . and the list of negatives they see goes on. *Everything* about the environment has become negative because of the way they see it. When the fresh eyes of the makeover team arrive, they, of course, see things quite differently. They see all of the positives in the environment and they make use of those positives to make the best of the rooms. The changes they make are often very small but the outcome of those changes is that the owner sees things differently and therefore feels differently about the environment – they can now see the positives, and they no longer want to sell up and move. Those positives were there all along, but the negative inner environment in the home owner's mind created a negative outer environment in which only negatives could be seen.

Changing your inner environment . . .

Internal changes lead to external changes and this means it's possible to look in the mirror and see a **new you**. Can you think of a time when you've looked in the mirror and felt really good about what you saw? It may be a time when you were all dressed up for a special occasion and the feel-good emotions could be seen radiating from your face and body. Wouldn't it be good to feel this way *every* time you looked in the mirror? You *can*.

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How?

It's very simple: honesty is a key factor when making changes. Simple but effective changes in the way you communicate with yourself about your physical looks can bring about radical changes in your behaviour. Think about this for a moment; if you look in the mirror and send out "fat" or "ugly" signals, then that's exactly what you'll find. To see a new you in the mirror, you need to create a new identity. Your new identity must be the *true* you. If you have yet to discover who you *really* are, refer back to the "True Me" exercise in Step One and identify the *real* you before reading any further. You have to know who you are in order to know who you are to become, and building your temple on the foundations of a false (or mistaken) identity is like building on foundations of sand.

Self-awareness is something that sets humans apart from the majority of other animals. We are able to see and recognize ourselves in a mirror, whereas a dog, for example, sees another dog rather than a reflection of itself. "The Mirror Test" was pioneered by psychologist Gordon Gallup Jr. in 1970 and is now considered the classic test of self-awareness in animals; with a variation of the original format used in developmental psychology to test self-awareness in babies and young children. In the fast moving world of technology, The Mirror Test is now also being used in the development of artificial intelligence, with a robot named Nico set to "pass" the self-awareness test and become the first *thinking* robot. While this may strike fear into the hearts of all those who saw the 2004 movie *I, Robot*, starring Will Smith, it's quite fascinating to

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think that we're on the threshold of replicating this most human-like *awareness* in the computerized "mind" of a robot.

Of course, we still have so much to learn about the human mind and the inner workings of the brain. Understanding that we have an awareness of "self" is only the tip of the iceberg . . .

- . . . What image of "self" does an anorexic see reflected in the mirror?
- . . . What image of "self" does a narcissist see in the mirror?

Science doesn't have all the answers but, clearly, the image an individual sees of themselves in a mirror is not necessarily the same image another person sees when looking at them in the same mirror. In each set of eyes, the image they see is believed to be a *true* image, demonstrating the power of the mind and its ability to influence the thoughts and behaviours of each individual. If you *believe* something to be true, it *is* true – for *you*.

Success preparation

To achieve the success you want to achieve, you must *believe* that's it's possible for you to achieve it. You must be able to look in the mirror and see the *true* you; the "success in the making" you, and the "best you" you're on your way to becoming by taking massive action to implement the necessary changes.

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"Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it"

Maya Angelou

Think about it this way; are you more likely to achieve something you want by . . .

- Believing it is **possible** – acting and utilizing positive intentions to create paths and strategies with added resourcefulness, and adopting a state of *doing* rather than *being*?
- Or, believing it is **impossible** – acting in a way that's demoralising?

To succeed, you must *prepare* to succeed. This means you must:

- **Believe in yourself** – *you* must believe you can succeed.
- **Value yourself** – you must believe you deserve to succeed.
- **Invest in a good education** – you must invest in learning from the best to become *your* best. However "best" does not always equate to most expensive or most prestigious; the best education is found in learning from masters of the art who pass on their knowledge through loving what they do and doing what they love.

Repetition provides perfection . . .

Just as a stonemason makes many small alterations to the cornerstone in the process of setting the stone, your persistence

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with any action will embed this new pattern within your thinking. Consistent actions become actions you are able to do without "thinking" about doing them. When you consistently see the positives in your environment or consistently look in the mirror and see the true you, you reach a level of subconscious competence that makes seeing the world and yourself in this way your default setting: you *learn* to see the *best you* in the mirror without consciously thinking about it, just as a stonemason learns to alter and set the stone as if it were second nature.

The Four Stages of Learning

"The Four Stages of Learning" is the name given to a theory developed by Noel Burch at Gordon Training International in California in the 1970s. In a nutshell, it's a model for learning that began as a model for learning new skills. The "four stages" map the journey from being unaware of incompetence – not knowing what you don't know – to achieving subconscious competence – able to apply or carry out what you now know without thinking about it.

Stage 1: Subconscious Incompetence

In this stage, you're unaware of your incompetence so, in other words, you don't know what you don't know. You may be completely unaware or you may believe that the knowledge or skill you don't have is something you don't need; you're unaware of the positive benefits it could bring into your life. It only becomes possible to progress beyond this

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stage when you recognize for yourself that there's something you don't know and realize the benefits of changing your status through learning.

> *"Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge"*
>
> Charles Darwin

Stage 2: Conscious Incompetence

In this stage, you haven't acquired the new knowledge or skill but you recognize the benefits of acquiring it. It's having an understanding of the benefits that not only allows you to begin the learning process, but also to accept the inevitable process of trial and error you're likely to go through on the way to acquiring it.

Stage 3: Conscious Competence

In this stage, you have gained the new knowledge or learned the new skill but applying or practising it takes concentrated effort; you're effectively still learning and embedding the new pattern or "setting the stone" through careful and deliberate repetition.

Stage 4: Subconscious Competence

In this stage, the new knowledge or skill can be applied without consciously thinking about it and the learned pattern is now so firmly embedded that it can be demonstrated effortlessly.

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Any knowledge or skill you have acquired to the level of subconscious competence is something that feels like second nature to you.

So, to put the above "four stages" into context, let's say you've never learned to drive because you live in an inner city apartment and therefore you've never felt it was a skill that would be of any benefit to you in your life (Stage 1). You then come to the realization that you're longing for a change of pace and change of lifestyle – you want to move out of the city. During the search for your new home, you also come to realize that your options are restricted by your need to have easy access to public transport. The value of learning to drive now becomes apparent to you (Stage 2). You find your dream home in a rural location – several miles away from the nearest town with public transport links – and this galvanizes your decision to learn to drive. You book yourself a course of driving lessons and the learning process begins. At the end of the course, you feel confident enough to book a driving test, which you pass, but you're aware that you've never driven "alone" without supervision (Stage 3). You buy your first car and drive without supervision for the first time, gradually building your skills and your confidence by getting behind the wheel every day. Before you know it, you're driving without consciously thinking about driving – you're effectively driving on "auto pilot" (Stage 4).

Knowledge is power and, in the above scenario, knowledge is also freedom. Learning to drive opened up a whole new world of possibilities in terms of finding a new home and

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adopting a new lifestyle: learning allowed you to change your life for the better.

It's never too late to learn: learning is for life, not just for school, but . . .
BIG TIP – avoid any kind of learning that restricts the mind.

Of course, making the decision to learn something new doesn't guarantee you success, instant or otherwise. However, there is never any shame in giving the decision you make your best shot. Things may not turn out exactly as planned, but when you've done your best by committing yourself to a task, you have not shamed yourself or let yourself down . . . and you have not let anyone else down. You see, you cannot let anyone else down before letting yourself down, and when you have done your very best, you have no reason to feel any emotional shame.

Learn then lead . . .

Learn then lead – this was a great saying that I heard back in 1999 when going through my secondary phase of Army basic training. "Cubby," the sergeant at the time, said "In order to lead you must read: learn the topic, create a solid understanding, and then lead by sharing it." You will meet people who lack understanding, and through the use of their strength and "power" will attempt to belittle the "ideas person" who wants to share rather than learn from them. This is common in modern structured cultures and it's an

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attitude that is very often reflected in the morals of such individuals.

However, this is not the case with the likes of Virgin, Boots, or Apple. In these highly successful organizations, an employee at any level with an idea worth sharing is someone who will be listened to, and the "powers that be" listen *not* because they have to, but because they choose to . . . and they choose to because they are interested.

> *"Having a personality of caring about people is important. You can't be a good leader unless you generally like people. That is how you bring out the best in them"*
>
> Sir Richard Branson

Keep learning . . .

Study the human response . . . and keep learning. The way that you will act in a situation is largely based on your previous learning; however, by studying the behaviours and actions of others, you can further your own learning by paying attention to how they respond in the same situation . . . or any given situation.

We have no control over the actions of others, but we have absolute control over how we *interpret* those actions. Although I appreciate the advances of modern technology, there are now many more instances of miscommunication; and the further removed from face-to-face interactions we become, the greater the potential for messages to be interpreted incorrectly.

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Think about the following scenario . . .

You are just about to leave the company where you have worked for over 10 years: you are leaving to have a child and you don't intend to return. Your boss has arranged a party and you are just on your way out when your phone bleeps. The message is from your boss and reads: "Can't make it tonight, good luck."

What are your first impressions?
Would you feel angry; disappointed?

You go to the party. As you arrive, you are greeted by a fellow colleague who asks, "Have you heard the news?" The news is that your boss has been involved in a car accident and her child has been injured. You immediately feel a sense of guilt and experience emotions of sadness over pre-judging your boss on her brief words.

From this point forward, make the conscious choice to base emotions and behaviours on physical interaction rather than "faceless" technology. If you receive a message via these channels, avoid adding any emotional attachment to the words. As you read on through the contents of this book, you will become increasingly aware of the need to play along with the emotions you experience in life; questioning and judging them to see what will come true. One thing that's for sure is that you need to know *all* the facts before you pass judgement.

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Visualizing a completed you

The external image others see of you is an image you are constantly judged by. However, it's a purely superficial image. The *true* you is the person you are on the inside, so it's only possible to create a true image of you by combining external *and* internal images to reveal the *complete* you . . . the *best* you.

To see the true you, you need to see beyond the reflection in the mirror to the inner you. Visualizing a completed you begins by transforming the way you *think* of yourself. This is not something many get or take the opportunity to do within a lifetime, but you can . . . and you can start right now.

Knowing the true *you . . .*

Knowing who you really are is the foundation on which the process of change is built, but knowing how you came to be the person you are is fundamental to understanding how you can change and why change is needed in your life.

You are who you are based on three important aspects:

One – the first person you are is based on the person you were told you were. This person is likely to have been formed during your early childhood, your imprint stage, and is therefore largely a reflection of the environment and behaviours of those around you at that time in your life. This could be considered the past you; but while memories of this period

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are likely to become blurred and lack any real clarity, emotions are likely to stay strong, and it's from these emotions that the second person is most likely to evolve.

Two – the second person is the person you think/believe you are. This is the person you see when you look in the mirror; the person who has evolved from the imprint period in your life. This could be considered the present you, and this person is based on everything you have chosen to accept as real or not real about yourself and your environment along the way.

Three – the third person is the person you truly are. This is the person you aspire to become and so could be considered the future you. The harsh reality is that most people will not achieve this person in their lifetime simply because their belief in the second person, the person they *think* they are, restricts their movement towards becoming the person they *truly* are.

Change can take a second to implement and offer a lifetime of rewards: your change starts the second you take the action to do something about it. It's a misconception and a myth that it takes time to see the positive effects of change. A simple change in your diet, for example, can bring about visual and emotional changes within a week, and changes to your outlook on your career can bring about changes within minutes of sitting at your desk. The image of "self" you create is powerful, so a change for the better in terms of learning to think of yourself and see yourself as a success is an essential step towards becoming your best self. Confidence can be found by really getting to grips with the *true* you; and

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knowing who you really are on the inside makes it possible to begin expressing who you really are on the outside.

Trust the *true you* by choosing NOW to accept that you deserve more, you deserve better, and you *can* have it.

Task

To move from being the person you *think* you are to being the person you *truly* are, you need to identify which beliefs you have about the current you that are accurate, honest, and *real*. The simplest and most effective way to do this is to write them down in a notebook in a section dedicated to "Beliefs" – and use the title "The Beliefs I Have About Myself."

You can refer to this page every day or every other day, but refer to it at least once a week for six weeks. Each day you refer to your notes is an evaluation day, a day in which you give yourself the opportunity to question the beliefs you have written down.

For example, your notebook page may look as follows:

07/01/2013
I will never get the job promotion I want because I am not good enough.

08/01/2013
My relationships always fail because I am boring.

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11/01/2013
I will never get the grades I need because I am not intelligent enough.

Choose *not* to accept the negative beliefs you have about your current self, choose to question them, and choose to accept the positive beliefs of the true you; the person you aspire to be instead. Remember, knowing who you *really* are provides you with the rock solid foundations on which the process of change can be built. However, beware evaluating your beliefs on a "bad day" – a day when your thoughts and behaviour are somewhat different to your usual state. Any decisions made outside of the *true you* state are unlikely to be productive.

When you are having a "bad" day, it's likely that a number of things will happen. The first is that your body will take on a physical demeanour that shows how "bad" you're feeling; the second is that you will create a number of visual cues that represent a past negative state; and the third is that you will communicate in a way that provides the easiest option under the circumstances as you see them.

Be aware of stacking . . .

Stacking is a term I've coined to describe the process of adding one issue on top of another until the situation becomes unbearable. When you stack your issues, you are effectively confirming their existence; you are convincing yourself that all of the negatives in your life are real and that you're right to continue with your negative strategies. The more you stack, the heavier the weight of negative emotion you add,

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so next time you *choose* to have that emotion or practise that strategy the quicker you can adopt that negative state.

It's like stacking your dirty plates in the sink and never washing up. You need to keep eating but eventually you'll run out of clean plates, and your sink will be overflowing!

Installing a learning mind-set

Learning is easy when you are passionate about the end result, and the same can be said of change. The more excited you are about the benefits of making a change, the easier it is to make that change or, put another way, the bigger the reward the better the journey. Over the years I have always given myself various targets and rewards as incentives, many of which massively outweighed the actual amount of work I needed to put in to merit getting them. My reason for doing so is simple: a big reward encourages a big effort – often encouraging me to over-achieve – and when you're rewarded for achieving one task, you're much more likely to set yourself another one . . . and another . . . The incentives can be hourly, daily, or weekly, and perhaps eventually scaled down to monthly or even yearly, but having those incentives in place and making them visual reminders of what you are working towards can provide on-going motivation to implement the changes you want to make.

I have a belief that the only things we cannot do are the things we choose not to do. This bold statement is one that can be set into the stone of your new thinking patterns.

The only things I cannot do are the things I don't want to do.

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Your first breakthrough will be your best breakthrough: once you have implemented the techniques set out within the pages of this book, your change will happen and your life will change as a consequence. Changing the way you think of yourself and see yourself will release all of the negative connotations that have restricted your life to this point. Releasing negativity frees you to push the limits of your internal beliefs about what is and is not possible; however, letting go of the past is still very often believed to be difficult and is therefore resisted – why is this? The reason why so many people struggle to let go is that there is a "comforting" sense of familiarity in knowing and relying on everything in the past being true.

But is it?

It's time to plan for the future and not for the past . . .

It can be all too easy to rely on the past to guide you through the future, but this restrictive trait can bring about endless issues and complications. The actions you are taking today *will* affect your future so thinking about making changes tomorrow or another day must be avoided; the delay caused by putting things off until tomorrow will be reflected in your future.

"You are today where your thoughts have brought you;

you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you"

James Allen

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So, if your life is a direct result of your past, what were you thinking when you made the decision to create the strategies that have brought about the life you have now?

Think . . .

- Think back 5 years . . . what decision did you make then that has affected your life?
- Think back 10 years . . . what decision did you make then that has affected your life?
- Think back to your childhood . . . what decision did you make in your childhood that continues to affect your life today?

For example; did you look in the mirror 5 years ago and decide that you were now "too old" to make the career change you first thought about making 10 years ago? Or, did you take on board the ill-advised "advice" of a schoolteacher in your childhood who told you that your dream of becoming a writer was not for "the likes of you" and you should focus your attention on getting a "proper job"?

Your inner you is the person who talks to you and guides you; the inner you is the subconscious mind and the *true* you, and this is the person you must now listen to. Remember, to prepare for success you must believe in yourself and believe in the value of yourself. The *true* you believes in you and your potential to succeed, therefore the only person standing in the way of your success is the person you currently *think* you are.

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Think . . .

Getting to know the voices inside your head is an essential element of change. By knowing when they are active, you gain an understanding of them and this gives you the power to stop them or **change** them.

Changing voices:

- Think about your happy voice; the voice you use inside your mind when you're happy, confident, and things are going well. Think about the way you communicate with yourself internally when you're happy.
- Now think about your angry voice; the voice you use inside your mind when you're unhappy, frustrated, or things are just not going well in general. Think about the way you communicate with yourself internally when you're upset or angry.
- Being aware of and recognizing the internal voices you use are the first steps towards taking control of them. The next step is to write down the differences you notice between the two (or more than two if you become aware of other internal voices you use under different circumstances). For example: does the speed change? Do you speak faster or slower when you're happy or angry? Does the tone change? Do you speak louder or quieter when you're happy or angry? Does the voice generate differences in your posture? Do you

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become more animated or more subdued when you're happy or angry?

- Now imagine yourself in a situation that would normally bring your angry (negative) voice into play. For example, let's say you're struggling to change your duvet cover! The frustration of not being able to get the duvet into the corners and then discovering you've put it on inside-out or the wrong way round causes the negative voice in your head to tell you things along the lines of, "You're an idiot; you have this same problem every time but you're totally incapable of working it out; you're hopeless; you couldn't organise a p**s up in a brewery; you just *never* learn . . ." Okay, this may be a slightly over-the-top response to the situation but you get the gist!
- Keep the same situation in mind and **change** the voice by changing the speed, tone, volume, posture, and everything else you noticed when comparing the difference between your angry and happy internal voices. Imagine yourself in the same situation but use your happy (positive) voice. As you do so, notice how the situation changes. The whole experience is changed just by changing your internal voice.

I will become the person I want to be by making the changes needed to be better.

Becoming the person you want to be means having the confidence to see yourself as someone who already possesses all of the tools needed to implement change . . . and that confidence comes from getting to grips with the true you.

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> **"Confine-dence"** is my interpretation of **confidence**, meaning simply that the confinement of emotions in any animal for any length of time leads to the suppression of identity; and when someone's identity is suppressed, they become unable to express a true representation of themselves.

It can be useful to design your own inner pathway to the true you, so that you can follow it in your mind using visualization techniques to generate your true state, and create a repeatable positive strategy to keep you moving forwards.

Task

"Don't just think it, ink it"

There is nothing more rewarding than getting your thoughts down on paper. You can carry a small notebook around with you or you can use your mobile device, but either way it provides you with the opportunity to make a note of your thoughts as and when they come into your mind. Having this type of written reference can be an extremely useful visualization aid, providing you with motivational prompts that can add depth and texture to the images of what it is you want to achieve.

An example format for your inner pathway might be as follows:

- **Thoughts** – what is the thought; what is the positive thought you want to capture?

(*Continued*)

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- **Emotions** – how does it feel when you have this thought?
- **Actions** – what actions would I have to take to make it happen?
- **Promotions** – where/how would the results be shown?
- **Legacy** – when will the legacy come to fruition?

It's important to accept that your world is constantly looking to give you opportunities; opportunities that will make your life happier and healthier in all aspects. The things you need are usually staring you directly in the face, and it's just a matter of reaching out and asking for them.

You have to be really clear on what it is you want to achieve, clarity is king . . .

Task

- Write down just five things that you would like.
- Now write down how you can get those things: ask yourself *"How can I get them?"* and create a step-by-step action plan based on your answers. Depending on what it is you've written down, this may seem like a daunting prospect, but just allocate yourself five minutes to do some research and you may be surprised by your findings.
- Now put your plan into action.

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Moving forward and accepting change

The beliefs you have about yourself and your ability to achieve determine the path you will follow. Beliefs can bring about a sense of clarity in many situations – whether you believe you can or you can't complete a certain task, for example, or whether you believe you can or can't make the changes you desire to bring about your perfect lifestyle. But are those beliefs true? There's a well-known Henry Ford quote that backs up my belief that whatever you *believe* to be true *is* true, for you. "*Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right*."

Think about it for a moment: have you ever been involved in an argument or debate where you were so absolutely certain that what you were saying was true that you'd have been willing to bet your life on it . . . only to be *proved* wrong?

- Our ancient ancestors believed that it was worshipping the Sun at the end of each day that guaranteed its return the following day.
- Our not-so-ancient ancestors believed the Earth was flat.
- And in 2012, a number of people believed the world would end on December 21.

Your beliefs, unless controlled and understood, can create havoc if they are not aligned correctly with your life or your strategies.

Some of my clients have suffered some horrific behavioural outcomes through various forms of phobias – *have* being in

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the past context. Common phobias include claustrophobia, agoraphobia, and a fear of heights, spiders, or public speaking. In its literal sense, a phobia is a fear and whether or not you believe yourself to have a *phobia*, you will have experienced fear: we all know what fear feels like.

Fear in this sense is a negative emotion and, remember, it's only by releasing negativity that you become able to push the limits of your internal beliefs. For as long as you hold on to your fear – irrespective of how rational or irrational it may be – you hold on to the limits it places on your life. For example, if you believe you have a fear of speaking in public, you will avoid any situation that might require you to do just that. Adopting this tactic may not have inconvenienced your life too much up until this point, but then one day you get a golden opportunity to go for a promotion at your work; a promotion that would lead to having your dream job. As part of the interview process, you must give a short presentation in front of a panel of senior executives . . . now what? Holding on to your fear *will* now inconvenience your life; holding on to it will prevent you from achieving something you want to achieve; holding on to your belief that you fear public speaking will keep you stuck where you are – stuck as the person you *think* you are, unable to move on to become the person you *truly* are . . . unless you take massive action to implement **change**.

You can dwell on the past and create an emotional state that reflects that or you can choose to change and move forwards with an attitude of "I deserve to move forwards."

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Get scared . . . !

Remember, it's only by mastering the ability to control your mind and emotions that you become able to make clear decisions focused on achieving a better, more fulfilled and successful life. Most of us grow up *fearing* fear – we are effectively taught that fear is a weakness – but fear should be looked upon as a fantastic motivator: fear should be used as a booster to the massive action you are about to take to move your life forward. This means in the above scenario, rather than fearing the prospect of speaking in public, you should turn it around to fear of the outcome of *not* speaking in public!

> Get scared about what will happen if you fail to take the action needed to accomplish your task; get scared about living your life in the past; get scared about reaching retirement age only to look back and see a wasted life; get scared about not leaving a legacy, and becoming a distant memory, forgotten within two generations.

Use fear as a motivator to change, and remember, the stronger your motivator – or incentive – the more likely you are to excel at the task in hand.

> *"It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like an egg at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary egg. We must be hatched or go bad"*
>
> C S Lewis

Of course, there is never any shame in recognizing that a situation is out of your control and asking for help. There have

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been many times in my life that the next stepping stone on my journey across the pond was just too far to leap without getting my feet wet; so I asked for help. Asking for help should never be feared, after all, to become the best we must learn from the best, and investing in a good education is a key element of preparing to succeed.

Are your fears worth listening to . . . ?

Our fears are just like stories; they have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Sometimes our fears *can* predict the future and come true; however, you have to ask yourself: are your stories and fears worth listening to? And is it time to stop listening to the wrong story?

There are many stories of people losing everything before turning things around to build an empire; there are many bible stories and ancient fables that tell of people clearing thorn-torn farms to produce successful crops and other such turns of fortune. In each of these stories *and* your own, the principle is the same: the past must be stripped away to make way for the future or, put another way, the foundation must always be clear before the building can take place.

> *"Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time;*
>
> *what we really want is for things to remain the same but get better"*
>
> Sydney J Harris

Isn't it time to give up being the person you have become and to take the next step towards becoming the person you want

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to be; the *true* you? Start to use the words "**What next?**" in your everyday language. These are words that gear up your mind to keep moving forwards, and without a willingness to continue looking for the next step on your journey, opportunities will continue to pass you by.

Craft your own destiny . . .

If you were to theme your life so far into a story, how would it be told? Would it be a story of an average, fairly normal life? **Stop! Stop pretending your life is normal . . . because it isn't.** Normality doesn't exist, and life is full of dysfunctional people. We are taught that normality is something we should all strive to have in life but, as I see it, the word *normality* could easily be replaced with the word *conformity*. If you choose to conform to the rules set out within "normal" society then you will achieve a normal standard of living and, who knows, you might be able to look back with a sense of accomplishment. But, if you look at the back-story of any individual who has truly achieved in life, you find a story that's far from standard or normal.

Choose *not* to conform. Delete the words "I wish" from your everyday language and replace them with "I will." This is a simple change but a significant one: it's a small step that can make the difference between *actually* achieving and carrying on through life with the *intention* of achieving. Think about it; throwing endless amounts of money into a wishing well is not going to bring about the results you want, but stepping away and investing that money in what you need to ***do*** next *will* take you a step closer to what you want. The more you

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put yourself into situations that will bring about the life you want, the more chance you have of achieving the life you want. One thing is for certain; you will never win the lottery if you never purchase a ticket!

It doesn't matter where you're starting from or how much money you have. In fact, it has always been my opinion that money (pure cash) only magnifies the state you are in when you receive it. This is something that is demonstrated time and again through the stories of many lottery winners. People mistakenly believe that life will instantly change for the better through becoming "rich" and that money is the answer to all of their problems. However, money cannot change "who" you are, it can only change "what" you are.

Think . . .

- Take a moment to think about your "happy" self and the person you are when you're happy with life and things are going your way.
- Now imagine that "self" magnified by a multiple of ten. How would you look; how would you sound, and how would you act?
- Take a moment now to think about your "unhappy" self and the person you are when you're unhappy with life and things are not going your way.
- Now imagine that "self" magnified by a multiple of ten. How would you look; how would you sound, and how would you act?

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Remember, true wealth is found in your inner smile. If you were experiencing depression, sadness, or any other mental illness prior to having financial abundance, then your state will only be magnified by the amount you receive. This highlights the importance of setting solid foundations on which to build your legacy; setting solid foundations based on what *really* matters to you in life. Building your legacy one stone at a time and setting each stone as you lay it ensures each step in the process is a *lasting* step, and the things that really matter to you in your legacy cannot be moved by any external pressures you encounter on your journey to completion.

Remember, there is no such thing as a quick fix. Building your house on foundations of sand may be quick, but it's not going to be lasting. Avoid looking for, and taking, shortcuts on your journey. It can be all too easy to slip into skipping over behind-the-scenes elements of the building process . . . bodging jobs that won't be seen, or leaving edges unfinished in out of the way places . . . but your mind will never actually be at rest; you will never feel a sense of complete fulfilment or contentment until the whole task is completed, and completed to the best of your ability.

Do you know what you're really *capable of. . . ?*

Before leaving this Step, I want to give you some food for thought. In the world of psychological research, opinion is divided over what has the biggest influence on our individual

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behaviours in life. In one camp, psychologists believe that it's our character or personality that drives our behaviour; but in another camp, psychologists believe that our environment or circumstances are in the driving seat with character and personality very much in the back seat.

The milgram experiment

In 1963, psychologist, Stanley Milgram, carried out an experiment designed to test obedience to authority. It's now known as "The Milgram Experiment" and to this day remains controversial. Milgram, a psychologist at Yale University, devised the experiment after the majority of accused individuals in the World War II Nuremburg War Crimes Trials used "obedience" to superiors and "just following orders" in their defence. He wanted to know how influential "authority" really was in terms of how ordinary people responded to "orders" that would lead to them knowingly harming another human being.

In a nutshell, the participants in the experiment were all men aged between 20 and 50 years old, and they all volunteered to take part after replying to a newspaper ad requesting volunteers for a "learning" experiment at Yale University. Each participant was paired with another man (who was actually an associate of Milgram's and essentially an "actor") and straws were drawn to decide who would be the "learner" in the experiment and who would be the "teacher" – but this was always fixed so that the genuine participant would play the role of teacher. The learner had a list of word pairs to remember and he was then taken into another room (within

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earshot) where he was strapped into a chair and connected to electrodes. The teacher's role was to ask the learner to provide the matching pair word to the word he gave, and if the wrong answer was given, he had to give the learner an electric shock. The teacher had a "shock generator" in front of him which had 30 switches, enabling him (or so he thought) to give a range of shocks from very mild at 15 volts all the way to very severe (potentially deadly) at 450 volts.

Of course, the learner deliberately gave wrong answers on most occasions and the teacher had to administer an electric "shock" – the effects of which could be heard! In the same room as the teacher, and sitting close by, there was an official "experimenter" dressed in a white lab coat. Unknown to the participant, the experimenter was also one of Milgrim's associates. The participant was instructed to increase the voltage of the "shock" each time an incorrect answer was given, and on many occasions this led to the participant refusing to give yet another shock. On asking for guidance from the experimenter, they were given four predetermined instructions. The first was, "Please continue." If the participant still refused, the second instruction was, "The experiment requires you to continue." If they still hesitated, the third instruction was, "It is absolutely essential that you continue," and the fourth and final instruction was, "You have no other choice but to continue."

An astonishing 65 per cent of the participants continued to administer "shocks" all the way up to the full 450 volt shock, and *all* of them continued to administer "shocks" up to a voltage of 300 before refusing to give any more. This "willingness" to follow the instructions of an "authority figure,"

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even though they believed that they could hear another human being *screaming* and pleading to be released, is food for thought indeed!

By today's standards, the Milgram Experiment is flawed on many levels, but the results certainly add weight to the argument that *circumstances* drive our behaviour more than *personality* alone. The participants were ordinary men from all walks of life with no history of violence or anything other than normal, decent behaviour . . . yet they were all willing to *knowingly* harm another human being; 65 per cent of them believing they were causing potentially life-threatening harm!

So, how well do you know yourself; how reliable is your character; and do you know what you're capable of under *any* circumstances? Look at it this way; have you ever found yourself acting out of character or doing something against your better judgement because you were "going along" with a crowd?

Think . . .

Look again at your legacy statement: look again at your description of the *true you*.

Ask yourself; how do you want to be remembered after you're gone? What lasting legacy do you want to leave behind?

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Setting the stone checklist

- ☐ Commit to taking **one focused step at a time,** there are no shortcuts to any place worth going!
- ☐ Choose to **change your inner environment** in order to change your outer environment
- ☐ Choose to prepare for success by **believing** in your success
- ☐ Commit to life-long learning**; read then lead**
- ☐ Accept that the only things you cannot do are the things you do not want to do
- ☐ Choose to have confidence in and trust the ***true you***

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