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SPIRITUAL • GOODNESS

Connect with Goodness

Achieve big when no one else believes in you.

by Kate Cheney Chappell

TO ENHANCE THE VALUE OF GOODNESS, LEARN to use it by connecting with it, as a source of wisdom and strength. Connecting with goodness can take many forms—from being open to suggestions and ideas to keeping balance and centeredness in relationships.

Reminding yourself to connect with goodness each day can be a gift that you give yourself, a point of strength in growing the quietude that you need to keep grounded in your personal and professional roles, to act in gesture and speech from a place of kindness, and to find that place of reflection that allows you to set aside the difficulties of the day and enter into peace—even for a short time.

Connecting with goodness for me is a daily practice. What works for me is having various ways in my life that connect me with God or my creative force. It really doesn't matter what you call it—as long as it takes you outside yourself, away from your concerns about the world, to connect to a greater power beyond yourself.

Seven Best Practices

To connect with goodness in your own way, consider these seven best practices:

1. Do morning pages. Sit down with your journal after waking and write for 20 minutes, never taking your pen from the page—as if the words were streaming from your mind, though your heart, to your hand onto the page. This stream of consciousness journaling helps to clear the mind of clutter—the constant chattering of worries, concerns, anxiety—so that you can settle into a calmer state to meditate, breathe, or your morning routine.

ety—so that you can settle into a calmer state to meditate, breathe, or your morning routine.

2. Read and reflect on a poem or sacred text. I use poetry and sacred texts as mediums to connect with goodness. Compilations of sacred texts and anthologies of poetry organized by topic, are wonderful treasures that contain wisdom and access to goodness. Memorize favorite quotes, lines of poetry, or sacred text and recite your favorites in times of stress.

3. Write or draw in a journal.

Journaling is a large part of the reflection process. While it might take some reminding to get that journal out and write in it, this is a great opportunity to start at it again. Be good to yourself, and take up the journaling as if you had just put it down a moment or two before. And it's not just writing that a journal is for: Sometimes I copy a favorite poem out with my left hand. This helps me

slow down and use the right side of my brain. I sketch, draw, or paint directly into my journal or I paste in pictures or images that inspire me. I use the journals to record my creative play.

4. Meditate. Meditation, which includes breath work and movement of yoga, are part of my daily practice of connecting with goodness. I want to be able to connect with goodness in a bodily way, whether it be stretching or walking. I feel so much better when I do these things, and I can see and feel the difference when I do not meditate or move. I also recommend organic prayer (integrating movement with prayer) or opting for a walking meditation. I integrate movement with prayer by raising my arms over my head in a modi-



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fied tree pose, opening both arms wide in a circle that ends with palms together over my heart chakra. This is a quick way to bring me to integration.

5. Slow down and breathe. A large part of connecting with goodness is slowing down your body and your mind, which allows you to find humility. With so many things in life and business that can distract you, take the time to feed your spirit through slow observation of nature. It forces you to work with your hands, heart, and head in ways that stretch your connections, drawing yourself closer to the meaningful interactions with the goodness you have everyday. Anytime your day is going too fast, your mind races, and your body needs a break, bring yourself back to your breath. Take three deep belly breaths, bringing all your attention to that act. It is very calming and renewing.

6. Seek moments alone in a busy day to reflect or create. Take a few minutes to center yourself and relax. You might connect through breath or a mantra like "All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." Or you might dialogue with a trusted friend or wise person before and after a difficult task. Or, you might make a visual connection with an individual whom you love and admire or with a place that conjures up serenity or peacefulness.

7. Start meetings with a connect exercise. I first started bringing poetry to meetings at Tom's of Maine 20 years ago, at company-wide gatherings and Board of Directors meetings. Now, we start most meetings with a poem or a simple question that grounds us in being human before taking on our leadership roles and tackling the agenda.

Connect questions are useful at as meeting starters. For example, you might ask: What is one good thing you have going for you today? Do you have a pet? If so, what relationship do you have with that pet? What did you do last weekend that allowed you to connect with nature?

Connect exercises help people to connect with the goodness that is in them. Connect exercises save time during the meeting because people tend to lose their tensions and listen to one another's experiences, ideas, or opinions. People also tend to lose their worries and find their commonality, which makes for a productive meeting.

The Peace of Wild Things

For example, here is a poem by Wendell Berry and a reflection that you can use as a connect exercise. You can read the poem and find a colleague or friend to discuss your thoughts and reflections.

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound*

*in fear of what my life and my children's lives
may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water,
and the great heron feeds.*

*I come into the peace of wild things who
do not tax their lives with forethought of grief.
I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

This poem speaks to our tendency to stir up and anticipate much grief. The poem show us a better way. Read the poem once. Read it aloud to yourself, or to a friend. Listen for the lines that seem to be written for you. Say them aloud or write them in your journal. Consider journaling about the following questions: Do I "go in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be"? What am I most afraid of? Of what do I despair?

The poet seeks out creatures and aspects of the natural world as an antidote to despair and fear: the wood drake, great heron, still water, stars. What are they doing? Is there something to learn about being in this world? Notice the language the poet uses for finding peace: "I come into", not "I take" or "I get", but a sense of entering into the peace. Do you tax your life with forethought of grief? Are there other animals or natural places that have sustained you? Name them. Go there in your mind's eye. What keeps you from resting "in the grace of the world"? What keeps you from being "free"?

Share these thoughts with a friend or colleague. Ask your partner to read the same poem and share his or her thoughts with you on a "poetry date." What two things can you do to connect with nature, just for today?

Challenge the ways in which you work to align with your values. Beginning a daily practice takes effort and commitment, and often you may be at a place in your life that seems like adding one more thing is too much. However, it may be that adding an exercise in goodness will make the entire day brighter, more energetic, and more productive. When you start the day from a place of serenity—whether it is from meditation, reading, exercise, journaling, or quiet reflection—you provide yourself with a peaceful start that reverberates through the day and influences your actions, speech, and tasks. Your day goes better when you connect with goodness. The best place is to start with what you feel most comfortable with and then notice how it makes you feel, how you move through the day differently. PE



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ACTION: Add daily exercise in goodness.



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Choose Your Reality

What does physics predict for you?



by Bob Davies

WHEN PEOPLE ASK ME how I did last year, I tell them that they're asking the wrong question. They should ask, "What did you chose to pay attention to last year?" and "How much effort did you put forth last year?"

The *attention choice* is the *quantum question*, and it has to do with probabilities. The *effort aspect* is the Newtonian physics question and has to do with pushes and pulls, causes and effects (Newton's third law, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction).

Quantum physics describes the movement and energy of electrons around a nucleus of the atom and other subatomic actions. Newtonian physics describes the orbit of the planets or the energy transformations in a game of pool.

The natural laws of physics do not apply on the scale of the small. For example, in the Young Double Slit Experiment, scientists randomly shot a particle at a screen with a barrier that had a single slit on its face. They expected to see a pattern on the back screen where the particles hit. That's exactly what they saw—a vertical line pattern just behind the vertical slit. That is how they expected the particles to act.

Now let's look at waves. A wave of light would strike the single slit barrier and hit the back wall with most of the intensity directly behind the slit as expected, much like the particles reacted. But when we add the second slit something strange happens.

The wave patterns interfere with each other. When the top of one wave hits the bottom of another, they cancel each other out, leaving a dark space on the screen. So now there is an interference pattern on the back wall. The places where the tops meet have the highest intensity and are bright, and where they cancel there is a dark band representing nothing.

With matter there are two bands of hits, and with waves there are interference patterns with multiple bands.

An electron is matter on the small scale. Scientists fired a stream through one slit, and it behaved like a particle sending a vertical band behind the single slit. When they shot an electron stream through two slits, they expected

it to leave two bands; instead, they saw an interference pattern like the wave.

The pieces of matter, particles, behaved like a wave. They thought that maybe they just interfered with each other, and so they then shot the electrons through the slits one at a time. The results were the same. They concluded that a single electron leaves as a particle, becomes a wave of potentials, goes through both slits, and interferes with itself. Calculations suggest that the particle goes through one slit, or the other, or both, or none. All of these potentials exist at the same time. They are super-positioned with each other.

Physicists were intrigued, and so they observed which slit the electron actually went through by placing a measuring device by the slits. The quantum world is far more mysterious than they imagined. When they observed, the electron went back to behaving like a particle by producing two bands right behind the two slits, as opposed to the interference pattern when it was not observed. The act of observing or mea-



suring meant it only went through one and not both. *It was as if the electron was aware that it was being measured.* The observer collapsed the wave function simply by looking.

What Is Matter?

Today, this continues to stump scientist: *The act of observation changes what is being observed.* This is referred to as the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. What does this mean to you?

It means this: *what you observe changes.* We live in a world of multiple possibilities. Your world doesn't become real until you observe, until you make a choice, then all other possibilities collapse and what remains, based on your choice, is your reality.

Philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche stated, "There are no facts, only interpretations." Albert Einstein said, "Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one." Pablo Picasso stated, "Everything you can imagine is real." And Thomas Carlyle said, "That block of granite that was an obstacle in the path-

way of the weak, became a stepping stone in the pathway of the strong."

It's all a matter of choice. There is no reality until you choose. You can choose to pay attention to a down marketplace or one with tremendous opportunity. Ralph Emerson said, "People seem not to see that their opinion of the world is also a confession of their character." You are responsible for what you pay attention to. There is no truth until you observe and decide where you place your attention—that's what is real for you.

Henry Ford said, "Don't find fault. Find a remedy." However, it appears to be easier to go victim, find fault, blame the market, or your company, or other people. It's much easier to place blame outside of you than to internalize and live by the core principle, "I am the source of all that I experience."

The law of the quantum does not apply to the big aspects of your life. That's where you defer to the determinism of the classical physics of cause and effect. For every action—your efforts of prospecting, for example—there is a reaction (the setting of appointments, presentations and sales). So the big is a direct relationship of numbers. If you do enough of the right actions, you will have a high probability of a predicted result. And if you measure the numbers, you will act differently than if you don't.

Your thoughts, however, are in the realm of the quantum. A thought is a transformation from an electrical signal to a chemical discharge. The area between nerve cells (axons and dendrites) is so small it is governed by the quantum principles. So you must observe both levels of physics. The quantum tells us this: *There is no reality, only multiple potentials and possibilities—until you chose, and then there is only your choice.*

So, what will you measure this year? What will you pay attention to? Will you focus on how tired you are, or how good it feels to get up early and exercise? Will you pay attention to how hard it is to prospect, or to how great it is to solve your client's problems? Will you pay attention to how busy you are, or will you make the time to have in-person client visits? Will you focus on the Dow dropping 100 points, the decline of the housing market, or your ability to have a big impact in the lives of others? It's all out there, in waves of possibilities, ready to collapse into your reality. It's up to you. What do you choose? PE

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ACTION: Choose your reality this year.

I Am Entitled

Combat an entitlement mindset.



by Bonnie Cox

AN EMPLOYEE WALKED OUT of the company with a laptop computer—with no intent of ever returning it. When confronted, the person said, “I feel I deserve it. It is the least the company owes me for cutting my hours!” You’ll recognize this attitude as the “entitlement mentality.” In this situation, the person perceived that the cutback in hours was unfair; hence, he was “entitled” to steal a computer.

An entitlement mentality is a state of mind whereby you feel that you have a right (or entitlement) to *something* (that usually belongs to someone else). An attitude of entitlement goes hand in hand with the *equity theory*—the relationship between your motivation and your perception of being treated fairly. You have your own perceptions of what is fair. If you perceive that someone else is unfairly getting more than you are, you will try to level the playing field. To do so, you may resort to fraud, sabotage, or theft. You may not steal a laptop computer, but you may seek to get even in other ways, perhaps by stealing time (padding your timecard), stealing supplies (for personal use), or stealing loyalty (badmouthing the company).

Once worked with a company that operated 24/7. One supervisor was asked to work the night shift and oversee the employees, keep the environment safe, and meet production requirements. He resented being put on nights. His way of *getting even* was to sleep for several hours a night on the couch in the conference room. He not only lost credibility with his people but he eventually lost his job. When his motivation tanked, he tried to steal time to even the score.

Three Ideas for Equity

What can you do? Here are three ideas:

1. Be observant. Disgruntled people give signals that things are not right. Early on they will engage in “leaving” or “avoiding” behaviors: being late, absent, or taking unauthorized leaves of absence. Or they may under-produce on the job—doing only enough to get by.

2. Ask questions and listen. Most disgruntled people want to talk. They want you to ask how they are so they can tell

you about their hurts (based on their perception). By asking open-ended questions (such as when, where, why, and how), you can listen your way to a meaningful conversation. Encourage people to keep talking by uttering encouraging words like, “tell me more ... um-hmm . . .” You need to *ask* and then *listen*, not *tell* and then *turn away*.

For example, if you want to upgrade a process, before you hire consultants or purchase expensive equipment, involve the people who work with the process and know the answers. If you never ask them, they will let you figure out how to get *your* production out the door.

3. Institute good checks and balances. Create accountability systems. Make it more difficult for people to cheat, steal, or scam. When you realize that desperate people do desperate things, you can

create obstacles to make theft less tempting (such as publishing guidelines for safety, security, and consequences). You might mark all equipment with fixed asset property “tags” that set off detectors if they leave the building. Or, install motion detectors or cameras at entrances and exits. Or, publish a “one-strike-and-you’re-out,” zero-tolerance policy in case of lost or stolen goods. When the guidelines and consequences are clear, there is less temptation for theft. Spot perceived inequities before they disrupt your work.

By taking a few cautionary steps you can make sure the entitlement mindset doesn’t invade your work. **PE**

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ACTION: Combat the entitlement mindset.

MENTAL • THINKING

Power Thinking

Clear your mind of negativity.



by Nanci Raphael

YOU’RE ALWAYS DOING something—moving from one activity to the next.

However, to have successful outcomes, you must give them some thought *before* you act. If your mindset is negative, your thinking will be laced with negativity, leading to stress and frustration. You’ll expend more precious time and energy, tasks will move slower, and possibilities will look dimmer.

When your mind is sharp, you’re more likely to be at peak performance—and all around you benefit. Being aware of your thinking and knowing how to shift your thoughts to create positive outcomes are critical to your effectiveness and productivity.

Listen to your thoughts. Write them down. Do you notice a pattern? Are your thoughts positive or negative?

Four Time-Tested Tips

To move to your center of positive personal power where anything is possible, follow these four tips:

Tip 1: Reclaim clarity in two minutes. Meditation allows for much-needed quiet time for your mind. When your mind is quieted, it will relax you and help you get back to your powerful center. Meditation is like taking a time-out. Start meditating for two minutes a

day. Find a quiet spot. Sit in a chair with your eyes closed, and breathe deeply. As you practice meditation, your thinking will be clearer.

Tip 2: Manage negativity since it drains energy. If negativity is coming from others, you can choose to walk away. Make negative people aware that you’re not interested in their pessimism. When you do, you give yourself a gift of internal peace. Perhaps the other person will get the message for the next time he or she speaks to you or others. If negativity is coming from you, simply tell yourself, “Stop, I won’t listen to this anymore.”

Tip 3: Don’t play the blame game.

Blame is a way of saying “I have no control.” Blaming others creates victims. Instead of blaming, acknowledge the mistake. When you refuse to blame, you regain control, learn from the mistake, and grow from it.

Tip 4: Avoid should-have’s. *I should have done it differently. They should have known better.*

Should-haves create guilt and doubt in you, promote negative thinking, cloud your current reality, lower your energy, and erode your confidence and positive power. Once you make a mistake, a poor decision or misguided action, you can’t go back and do it differently. When you stop should-have’s, you remove chains of guilt and blame.

You have this incredible tool called *thinking*: recognize its power and shift it when it gets off course. **PE**

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ACTION: Engage in power thinking.

Your Bright Future

Don't let the past hold you back.



by Guerline Jasmin

WE ALL HAVE NEGATIVE baggage from our past—perhaps abuse from family members, name-calling from school friends, or destructive self-talk, to name a few. Although these negative events occurred in childhood, many adults allow past baggage to dictate their present and guide their future.

For example, perhaps when you were in elementary school, a group of classroom bullies constantly called you “a dummy.” Their words hurt you and got ingrained in your mind. Now that you’re an adult and rarely, if ever, think back to your elementary school days, you still believe you’re too dumb to handle many situations. As a result, you don’t try as hard as you could at work, and your results suffer.

No matter what your past burdens are, you need to walk away from them instead of letting them control your present. Consider these strategies.

1. Do a life assessment.

Most people don’t realize that something from their past is holding them back. Instead, they make excuses for why their life or situation is the way it is. They are so used to being in a negative or non-optimal state that they don’t realize they’re living out a pattern that started in their youth.

So, do an assessment of your life. Review some messages you received and revisit major events. Record key phrases or words that you remember, and that you still say today. Describe any events that seem memorable or life changing. You’ll likely see a pattern emerge. Then you can put meaning to those phrases and events and see why you do certain things today.

2. Decide to be a conqueror. There are victims and conquerors. Victims blame external factors for the results of their life now. For example, a victim would say, “I can’t get a promotion at work because I’m a woman.” Everything is always someone else’s fault. Victims often have low self-esteem and low self-confidence, and they are often afraid to take action or take risks.



Conquerors learn from their past and take responsibility to change their life. For example, a conqueror would say, “I didn’t get the promotion at work because I don’t have the advanced training I need, so I’m going to enroll in college and get additional training.” Knowing that the key to changing their life is within themselves, conquerors do what they need to do to make a difference in their life. They know they are worthy of great things, and willing to work to achieve those things.

Your goal is to create the best life possible with what you have. Yes, you will face challenges; but if you press on, you will make it. So, do whatever you can to take yourself out of the victim mindset and be a conqueror.

3. Don’t be a complainer. When you complain, you indicate that there is an alternative—something better. For example, you might complain about being overweight. The alternative is losing the excessive weight. So, now that you know the alternative, you can stop complaining and do the necessary steps to lose the weight.

Take an inventory of your complaints. Next time you complain, stop yourself. Write down everything you wanted to say. Now you can see the pattern in your complaints and pinpoint the alternatives available. You will find that you complain

about things you *can* do something about. For example, you might complain instead of taking action because taking action involves taking risks that may be uncomfortable, difficult, or confusing. You tend to remain in your comfort zone, even if it is dysfunctional. To get out of a negative comfort zone, you need to change something and take a risk. You may need to let go of negative people in your life. You might be alone until you make new friends. This may frighten you, but that’s what change is all about.

It boils down to choice. Accept that you are making the choice to be a complainer, take responsibility for that choice, and then stop being a complainer. A better alternative is to take the risks to create the life you want.

4. Learn new habits. Everything you do in life is based on some routine or habit. Therefore, you have to get rid of the old and destructive routines and replace them with new and positive ones. For example, you may hope for a promotion at work, but you are always late, you procrastinate, and you don’t take criticism well. Those are learned habits. To be considered for the promotion, you have to replace the bad habits with new habits. You could get up an hour earlier to get to work on time, buy a planner and use it daily, list your tasks with a deadline to stop procrastinating, and write in a journal.

You need to do something consistently for at least 21 to 30 days to make it a habit. Doing something for this long puts you on track to keep doing it for the long term. By taking your negative habits and turning them into positive behaviors, you can control your situation and make it better than before.

5. Choose to help and serve others. When you help others, you take the focus off of yourself. By focusing on yourself and your own situation so much, you can quickly forget that there’s a whole world of people out there who have experienced the same things you have...or even worse. However, when you start looking outside of yourself and realize that people who are worse off than you have overcome and survived, you begin to see the possibilities for your own life. And, by sharing your story with others, you can motivate people to make a change in their life. So search out support groups that pertain to your situation, offer to be a mentor to others, or start sharing your experiences with others. By doing so, you’ll quickly realize all the good you have to offer.

Your Bright Future Awaits

Changing your life can be overwhelming, but you can do it. You can overcome your past and create a bright future. No matter what happened to you in the past—whether it was abuse from a loved one or schoolyard bullying—remember that the past has no correlation to your present or future. You are in control of your destiny and can take the appropriate action steps to create the best future possible. So be a conqueror, stop complaining, learn some new habits, and help others along the way. Keep enduring and don’t give up. You *will* reach the life you want. PE

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ACTION: Create your bright future.

Held Up in Traffic

Learn to hit life's curve balls.



by Steve Young

PEOPLE AND EVENTS SEEM TO have it in for me. I've often been on the road stuck behind a slow car in the left lane, as I watch everyone in the right lane passing me by. Don't they know that the left lane is for passing? Don't they know they should be in the right lane? Don't they know I have an appointment? Now I see an accident up ahead. I'll likely miss my appointment; but if that guy hadn't slowed me down, I might have been in that accident.

In life, you and I are always met with detours or roadblocks—unexpected curve balls. But are they really curve balls? Or is the *curve* only an illusion set up by your expectations of what a good pitch should look like? While they may not look like slow and easy pitches for you to hit out of the park, perhaps they're balls that you should wait on, let them do their thing, and then smack them between first and second base for a "ball-with-eyes" single. Who says that every hit has to be a home run?

It's all about reassessing your obstacles, finding the positive value in them, and turning them into tools for growth.

The "Father of Radio Syndication," Norman Pattiz founded Westwood One, America's largest radio network and syndicator. Yet in 1973, Pattiz found himself without a job, with little money, and no idea what to do with his life. He was fired from a job he felt he had done well, and he was devastated. But life had other plans for him, and his dismissal turned out to be one of the best things that ever happened to him.

Until the firing, his ambition was simply to become a general manager in the television business. He had no notion that he would create a business of his own, until unwanted circumstances, a *curve ball*, created opportunity.

Dire circumstances often create opportunity. So, always be open to recognizing the possibilities in taking negatives and turning them into positives.

I've heard many people say, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans." But I find that the obstacles I run into end up being for the best—if I choose to make it that way. Adversity,

mistakes, and failure have been long thought of as bad things, to be avoided at all costs. But to scientists, failure is instrumental in getting them where they need to go. One successful research scientist told me that he considered failure, in itself, quite the success: "The experiment that fails usually tells you the most. You do the experiment and get a result you don't expect, but it tells you something new. If you get what you predict, you don't learn anything new—you just confirm your previous thinking. To do pioneering work, you don't want to just confirm—you want to look for something that's different from what you expected."

Failure, especially humiliating failure, can hand you the extra drive and dedication to succeed—to rise higher and make the greater effort. Don't limit

yourself to your own failures and complications—learn from the mistakes of others and create your own solution. It could result with a different but more valuable payoff—a springboard to a thought, project, or campaign that only your perspective could conceive—one that would have never developed without the *faux pas* of another.

Being available to learn from your situation and envisioning the possibilities will leave you far less agitated. Finding your way to accomplish that might be considered a great achievement. And when was the last time you've ever accomplished anything in traffic? PE

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ACTION: Reverse your emotional setbacks.

EMOTIONAL • RESILIENCE

Bad Things Happen

Prepare yourself to handle them.



by Louise Lewis

DO YOU EVER TURN OFF THE evening news because watching stories about bad things shoots your stress level into the stratosphere? Global warming, terrorism, home foreclosures, murder, crime, and scandal are the prevailing stories of the day. You are constantly bombarded by bad news. While you can't bury your head in the sand and pretend these problems don't exist, you can prevent the state of the world from stressing you out. You can learn to protect yourself from feeling overwhelmed by negative events. Rather than absorb all of the bad state-of-the-world news that chips away at your sense of security and balance and stresses you out, you can focus on changing the state of *your* world and on touching the lives around you in a positive way.

For example, if your life is a daily routine of getting up, going to work and then coming home and watching TV, you can become isolated, making it easy to focus on the negative news; but if you seek opportunities to socialize and show compassion towards others, you achieve multiple positive benefits.

When you build bonds with other people it's like weaving a safety net for yourself. The ability to commiserate

and laugh together establishes a healthy foundation for you emotionally. And when you feel anxious about the world, giving to others can help. Your giving spirit might lead you to talk to someone who looks lonely. Sometimes chance encounters—where you reach out to other people—have a profound impact.

Reaching out to others can be a key coping strategy when things in your life get rough—and the reality is, they will get rough at some point. Whether you're dealing with a divorce, death of a loved one or some other drastic, life-altering event, I believe it is possible to prepare yourself for adversity. No one is immune from problems. So if you fortify your life now, you'll better handle those major events when they do happen.

How do you fortify your life? Spend time figuring out what's important to you and determining the meaning of your life. If you then focus on what matters most in your life, you'll have an anchor when the storm hits.

Deciding your own meaning of life gives you strength and the freedom to break down barriers with the people you love. Once I began following my sense of purpose, I could talk to my family in a new, more open way. They sensed the honesty of it, and it has changed the dynamics of our relationships. It put history in its proper place—the past. And our improved relationships fortified my buffer zone against the bad things in life. PE

Louise Lewis is author of *No Experts Needed: The Meaning of Life According to You!* Visit www.noexpertsneeded.com.

ACTION: Fortify your emotional life.

Inner Strength

Follow five guidelines to get fit.



by Bob Greene
and Oprah
Winfrey

YOU HAVE THE INNER STRENGTH TO MAKE changes to improve your life. You can find that strength and commit to a healthier—and happier—lifestyle. Making health-conscious choices can make you look and feel absolutely wonderful.

Bob: I started spreading this message early. At age nine, after I read about the health hazards of nitrates added to meats and the harmful effects of pesticides on fruits and vegetables, I lobbied my parents to banish unhealthy foods from our table. When I learned salt causes high blood pressure, I warned my dad about using the shaker liberally. As the self-appointed guardian of my family's well being, I took nutrition seriously.

My family members ate fairly healthy meals; however, many of them struggled with their weight. My great grandmother was bedridden, primarily due to excess weight. I know this distressed me, even as early as age seven.

My concern about my family's well-being led to a professional interest. Along with being an exercise physiologist, I am also a certified personal trainer. For two decades, I've specialized in fitness, metabolism, and weight loss.

Over the years, I've worked with thousands of individuals to help them to get fit and lose weight. Here are five guidelines to help you get and stay fit:

1. Overcome emotional eating—impulsive, unhealthy snacking triggered by stress, boredom, anger, and depression. To halt these cravings that can sabotage your weight loss efforts, you have to determine what triggers those episodes of binges. What are you angry or depressed about that makes you turn to food for comfort? I encourage you to draw a circle with several sections that represent areas you feel are part of a fulfilled life, such as *career, family, health, fitness, friendship, romance, finance, and relationships*. Ask yourself how everything is going in that area. How could you improve that area? What is one thing you can do daily to stimulate positive change? Write one goal that you can do now to improve

that category, and commit yourself to put an end to your emotional eating.

2. Address other troubles spots that interfere with your health and wellness. For example, if a friendship has soured, write a letter, send an e-mail, or pick up the phone. If your fitness has stalled, rejuvenate it: begin an exercise journal or buy some new workout clothes. Not eating healthy enough? Clean out the refrigerator and fill up with fruit and vegetables. Relationship woes? Consider joining a social group, or bond with coworkers after hours. Re-vamp your financial situation, update your resume, or review your budget. When you address negative feelings about a relationship or money worries, your emotional eating vanishes.

3. Take small steps every day. When you struggle with weight gain, you



want instant gratification. But if you're patient and take small steps every day, the results can be powerful. If you can do at least one thing daily to change a negative to a positive, powerful change will occur after one year. If you can do three things daily, you won't recognize your former life. If you eat healthy and exercise, you won't feel any change day-to-day. Yet, you can look back a year later and see a major transformation.

4. Eat a good breakfast and stop eating at meals when you are comfortable (not full). Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Start the day with a healthy meal. Breakfast can have a big impact on body weight. If you're trying to lose weight, you can't afford to dispense with breakfast. At any meal, you need to stop eating when you are *comfortable*—a 5 or 6 on the 10-point hunger scale: 1) weak and light headed—your stomach acid is churning; 2) very uncomfortable—you feel irritable and unable to concentrate; 3) uncomfort-

able—your stomach is rumbling; 4) slightly uncomfortable—you are just beginning to feel hungry; 5) comfortable—you are neither hungry nor full; 6) perfectly comfortable—you feel satisfied; 7) full—a little bit uncomfortable; 8) uncomfortably full—you feel bloated; 9) very uncomfortably full—you need to loosen your clothes; and 10) stuffed—you are so full you feel nauseous.

5. Adopt The Best Life program as a way of living—of eating, exercising, and viewing your life—that puts you at your healthiest. The goal is to lose weight, to keep the weight off, and to develop habits that dramatically reduce your risk of diabetes, heart disease, and other ills. Follow a three-phase program at your own pace. Each phase leads you to an increasingly healthy and slimming diet and encourages you to increase physical activity. Soon, you'll be amazed at how different and wonderful your life has become.

When I met Oprah, I was hiring and training the fitness staff at a spa in Telluride, Colorado. She became my client, and I moved to Chicago to help her get fit, lose weight (she lost 90 pounds), stay fit, and train for a marathon.

Get Off the Rollercoaster

Oprah: I had been stuck on the diet rollercoaster, meaning I would lose weight, only to gain it back—and more.

When I hit 237 pounds in 1992, I'd nearly lost hope of ever achieving a healthy weight. But with Bob Greene's help, I was able to do it. We did it in two steps: First I became active, and then I improved my diet. Throughout the process, I forced myself to face the tough questions, like why I overeat and why I need to turn to food for comfort. I began addressing big, painful issues, like how much I really loved myself and why I allowed my life to get so out of balance. Once I figured these things out, I not only gained control over my weight, but over my life, too.

If you're taking the weight-loss challenge, you can gradually make the changes that will get you off the diet rollercoaster. Start by signing a contract with yourself; it's the first step to achieving your goals. Believe that you can achieve the best life possible.

Ask yourself, *What kind of life do I want and how close am I to living it?* You can't ever live the life of your dreams without facing the truth. **PE**

Bob Greene and Oprah Winfrey are co-authors of the best-seller, Make the Connection: Ten Steps To A Better Body—and a Better Life and A Journal of Daily Renewal. Visit www.thebestlife.com or www.oprah.com.

ACTION: Follow these guidelines to get fit.

Commitment

It's key to resolution.



by John J. Scherer

WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR resolutions to actually happen this year? What are they? To lose weight? To stop smoking? To run a marathon? To make more money? To do an exercise program?

How often have you made resolutions, only to fail? It might not be a lack of effort or intent on your part. I think Aristotle was wrong when he said, "Those who know the good will do the good." Would that it were so!

I asked my son Asa to look up the etymology of the word *resolution*. What he told me about the origins of the word blew my mind—and could help us to make resolutions that stick.

The word *resolution* comes from Latin *resolvere*. In 1400, it means to *unloose, melt or dissolve*. Then in 1548, it expands to mean to *break into parts, to solve or answer a problem*. In 1588, it means the *power to stand firm, hold to a purpose*.

From this etymology, we gain clues to keep our resolutions: 1) to unloose, melt, or dissolve (to break into parts); 2) to solve (answer a problem); 3) to clear up (resolve a dispute); and 4) to stand firm (hold to a purpose).

Examine Your Resolution

Keeping your fitness resolutions will require you to do four things:

1. *What do you need to "let loose of," to "melt" or "dissolve" to make this happen?* What do you need to let go of to achieve this resolution? What do you need to clear out so it will have a small space in which to start—and grow? Want to lose 20 pounds? What belief or self-concept are you carrying that has to go? Break losing those 20 pounds into smaller parts, for instance: a) get a pair of exercise shoes, b) put the scales in the bathroom, c) make a chart for the fridge, d) start walking or jogging every day.

2. *What's the "problem" losing weight would solve?* Are there things you can't do that you would like to be able to do? Is it having an effect on your self-concept?

3. *What is the "dispute" inside you—about losing 20 pounds—that has to be resolved or cleared up?* What is the internal conversation about losing 20 pounds? Until that "dispute" is resolved, you'll be "split" in your efforts.

4. *Now, based on your insights,*

make an intention. This is a no-kidding commitment to take the steps that you developed through this process.

Test for Commitment

Suppose you're driving home with your daughter when you are hit by another car. In the crash, your legs are broken, and your daughter hits her head hard. Her eyes are dilated, her breath shallow. You realize she has a concussion. Since your car is damaged and you can't drive, you hope someone will take your daughter to the emergency room. You call out to three men converging on the scene: "Help me! My daughter needs to get to the hospital immediately! Will you help?"

The first person says, "I'll try to get her there." The second person says, "I'll do my best to get her there." The third

person says, "Absolutely! I promise you I will get your daughter to the emergency room—and then I'll return to ensure you get there, too! Here's my card."

Would you give your daughter to the first person? No. How about the second? No. What if their "best" is not enough? That's not commitment. Only the third person is expressing commitment. You can you hear it in someone else's voice—or hear when it's not there. So, listen to your voice as you talk to yourself about your commitment to your resolutions. What do you hear? If you hear a half commitment or you stop following through, go back to those meanings of *resolution* and do what's required. PE

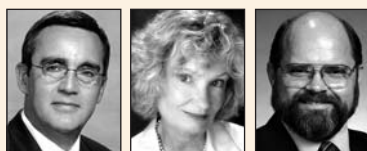
John Scherer works to unleash the human spirit at work. Visit www.SchererCenter.com or call 1-800-727-9115.

ACTION: Make a commitment to get fit.

PHYSICAL • FITNESS

Fitness After 50

Focus on five types of fitness.



Walter Ettinger, Brenda Wright, and Steven Blair

PHYSICAL FITNESS IS THE ABILITY OF YOUR body to perform physical work. It's what happens in your body because of physical activity or exercise. You must be physically active (the action) to achieve a good level of physical fitness (the goal).

Five types of fitness form your health as you age:

1. **Aerobic fitness.** The word *aerobic* means "with oxygen." Your muscles (including heart muscles) need oxygen to work. When you are aerobically fit, your heart, lungs, and blood vessels deliver oxygen to your muscles quickly and effectively. You are less likely to become tired from daily activities. You also have lower rates of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. And you are more likely to remain independent into old age.

2. **Muscle fitness.** This includes muscle strength and endurance. As you grow older, muscle fitness is as important as aerobic fitness to the quality of your life and health. *Muscle strength* is the effort your muscles can exert at one

time. Decades of inactivity cause you to lose muscle. Physical activity can help you regain muscle strength, no matter your age. *Muscle endurance* is the ability to continue to perform a task repeatedly. If you are doing a task that requires a high percentage of your muscle strength, you can't do it for long.

3. **Joint flexibility.** *Flexibility* is the ability to move muscles and joints in a full range of motion. Joint flexibility—especially in the arms, neck and shoulders—can become limited after decades of inactivity. Tasks you used to do with ease may now be difficult or impossible. Many exercises can improve your muscle strength, endurance, and flexibility.

4. **Balance.** *Balance* is your ability to maintain your body in its upright posture while moving. You need good balance to be avoid falling if you trip. Falling causes many accidental injuries and death in people over age 65. You can exercise to develop strong muscles in your back and stomach, hips and legs, to improve balance and prevent falls.

5. **Body composition.** Your body composition—the ratio of fat to lean tissue—is part of fitness. Beginning at age 30, you tend to gain 1 pound of weight per year until about age 50 (for men) or 60 (for women). For most people, the decline in weight in later years is caused by loss of muscle and bone.

Decide which types of fitness you'll work toward this year. PE

Walter Ettinger, Brenda Wright, Steven Blair are coauthors of *Fitness After 50 (Human Kinetics)*. Call 1-800-747-4457 or email publicity@hkusa.com.

ACTION: Work on one or more types of fitness.



Become Debt-Free

Eight ways to get out of debt.



by Eric Tyson

IF YOU HAVE TOO MUCH DEBT, you can break the cycle and build a better financial future.

What are you hoping to achieve this year? Buy your first home? Send your last kid off to college? Or obsess over an ever-growing mountain of debt? If you have debt, chipping away at that mountain to regain control of your financial future should top your resolutions.

Most people carry too much consumer debt. If you have credit card debt or auto loans, you're not alone. But, consumer debt is *not* okay. It can damage your personal relationships and mental well-being, not to mention the stability of your financial future.

Here are six tips to help you improve your financial health:

1. Engage in self-reflection. A misaligned mindset toward spending and shopping—compulsive or otherwise—can damage your financial and personal well-being. If you have a problem with shopping or spending, ask yourself: *Do I feel guilty about shopping? Is my shopping causing financial trouble? Is my shopping, spending, and accumulated debt leading to feelings of helplessness, anger, confusion, fear, or depression? Does the act of shopping and interaction with salespeople give me a feeling of worth, importance, and control?* If you have a problem with compulsive spending, you should seek help. You won't get rid of your debt until you can figure out what makes you compulsively spend.

2. Make a plan and stick to it. Many resolutions fail because you simply state the thing you want to improve on but never create a plan for getting from point A to point B. Most people don't like to plan, unless it's for a vacation. But, planning for your financial future is like planning a vacation. You're organizing your money and time so that you get to do all the great things you want when you get there. So, enjoy the process. Planning your finances doesn't have to be a long, complicated, dreary chore. In the absence of financial goals, your finances will reflect the history and disorganization of your life. The first step to planning is setting some goals. Decide the best ways to make the most of your money and start working

on reaching those goals. By reducing your spending, taxes, borrowing, and insurance costs and boosting your rate of savings and investment returns, you can turn your financial situation around.

3. Get rid of your four-wheeled debt. A new \$30,000 car is *not* a necessity. Many far less expensive used cars will also make it to your office! If you take out an auto loan to buy a car that you can't afford, and take a similar approach with other consumer items you don't need, you'll have great difficulty saving money and achieving your goals. And you'll feel stressed.

Many perfectly good cars are within your budget; in fact, you might actually pay for them with cash. And trading in your \$30,000 option for one of those will instantly help you free up money



that you can use to pay off your other debts or invest in your future. Imagine what it would be like to save \$500 each month rather than throwing it away to pay off the loan on your expensive car.

4. Start making purchases based on need, not emotion. It can be easy to give in to all of those ads telling you how much you "need" that new car, expensive gym membership, or trendy outfit. Marketers play on insecurities, fears, and guilt and suggest that you can feel better about yourself by buying their products. You won't overcome spending and consumer debt until you recognize how these pressures influence your buying decisions. If a product is too expensive for your budget, you don't need it—no matter how much you might want it.

5. Research before you enter the stores. Before going shopping for necessities that aren't everyday purchases—like a new refrigerator—first do some research (*Consumer Reports* is a good source) to identify brands or

models that are good values. You don't want to make an expensive mistake. When you've checked in with your budget to ensure you can afford it, check various retailers and compare prices. When you go to make a purchase, stick to your list. Don't be tempted by the other products in a store, and don't spend a lot of time wandering around looking at things. Get in, get what you need, and get out to avoid buying little things here and there that will throw your finances out of whack.

6. Watch your food budget. Dine out less and keep stock of the groceries you have. Learn to cook. Keep a healthy inventory of groceries at home. This will minimize trips to the store and the need to impulsively dine out because your cupboard is bare. Do most of your shopping through discount warehouse-type stores that offer low prices for buying in bulk, or grocery stores that offer bulk purchases. Saving on the amount you spend on food will help you put more money toward paying off your debt and setting money aside for investments.

7. Become more energy-efficient. Make your home more energy-efficient. Adding insulation and weather-stripping, installing water-saving devices, and reducing use of electrical appliances can pay for themselves in short order. Many utility companies will even do a free energy review or audit of your home and suggest money-saving ideas. And you may qualify for Residential Energy Credits that reduce your tax.

8. Watch what you pay for insurance. Many people overspend on insurance by carrying coverage that's not necessary or that covers small potential losses, such as \$100 or \$200. Take high deductibles on your insurance policies—as much as you can afford in the event of a loss. Also, shop around. Rates vary tremendously. Of course, an insurer's quality of service and financial stability are important. Ask insurers and agents selling policies to provide financial ratings for the policies you're considering.

Getting out of debt has a great payoff. Whenever you feel like giving in, think about the wonderful benefits of financial well-being. Once you're out of debt, your savings and investments enable you to get more for your money.

Best of all is the peace of mind. Debt is emotionally crippling. It's a prison. Getting out of debt is your ticket to freedom, and that's a great gift to give yourself and your family this year. PE

Eric Tyson is author of Let's Get Real About Money! (FT Press). Visit ftpress.com or call (828) 325-4966.

ACTION: Become debt-free this year.

Gain Financial Freedom

Secure your financial future.



by Vince Shorb

IN AN AGE WHEN FORECLOSURES are at a record pace, credit card debt is hitting new highs and personal savings are at an all time low, millions of people are worried about their future. Many parents are not skilled enough with their own money to offer solid guidance to their children. And financial literacy isn't even taught in most high schools.

My goal is to teach you how to avoid the pitfalls of racking up debt by empowering you to become financially self-sufficient. Sadly, few education efforts teach students how to manage their finances. Misdirected preparation results in one-third of students receiving a bachelor's degree and the average college grad having over \$20,000 in debt.

I offer seven basic tips that you can use and share with your children:

1. Distinguish between needs and wants. To counter the lifelong effects of advertising, you need to distinguish between a need and a want. A need is something you must have (like food, shelter, and clothing). A want is something you would like to have (like designer clothes or an iPod). When you have enough savings to cover your needs, you can focus on your wants.

2. Ditch costly everyday habits. A \$4 coffee five days a week equals more than \$1,000 a year. Record your daily expenses. This "money diary" exercise is a great way to see how even the smallest expenditure can add up!

3. Develop a savings plan. Compare what you make in a month versus how much you spend in a month. Using this information, construct a monthly budget and start saving! With simple investments and saving \$250 a month, you could be a millionaire in 20 years.

4. Pay yourself first. Stop spending beyond your means. Become a money rebel by not doing what the average person is doing. It will seem tough to see the benefit of this at first, but if you automatically deposit a percentage of your paycheck into a savings account, you won't miss it! A savings plan is the cornerstone of financial freedom.

5. Get your accounts in order! At a minimum, you should open one checking account and two savings accounts, one for long-term planning and one for

your fun money—things you want to do *now*. I find that people who set up and manage these accounts gain the ability to not only save more but also learn some investment basics.

6. Start investing now. It is never too early to benefit from investments! Young people can make simple investments. The S&P 500 Index could make sense for young investors, giving them the chance to own a piece of 500 different companies. This shows them that investing is easy while lowering the risk and delivering consistent returns!

7. Write your lifestyle goals. Young people are not motivated by money—it's what money allows them to do:

places they want to travel, toys they want to have, and the positive impact they can make. Learn the lifestyle your child wants to live and help them find out what they need to achieve it. Have them be as specific as possible, including how much money they need to make every month to meet their savings and lifestyle goals.

If you pass these tips on to your children and apply them to your life, you can build a financially secure future and escape the shackles of life-long debt. **PE**

Vince Shorb is a leading financial literacy expert and creator of Financially Free by 30 Home Study Course. Visit www.FreeBy30.com.

ACTION: Gain financial freedom.

FINANCIAL • THEFT

Identity Theft

Avoid becoming a victim.



by Cindy Dicciani

IDENTITY THEFT IS NOW A BIG concern. Victims feel shock, anger, embarrassment, frustration, and helplessness. You can take four steps to prevent or minimize the effects of ID theft:

1. Guard your Social Security number (SSN). This ID is used to obtain credit from credit cards, credit reports, federal benefits, applications for mortgages, and health care benefits. Don't carry your Social Security card or any other card that uses your SSN on it. Don't let a merchant put your SSN on a check. Legally, merchants are not allowed to ask for it.

2. Don't give personal information to anyone unless you initiate the inquiry. ID thieves trick people into giving them confidential information by claiming to represent legitimate companies or government agencies. Be wary of who you are talking to. Ask them for the name of the company and a supervisor. Investigate to ensure that they are legit before giving them any information.

3. Examine bank-account statements and credit card bills. If your credit card number is stolen, you should see the charges on your credit card bill. If there is a discrepancy on a bill or a bill does not arrive, contact the financial institution immediately. Federal and state laws limit your losses to \$50 per card if you are a victim of ID theft, but you have to prove that you did not make the charges.

4. Review credit reports at least once a year. Ensure that no unauthorized accounts are opened and no changes are

made to your accounts. Also see if the information reported is correct; if there are inaccuracies, file a grievance claim immediately. Credit reporting companies can investigate and correct errors. Being diligent about this process and the documentation will keep ID thieves away from your accounts.

If you become a victim of ID theft, take five steps:

1. Close accounts that you believe have been tampered with. ID thieves move quickly to run up charges.

2. File a criminal report with local police, if you have evidence of fraud. Many creditors require a police report before they will resolve a dispute.

3. Contact the security or fraud departments at the credit card companies. Have a safe list for your credit card

companies in an accessible file. On this spreadsheet, list the company, phone number, your account number, their fraud hot line number, and the last balance from the most recent statement. Take the names and numbers of people with whom you speak.

4. Place a fraud alert on your credit files, making it harder for an ID thief to open any credit accounts in your name. You just have to call a consumer-reporting agency to do this.

5. Follow up on all of your calls with a letter outlining the fraudulent activities. Many companies have a fraud dispute form. Make a copy before mailing this back and keep good records. Send all supporting information in promptly by certified mail.

Keeping good records and being persistent will pay off! **PE**

Cindy Dicciani is a Certified Senior Advisor and Registered Representative with Leigh Baldwin & Company. Email Cindy@taxlegalfinancial.com.

ACTION: Protect yourself against identity theft.



Creative Genius

Cultivate habits to get out of ruts.



by Andrew Pek
and Jeannine
McGlade

OVER A CUP OF TEA IN DUBLIN, OUR client, David confessed to us that he had run out of creative juice, was unable to come up with fresh, new ideas, and was feeling stuck in a rut. Lacking the passion, energy and zest necessary to help him lead his team, he was just going through the motions day-to-day, showing up but not really being there, doing what he had to do but not doing it with joy and passion, getting by but not getting inspired.

When you are feeling like David, it's hard to be excited or look forward to anything. When you don't have much energy left in your creative tank, eventually you simply run out of gas.

At some point, you have likely felt overwhelmed, unmotivated, and stuck. During those times, it's hard to feel creative, come up with new ideas, and meet the challenges of your work and life with a feeling of possibility and passion. With the pace of change, creativity isn't a luxury—it's a survival skill.

Getting out of the rut is simply a matter of finding, nurturing, and experiencing various stimuli as part of your daily routine to keep things fresh and keep you engaged. As you become aware of how you seek and use stimulus to spark your creative genius, you will flourish.

Creative genius is your gift when you are stimulated—full of excitement, energy, ideas, possibilities, and a “can-do” attitude and behavior that communicates anything is possible. This genius brings creative energy into your work, meetings, and interactions with others; works more with imagination than knowledge; and pursues big, bold ideas.

Three Healthy Habits

We have identified several habits that shape your creative genius and give you the stimulus you need to get out of the rut. Here are three of these habits, along with ways of getting started.

Habit 1: Scouting. Imagine yourself drawing inspiration and insights from the world around you each day. The scouting habit forms the backbone of

your creative anatomy. Scouts keep their eyes open and immerse themselves in the experience at hand, much like anthropologists in the field. Scouting is not the time for evaluating, but rather for observing, being absorbed in and recording what it is that you see, hear, and read—not analyzing what those observations may mean. It's all about taking in different stimuli and seeing what sparks happen for you (aha moments that help you seed ideas).

When you're on autopilot, you perpetuate the rut. Sometimes shaking up the routine is exactly what you need to stimulate your creative genius. For example, examine how you get to your work. Likely you take the same mode



of transportation or the same route. How about going via a different way tomorrow? Or, try the bus if you take the train, a car if you take the bus, a bike if you walk? Change it a little. You may see things you haven't seen before and receive a creative spark.

French novelist Marcel Proust said, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” While new landscapes provide rich opportunity within which to scout, often you need only to change the way you look at things. Try this: read a magazine that you normally wouldn't read. When you find yourself getting inspired, capture your thoughts. Review the journal, think about what you wrote and the ideas sparked from what you've written.

Habit 2: Cultivating. Picture a workspace that encourages your creativity. What does it look like? How do you feel when you walk into it? How about other spaces and places that give you energy or make you feel good? How can you cultivate the spaces and places

that will give you the fertile conditions for your creative genius to thrive?

A proper environment is critical to get out of a rut and attract sparks. You don't need a huge budget to rearrange your office furniture or buy a new picture or purchase some plants. This habit of cultivating is about creating, developing and experiencing spaces and places that will help you be in a creative state of mind. If you walk into an environment that makes you feel down, lowers your energy or leaves you uninspired, you can't be in that space and come up with great ideas that you feel passionate about. If you can't do much with your environment or need a change of pace, try getting out and about to a place or space where you can get some energy and a vibe that puts you in the right state of mind for creating. Sometimes simply going to a different space is all you need to feel inspired, get you out of the rut, and activate the creative genius! Or, inspirational music might provide the right “state of mind” for you. What can you do with your environment that will give you more energy and help you access your creative genius?

Habit 3: Playing. Plato was quoted as saying, “You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” How you play tells those you play with a lot about yourself. Sadly you rarely communicate who you are through play because you don't allow yourself to—nor is it typically rewarded or encouraged. At work, few managers consider play to be a legitimate way to spur business results. However, we believe that play is serious business. In fact, your creative genius must have a steady diet of fun. Play is a fast and easy way to get out of the rut. If nothing else, you keep amused. Think back to when you were a child or think about a child. Chances are this child spends more time in a state of play than in any other state. Of course your creativity naturally flourishes in childhood, but who says even with your grown-up responsibilities and rules, you can't have a little fun?

To be more playful, try a new hobby, sport, or food. See how you feel. Watch a funny movie tonight when you get home. Or, bring in a funny movie and watch it with your team instead of having your regular status update meeting.

As you practice these habits, start small. Select one habit and action. Soon your creative genius is sparked, and you are stimulated and out of the rut! PE

Andrew Pek and Jeannine McGlade are authors of Stimulated! Habits to Spark the Creative Genius at Work.

ACTION: Activate your creative genius.

Lessons About Life

Learned from baking cookies.



by Tom Peters

TWO HOURS IN A HOT kitchen can teach you as much about life and management as the latest books. That's my take, anyway, after a bout of cookie baking. Here are 11 lessons for life (and enterprise), fresh from the oven:

1. Engagement. Watching others helps, but you've gotta get your hands dirty. I hadn't made cookies for years, so I observed a friend do a few batches. I thought I was learning something, and I suppose I was—but nothing clicked until my hands were covered with flour. Lesson: Cut the lectures. Get folks involved in "real stuff" very quickly!

2. A plan. I'm not keen on planning, but a time-tested recipe is a godsend. First, it's roughly "right." More important, it gives you the confidence to get started. Lesson: Any plan is a help; it gives you the sense you aren't aimlessly flailing.

3. Art. The plan is an outline—not Holy Writ. Plans, including recipes, are made to be tinkered with—and eventually torn up. Cookie-making, software design, and real-estate lending are art. And it's the artists, not the slavish followers of others' recipes, who land in the world's halls of fame. Lesson: Blind devotion to any plan is downright dumb!

4. Trial and errors. Yes, I'd watched a master at work (or at least a good cook), but in my first hour of hands-on work, with instructions close at hand, I made dozens of mistakes, large and small. In real life, and cookie-making life, error is the fuel that drives you. Lesson: Don't "tolerate" mistakes. Embrace them!

5. The same mistakes. "Mistakes are okay," some concede, "but don't make the same mistake twice." Rubbish! I made the same errors, in something as simple as cookie-making, over and over. Lesson: Nobody ever did anything (interesting) right the first, or 51st, time.

6. A sense of humor. I was awkward at the start (and finish). I turned the kitchen into a mess. Kids and adults laughed at me. Experimentation—the nub of life and business—depends on learning to laugh at yourself. Lesson: Learning is about making a fool of yourself—often in public.

7. Perseverance. An ability to laugh at yourself and suppress your ego is key—but so is steely-eyed determination. Sure it was "just" cookie-making.

But I did want to do it right. Lesson: Winners want to do everything well, and that takes focus and drive.

8. Perfectionism. The kitchen was a mess. Yes, I was the object of ridicule. But mastering one's craft requires nothing less than pain-in-the-butt perfectionism. Most see artists and creative types as scatterbrained. I'm sure there are scatterbrained artists (and bakers), but their work doesn't end up in museums (or cookbooks). Lesson: Creativity and perfectionism are essential handmaidens.

9. Ownership. It was made clear to me: I was responsible for the holiday cookies. There were no backups available—and a long ginger-cookie tradition hung on my frail (i.e., incompetent) shoulders. The monkey was ensconced squarely on my back. So I did the job. Lesson A: No ownership, no passion.

Lesson B: No passion, no perseverance. Lesson C: There is no half ownership.

10. Accountability. When I'd helped with some previous cookie-making (the day before), I'd screwed up the baking time twice. Now I was on my own. That should have made things more difficult. But I was so attuned to the task, I didn't blow it. Lesson: Until you're engaged in all aspects of a job, you don't fully engage.

11. Taste. OK, I'll brag: I made good cookies. Greatness takes practice—and exquisite taste. I may or may not practice more, but I doubt I'll ever become a master baker. Lesson: If we want great products, we need to find, attract, and retain great creators. Period. **PE**

Tom Peters is chairman of the Tom Peters Company and author of Leadership. Call 617-242-5522 or visit www.tompeters.com.

ACTION: Apply these lessons to your profession.

PROFESSIONAL • SUCCESS

Career Success

Achieve meaningful goals.



by Patrick McClure

TO SOME DEGREE, YOUR success—like that of your favorite athlete or team—depends on fans and cheerleaders.

You can increase your odds of setting and meeting meaningful goals and winning your game by using three tips:

1. Find your teammates and build a strong team. Everyone needs a team to

achieve their goals and dreams, so carefully consider who is on your team and why. The people who surround you can bring you ideas, support, inspiration, enthusiasm, and help. Or, they can drag you down with negativity, selfishness, backstabbing, conflict, and stress. You choose who you admit to your "inner circle" of trusted friends and advisors. Discover who would be ideal to recruit for your team. There are powerful, energetic, well-connected people. Find out who they are, where they meet, who they associate with. Become known by them and recruit them to your team.

2. Become a fan and cheerleader. Before you can entice a top recruit to join your team, you must show that you can be trusted and that you will contribute to their team. For example, suppose you just met the CEO of an emerging growth company. You would dearly love to "make the connection"



and have them join your network. After all, they are an ideal prospect, and you can't wait to sell them! The biggest mistake you could make is to immediately begin selling! That will brand you as a "vendor" and a "taker" who will be avoided or dismissed.

You don't want a sale; you want to build a valuable connection for life! So, first build common ground and rapport. Then, find out how you can help them succeed, and take positive action. Know who in your network would be a good connection or an ideal customer or prospect for their business? Next, scan your memory or rolodex and discover who fits the criteria. Arrange to make a mutually beneficial connection. This establishes you as their fan, cheerleader, and trusted advisor.

3. Train your personal cheerleading squad. You earn the right to recruit people to your team and train them to become your cheerleaders by painting a clear picture of what you do and the value you bring to your clients or customers. You can then train your team to deliver your "cheer." If you add value to their lives, they will become your cheerleaders and spread the word about your business. This may take several meetings and much practice. Cheerleading is hard work! Who needs to be added to your team? Who should you be cheering for? Who needs to cheer for you? Recruit an army of fans and cheerleaders.

These proven strategies will change your career and your life! **PE**

Patrick McClure, president of Connexia Group, is author of Precision Selling. Email patrick@connexiagroup.com.

ACTION: Recruit your fans and cheerleaders.

Transfer a Vision

Expand your version of reality.



by Robert Moss

THE GREATEST CRISIS IN YOUR life is a crisis of imagination. You get stuck and set yourself up for failure because you buy into a limited or self-defeating version of reality, and refuse to see your situation differently.

The answer lies within you, in the power of imagination. You are ruled by images; they are the “facts of the mind” that turn you on and off and program your body for wellness or disease. To live a richer, more creative life, you want to learn to *choose* the images to which you give energy and belief. You can do this by learning and harnessing the seven open secrets of imagination:

1. If you can picture your blocks, you can move beyond them. Mandy was terrified of speaking in public, even in front of three people. I asked her if she could *feel* what was blocking her. She could; it felt like a choke collar. I asked if she could see that collar. She saw it as antique lace of the kind her grandmother used to wear. Once she had that image, she was able to release herself from the choke-hold of a family tradition that held that it is the role of women to suffer in silence. When she found an image of her block, Mandy moved beyond it and claimed her voice.

2. The body believes in images, and they can help it to heal and stay well. An image sends electrical sparks through your body. This shows up when brainwaves are recorded by an EEG. At the same time, an image sends a stream of chemicals washing through you. If you dwell on images of grief and failure, you are manufacturing “downers”. If you can shift your mind to a relaxing scene you produce a natural tranquilizer whose chemical structure is similar to Valium. If you summon up images of triumph, you mobilize neuropeptides that boost your immune system. In its internal workings, the body does not seem to distinguish between a strong image and a physical event. There is immense potential for healing here—if you choose to give your focus to positive images that are right for you. Where do you get those images? From happy life memories, and from your dreams, which are a great factory of

customized imagery for self-healing.

3. If you can see your destination, you are better than halfway there. Harriet Tubman saw roads to freedom. She saw them in dreams and visions in which sometimes she was flying like a bird over landscapes she has never seen with ordinary eyes. She led 300 escaping slaves along those roads, guided by her vision maps, and never lost one of her “packages” to the posses and the bloodhounds. You want to grow a vision of possibility. You want to practice seeing and sensing yourself enjoying the fulfillment of your heart’s desires, in your dream home, or your dream job, or with your dream partner or community. If you can grow a vision strongly enough in your inner



senses—and if it is guided by the heart and the gut and not merely the head—then that vision has traction. It helps to pull you toward your destination.

4. The Big Story is hunting you. The Big story—the one that can give you the courage to get through whatever life throws at you—is hunting you. It makes itself known in dreams and through the play of coincidence. You allow it to find you by making a date, preferably seven days a week, with the most important book you’ll ever own: your personal journal. Writing a journal is taking a walk in the bush. The longer you write, the further you get away from safe places and much-traveled roads. You’re now in the wild. And you’re in that state of alert relaxation that is going to encourage something large and powerful that lives in the wild to leap at you from hiding and claim you. That’s how you get your big story, the story that wants to be told and lived through you. You go where it can catch you.

5. There is a place of imagination,

and it is entirely real. There is a place, perhaps many places, that are altogether real. One of these for me is a magical library of which I never tire. Any book in this library opens another world, and master teachers are accessible here. Spend a few minutes, any day, building your home in the imagination—a place where you can rest and relax and get creative ideas or receive healing or have fun with your favorite people. You’ll find this very restorative. The stronger you build your dream place in your mind, the more likely it will manifest.

6. You can transfer a vision to someone in need of a vision. You can grow a vision for someone who needs a vision. After her hysterectomy, Dawn told me she felt “guttled.” I helped her to picture herself inside the blackened, hollowed-out core of an immense California redwood that had survived a forest fire. Despite the gutting, the great tree was *alive*, hurling its green spray towards the sky. Dawn made the redwood image part of her daily meditation, and it took on spontaneous life. She entered the blackened core one day to find it had become the nest of the phoenix, and felt herself rise, on shining wings, from the ashes of her pain and loss. You can transfer a vision one person at a time, or with a group.

7. The stronger the imagination, the less imaginary the results. Imagine that you can make yourself incredibly small and travel inside the body and repair its cells structure and balance its flows from within. Imagine you can travel across time and visit a younger self and provide the counsel and mentorship that younger self needed in a time of ordeal. Imagine you can communicate with yourself on a higher level, get a wiser perspective on your issues, and return with a road map that will get you where you need to go. Imagine that you can reduce pain with your mind. Imagine you can go to a place where you can review your soul’s contract—the set of lessons and tasks you may have agreed to undertake before you came into your life experience—so you can now complete your life mission.

Imagine a workplace that isn’t toxic or stressed because people make space every morning to share dreams and check whether an innovative idea has come to someone in the night.

What you can imagine tends to become *real* in your world. So, imagine peace and healing, and remember: “The stronger the imagination, the less imaginary the results.” PE

Robert Moss is the author of The Three Only Things (New World Library). Visit www.mossdreams.com.

ACTION: Serve others by transferring a vision.

Spirit of Service

Serving yourself serves others.



by Nneka (en-nay-kah)

I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN Trinidad where I was exposed to diverse creeds and cultures. I'm passionate about expressing Spirit in my life through service.

Spirit can be expressed in your finances as infinite supply, in your relationships as unconditional love, and in your body as perfect health. I'm working on aligning my finances, relationships, and health with the nature of Spirit. I'm paying off debt, saving, learning to invest, building a business, being present and loving in my relationships, learning to express my emotions, losing weight, and exercising.

I believe in your ability to govern your life and choose for yourself what is right for you. Something that may work marvelous for me might bring you pain. Always let your conscience be your guide. I have faith that you will choose the best possible outcome for all involved. You are always free to choose what you will have for your life. All the moment-to-moment choices add up.

I believe in having options and seeking life balance. God's Spirit courses through our lives and abides everywhere. Divinity lies within all people. I encourage you to discover your Divinity and find unique ways to express it.

Service to self and service to others are the threads woven in the tapestry of life. They make life colorful and strong.

Service to Self and Others

Words like *selfish*, *self-absorbed*, and *narcissistic* might come to mind when you think about serving yourself. So how does serving yourself serve others?

1. Your positive change inspires others. When you change for the better, people notice the difference. You may smile more, or lose weight, or be a more loving spouse. You begin to teach people—through your life example.

2. You gain greater capacity. As you become healthier, improve relationships, or get more organized, you gain greater ability to give to the world. You'll feel nourished and able to give from excess.

3. You experience oneness. As you become healthier, more loving, more centered, you radiate love and peace.

How does serving others serve you?

1. You gain perspective on your life.

You begin to appreciate all that you have in your life. For example, when you serve food at the Shelter, your extra weight starts looking like a good thing. Or when you're tutoring a young boy with learning disabilities who is struggling to read 1st grade books in the 5th grade, your problems seem to dissipate.

2. You open yourself to opportunities. Opportunities open up to you as you share with others. You gain a sense of gratitude and joy from helping neighbors and building your community. You may find that optimism in the child you are tutoring is contagious.

3. Giving alerts you to resources you didn't know you had. Serving homeless people, for example, might prompt you

to save more or become more financially literate. You learn that many things you think of as necessities are luxury items.

4. Service enables you to practice being present. Serving removes the focus from your life to the activity at hand. It temporarily interrupts the chatter of "not good enough", or "I need more", or "I want". Serving brings you to the moment. You can let your true spirit shine.

The greatest gift you can give is service. You feel more centered, fulfilled, healthy, loving, and happy when you share your gifts of love with the world. **PE**

Nneka is the founder of the Balanced Life Center. Visit www.balancedlifecenter.com.

ACTION: Engage in service to self and others.

Service to Others

Practice unselfish kindness.



by Bill Maxwell

IN ADDITION TO STRIVING TO achieve personal success, go out and serve others. By this, I do not mean doing a deed in return for an equal or similar deed. I'm talking about unselfish kindness and generosity, acts that validate your good fortune, that give meaning to your lives and, above all, that sustain and dignify the lives of others.

No positive acts are insignificant, and no person in need of assistance is too lowly for your time and attention.

Unselfish service is marked by humility, a hard-to-find trait in this age of egoism, so-called individualism and incivility. More often than not, too many of us are guilty of the latter.

George Rupp, then-president of Columbia University, once told graduates to become committed community volunteers, to try to comprehend "the need to revitalize our common life as a necessary part of individualism."

Dot Richardson, an orthopedic surgeon and Olympic softball gold medalist, asked graduates not to squander the "moments in your life when you can make a difference in the lives of others." After winning her medal, she brought it to the children's hospital in Los Angeles where she placed it around the neck of each child there. "I wanted to make sure that each kid got to wear that medal."

As a father, grandfather and citizen of this great country, one of my con-

cerns is the increasing strife and indifference among young people of various races, ethnic groups and religions. Here again, service is important. As you enter the workplace as professionals, reach out in kindness and understanding to people unlike yourself.

Do not simply chat with others around the water cooler. Find time to regularly have dinner with colleagues of other ethnicities. Invite colleagues of different ethnic backgrounds to explore new areas of your rich cultural, social, and historical life.

These efforts are part of community service. They foster enlightenment, civility, and democratic values. Treat the workplace as an extension of communi-

ty life, including churches, civic organizations, and sports teams. Always seek ways to share your good fortune.

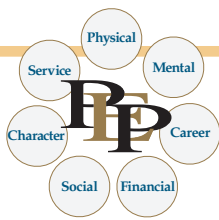
If you have graduated from a fine school, with a degree that will open doors, you are a privileged person. You have a moral obligation to serve others. Merely accumu-

lating wealth is not enough. You need to invent, produce, create, and deliver goods and services that make life better for the greatest number of people.

If you have a brilliant mind, use it to teach others, feed hungry people, find cures for fatal diseases, work *pro bono* for the poor, empower children to attend college, tutor children, help illiterate adults. As you serve, you fulfill your purpose and add meaning to life. Service to others ennoble you. It gives you moral authority. So, use your good fortune to serve others. **PE**

Bill Maxwell was a columnist for the St. Petersburg Times and professor of journalism at Stillman College. E-mail bmaxwell@sptimes.com.

ACTION: Use your resources to serve others.



GOAL GETTERS



The more purposefully engaged you are in helping others, the deeper, finer and more memorable is your life.

You may be busily marking tasks off your “to do” list but are you creating your “to be” list? The only way to create and execute on a meaningful “to be” list is to also have a “stop doing” list.

Aristotle said: “Excellence is not an art. It is a habit.” We can’t be excellent half of the time and be in a comfort zone the other half. We’re either excellent or we’re not.

Good habits are hard to develop, but they’re easy to live with. Bad habits are easy to develop but hard to live with. Excellence is a habit. Stewardship is a habit. Philanthropy is a habit. These habits touch people. They plant seeds of greatness in the lives of others. They create your legacy in a lasting and authentic way. The best legacies are innocent by-products of a life lived well and a heart overflowing with tender love. Seek not fans, fame, and fortune, but instead faith, family, and friends.

I want it to matter that I lived—not for personal gain but for the need of knowing that when God breathed in my nostrils and gave me life, He intended for me to use it well. To help a person. To light a candle. To build fires so others can warm themselves. To dig wells so others can quench their thirst. To construct strong bridges so others can travel across them. Enlightened self-interest should inspire you to do good and be good so you can be more, have more, give more!

—Nido Qubein, president, High Point University, www.nidoqubein.com



Before you take action, determine your outcome: What do you want to produce; what are you trying to accomplish?

What results are your actions leading toward? What goal is governing why you’re doing what you’re doing?

Before you act, say to yourself, “I know exactly what I’m doing here. I know why I’m doing it; I am dedicated to the specific result. With every fiber of my being, I

commit to produce a personal victory result. I use my full effort and power to advance myself and produce a clear and decisive embodiment of success. I now strive to bring forth results clearly demonstrating my total commitment to excellence, to purpose, and to my tenacious commitment to win!”

Filled with this self-reinforcing purpose and conviction, start taking targeted action—and keep up your efforts until you’re done with what you’re doing. Applying this approach before engaging any life-advancing action will keep you emotionally connected with the commitment to win, and bring out your best efforts and results.

—Peter Siegel, www.incrediblechange.com



Everyone can be a leader, exercise leadership traits, and develop leadership qualities.

A leader instills a passion and daring that gives others the courage to act. A leader breaks new paths into unfamiliar territory, recognizes a problem before it turns into an emergency, is reasonable and calm, submerges himself or herself in the fountain of the people, implements noble ideas, is practical and a realist, is a visionary and an idealist, and, sometimes, is the wave pushed ahead by the ship! Many qualities of leadership apply not just to those who are in recognizable, appointed, usurped or elected positions of power, but also to those outside the realm of formal authority. Leadership qualities can be learned and practiced by all who wish to be achievers. You need to ask: How do I get things done when I’m not in charge? How do I motivate others when I have no formal authority? Although structures and hierarchies exist, you can practice leadership competencies and have influence, regardless of your position, power, title, job, or rank. Real leadership is not about authority, positions of power. It’s about listening, valuing, following advice, bringing people together for a common goal and vision, and sharing a passion for excellence.

—Lilya Wagner, lwagner@counterpart.org or www.counterpart.org

PersonalCOACH



Power of One

Achieve your main goal.

by Michelle LaBrosse

INSTEAD OF MAKING A LONG LIST OF RESOLUTIONS this year, focus on just one—the one resolution that can make the biggest difference.

What is that resolution for you? Think about the one thing that gnaws at you most. Maybe it’s a dream or a goal that you catch yourself thinking about, but then you put off. Or maybe you don’t know where to begin? Here are five tips to get you started:

1. Make your resolution actionable. Don’t make your goals and resolutions too broad. Plans need milestones, and they need to be measurable. Break your resolution down into 12 months, and develop a milestone for each month. When you can see your goal monthly, it’s less overwhelming. “The best thing about the future is that it only comes one day at a time,” said Abraham Lincoln

2. Inspire yourself. What inspires you? Motivational quotes or photos or images that remind you of your goal? Use what inspires you and tap into that inspiration daily. “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams,” said Eleanor Roosevelt.

3. Aim high. I believe in “big, hairy, audacious goals.” You can meet little goals in a day. Big ones take your perseverance and passion. The power of one enables you to choose a large goal that will have a lot of impact. “In the long run, men hit only what they aim at; therefore, they had better aim at something high,” said Henry David Thoreau.

4. Cultivate an attitude of success. In the lives of successful people, you’ll find one consistent thread: They believe in themselves and have an attitude of success. Many people secretly don’t believe they can accomplish something—which is why they never try. If you cultivate an attitude of success, success will follow. “If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude,” wrote Maya Angelou.

5. Practice random acts of kindness. It’s easy today to feel disconnected and to feel like everything is too big for one person to have an impact. When your goal feels too big or you feel too small, do one simple act of kindness, and you’ll quickly be reminded of the power of one. “If you can’t feed 100 people, then feed just one,” said Mother Teresa.

When you achieve your goal, reward yourself with something that matters to you. Make the reward as exciting as the journey. PE

Michelle LaBrosse is Chief Cheetah of Cheetah Learning. Visit www.cheetahlearning.com.

ACTION: Focus on just one resolution.

Greatest Secret

Love and serve others well.



by Marc Allen

THERE ARE NO SECRETS—JUST truths and powerful laws of creation that remain hidden from our awareness until we're ready to hear them. The *law of manifestation* is just as concrete as the laws of physics; in fact, the law of manifestation incorporates the laws of physics and chemistry: We have the power within us to clearly imagine what we wish to achieve. The more often we focus our thoughts on our dreams and goals, the closer we come to realizing those dreams.

The law is simple. This is one reason why so few people understand it. I'm telling you the secret in the best way I can. But for it to work in your life, you need to put it in your words. How do you understand and describe the simple yet profound law of manifestation?

We are powerful creative beings. When we focus our subconscious mind on a goal, our limitless subconscious mind gets to work and shows us the way, step by step, to attain our goal. Find your own words to describe the secret of manifestation, and watch it work in your life.

Of course there are far greater secrets than the law of manifestation: the secrets of a life well-lived, the secrets of happiness and inner peace, the secrets of a life of ease and fulfillment, a miraculous life, a sacred life.

Here is the greatest secret of all, in my words—take it in, and then express it your own words. We have a great purpose in life—a great mission, vocation, and calling. We are here to grow, to evolve, to reach our full potential and contribute to the betterment of the world.

This is what has remained a secret for most of humanity: You are far greater than you think you are. Your potential is vast. You have just barely begun to realize who you are and what you are capable of. You have had just brief glimpses of the far more expansive possibilities that are within your reach.

Your task, then, is to discover your unique contribution to the world and let it shine. When you do it, you help others do it as well, and the light grows and grows, until it becomes a powerful force for change in your life and in the world.

There are three simple things you can do to realize the greatest secret of all in our lives: Love, serve, and remember.

Remember what? Remember to love and serve, always. Love overcomes fear. Love rises above fear and opens you up to a higher awareness. Love opens the gates of heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is within. Remember who you are: a child of God, part of a miraculous creation. Remember that love finds the perfect partnership in all you do.

To love is to respect and cherish all of creation, and to rise above fear and the need to control, to rise above domination and exploitation into endlessly creative partnerships with all. You choose the cup of life instead of the sword of fear. In the words of Riane Eisler, you choose the chalice, not the blade.

As Ramana Maharshi said: "The end of all wisdom is love." This is not just great moral advice, something to do

because you want to be good. This is the practical key that opens the doors to a new life, and shows you the great view from the top of the pyramid of humanity.

In all you do, love and serve yourself and others. This is the secret that guides you every moment to create the life of your dreams and a world that works for all. This is the end of every path of study, every worthwhile philosophy.

This is the greatest secret: Loving and serving yourself and others is the key to fulfillment, happiness, and inner peace.

You know the secret now. Act on it, and live it. Together, we can discover how to live the life of our dreams. **PE**

Marc Allen is a speaker, entrepreneur, and author of The Greatest Secret of All (New World Library). Visit www.newworldlibrary.com or call 800-972-6657.

ACTION: *Live the life of your dreams.*

SPIRITUAL • CONVERSION

My Conversion

Suddenly I was a new man.



by Selwyn Hughes

BEFORE MY CONVERSION, I'D felt a longing to know God in the way my parents seemed to know him, but I was afraid to pursue it in case I might be disappointed.

Before my 16th birthday, God began to move in my life in a powerful way. One night in 1944, I was going to the local dance hall. It was about 8 p.m., and the route to the hall was past the local mission hall and the prayer meeting. As I walked the streets, I heard a familiar voice—the voice of my father. I stopped and listened as he prayed for me, pleading with God for my salvation.

I'd heard my father pray many times, but never with such passion. His voice penetrated deep into my heart. Some-thing inside me wanted

to rush into the meeting and say I wanted to be saved. But I waited, and the feeling passed. I went to the dance, but the lights appear-ed less bright; some-thing was missing in the music; the place seemed changed. God was calling me, and giving me a new perspective.

The weeks that followed were difficult. The more I threw myself into the pleasures of the flesh, the less satisfying they were to my soul. I turned from one to the other, but they seemed not to thrill me as much as they once did.

For weeks I fought against the strivings of the Spirit. Things came to a head

on a stormy Sunday night in February 1944. I went to church with my parents, but with so much rain, no one expected the guest preacher to turn up (he lived six miles away, and to get to us meant a tortuous bicycle ride over the mountain). As the service began, I saw him walk in.

Something about that night's service that was different. I was drawn to what the preacher was saying. His words seemed to have some powerful conviction that reached deep into my soul. His face radiated a strange light. His words reached deep into my soul: "Come to Jesus, who will save you from your sin. He will give you the power to serve him." Tears were coming into my eyes. The preacher asked those of us who were ready to commit ourselves to Jesus Christ to walk to the front. I was the first to move.

As I moved forward, my pastor greeted and embraced me. I sobbed as I knelt at the front of the church and asked God to forgive my sins. I received the assurance that my sins were forgiven. I went home, where my parents rejoiced with me. I

knew I must break with lying, cheating, stealing, gambling, smoking cigarettes, and swearing. I have never smoked or used a swear word since.

Some people baited and teased me, but as the days passed and they saw I was serious, their respect for me grew. Some of the men would ask me to include them in my prayers as they struggled with difficulties in their lives. I started praying that I might make some difference to the world. **PE**

Selwyn Hughes is the author of My Story (CWR).

ACTION: *Live your own conversion story.*

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