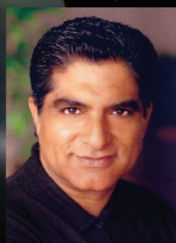


# STEPPING STONES *to* SUCCESS

EXPERTS SHARE STRATEGIES  
FOR MASTERING BUSINESS,  
LIFE, & RELATIONSHIPS



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STEPPING  
STONES  
*to* SUCCESS

EXPERTS SHARE STRATEGIES  
FOR MASTERING BUSINESS,  
LIFE, & RELATIONSHIPS

# *Stepping Stones to Success*

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Published in the United States by

INSIGHT PUBLISHING

Sevierville, Tennessee • [www.insightpublishing.com](http://www.insightpublishing.com)

ISBN 978-1-60013-537-8

Cover Design: Emmy Shubert

Interior Format & Design: Chris Ott

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*Disclaimer:* This book is a compilation of ideas from numerous experts who have each contributed a chapter. As such, the views expressed in each chapter are of those who were interviewed and not necessarily of the interviewer, Insight Publishing or the other contributing authors.



# *A Message from the Publisher*

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There are many things I've come to understand throughout the many years I have been in this business. I've learned that it's never too late to grow and learn, to change course, to expand perspectives, and to admit I don't know everything.

Because I know it's important to learn from the experience of others, I reached out to many experts when putting this book project together and I gained some valuable information from them. The people I talked with have presented some insights that will expand your horizons and make you realize that you can be the key to your own success.

This book, *Stepping Stones to Success*, is your golden opportunity to profit from the knowledge of others. It will give you the facts you need to make important decisions about your future.

Interviewing these fascinating people was a unique learning experience for me. And I assure you that reading this book will be an exceptional learning experience for you.

—David Wright

The interviews presented in  
*Stepping Stones to Success*  
are conducted by David Wright,  
President and Founder of  
International Speakers Network  
and Insight Publishing.



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## CHAPTER ONE

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### Using Your Inherent Power as a Stepping Stone to Success

An Interview with . . . **Lu Vorise Dahlman**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Lu Vorise Dahlman. Ms. Dahlman is Founder and President of the LVD group where she coaches and recruits individuals and groups with creative and empowering techniques, which is rare in corporate America. She is an out-of-the-box thinker who encourages others to look deeply within to discover their inner talents and core strengths. Her captivating interactions leave individuals and groups highly motivated with a renewed mind and focused vision. She has a contagious energy that draws out the best in her clients.

Ms. Dahlman, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

LU VORISE DAHLMAN (DAHLMAN)

Thank you, I'm glad to be here.

WRIGHT

How would you define your inner strength as it relates to dealing with adversity?

DAHLMAN

My inner strength is the ethos and essence of my spirit that brings forth the resiliency in my being when all the circumstances of a situation say “Give Up.” These are times when I so desperately want to give up on life and my personal and professional goals because everything that can go wrong has gone wrong. Just when I think I can’t go on, there is the *I am* at the core of my being that says, “Yes you can—you’re bigger than these circumstances! Get up and get moving!”

WRIGHT

Would you share with our readers some challenges you have had and where your inner strength played a major role in carrying you through tough circumstances?

DAHLMAN

In 2001, I was in the process of building my dream home when I lost my job. I went from six figures to zero in fifteen minutes and was wondering what just happened. I had recently sold my current residence and had literally handed over the keys to the new buyer. I was due to close the next week on the new house, only to get back to my office and find out that my entire staff and I had been laid off!

It was absolutely devastating to me because I had put down a large sum of money. The money was eventually forfeited due to my not being able to meet the contract obligations to close on the purchase of the new home. I no longer qualified for the loan because I had become unemployed. I could not get my previous home back, because I had just closed on the sale. So, I went from a beautiful, spacious home to living in a seven-hundred-square-foot apartment. I had to keep the majority of my personal furnishings and clothes in a storage locker for two years. It was like being a homeless vagabond. I went through months of

depression and some days couldn't even get out of bed. I guess you could say I had also completely lost my faith in God.

During this time, my mother was my pillar of strength. I remember calling her crying and feeling sorry for myself when she said to me, "I taught you better and when did you start equating your self-worth with material possessions? When did my daughter become a materialistic girl? God doesn't equate your self-worth with degrees and materialism so, why do you?"

What I realized during this experience, and in the thought-provoking questions my mother asked me, is that I had made the material world my source instead of relying on my God spirit, which is my higher power. Everything that my mother had ever taught me about believing in myself, knowing who I am, and owning my inherent power has given me the inner strength to get up and get moving when I didn't think I had the ability to do so. That's the resiliency of that inner strength that moves within all of us, if we allow it, and knowing we are the creators of our world and not our circumstances.

#### WRIGHT

So what are your core values and do you believe they played a role in shaping your demeanor when going through devastating circumstances?

#### DAHLMAN

Absolutely. And this is what I will share with you: I believe from a socialization point we have those "should have" values that are passed on from our parents and society. However, as we go out into the world, grow, and mature, we develop our own set of values based upon our life experiences that really shape who we are as a person and influence the decisions we make in our life.

For instance, my core values are: Spirituality, Authenticity, Diversity of Thought, and Freedom of Choice. These values are instilled within me and keep me moving. When adverse circumstances seem to indicate that I can't make a situation happen, the inner spirit that encompasses these values within me says, "Oh, yes I can and I will make it happen." Your values give you direction and focus.

WRIGHT

So what would you like to share with those around you who are going through some challenging circumstances, to get them through?

DAHLMAN

I would tell them that we all have prosperous and dry seasons in life and we must recognize the season we are in and take advantage of it. In good seasons, savor what you have and make the most of all your opportunities with wisdom. Doing so will make the dry seasons more tolerable.

I would also share with them that there is no such thing as a “normal life”—there is just life. We live in an ever-changing world and nothing is static.

WRIGHT

In your core values, you mentioned authenticity. What does that mean in your life?

DAHLMAN

To me, authenticity is being true to yourself and understanding who you are as a person—your core strength, your beliefs, and your value systems. These are what make you uniquely you. As much as I'd like to be Halle Berry, I'm not—I'm Lu Vorise Dahlman. I have my own unique innate abilities that were given to me from birth and based upon these gifts, I was created to fill a place that only I can fill and no other. We as individuals need to own our own inherent power and not let the world's perception of us become our reality. You must “Think as though you are and you shall be.” There is never a need to compete, only to create. Your unique talents are the source of your authenticity.

WRIGHT

You refer to yourself as a visionary leader. In what way are you a visionary and do you have a vision for yourself?

DAHLMAN

Oh, absolutely. My visionary leadership encompasses an intuitiveness to see beyond just what is in front and back of me. For example, I see the current

demographic changes that are taking place within the United States and how they are going to affect the way traditional business paradigms will have to change to stay marketable to clients and even to recruit talent.

There are more women entrepreneurs than ever before, in particular, African American women. We currently have an influx of immigrants and entrepreneurship is the norm for them—they are more entrepreneurially minded.

My visionary leadership also sees a return to entrepreneurship for most Americans due to the current state of the economy and the collapse of major corporations. To me, being a visionary leader is seeing the changing trends and being in sync with the flow of them, however, neither in the front nor in the back of them. My personal vision is to use my voice to communicate, educate, and inspire inner spirituality, authenticity, diversity of thought, and freedom of choice for humanity through my storytelling, poems, and personal coaching.

#### WRIGHT

So how important is it for individuals to have a vision for themselves and to understand their values when they're going through adverse circumstances?

#### DAHLMAN

I will quote Dr. Miles Monroe who said, “When you do not understand a purpose of a thing, abuse is inevitable.” “Abuse” is a term that is actually made up of two words—“abnormal use.” If a person does not understand who he or she is as a person and what his or her core values are, then abuse is inevitable.

What this means to me is that we will engage in activities and make decisions that are not in alignment with our vision and values; doing this takes us further away from where we want to go. We all should have a vision and a flexible plan as to where we would like to go and how to get there.

For example, if I want to get to A, will the current activities I'm doing and the decisions I'm making get me there? Or will my decisions and activities take me further away from my goal of reaching A? If my decisions and activities don't align with where I want to go and with the vision I have, then I won't make it. However, if the activities and decisions get me closer to my goal of A and aligns with where I

want to go in my life, then I must make those decisions and do those activities that will take me there.

From a business perspective of having a vision, I like to use the example of Gap Inc. The corporation's original vision for their clothing line had been built around khaki pants, white shirts, and blue jeans products. They lost sight of their original vision and started carrying other product lines; they almost went broke until they went back to the original vision and purpose for their business.

Whether it is a person or corporation, we all should have a vision and a flexible plan to get us there.

#### WRIGHT

You know, somebody told me a long time ago if you're walking down the road and you see a turtle sitting on top of a fence post, you can believe he didn't get up there by himself.

In this present day and time, who are the people you admire? Will you name some people who have had an influence and helped you in your life?

#### DAHLMAN

I would say first of all my mother, Alberta Johnson, has had a profound influence on my life. She was so wise, witty, and smart.

The second person whom I adore tremendously is Maya Angelou. Maya Angelou speaks from the heart in that true essence of faith, courage, and wisdom in knowing who you are in your own inherent power. I absolutely love her for that.

The third person is Condoleezza Rice. I admire her for her strategic acumen and sheer intelligence.

#### WRIGHT

Sound like three good ones.

I know you've been interviewed a lot throughout your career and I was wondering, what's the worst question you've ever been asked?

DAHLMAN

Having a human resources background, I can tell you that one of the worst questions interviewers ask is: where do you see yourself in five years? Why put a time limit on yourself? After all, half a second can change your life and we all know that life—personal or professional—is not static. A better question would be, what is the vision you have for yourself in fulfilling your current role and how does it relate to your environment? This question is better in my opinion because it allows the space to speak to the vision that a person would like to create and have to live beyond themselves.

WRIGHT

LV, I know you're a big advocate for women; what advice would you give to women struggling to find themselves and their inner strength, whether it's in a job, relationship, or entrepreneurship?

DAHLMAN

What I would say to women struggling with a job, a relationship, or in entrepreneurship, is to find and own your inherent power. Know who you are and where you are going and make decisions based upon your vision and values. I also ask that they stand up for what they believe. The most important thing for a woman is to listen to the still small intuitive voice inside of her and follow through. Intuitively, we all know what to do, the problem is just doing it.

WRIGHT

What are a couple of your favorite quotes and would you tell our readers why?

DAHLMAN

I'm going to have to go back to Maya Angelou who said, "When people show you who they are, believe them the first time." People make known who they are by their behavior. It all goes back to knowing your voice, knowing who you are, and trusting your instincts, especially when it comes to interacting with other people.

My second favorite quote is: "Power moves but is never moved." This is because power is inherent and implied when you understand it. And there is no greater



power than inherent power, which is your personal power as the unique being you are. When you know your power, you can move but not be moved.

WRIGHT

So what words of encouragement would you leave for those struggling through tough times?

DAHLMAN

First of all, I would tell them to own their own inherent power and know that they are where they are supposed to be at any given time based upon the decisions they have made in the past and present. You can only demonstrate where you are mentally—you can't think one thing and produce another.

The key is to understand who you are and where you want to go. You have to stay focused. I'm not saying that there will not be challenges. At times you might have to adapt and change your approach, however, you have to stay focused, whether it's pursuing the presidency and/or being the best mother in the world.

WRIGHT

With your job there at LVD Group, you coach and recruit individuals. You also coach groups with your empowering techniques. What is it that you do for them? Are you available for them all the time? Do you go to them? Just what do you do?

DAHLMAN

It is really based upon my clients' needs. If they would like to do one-on-one, or face-to-face, I'm available to accommodate them. The coaching sessions can be via phone conference, cyber-coaching, or in person.

WRIGHT

And you help them make decisions?

DAHLMAN

As a coach, I believe that clients have the answers within themselves. My mission is to keep clients focused on reaching their vision and goals by asking thought-provoking questions and holding them accountable for doing what they

say they're going to do. If by engaging in these activities with my clients I assist them in making decisions, then I suppose I do help them make decisions. Ultimately, however, their decisions are their own.

WRIGHT

What's the most difficult thing you have to do? Let's say you're coaching me and I'm really not following through on your advice. What's the most difficult thing you have to go through?

DAHLMAN

I think being honest and saying, "Hey, Mr. [or Ms.] Client, this is what you asked me to do; this is what you hired me to do, however, we're doing X, Y, and Z. So I have to tell you right now that this is not working. So, how do we get back to being focused? My mission is your mission."

WRIGHT

Coaching must be tough.

DAHLMAN

Those of us in the profession know that you can't measure your success or that of your clients in the coaching relationship if we do not set and manage expectations. As a coach, if you set and manage a client's expectations, then the coaching experience will not be difficult because both parties understand the expectations and parameters of the coaching relationship.

WRIGHT

Well, I would be remiss if I didn't ask you this final question. The title of this book is *Stepping Stones to Success*; would you define what you think success is?

DAHLMAN

I think about success in terms of doing the things that you want to do and being in alignment with the vision and goals that you set for yourself. True success

and fulfillment comes from being where you want to be and owning your own time.

WRIGHT

That really does make sense.

I really appreciate all this time you've taken with me this afternoon to answer these questions. As I thought in the very beginning, if I were one of your clients I think I would be in good hands. I have really learned a lot here today about coaching and about inner strengths.

DAHLMAN

Glad to be available to you.

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Lu Vorise Dahlman, "LV," who is Founder and President of the LVD Group. She coaches and recruits individuals and groups with creative and empowering techniques that, as I think we've found out here today, are rare to corporate America.

LV, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

DAHLMAN

Thank you, David.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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LU VORISE DAHLMAN is Founder and President of the LVD group where she coaches and recruits individuals and groups with creative and empowering techniques, which is rare in corporate America. She is an out-of-the-box thinker who encourages others to look deeply within to discover their inner talents and core strengths. Her captivating interactions leave individuals and groups highly motivated with a renewed mind and focused vision. She has a contagious energy that draws out the best in her clients.



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## CHAPTER TWO

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### Overcoming Anxiety on Your Journey to Success

An Interview with . . . **Joanna Cameron**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking with the English-born, Joanna Cameron, who has a doctorate in Clinical Hypnotherapy and is an instructor of NeuroLinguistic Programming (NLP) and hypnosis. She is a member of the American Board of Hypnotherapy. Based on ten years of experience as a hypnotherapist in Mclean, Virginia, she will be shortly publishing her first book, *Forget Diets, Plant Tomatoes: A Metaphoric, Hypnotic Journey to Heal Emotional Eating*. In *Stepping Stones to Success*, Dr. Cameron will focus on how to use your mind to conquer stress. She believes in the power of the mind to heal the body and teaches change techniques to her clients, college students, and corporations. As the “Trance Lady,” she performs as a comic hypnotist for high schools, colleges, and corporations, and works with the Innovators Group Inc., as a keynote speaker. Her energy and

enthusiasm are communicated to every audience. She looks forward to working with the U.S. Army on upcoming shows in different parts of the world.

Dr. Cameron, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

JOANNA CAMERON (CAMERON)

Well, thank you.

WRIGHT

What's wrong with anxiety? Can't I use anxiety as a motivating factor?

CAMERON

Challenges, deadlines, and obstacles can indeed motivate you. However, anxiety is what causes your mind to race, to keep saying: "What if—?" If you *continually* use anxiety to motivate you, I would suggest you find another way. The trouble with anxiety is "the baggage." Sleep problems, raising your voice at a family member, binge eating, drinking, smoking cigarettes, nail-biting, hair-pulling, or other unwanted habits are all unsuccessful strategies for dealing with anxiety. Feeling anxious can be a trigger for an unwanted behavior that leaves the sufferer feeling worse, shameful, and then repeating the same behavior. Anxiety is like a dog chasing its tail. What are your strategies I wonder? Are they successful or do they make you fat, drunk, unhealthy, nervous, and unhappy?

Here's the deal—if you are anxious, you are not focused on what you want. Successful people have strategies for dealing with anxiety so they can focus on doing those things that make them happy and successful. What you really have in life is "the present." Consciously we've labeled this *time*. How are you going to maximize the use of your time to lead a successful, passionate, purpose-driven life? Unsuccessful strategies rob you of valuable time.

The goal of this chapter is to help *you* to understand anxiety, let go of unsuccessful strategies of dealing with it, set goals for the future, and learn *how* to be really "present" in your life. When you are fully functioning in the *now*, you are peaceful, relaxed, and living your life at its fullest. Through self-hypnosis and the release of negative beliefs, anyone can overcome anxiety and concentrate on his or her goals. Self-hypnosis is not an exotic process. We all have the ability to do this.

WRIGHT

It sounds like we're in for an exciting and profitable journey. So how does anxiety feel, and why do we get anxious if it carries so much baggage?

CAMERON

Well, let me give you an example. Let's suppose that you are a Masai warrior in the Serengeti and you hear a rustling outside your mud hut in the middle of the night. You can actually smell the lion. You grab your spear. The hormones, adrenaline, and cortisol seep through your body and the blood flows away from your stomach to your arms and legs. Your heart beats faster and your breathing deepens. You sweat! Your pupils dilate. The moment slows. You are ready to protect your family or run away to protect yourself. This is the so called "fight-or-flight" response. It served primitive man well when the primary issue was survival.

Today, however, the lions are replaced by computers that freeze, traffic that comes to a grinding halt, miserable bosses, phone systems devoid of humans, and all the nuisances of everyday life. These, plus other modern-day aggravations keep us revved up and prepared for "battle."

Anxiety feels like a dripping faucet that needs fixing—an internal grind or an alarm that won't turn off. Many of my clients do not realize that they are anxious, and what is perhaps more important is that they have a choice in the matter. They can fix the faucet, and turn off the internal grind and the alarm. Anxiety actually is a lack of focus. It's your own self talk. Anxiety is a sign that you're not present in the *now*. When you are present and focused, anxiety is gone. You actually feel focused and relaxed.

WRIGHT

So what is anxiety at the physiological level of your body?

CAMERON

Okay, your body has a central nervous system composed of your brain and spinal cord (with connected nerves). We've all had the experience of being tapped on the knee in the doctor's office, and the knee moves upward in an involuntary fashion. This is a simple nervous connection from the knee to your spinal cord.



You have another, slower information system that transmits emotional information. This is what is loosely called the “limbic system,” which is composed of glands at the top of your spinal cord in the most primitive part of your brain. These glands include the amygdala, the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, and several others. When you feel anxious, emotional information is sent to every cell in the body by nervous secretions, called neurotransmitters. All of the cells in your body receive this information.

Anxiety is not just in your brain, it’s in your gastrointestinal tract, your pupils, and every part of your body. When the fight-or-flight response is triggered, you produce dopamine (along with cortisol and adrenaline) that revs you up like a shot of caffeine. It activates your system.

It may then take you a while to calm down as your body changes over to the production of serotonin (you could say serotonin is a close relative of Sarah Palin, who is a mood-changer in her own right! Now, I’m just kidding, David!) Serotonin relaxes you, focuses your thoughts, lowers your blood pressure, slows your breathing, and calms you down. If you have chronic anxiety, then you are very good at producing dopamine and you need help in manufacturing serotonin.

I know what you’re thinking—“Why don’t I just purchase some serotonin over the counter?” The answer is simple. Your body is much better at regulating its own neurotransmitters or emotional information. When you take a pill, it affects every cell in your body. If you ever have taken a pain pill, you have mercifully felt relief from the pain but then you’re constipated. Oh dear! Keep reading because I will soon talk about ways to take control of anxiety by taking control of your mood. Yes, you can change your thoughts, produce more serotonin, and change your mood at the same time.

In addition to the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin produced by the hypothalamus and amygdala, the pituitary gland sends a message to the adrenal glands, which in turn release the hormones cortisol and adrenaline during the fight-or-flight response. Both hormones mobilize the body to produce glucose or sugar, providing needed energy to resist the stressor and, in the process, stimulate other processes that, when *continually activated*, unfortunately accelerate aging of the body and accumulation of body fat in the stomach area. Continued production

of cortisol weakens the adrenal glands—they basically “run out of gas.” The unfortunate person will experience symptoms of chronic anxiety.

The problem is not the response of the body—the problem is how to turn off the perception of stress. I define “stress” as the elements outside of your body and anxiety as those processes within your body. The good news is that we have a choice with stress. What one person defines as stressful is “water off a duck’s back” to another. How do we turn off the tap? How do we reset the stress button so we can produce serotonin and feel relaxed?

#### WRIGHT

So what are the symptoms of chronic anxiety?

#### CAMERON

Let’s start with belly fat. Those fat bellies are actually stores of fat in the liver that prevent the liver from removing insulin. So, insulin levels rise, causing heart attacks, increased possibility of stroke, more abdominal obesity, and eventually diabetes.

Persistent headaches, muscle tension, heart palpitations, hot flashes, jumpiness, irritability, tearfulness, and insomnia are likely symptoms of chronic anxiety. The latter can trigger irrational fears, phobias, and panic attacks and even obsessive-compulsive disorders. (I had a client, who would leave her home and then repeatedly return, convinced that she had left the stove on.)

During the stress response, blood is shuffled away from the intestines, as it is needed elsewhere. Digestion of food comes to a halt. This is the reason that gastrointestinal complaints are ubiquitous with chronic anxiety resulting in diarrhea, nausea, and irritable bowel syndrome. (Nobody feels good when their intestines are out of whack!) Also, it is estimated that about 20 to 30 percent of people with anxiety disorders suffer from depression. So, if you have a persistent low mood, have difficulty functioning, and getting out of bed, it is important that you see your medical doctor. There are short-term medications that can lift your mood while you learn the other techniques that are mentioned here.

Chronic anxiety lowers your immunity so sufferers are more susceptible to colds and flu. Because of the continued activation of the stress hormones, the

disease-fighting cells (like white blood cells), are getting the message to be dormant or stop fighting because the body is concentrated on mobilization rather than growth and protection. Your ability to deal with anxiety will likely affect how long you live.

So, I hope I have your attention as we consider further how anxiety is generated and maintained.

#### WRIGHT

Why is an understanding of “the unconscious mind” important in controlling anxiety?

#### CAMERON

The term “unconscious mind” is the same as “subconscious mind.” Your unconscious mind is simply what is out of consciousness at any given moment. Your conscious mind is what you are aware of right now; it is generally agreed that you can handle about seven bits of information consciously now. So, as you are sitting reading this, you are aware of the words on the page, perhaps a feeling, the sound of a computer fan, the view outside the window, the temperature, what’s in your peripheral vision, or how the chair feels on the back of your legs. But, you are not aware of your unconscious functions, such as breathing or eye blinking unless I bring them to your conscious attention.

At any given time you can consider approximately seven bits of information (Miller, 1956). These seven bits of information are in turn selectively filtered and measured against your other memories, values, beliefs, and attitudes and interpreted accordingly. You basically put your own spin on those bits. This is why we have different interpretations of the same event. Have you ever been to a family party when two people are recounting an experience they had together? One person relates the experience one way and the other says, “No, it didn’t happen that way. What I remember is—.” We all choose different bits of information to remember. This is why some people are anxious in certain situations and others are not.

*The conscious mind is just the tip of the iceberg, there is so much more below the surface, and that's your unconscious mind. What's driving your anxiety is "under the water."*

Your unconscious mind has unlimited storage, even for stuff you don't want (Penfield, 1954). It's always listening. Imagine a flashlight in a dark room. The beam of light is your conscious mind and the unconscious mind is everything else in the dark room. Just because you cannot see it does not mean it's not there—it's always there. It is the unconscious mind that controls appetite, maintains habits, beliefs, emotions, and is a storehouse of your memories. Even though you feel emotions at the conscious level, they are generated and maintained at the unconscious level. Therefore, we must deal with the unconscious mind to get to the core of anxiety.

*The drivers of your anxiety are limiting beliefs, faulty boundaries, and negative emotions that reside in your unconscious mind. Healing your anxiety and related habits, dear reader, means healing your unconscious mind and giving it new direction and purpose.*

Let's suppose you have a craving for potato chips. You smell them. You salivate. You want them even more. You imagine the crackling sounds as you chew them. You produce more saliva. Your anxiety increases. Your unconscious mind persists in "knocking on your door." You may have decided to *not* eat the potato chips, but finally you go ahead and eat them. Yes, you made a conscious decision to resist the chips, but the orders are carried out by your unconscious mind, which persuaded you otherwise.

*The craving for the potato chips is a symptom that your conscious and unconscious are not on the same page.*

You consciously want to make the healthy choice, but your unconscious has a different preference. Your unconscious wins. That's right—you cannot stop eating the chips consciously, otherwise you could just say, "Okay, don't do that anymore," and that would be the end of it. But, it doesn't always work that way, does it? Otherwise you would not be reading this! Anxiety rears its ugly head and so do the related unconscious behaviors.

Imagine a ship if you will—one of those tall ones with billowing sails! It is the captain who makes final decisions, including the ship's itinerary and the well-being

of the crew. It is the crew's responsibility to carry out those decisions. The captain is the conscious mind and the crew, the unconscious mind. It all works well until there is a mutiny! Anxiety is frequently the trigger for mutiny, which in turn manifests itself as emotional eating, binge eating, food cravings, food obsession, smoking, drug use, alcohol dependence, overspending, nail-biting, hair-pulling, and hot flashes. Chronic anxiety also exacerbates panic disorders, phobias, and sleep problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

#### WRIGHT

So what beliefs will serve me as I empower myself to overcome anxiety and feel peaceful?

#### CAMERON

Here is what Mahatma Gandhi had to say about beliefs:

- Your beliefs become your thoughts
- Your thoughts become your words
- Your words become your actions
- Your actions become your habits
- Your habits become your values
- Your values become your destiny

Please look at the following ten beliefs as affirmative statements.

#### **Belief Number 1:** *I Believe that the Mind Affects the Body.*

Ever since the first neurotransmitters were discovered in the early 1970s, we have gained an understanding of how emotional information is transmitted by the limbic system to every organ of the body (Pert, 1997).

What you think affects you physically. Reality is our own unique interpretation—it is a subjective experience. Deepak Chopra estimates that we have 16,000 thoughts a day. What is a little sad is that 90 percent of the thoughts that we had yesterday are the same as today. Oh dear! How do we change those thoughts so we can break the cycle of negative thinking and negative behavior patterns?

#### **Belief Number 2:** *I believe that I get in Life what I Focus On.*

If I stand over my golf ball and think about the lake in front of me, where does the golf ball go? In the lake, of course! If I say to you David, whatever you do, do not think about a blue tree, what do you think about?

## WRIGHT

A blue tree.

## CAMERON

This is because your unconscious mind does not compute negative terms. When you focus on your passion in life—what you want—you will be fulfilled. Anxiety is a lack of fulfillment, a spiritual void, or the accumulation of negative emotions within the body. Anxiety is a message from your unconscious mind that you need to focus on what you want (James, 1989).

**Belief Number 3:** *I Am Responsible for Where I Am Today. When I Accept The Present I Can Change the Future.*

Let's look at taking responsibility by considering the words "cause" and "effect" side by side.

## CAUSE EFFECT

Imagine "cause" getting bigger while "effect" gets smaller and smaller. "Cause" here means simply that you *consciously choose* how you lead your life. You need to be on the "cause" side—you want to be at "cause." You don't want to be at "effect"—at the mercy of causes that you do not choose. Taking responsibility is forgetting about blame. Whatever happened in life—whether good or bad—there is no blame. There is simply something to learn. People, places, and things are not the cause of your anxiety—it is your interpretation of those events that causes the anxiety. When you change your thoughts, you can change your body. What you imagine today will be your future.

**Belief Number 4:** *I Was Born Perfect and I Still Am.*

This belief is an antidote to the self-limiting fear of criticism. Some people falsely believe that they need to be perfect to merit approval from others. They may have acquired this belief in childhood. When they accept that we are all imperfectly perfect, they are much happier.

**Belief Number 5:** *I Believe That There Is Never Failure, There Is Just New Information. Every Situation Is An Opportunity For Learning.*

Anxiety feels like fear with nowhere to go. The fear unfortunately is manifested detrimentally in the body, or the anxiety is a trigger for unwanted habits.

Some people fear failure and they set themselves up to never push or extend themselves in any way. The word “can’t” is commonly used, as in: “I can’t make enough money.” Other people fear rejection and, in my experience as a hypnotherapist, this is the most common fear. The faulty belief of “not being good enough” is unfortunately learned in childhood and it manifests itself in poor self-esteem and related anxiety.

**Belief Number 6:** *I Believe That Good Exists In All Situations. I Will Seek Out That Good.*

So, positive thinking is a must. This does not mean that you do not express negative emotions—it just means that you put a positive frame around events. When the day starts well, you feel good, and you usually continue to feel that way throughout the day. However, when you “get up on the wrong side of the bed,” the day seems to progress that way.

**Belief Number 7:** *I Believe That At Any Time Of Day, I Have The Choice To Start My Day Over.*

Your unconscious mind loves it when your conscious mind looks on the bright side of things. This is being the captain of your ship—you have the power to change your emotional state at any time.

**Belief Number 8:** *I Must Forgive Myself As Readily As I Forgive Others.*

Delete the word “blame” from your vocabulary and be firm with your unconscious mind about that. Give it a good talking to. And by the same token, other people are doing just the best they can, living life in response to whatever their model of the world is at any given time.

Throughout your life, people have judged you and you have judged them, but that act creates separation between you and them. Separation causes loneliness and unhappiness. Judging others depletes you of energy. It actually makes you feel a little crummy and induces anxiety. Have you ever entertained the thought that we may all be the same souls in a different disguise? No one is inherently any better than you.

I want you to imagine the words “judgment” and “wisdom.” Every day judgment gets smaller and wisdom gets bigger.

## WISDOM JUDGMENT

**Belief Number 9:** *I Believe That I Have All The Resources Within Me To Self-Heal.*

If you are truly at cause, then you accept responsibility for your life. If you created the problem, then the reverse must be true—you can reverse it.

**Belief Number 10:** *I Believe That I Have A Unique Purpose In Life; I Must Seek That Purpose.*

What drives you in life? What is important to you? An understanding of your values and purpose gives motivation, direction, and meaning to your life. This is the “rudder” under the boat. Your body responds to that direction. When you lose direction and meaning or you “give up,” so does your body.

### WRIGHT

So what are the steps to conquering anxiety?

### CAMERON

There are six steps:

1. I obtain an understanding of what anxiety is through reading and research.
2. I decide that I want to let go of anxiety.
3. I accept the ten beliefs that are stated above.
4. I take full responsibility for my anxiety.
5. I set a plan for everyday life, which includes proper nutrition, meditation, self-hypnosis, exercise, time outdoors, and social contact.
6. I set goals in every area of my life—spiritual, personal growth, health and fitness, business, and relationships.

*(Go to [www.joannacameron.com](http://www.joannacameron.com) for instructions on how to set effective goals—SMART Goals.)*

### WRIGHT

How does self-hypnosis teach me to change my emotional state and let go of anxiety?

### CAMERON

Without exception, David, everybody I’ve ever hypnotized tells me that he or she feels really relaxed after the experience. In order to deal with anxiety, we must



talk to the unconscious mind, which is the storehouse of our emotions and runs our bodies. When you instruct the body to let go of anxiety, it has an amazing way of healing. In fact, simple awareness and acceptance that anxiety affects your body is often enough to facilitate change.

When you are hypnotized, the conscious decision-making mind “takes a hike,” allowing the unconscious mind to come to the surface. It is your unconscious mind that is susceptible to suggestion. This is a good thing. Hypnosis just feels like relaxation. You are totally aware when you are hypnotized. In fact, you’re an active part of the hypnotic process and hypnotize yourself all the time in everyday life. You have to hypnotize yourself to fall asleep at night. You’re very good at hypnosis. You just need to channel this skill and do it every day. So are you motivated to go into a trance David?

WRIGHT

I will admit that it sounds easier as you talk.

CAMERON

You may find that reading this makes your eyes close. Please do not drive a car and listen to the CD of this chapter (available at [www.joannacameron.com](http://www.joannacameron.com)) at the same time.

This is a hypnotic exercise—it involves closing your eyes.

*Now, you are sitting there. And, you are breathing in and out. And, you get into a position of maximum comfort. And, you are relaxed. And, you are reading this book as you are motivated to be a healthier person. And, you will find it easy to go into a trance listening to or reading my words. And can you find a spot on the wall in front of you that you can look at comfortably? And as you look at that spot—do your eyelids want to blink? And will they flutter first or close completely as you allow your comfort to deepen? That’s right. And can you now pretend that you are in a trance and those eyelids are so perfectly relaxed that they remain closed? And that feels perfectly fine. You can test your eyes now. You may find that you can move your eyebrows but your eyes are stuck. They are one piece of skin. Try in vain to open your eyes. They are stuck like glue. And that is perfectly fine. And the harder you try to open your eyes, the more that they are stuck. And now, you can forget about your eyes. Every time you listen to my CD, you are more*

*relaxed by my voice. And the suggestions are absorbed readily by your unconscious mind. You easily learn and integrate all the material presented. In a few seconds, I will awaken you and you will feel relaxed, refreshed, and absolutely fantastic. Come back into the room, 20 percent with each count, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Welcome back!*

So what happened? Eye closure is simply relaxation. The eye muscles are the easiest muscles in the body to relax. When you are tired, your eyes close. Your eyes become stuck as you have let go of the conscious mind or bypassed the critical faculty. This is a good thing. You want to be hypnotized. You want to become really good at this so you can talk directly with your unconscious mind. Besides, it feels great!

Now, if your eyes open, that's Okay too! You have proved to yourself that you have conscious control. Maybe you're saying to yourself, "I don't know if I can do this." And that's right—you do not know. There are many things that you do not know. You do know that you dream at night, but you do not know how your unconscious mind integrates your dreams. And sooner or later, your eyelids will blink but you do not know how your unconscious mind knows to blink those eyes. That's right. You can sit there and do nothing at all. And you do not know when your eyes might close altogether and allow your comfort to deepen.

The goal is to learn how to obtain eye closure very quickly. You have then successfully hypnotized yourself. Use this to change your state of mind. Let's suppose you are sitting at your desk and you feel anxious. You can just close your eyes and take a hypnotic time-out and wake up feeling relaxed and refreshed. That's empowerment. The more you do this, the better you will get at it. Trance is learned. Think of your brain as a computer—occasionally it gets too much information and it does not work properly. You turn it off. Trance is your own reset button.

#### WRIGHT

So what about deep-seated anxiety related to a difficult childhood?

#### CAMERON

My client, Jim, was obese and brought up in severe poverty. He told me that he ate when he was anxious because he was always afraid that "there would never be

enough food.” In therapy with me, he let go of that fear and the limiting decision that food was the fix for anxiety, and then he was able to eat correctly.

Negative “hot buttons” such as a certain tone of voice, shouting, and put-downs are actually emotional triggers that stimulate the anxiety response time after time. We are energetic beings in tune with everything around us; our hot buttons are emotional disturbances. In order to heal, we must get to the cause of them. However, they are like the legs of a table—if you knock away any one of the legs, then the table will fall down. We can release negative emotions from a few major childhood events and the whole structure will fall.

As a hypnotherapist, I use certain techniques to help clients let go of negative emotions. Yes, a person will no longer feel the anger, sadness, fear, guilt, and shame from the past when the session is over. It’s miraculous! You can go to the “Time Line Therapy”™ Web site at [www.timelinetherapy.net](http://www.timelinetherapy.net) and find a therapist who is trained in this technique. The American Board of Hypnotherapy has a Web site ([www.abh-abnlp.com](http://www.abh-abnlp.com)), where you can fill out a form and identify a therapist in your area. NLP therapists may also be trained in hypnosis as well as NeuroLinguistic Programming, which simply means nerves, language, and programming.

I also teach the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT®), and for more information, you can go to [www.emofree.com](http://www.emofree.com). This technique also gets to the cause of anxiety and buried negative emotions.

Let’s do an exercise: “*Your Power Anchor*”—*How to change anxiety into laughter!* Do this exercise with a friend or listen to my CD. ([www.joannacameron.com](http://www.joannacameron.com)).

An anchor is a “hot button.” It is simply a stimulus that evokes a consistent response pattern from a person. When you see a traffic light turn red, you know that you must brake and come to a stop. The smell of mothballs may remind you of another time or your grandparents. Or how about the smell of French bread—does that make you salivate? Does a seagull’s call remind you of the beach? How about the sound of the waves or an alarm clock?

We are now going to set our own Power Anchor, which will get you into a powerful state of mind. So close your eyes:

- 1) I want you to remember a time when you felt totally powerful—you were on top of the world. Okay, do you remember one? Now, get into that state. Feel the feelings. When you really feel it in your body, touch the top of your left shoulder on the bone with three fingers. Let go.
- 2) Okay. Open your eyes. Now, I want you to imagine that you are sniffing coffee. Can you smell it?
- 3) Okay. Close your eyes. Now, I want you to remember a time when you could not stop laughing—it was falling-down funny. There is a smile on your face. When you are really feeling it, touch that shoulder bone in the same place with three fingers. Let go.
- 4) Okay. Open your eyes! Now, think about the smell of coffee or another pungent smell.
- 5) Okay. Close your eyes! Now, I want you to remember a time when you felt totally loved. Feel it, enjoy it. When you are really feeling tingly, touch yourself on the left shoulder in the same place as before. Let go.
- 6) Okay. Open your eyes! Now, think about the smell of coffee.

Okay, so maybe you need to take a little break here. Look out the window; take a time out or seventh-inning stretch.

Welcome back! Now I want you to sit down and focus your eyes on a spot in front of you, and open up the focus so you can see peripherally. Now touch that left shoulder again with the same three fingers. What do you feel? Is there a smile coming on your face, I wonder?

I set a power anchor in a training many years ago and I still use it. I think of it as a reset button. You know how it is with your computer. It stops functioning and is moving slowly or even freezes. The cure is to just switch it off and let it reboot.

Fire your power anchor when you feel anxious. It is your responsibility to get into a powerful state. You can start your day over using this technique. *You* drive the bus. Get into a good frame of mind.

## WRIGHT

So how do you personally deal with anxiety?

## CAMERON

Well, as a hypnotherapist, I'm in a trance a great deal and this certainly helps. A trance invites trance. Also, I believe in good nutrition, which begins with purchasing healthy food. Yes, I read the labels! For exercise, I'm a keen golfer, I swim regularly, and I love to work in my garden.

Now, I need to tell you a story about my experience with anxiety. My family takes a yearly ski vacation to Park City, Utah, over the holidays. I rented a small house for us near the ski hill; but the rental was not optimum for our needs. I had back pain and could not stand up for several days. I had never experienced this before. I did heal after a week and I was really relieved. On my return, I ordered the book, *Healing Back Pain*, by Dr. John Sarno. This is a mind-body approach. Yes, you think yourself well.

The premise is that repressed emotions such as anger and anxiety can trigger muscle spasms, thought to be caused by lack of oxygen. There are certain personality types who are more prone to this. They are the coping, high-achieving, and motivated persons with high expectations of themselves. Vacations are a common time for tension myositis syndrome (TMS) to appear. The symptoms include back pain, neck pain, shoulder pain, and so on. In other words, I had high anxiety because I worried that our little vacation house did not fit our needs. To make matters worse, we had just remodeled our friends' car while trying to get up the icy road to the house. I was stressed.

There are certain symptoms that accompany TMS, such as soreness in the buttocks. My symptoms and personality type all fit the profile. Now, pain certainly got my attention. (Remember cause and effect?) Back pain was the manifestation of my anxiety about the house. Simple awareness was the cure. Now, whenever I feel discomfort in my back, I thank my unconscious mind for the message that I need to release anxiety. I meditate, use self-hypnosis, and listen to my own CDs. (This sounds narcissistic, but your unconscious does love your own voice.) Then, I give my unconscious mind a good "talking to" and the pain goes away. I feel empowered.

If you have back pain, shoulder, or neck pain, I urge you to read Dr. Sarno's book and follow the directions given within. Not all back, shoulder, and neck pain is TMS. Many people however, have healed their pain simply by taking

responsibility for it. It is the same way with other body manifestations of anxiety; it is enough in many cases to just take responsibility. This stimulates the unconscious mind to change direction—to get “on the same page” with the conscious mind.

Taking responsibility for where you are is actually a decision. So make the decision that you are responsible for where you are today. Even if you do not believe it yet, you will, and it is an inherent and necessary part of your recovery.

WRIGHT

What a great conversation. I really appreciate all the information you’ve given us here today. I have learned a lot and I know our readers will also. I appreciate all this time you’ve taken to answer these questions. This has really been enlightening.

CAMERON

Well, thank you, David.

WRIGHT

Today we’ve been talking with Dr. Joanna Cameron, a hypnotherapist and instructor of NeuroLinguistic Programming. She is a believer in the power of the mind to heal the body and teaches change techniques to her clients, college students, and corporations.

Dr. Cameron, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

CAMERON

And thank you, David. The following is a metaphorical poem I wrote. It speaks directly to the unconscious mind and helps it deal with anxiety.

## SCRAMBLING ON THE ROCKS

*Now the unconscious mind loves to drift  
Down into that trance in the same way  
A river wanders  
Meanders around the rocks  
So much fun to scramble and picnic on the rocks  
And peeking into the picnic basket  
A hamper with blue and white napkins  
And matching plates  
Everything packed and in its place  
Now how to choose a route in the mind's eye  
Ever questioning if a rock will wobble  
Or will it wobble and will I adjust my balance  
Making a quick decision to change course  
Trusting the unconscious mind to keep me balanced  
Bringing positive thoughts into a stream of consciousness  
So the precious picnic basket and I remain safe  
Or will I be the only one to slip on that rock  
Slimed by muddy waters  
Better perhaps to follow a leader  
Finding a new way  
Stopping to view the occasional rock pool  
Will it inhabit a fish momentarily fenced in  
Until the river rises  
And the fish must wait  
And I must wait  
Relishing the thought  
Of eating our family sandwiches on the right rock  
And sometimes it is good to wait  
The waiter takes the order  
When the diner is ready  
The poker player receives subtle cues  
Decides to go to the river  
More information is required  
More choices will be presented*

*And change occurs  
Change is inevitable  
And in good time  
Those wobbly rocks  
With jagged uneven edges  
Become smooth river stones  
Perfectly adapted to their environment  
In the flow of information  
Peaceful  
They say that patience is a virtue  
That is why the British form a queue  
And the Americans get in line  
For there may be necessary boundaries  
As the unconscious mind  
Takes its own time  
To absorb what it needs to learn  
And then presents new learnings  
New ways of thinking  
About old problems  
As you overtake any hurdles  
Knowing that a hurdle  
Is simply new information  
For you to use  
On your journey  
So much better to get into the solution*



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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The English-born, Joanna Cameron has a doctorate in Clinical Hypnotherapy and is an instructor of NeuroLinguistic Programming (NLP) and hypnosis. She is a member of the American Board of Hypnotherapy. Based on ten years of experience as a hypnotherapist in McLean, Virginia, she will be shortly publishing her first book, *Forget Diets, Plant Tomatoes: A Metaphoric, Hypnotic Journey to Heal Emotional Eating*. In *Stepping Stones to Success*, Dr. Cameron focuses on how to use your mind to conquer stress. She believes in the power of the mind to heal the body and teaches change techniques to her clients, college students, and corporations. As the “Trance Lady,” she performs as a comedy hypnotist for high schools, colleges and corporations and works with the Innovators Group Inc. as a keynote speaker. Recently, she has entertained the U.S. Army in Germany. Her energy and enthusiasm are communicated to every audience.



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## CHAPTER THREE

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### Find a Mentor and Believe in Your Dreams

An Interview with . . . **Jack Canfield**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking with Jack Canfield. You probably know him as the founder and co-creator of the *New York Times* number one bestselling *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series. As of 2006 there are sixty-five titles and eighty million copies in print in over thirty-seven languages.

Jack's background includes a BA from Harvard, a master's from the University of Massachusetts, and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Santa Monica. He has been a high school and university teacher, a workshop facilitator, a psychotherapist, and a leading authority in the area of self-esteem and personal development.

Jack Canfield, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

JACK CANFIELD (CANFIELD)

Thank you, David. It's great to be with you.

WRIGHT

When I talked with Mark Victor Hansen, he gave you full credit for coming up with the idea of the *Chicken Soup* series. Obviously it's made you an internationally known personality. Other than recognition, has the series changed you personally and if so, how?

CANFIELD

I would say that it has and I think in a couple of ways. Number one, I read stories all day long of people who've overcome what would feel like insurmountable obstacles. For example, we just did a book *Chicken Soup for the Unsinkable Soul*. There's a story in there about a single mother with three daughters. She contracted a disease and she had to have both of her hands and both of her feet amputated. She got prosthetic devices and was able to learn how to use them. She could cook, drive the car, brush her daughters' hair, get a job, etc. I read that and I thought, "God, what would I ever have to complain and whine and moan about?"

At one level it's just given me a great sense of gratitude and appreciation for everything I have and it has made me less irritable about the little things.

I think the other thing that's happened for me personally is my sphere of influence has changed. By that I mean I was asked, for example, some years ago to be the keynote speaker to the Women's Congressional Caucus. The Caucus is a group that includes all women in America who are members of Congress and who are state senators, governors, and lieutenant governors. I asked what they wanted me to talk about—what topic.

"Whatever you think we need to know to be better legislators," was the reply.

I thought, "Wow, they want me to tell them about what laws they should be making and what would make a better culture." Well, that wouldn't have happened if our books hadn't come out and I hadn't become famous. I think I get to play with people at a higher level and have more influence in the world. That's important to me because my life purpose is inspiring and empowering people to live their highest vision so the world works for everybody. I get to do that on a much bigger level than when I was just a high school teacher back in Chicago.

## WRIGHT

I think one of the powerful components of that book series is that you can read a positive story in just a few minutes and come back and revisit it. I know my daughter has three of the books and she just reads them interchangeably. Sometimes I go in her bedroom and she'll be crying and reading one of them. Other times she'll be laughing, so they really are "chicken soup for the soul," aren't they?

## CANFIELD

They really are. In fact we have four books in the *Teenage Soul* series now and a new one coming out at the end of this year. I have a son who's eleven and he has a twelve-year-old friend who's a girl. We have a new book called *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul and the Tough Stuff*. It's all about dealing with parents' divorces, teachers who don't understand you, boyfriends who drink and drive, and other issues pertinent to that age group.

I asked my son's friend, "Why do you like this book?" (It's our most popular book among teens right now.) She said, "You know, whenever I'm feeling down I read it and it makes me cry and I feel better. Some of the stories make me laugh and some of the stories make me feel more responsible for my life. But basically I just feel like I'm not alone."

One of the people I work with recently said that the books are like a support group between the covers of a book—you can read about other peoples' experiences and realize you're not the only one going through something.

## WRIGHT

Jack, we're trying to encourage people in our audience to be better, to live better, and be more fulfilled by reading about the experiences of our writers. Is there anyone or anything in your life that has made a difference for you and helped you to become a better person?

## CANFIELD

Yes, and we could do ten books just on that. I'm influenced by people all the time. If I were to go way back I'd have to say one of the key influences in my life was Jesse Jackson when he was still a minister in Chicago. I was teaching in an all black high school there and I went to Jesse Jackson's church with a friend one time. What

happened for me was that I saw somebody with a vision. (This was before Martin Luther King was killed and Jesse was of the lieutenants in his organization.) I just saw people trying to make the world work better for a certain segment of the population. I was inspired by that kind of visionary belief that it's possible to make change.

Later on, John F. Kennedy was a hero of mine. I was very much inspired by him.

Another is a therapist by the name of Robert Resnick. He was my therapist for two years. He taught me a little formula:  $E + R = O$ . It stands for Events + Response = Outcome. He said, "If you don't like your outcomes quit blaming the events and start changing your responses." One of his favorite phrases was, "If the grass on the other side of the fence looks greener, start watering your own lawn more."

I think he helped me get off any kind of self-pity I might have had because I had parents who were alcoholics. It would have been very easy to blame them for problems I might have had. They weren't very successful or rich; I was surrounded by people who were and I felt like, "God, what if I'd had parents like they had? I could have been a lot better." He just got me off that whole notion and made me realize that the hand you were dealt is the hand you've got to play. Take responsibility for who you are and quit complaining and blaming others and get on with your life. That was a turning point for me.

I'd say the last person who really affected me big-time was a guy named W. Clement Stone who was a self-made multi-millionaire in Chicago. He taught me that success is not a four-letter word—it's nothing to be ashamed of—and you ought to go for it. He said, "The best thing you can do for the poor is not be one of them." Be a model for what it is to live a successful life. So I learned from him the principles of success and that's what I've been teaching now for more than thirty years.

#### WRIGHT

He was an entrepreneur in the insurance industry, wasn't he?

#### CANFIELD

He was. He had combined insurance. When I worked for him he was worth 600 million dollars and that was before the dot.com millionaires came along in Silicon Valley. He just knew more about success. He was a good friend of Napoleon Hill

(author of *Think and Grow Rich*) and he was a fabulous mentor. I really learned a lot from him.

#### WRIGHT

I miss some of the men I listened to when I was a young salesman coming up and he was one of them. Napoleon Hill was another one as was Dr. Peale. All of their writings made me who I am today. I'm glad I had that opportunity.

#### CANFIELD

One speaker whose name you probably will remember, Charlie "Tremendous" Jones, says, "Who we are is a result of the books we read and the people we hang out with." I think that's so true and that's why I tell people, "If you want to have high self-esteem, hang out with people who have high self-esteem. If you want to be more spiritual, hang out with spiritual people." We're always telling our children, "Don't hang out with those kids." The reason we don't want them to is because we know how influential people are with each other. I think we need to give ourselves the same advice. Who are we hanging out with? We can hang out with them in books, cassette tapes, CDs, radio shows, and in person.

#### WRIGHT

One of my favorites was a fellow named Bill Gove from Florida. I talked with him about three or four years ago. He's retired now. His mind is still as quick as it ever was. I thought he was one of the greatest speakers I had ever heard.

What do you think makes up a great mentor? In other words, are there characteristics that mentors seem to have in common?

#### CANFIELD

I think there are two obvious ones. I think mentors have to have the time to do it and the willingness to do it. I also think they need to be people who are doing something you want to do. W. Clement Stone used to tell me, "If you want to be rich, hang out with rich people. Watch what they do, eat what they eat, dress the way they dress—try it on." He wasn't suggesting that you give up your authentic self, but he was pointing out that rich people probably have habits that you don't have and you should study them.



I always ask salespeople in an organization, “Who are the top two or three in your organization?” I tell them to start taking them out to lunch and dinner and for a drink and finding out what they do. Ask them, “What’s your secret?” Nine times out of ten they’ll be willing to tell you.

This goes back to what we said earlier about asking. I’ll go into corporations and I’ll say, “Who are the top ten people?” They’ll all tell me and I’ll say, “Did you ever ask them what they do different than you?”

“No,” they’ll reply.

“Why not?”

“Well, they might not want to tell me.”

“How do you know? Did you ever ask them? All they can do is say no. You’ll be no worse off than you are now.”

So I think with mentors you just look at people who seem to be living the life you want to live and achieving the results you want to achieve.

What we say in our book is when that you approach a mentor they’re probably busy and successful and so they haven’t got a lot of time. Just ask, “Can I talk to you for ten minutes every month?” If I know it’s only going to be ten minutes I’ll probably say yes. The neat thing is if I like you I’ll always give you more than ten minutes, but that ten minutes gets you in the door.

#### WRIGHT

In the future are there any more Jack Canfield books authored singularly?

#### CANFIELD

One of my books includes the formula I mentioned earlier:  $E + R = O$ . I just felt I wanted to get that out there because every time I give a speech and I talk about that the whole room gets so quiet you could hear a pin drop—I can tell people are really getting value.

Then I’m going to do a series of books on the principles of success. I’ve got about 150 of them that I’ve identified over the years. I have a book down the road I want to do that’s called *No More Put-Downs*, which is a book probably aimed mostly at parents, teachers, and managers. There’s a culture we have now of put-down humor. Whether it’s *Married . . . with Children* or *All in the Family*, there’s that characteristic

of macho put-down humor. There's research now showing how bad it is for kids' self-esteem when the coaches do it, so I want to get that message out there as well.

WRIGHT

It's really not that funny, is it?

CANFIELD

No, we'll laugh it off because we don't want to look like we're a wimp but underneath we're hurt. The research now shows that you're better off breaking a child's bones than you are breaking his or her spirit. A bone will heal much more quickly than their emotional spirit will.

WRIGHT

I remember recently reading a survey where people listed the top five people who had influenced them. I've tried it on a couple of groups at church and in other places. In my case, and in the survey, approximately three out of the top five are always teachers. I wonder if that's going to be the same in the next decade.

CANFIELD

I think that's probably because as children we're at our most formative years. We actually spend more time with our teachers than we do with our parents. Research shows that the average parent only interacts verbally with each of their children only about eight and a half minutes a day. Yet at school they're interacting with their teachers for anywhere from six to eight hours depending on how long the school day is, including coaches, chorus directors, etc.

I think that in almost everybody's life there's been that one teacher who loved him or her as a human being—an individual—not just one of the many students the teacher was supposed to fill full of History and English. That teacher believed in you and inspired you.

Les Brown is one of the great motivational speakers in the world. If it hadn't been for one teacher who said, "I think you can do more than be in a special education class. I think you're the one," he'd probably still be cutting grass in the median strip of the highways in Florida instead of being a \$35,000-a-talk speaker.

WRIGHT

I had a conversation one time with Les. He told me about this wonderful teacher who discovered Les was dyslexic. Everybody else called him dumb and this one lady just took him under her wing and had him tested. His entire life changed because of her interest in him.

CANFIELD

I'm on the board of advisors of the Dyslexic Awareness Resource Center here in Santa Barbara. The reason is because I taught high school and had a lot of kids who were called "at-risk"—kids who would end up in gangs and so forth.

What we found over and over was that about 78 percent of all the kids in the juvenile detention centers in Chicago were kids who had learning disabilities—primarily dyslexia—but there were others as well. They were never diagnosed and they weren't doing well in school so they'd drop out. As soon as a student drops out of school he or she becomes subject to the influence of gangs and other kinds of criminal and drug linked activities. If these kids had been diagnosed earlier we'd have been able to get rid of a large amount of the juvenile crime in America because there are a lot of really good programs that can teach dyslexics to read and excel in school.

WRIGHT

My wife is a teacher and she brings home stories that are heartbreaking about parents not being as concerned with their children as they used to be, or at least not as helpful as they used to be. Did you find that to be a problem when you were teaching?

CANFIELD

It depends on what kind of district you're in. If it's a poor district the parents could be on drugs, alcoholics, and basically just not available. If you're in a really high rent district the parents are not available because they're both working, coming home tired, they're jet-setters, or they're working late at the office because they're workaholics. Sometimes it just legitimately takes two paychecks to pay the rent anymore.

I find that the majority of parents care but often they don't know what to do. They don't know how to discipline their children. They don't know how to help them with their homework. They can't pass on skills that they never acquired themselves.

Unfortunately, the trend tends to be like a chain letter. The people with the least amount of skills tend to have the most number of children. The other thing is that you get crack babies (infants born addicted to crack cocaine because of the mother's addiction). As of this writing, in Los Angeles one out of every ten babies born is a crack baby.

WRIGHT

That's unbelievable.

CANFIELD

Yes, and another statistic is that by the time 50 percent of the kids are twelve years old they have started experimenting with alcohol. I see a lot of that in the Bible belt. The problem is not the big city, urban designer drugs, but alcoholism.

Another thing you get, unfortunately, is a lot of let's call it "familial violence"—kids getting beat up, parents who drink and then explode, child abuse, and sexual abuse. You see a lot of that.

Wright

Most people are fascinated by these television shows about being a survivor. What has been the greatest comeback that you have made from adversity in your career or in your life?

CANFIELD

You know, it's funny, I don't think I've had a lot of major failures and setbacks where I had to start over. My life's been on an intentional curve. But I do have a lot of challenges. Mark and I are always setting goals that challenge us. We always say, "The purpose of setting a really big goal is not so that you can achieve it so much, but it's who you become in the process of achieving it." A friend of mine, Jim Rohn, says, "You want to set goals big enough so that in the process of achieving them you become someone worth being."

I think that to be a millionaire is nice but so what? People make the money and then they lose it. People get the big houses and then they burn down or Silicon Valley goes belly up and all of a sudden they don't have a big house anymore. But who you became in the process of learning how to be successful can never be taken away from you. So what we do is constantly put big challenges in front of us.

We have a book called *Chicken Soup for the Teacher's Soul*. (You'll have to make sure to get a copy for your wife.) I was a teacher and a teacher trainer for years. But because of the success of the *Chicken Soup* books I haven't been in the education world that much. I've got to go out and relearn how I market to that world. I met with a Superintendent of Schools. I met with a guy named Jason Dorsey who's one of the number one consultants in the world in that area. I found out who has the bestselling book in that area. I sat down with his wife for a day and talked about her marketing approaches.

I believe that if you face any kind of adversity, whether it's losing your job, your spouse dies, you get divorced, you're in an accident like Christopher Reeve and become paralyzed, or whatever, you simply do what you have to do. You find out who's already handled the problem and how did they've handled it. Then you get the support you need to get through it by their example. Whether it's a counselor in your church or you go on a retreat or you read the Bible, you do something that gives you the support you need to get to the other end.

You also have to know what the end is that you want to have. Do you want to be remarried? Do you just want to have a job and be a single mom? What is it? If you reach out and ask for support I think you'll get help. People really like to help other people. They're not always available because sometimes they're going through problems also; but there's always someone with a helping hand.

Often I think we let our pride get in the way. We let our stubbornness get in the way. We let our belief in how the world should be interfere and get in our way instead of dealing with how the world is. When we get that out of that way then we can start doing that which we need to do to get where we need to go.

#### WRIGHT

If you could have a platform and tell our audience something you feel that would help or encourage them, what would you say?

## CANFIELD

I'd say number one is to believe in yourself, believe in your dreams, and trust your feelings. I think too many people are trained wrong when they're little kids. For example, when kids are mad at their daddy they're told, "You're not mad at your Daddy."

They say, "Gee, I thought I was."

Or the kid says, "That's going to hurt," and the doctor says, "No it's not." Then they give you the shot and it hurts. They say, "See that didn't hurt, did it?" When that happened to you as a kid, you started to not trust yourself.

You may have asked your mom, "Are you upset?" and she says, "No," but she really was. So you stop learning to trust your perception.

I tell this story over and over. There are hundreds of people I've met who've come from upper class families where they make big incomes and the dad's a doctor. The kid wants to be a mechanic and work in an auto shop because that's what he loves. The family says, "That's beneath us. You can't do that." So the kid ends up being an anesthesiologist killing three people because he's not paying attention. What he really wants to do is tinker with cars.

I tell people you've got to trust your own feelings, your own motivations, what turns you on, what you want to do, what makes you feel good, and quit worrying about what other people say, think, and want for you. Decide what you want for yourself and then do what you need to do to go about getting it. It takes work.

I read a book a week minimum and at the end of the year I've read fifty-two books. We're talking about professional books—books on self-help, finances, psychology, parenting, and so forth. At the end of ten years I've read 520 books. That puts me in the top 1 percent of people knowing important information in this country. But most people are spending their time watching television.

When I went to work for W. Clement Stone, he told me, "I want you to cut out one hour a day of television."

"Okay," I said, "what do I do with it?"

"Read," he said.

He told me what kind of books to read. He said, "At the end of a year you'll have spent 365 hours reading. Divide that by a forty-hour work week and that's nine and a half weeks of education every year."

I thought, “Wow, that’s two months.” It was like going back to summer school.

As a result of his advice I have close to 8,000 books in my library. The reason I’m involved in this book project instead of someone else is that people like me, Jim Rohn, Les Brown, and you read a lot. We listen to tapes and we go to seminars. That’s why we’re the people with the information.

I always say that your raise becomes effective when you do. You’ll become more effective as you gain more skills, more insight, and more knowledge.

#### WRIGHT

Jack, I have watched your career for a long time and your accomplishments are just outstanding. But your humanitarian efforts are really what impress me. I think that you’re doing great things not only in California, but all over the country.

#### CANFIELD

It’s true. In addition to all of the work we do, we pick one to three charities and we’ve given away over six million dollars in the last eight years, along with our publisher who matches every penny we give away. We’ve planted over a million trees in Yosemite National Park. We’ve bought hundreds of thousands of cataract operations in third world countries. We’ve contributed to the Red Cross, the Humane Society, and on it goes. It feels like a real blessing to be able to make that kind of a contribution to the world.

#### WRIGHT

Today we have been talking with Jack Canfield, founder and co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series. *Chicken Soup for the Soul* reaches people well beyond the bookstore, with CD and DVD collections, company-sponsored samplers, greeting cards, children’s entertainment products, pet food, flowers, and many other products in line with *Chicken Soup for the Soul*’s purpose. *Chicken Soup for the Soul* is currently implementing a plan to expand into all media by working with television networks on several shows and developing a major Internet presence dedicated to life improvement, emotional support, and inspiration.

CANFIELD

Another book I've written is *The Success Principles*. In it I share sixty-four principles that other people and I have utilized to achieve great levels of success.

WRIGHT

I will stand in line to get one of those. Thank you so much being with us.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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JACK CANFIELD is one of America's leading experts on developing self-esteem and peak performance. A dynamic and entertaining speaker, as well as a highly sought-after trainer, he has a wonderful ability to inform and inspire audiences toward developing their own human potential and personal effectiveness.

Jack Canfield is most well-known for the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, which he co-authored with Mark Victor Hansen, and for his audio programs about building high self-esteem. Jack is the founder of Self-Esteem Seminars, located in Santa Barbara, California, which trains entrepreneurs, educators, corporate leaders, and employees how to accelerate the achievement of their personal and professional goals. Jack is also founder of The Foundation for Self Esteem, located in Culver City, California, which provides self-esteem resources and training to social workers, welfare recipients, and human resource professionals.

Jack graduated from Harvard in 1966, received his ME degree at the University of Massachusetts in 1973, and earned an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Santa Monica. He has been a high school and university teacher, a workshop facilitator, a psychotherapist, and a leading authority in the area of self-esteem and personal development.

As a result of his work with prisoners, welfare recipients, and inner-city youth, Jack was appointed by the State Legislature to the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. He also served on the Board of Trustees of the National Council for Self-Esteem.



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## CHAPTER FOUR

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### Social Media and Reputation Management

An Interview with . . . **Shellee Hale**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Shellee Hale, founder of Camandago, Inc., an Internet research firm whose clients include corporate human resources departments, law firms, and private clients. As a consultant, Shellee has coached many clients on technology-related issues as well as providing business research. Shellee is a licensed private investigator and is on the Board of the Washington Association of Legal Investigators (WALI).

Shellee, the amount and variety of information that can be found on the Internet these days is amazing. The Internet can certainly be a great tool in connecting people and in promoting our businesses. Are there any concerns about using the Internet as a business tool?

SHELLEE HALE (HALE)

You are absolutely correct about the Internet's potential as a business tool. Our Internet "reputation" can be an asset in achieving our life goals. You mentioned several of these above—as a marketing tool for your business and to connect with potential clients and partners. The Internet can also prohibit us from obtaining our goals if the information presented about us is not positive.

I really appreciate the opportunity to discuss this because I have come across too many situations where individuals have missed out on great opportunities because of their Internet reputation, and usually this happens without their knowledge. Many people simply don't realize that if someone is looking for information about a particular individual, the Internet is the easiest and most comprehensive method of finding it.

WRIGHT

You have seen firsthand the types of information available online. Many firms and individuals use the Internet to learn about potential employees, clients, and business partners. What types of information can be found online to help employers and potential business partners make hiring and contractual decisions?

HALE

Personal and professional information can be obtained easily and legally from the Internet, and many employers and attorneys use this information to make hiring decisions or to bolster their cases. For a small fee or for no fee at all, information can be obtained from government organizations, municipalities, and other organizations. In some cases, consent is required. In others, the request must be made by a licensed investigator. Some agencies don't require a request at all, but allow you to query their databases that they make available online. For instance:

- The department of motor vehicles will report on a person's driving record. Some states require the driver's consent, but not all. Some states will notify the driver that a request has been made.

- The department of licensing in some states allows you to check the status of your contractor's license, his or her insurance or bond, and whether there have been complaints against him or her. This extends to other businesses that require licenses as well.
- Credit bureaus will report your credit history and credit score with your consent.
- Many universities will provide information about your schooling.
- The state patrol in most states will check to see if you've had any felony offenses in the past three years. For many jobs this is required as a condition of employment.
- Many counties have open databases that allow users to find out who owns a particular property, how much the owner paid for it and whether his or her property tax is current. This could be a useful tool for a potential business partner. People can determine if you have the resources to enter into a deal.

Traditionally, to get this information, the firm handling the background check had to make calls and fax forms. Results from these information requests could take a few days to several weeks.

Nowadays, much of the information above can be found online, as more agencies are making processes more efficient. Because of this, information can be found almost instantaneously. Employers and other businesses are willing to ask for more information than ever before because they are able to get it in a timely manner. Items such as credit reports and property tax history, which were not part of a typical background check, are now becoming more common since the information is easy to get and can help a potential business partner decide if he or she wants to enter a relationship.

And these are just the third party information sources. With the rise of social networking sites, more personal information is available than ever before.

## WRIGHT

You bring up social networking sites. How do these sites play into an individual's Internet reputation?

HALE

The sources above are what I term *third-party* sources. They are independent sources reporting factual information on a particular subject, in this case, an individual. With social networking sites, information is published firsthand. Furthermore, it is published willingly and deliberately by the individual on his or her profile page. That basically says to the viewer, “I approve of this content that you are seeing on my page.”

The fact is, content that is okay for a college buddy to see may or may not be appropriate for co-workers or your boss. Depending on the personal policy of the individual, that information may be obtainable if an Internet researcher was hired to find it.

WRIGHT

Is this because their settings are lax?

HALE

Usually this is the case. Most users spend no more than a couple of minutes acquainting themselves with the privacy settings on the sites they use. Couple this tendency with the natural assumption that people looking for you have friendly intentions and an individual can be easily targeted. There are plenty of fraudulent schemes out there that are successful because of this assumption.

From a professional point of view, the issue becomes one of control simply because the purpose of these sites is for people to find each other. Some sites have better controls in place than others, but controls aren't completely customizable. Users want to be able to do one thing in one case, and something else in another, but a setting only allows them to choose one way. The user may opt for a lax setting in order to let more people find them, but in doing so they may be more exposed to unwanted attention as well.

WRIGHT

So if we have control of our content and who can see it, we're safe?

## HALE

Yes and no. I know we are all seeking a surefire way to use these sites worry-free, and we can get pretty close. But truthfully, we are engaging in risk management. If a person chooses to use these sites, there will always be some risk, no matter how small.

Because the point of social networking sites is to encourage interaction with others, comments, news, and requests from friends show on an individual's page. And while it is possible to keep this information off your page, that really isn't the point. You want to contribute to a network and also receive from it. But this does have inherent risks. You only know what someone has written on your page once it's published. If you have carefully selected who has access to your site, 99 percent of the time there is no issue. But the risk is always there. It's an illusion to think we have complete control over the content of our pages if we use the sites as they are intended.

## WRIGHT

So, what can we do to manage our information for positive results?

## HALE

There are some actions that you can take to protect your online reputation and build your professional network at the same time:

- Choose a network whose purpose matches yours. If you are looking for professional networking opportunities, choose a network created for that purpose. If the intent is to keep in touch with long distance family and friends, opt for a network that is designed with that goal in mind.
- Select a respectable network. Not all networks are created equal. Choose wisely.
- Keep your business and social networks separate. Some careers demand more discretion than others, but most people can benefit from this strategy. While you may wish to include business contacts whom you know socially in your social network, you probably do not want to add social acquaintances to your professional network unless you intend to network with each other in that capacity. And if you don't want to add a co-worker to your social network, you don't have to. If a business associate finds your



social page, simply send a request to him or her from your business network.

- Maintain control over your page. Understand who can see your page, your comments, your photos, and your friends. Have a policy regarding what you will do with requests from people you don't know. Requests can come from friends of friends, from individuals looking for a friend with a same or similar name, or from people unknown to you. Have a policy on how you will handle these events when they arise. Don't be afraid to ignore requests you are unsure about.

## WRIGHT

It seems that users really need to understand that their online profiles are as important as their professional and personal reputation. How can we use the social networking sites or the Internet in general to achieve our life goals?

## HALE

Depending on your goals, the opportunities are endless. Let's look at this from three points of view: Business, Life, and Relationships.

From a business perspective, several goals come to mind. You may want to use the Internet as a way to grow your business. More people can learn about your business if they find your site when they search. Once they get there, potential clients must find what they are looking for on your site so they are compelled to stay. Your goal is that they bookmark your site, come back to it often, and eventually make a purchase or request more information. In this case, your strategy is a well-conceived, compelling Web site.

Another common use of the Internet from a business perspective is networking. Joining a professional network can be invaluable. At your fingertips, you have contact information for people you may want to do business with. You can also get questions answered from professionals in their fields or let people you respect know that you are considering a career change. A positive Internet reputation is imperative for these strategies to work.

From a life goal perspective, again, the Internet provides infinite opportunities. Goals can be short-term, long-term, or somewhere in between. Let's take a short-term goal—you want to join a book club. Perhaps you have

asked around and been unable to find one or you have recently relocated and don't have the connections yet. So what do you do?

Well, here is a positive way that social networking can help. You go to a site such as [meetup.com](http://meetup.com). On this particular site, you can find people with common interests in a specific geographic area. In most of these cases, you ask to join a group, and the group founder or leader approves your request. Many of these groups meet in a public place, which helps overcome potential safety concerns. Most of these groups are founded due to a common interest. There are book clubs, wine clubs, dinner clubs, alumni groups, groups that embrace certain causes, groups based on sports, and so on. The range is vast. That's one example of how a short-term goal can be achieved with a social networking site.

The Internet can also be used for longer-term goals. Many universities offer online degree programs. If your goal is to become skilled for a new career, there are several online programs available depending on what you want to do. Some are entirely Web-based, and some are run through local colleges where online classes are an option. Sites that offer online learning include University of Phoenix, Capella University, and DeVry University. There are many others.

For many people, the Internet may be the last place to look to develop relationships. But as we have seen in the book club example mentioned previously, there are safe and productive ways to use the Internet to meet people with social networking sites. Where an individual may shy away from dating sites, meeting someone with a common interest feels safer—physically and emotionally—yet this friendship may progress into a more serious relationship. For those who are comfortable with dating sites, many people have used these sites successfully.

For people who do keep a professional and/or personal profile on a social networking site, maintaining relationships and staying in contact becomes much easier. Reconnecting with past friends, acquaintances, and co-workers is one of the main reasons people use these sites and in a world where relocating has become quite common, it is a great way to still feel connected to people from your past.

WRIGHT

We've discussed social networks as a way to develop and maintain business relationships. What can users expect if they join a site such as LinkedIn?

HALE

In its most basic form, LinkedIn is essentially your online rolodex. Of course, few people use a rolodex anymore, and basically that is because information can be better managed in an electronic format. Now imagine that many people all store their online rolodex in the same place. Furthermore, all these rolodexes are linked with each other through common entries. That is the essence of LinkedIn. My profile may have fifty business contacts in it, and each of these contacts may have fifty contacts. If I have an industry-specific question, am looking for a new job, or need to hire someone with a specific skill set, my network can help me. I'm also inclined to use my network because I know the people I'm dealing with. This is the underlying premise to the success of Web 2.0.

WRIGHT

What is Web 2.0?

HALE

Web 2.0 refers Web sites that promote or even depend on user participation. This includes social network sites, blogs, product rating modules within sites, and other sites that rely on user-generated actions or content. Originally, the World Wide Web consisted of static Web pages and one-way communication. The current generation of Web sites—Web 2.0—treats users as active participants rather than receivers of information. The Web still provides information, of course, but users now have the opportunity to answer back. Social networking sites, blogs, online communities, and product reviews are all components of Web 2.0.

WRIGHT

You have given us some examples of how the Internet, Web 2.0, and social networking tools can help us achieve specific goals. What about larger goals or career changes?

HALE

Many people have used the Internet and Web 2.0 sites specifically to achieve long-term goals.

For instance, I have known bloggers who have become experts in their subjects and have been offered book contracts by top publishers. Another friend reunited with an old co-worker on a social networking site and the two of them have since launched their own product line. Another ex-coworker has launched a venture capital firm for small businesses and gets plenty of leads from his own social network and that of friends. Large companies have programs such as Microsoft's BizSparq that bring certain skill sets together with interested investors or others who have complementary skills.

All of these career success stories are byproducts of Web 2.0.

WRIGHT

Are there any guidelines we can follow to keep our online reputations positive and professional?

HALE

Here are four steps an individual can take to use Web 2.0 strategies successfully:

1. Never use a false name. If you aren't willing to say it in your own name, don't say it!
2. Don't put down other people's work or comments. If you disagree with a comment or need to make a comment that conflicts with other points of view, base your comment in facts, not emotions or opinion.
3. Keep it clean. Most of us are not celebrities, but a good exercise in building a positive online reputation is to pretend that you are. Manage the content of your social network pages to ensure they present an accurate portrayal

of you. Ask yourself, if my site's security was hacked today and anyone can see my content, am I okay with that?

4. Perform your own "background check." Do you have concerns about the past? It's not unusual to have a traffic ticket or a missed payment. But if you know what a potential employer or creditor may find, you will be ready to explain any less-than-glowing items that pop up.

#### WRIGHT

How can we perform our own background check?

#### HALE

One way to do this is to see yourself through the eyes of the individual who may be hired to perform a background check. This is a defensive strategy, but one that can offer benefits if you can be honest with yourself. If your job application claims you've never been arrested, will your background check show something different? If your resume states you hold a degree in a subject, will the college or university back that up? If your marketing collateral claims you have certain revenues, will a look at your books confirm the numbers? Accept that much of this information can be discovered if someone was employed to look.

#### WRIGHT

If we do have less than positive events in our history, what should we do?

#### HALE

Depending on the situation, the following tactics may be helpful:

- Take care of anything that is in your direct control. On your network pages, blogs, and any other place this may apply, remove negative remarks, including jokes. Take down disparaging photos of yourself and friends. Stop the colorful commentary.
- Keep abreast of what is in your credit history at all three credit bureaus. If there is an error in one of your reports, get it fixed. If there is a negative event in your history, you have the right to add a comment. Do so, giving

the circumstances, so that anyone looking can at least have the whole picture before making a decision.

- Make sure your resume depicts your education correctly. If you don't have degree, state that you attended four years of college and name your program of study. You may not hold a degree, but you did gain some education.
- If you do have an arrest record or multiple infractions, your options may be limited. There is usually a time limit on how far back an investigator will look, typically three years. Felonies remain on your record. If you have a fairly recent infraction, an attorney can advise you of what steps you can take to seal or expunge your record. Not everything can be handled this way, and different states have different rules.
- Above all, be honest. No one is perfect. Most people understand that mistakes happen. If you are certain that a potentially negative event will be revealed, be ready to address it in a non-defensive, responsible manner.

Once you have done everything within your power to put together a professional profile, it is time to move ahead with the knowledge that you are putting your best foot forward.

#### WRIGHT

Now that we are ready to build our network and increase our opportunities for success, how do we go about it?

#### HALE

This is the fun part because we are being proactive and we can really start seeing the fruits of our labors. Depending on our personal goals, where we focus our energy may be different, but there are several strategies that apply to most situations.

First, decide what your goal is. Are you searching for a new career? Are you growing your existing business? Or is this a complementary or side business? In all of these cases what is needed is exposure. You need to let people know you are out there and what skills and knowledge you possess.

- Expand your connections. Always be on the lookout for people to add to your network. Of course you are going to be purposeful in this, meaning you aren't adding just have more names. But as more people continue to join networks, and as introductions are made through friends, your network can always be expanding.
- Join online communities that will keep you updated on the topics you are interested in.
- Participate in online communities in order to add value to the site and gain exposure at the same time. These sites, if used properly, benefit all parties—the community host, the participants, and other members.
- Create a blog or Web site in your area of expertise. Become a respected source for others and eventually you may be able to monetize the site.
- Keep pursuing leads. As doors continue to open, your chances of success continue to increase.

#### WRIGHT

Thank you, Shellee, for sharing your knowledge of Internet research and Web 2.0 benefits.

#### HALE

It has been a pleasure discussing how powerful a toolset the Internet, Web 2.0, and Social Networking can be. The secret is to see these entities as tools, actively participate according the guidelines mentioned above, and view the product of our participation as an online resume or biography. With that outlook, we are compelled to present ourselves just as we would in a social situation or an interview. Conducting ourselves in a professional manner and actively participating opens up opportunities we would not have otherwise, and can reward us with life-enhancing experiences.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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SHELLEE HALE has worked with companies as a business and management consultant for over twenty years. She is a Registered Counselor, Certified Life Coach, and Author. Early clients included high tech firms seeking to utilize new technology for a business advantage. As the Internet grew, Shellee's toolset expanded to include many forms of electronic information for her clients. After providing electronic research for a legal case, Shellee went on to earn her private investigator license and has enhanced her technical consulting expertise with strategic electronic and Internet-based investigative skills. Shellee is on the board of the Washington Association of Legal Investigators, a member of International Coaching Federation, National Writers Union, Society of Professional Journalism, Media Bloggers Association, and the Professional Association of Intuitive Consultants. Shellee is also a founding partner and VP of Global Media Relations at LiveAmerica.com.



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## CHAPTER FIVE

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### Building Principles for Success

An Interview with . . . **Tifphanie Tucker**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Tifphanie Tucker. An exciting and exuberant motivational speaker, Tifphanie challenges women of all ages to build their lives based on rock-solid principles and a firm foundation. Her delivery technique is captivating and absolutely powerful. Tifphanie owns and operates her own construction company where she and her team build and renovate homes. In the male dominated world of construction, she learned to navigate and succeed in a business that has transformed her into a strong and passionate individual.

Tifphanie, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

TIFPHANIE TUCKER (TUCKER)

Thank you.

WRIGHT

So will you tell our readers how did the name for your business, Women Under Construction, come about?

TUCKER

Women Under Construction was born as a result of my experiences as a female licensed general contractor and owner of a construction company. I have built and renovated homes for many families. As a builder, I encountered challenges and obstacles that have helped me to develop character, patience, and perseverance. With Women Under Construction, I use my expertise in overcoming obstacles and the lessons learned from my work in this challenging industry to encourage women to build on a foundation capable of withstanding life's storms.

WRIGHT

So what is the main message you want to convey so that they can learn from your success?

TUCKER

Building a house is a process and so is building a life. When building a house, it is necessary to create plans and work as part of a team to get the job done. The key to success in construction is having a clear vision. As a general contractor, part of my responsibility is to adopt the vision as my own and turn it into a concrete reality. I can't build a house alone. It takes a team of people to make this happen. I have learned to collaborate and rely on the skills of experienced subcontractors to do the work.

In daily life, we have to surround ourselves with a team of experienced and wise builders—people who have gone through a storm and weathered it. These are people who have visions and people who will encourage success. Many times we often allow the wrong team of people to enter our lives. This can have a negative impact on our ability to clarify our vision and reach our goals in life.

I tell people to drive through a neighborhood and take a good look at the houses. The houses may have many similarities and differences. From the outside, it is impossible to tell what their foundations are like. A storm could shake the

house from the foundation if it is poorly constructed. The same is true of the individuals we surround ourselves with in life. While they may have visible similarities and differences, it's important to look deep within and discover what makes up the core of their foundation.

WRIGHT

You speak metaphorically about building a house and building a successful life. What business strategies have you applied using this concept to become successful?

TUCKER

When I started my construction company, I initially faced many challenges. Some of those challenges were because construction is a male-dominated profession. It was difficult to overcome stereotypes, communication barriers, and to solve problems. I often became discouraged and wanted to throw in the towel. The key to my success was in restructuring my thinking to be more positive and to embrace the challenges. My mind had to become a solid foundation capable of supporting the business. Everything rested upon my outlook. From that point, I was able to build a successful business.

WRIGHT

So how did you conclude that speaking was your passion?

TUCKER

My business is unique in that I can provide homes for families in need, jobs for my employees and other contractors in my industry, and my personal skills and attributes allow me to teach others how to build strong foundations in their own lives. With my leadership and management experience, I became a motivational speaker, helping others learn to start their own businesses built on rock-solid principles and a firm foundation like mine.

From my professional experience as a builder and my involvement with women's ministries, I have been inspired to encourage and support entrepreneurs as they strive for professional and personal success. I seek to teach others the

necessary survival skills to make it through any storm and position themselves for spiritual wellness and professional success.

WRIGHT

So what kind of foundation are you building on?

TUCKER

I have been building homes and my work in the construction business is complemented in unique ways by my spirituality, leadership, and management skills. I can take a set of blueprints and transform them in a tangible reality—a place where a family can live or a business can operate. At the same time, I also look to God and His Word as the blueprints and my faith in Christ as the foundation for my daily life.

This combination of skills and beliefs has helped me to become a successful construction company owner and motivational speaker.

WRIGHT

Most people I've talked with who are very successful have always talked about the hard times—the things that went wrong. What obstacles have you faced and how can you inspire others?

TUCKER

The mindset that I approach challenges and storms with determines the outcome of every project.

The very first home I attempted to build was put on hold because the bank denied the financing. That setback was simply a small rain shower in the process. I persevered and sought alternative solutions to get through the “bad weather” and reach the rainbow on the other side. If I had accepted one bank's word as final, I never would have seen the smile on the new homeowners' faces when they cut the ribbon and received the key to the house I built for them.

Learning to navigate and succeed in the construction business has transformed me into a strong and passionate individual.

## WRIGHT

If you could write a prescription for success what would it be?

## TUCKER

In my seminars, I tell people that they are the builders of their lives. People see the houses I build after they are completed. They do not see the step-by-step processes that went into creating the finished product. The degree of effort and motivation it takes to build a house is similar to what's necessary for building a successful life.

My prescription would be to carefully survey the territory in which you want to embark and succeed. Create a vision with realistic goals and write it down. Move forward and put your written plan into action. Seek wise counsel along the way and always assess your progress. Make the necessary modifications and adjustments when you encounter unforeseeable roadblocks. Claim victory along the way and rejoice when you succeed.

I would also emphasize the following points in conjunction with my prescription for success:

1. As the builder of your life you have to have a plan. Even the Bible encourages us to write a vision and make it plain. Write a list of goals for all your endeavors you want to accomplish.
2. As a builder, I have to follow a plan that includes specific milestones. If those milestones are not met in a timely fashion, the project will be delayed. The same is true in life. If you get off course, revise your schedule and get back on track.
3. When I build a house, I have to build on a solid foundation. Life also has to be built on a solid foundation. My foundation is made up of the biblical principles found in the Word of God. With this knowledge, I am able to build wisely. Be a builder with integrity.
4. Build virtuously upon your foundation. The four walls of virtue include persistence, patience, passion, and a positive attitude. These attributes have helped me become successful and stand strong in the face of adversity.
5. The walls of a house support the roof. The roof represents your mind. If the roof leaks, the inside will be damaged. Surround yourself with positive, successful people who have your best interest and want you to succeed.

Protect the interior of your house by being around people who are successful and supportive of what you are trying to accomplish in your life.

WRIGHT

So what does success mean to you?

TUCKER

Success means accomplishing the goals I set. It means having a plan and strategizing to reach the goals. It means expecting the unexpected and mentally preparing to overcome any obstacles. Success also means knowing that there will be hurdles along the way, but jumping over them with grace and precision. Finally, success is knowing that a house is not built in one day, but it can be built.

WRIGHT

Well I've been a general contractor in my life, and I understand what you're talking about. It occurs to me that perhaps our readers know that people build houses but they really don't know what a general contractor is. Would you tell our readers just what is a general contractor?

TUCKER

From a house to a commercial building or a new road, a general contractor is an important part of many different types of construction projects. General contractors work on new building projects as well as renovations. They are responsible for completing building structures and coordinating other specific aspects of the project. These aspects might include coordinating and managing subcontractors and suppliers, creating schedules, and meeting deadlines.

WRIGHT

So how do you encourage others to achieve success during these economic times?

TUCKER

There is a story in the Bible (Matthew 7:24–27) where Jesus makes an analogy about two builders, one wise and the other foolish. The wise builder built on a solid

foundation and the foolish one built on sand. The wise builder's house withstood the storms that came. The foolish builder's house crumbled.

Life is very much like building a house. Owning and operating a business is also like building a house. Like the wise man Jesus spoke of, I have begun building on a rock-solid foundation to support my personal and professional endeavors.

I became a general contractor with the intent of applying my technical skills, creative thinking, and decision-making skills to build beautiful structures.

One of the most important lessons I have taken away from my experience in the construction field is the value of careful planning and execution. In a perfect world, the architect's plans would be flawless, the building department would issue a permit without any corrections to the plans, subcontractors would show up on time and pass every inspection, the materials would be delivered on time, the house would be completed without any storms or weather delays, no one would break the windows or vandalize the construction project, and the homeowners would be thankful for their new home. Unfortunately, the world is not perfect and no project ever comes together seamlessly. I have learned to weather the fiercest storms, even during these economic times, in order to accomplish my goals.

#### WRIGHT

So what's in the future for Tifphanie Tucker? What's your strategy for maintaining your successes for let's say, the next five years?

#### TUCKER

After becoming a Certified Seminar Leader through the ASLA, I have been inspired to conduct conferences and seminars to encourage others to build a solid foundation for a successful life. I will complete my book titled *Women Under Construction* that will have an accompanying seminar. My book and seminar will exhort, edify, and comfort women from all walks of life.

In addition to addressing the individual needs of women, my seminars can also be tailored to fit the specific needs of any organization or group. In the past, I have spoken to youth groups, students in schools, and other community organizations. I will continue my journey to help others succeed in the next five years. Using the



principles of building to help others become better leaders, my work will include helping organizations and businesses motivate and empower their employees.

As a support mechanism in the next five years, I will also rely on the guidance and direction of my mentor, June Davidson, President of the American Seminar Leaders Association. She inspires and encourages me, and will play an important role in helping me transform these dreams into realities.

WRIGHT

Tifphanie, I certainly do appreciate all this time you've taken today to answer these questions. It's fascinating—I've only met one other woman who owned a construction company and like you, she was very, very strong. She's been in it for thirty years now. You can probably imagine how tough it must have been for a woman in the construction business thirty years ago. In comparison, I can just imagine some of the things that you've had to go through. It's fascinating to hear you talk about it.

TUCKER

Thank you. I've really enjoyed talking with you.

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Tifphanie Tucker. Tifphanie challenges women of all ages to build their lives based on rock-solid principles. She talks a lot about building life on a firm foundation. The name of her company, Women Under Construction, says it all. She talks to women, young people, and with everyone she meets about building their lives on a strong foundation and hers is her faith in Christ.

Tifphanie, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

TUCKER

Thank you.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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TIFPHANIE TUCKER is the owner and president of Women Under Construction, Inc. As an exciting and exuberant keynote speaker and trainer, Tifphanie challenges individuals and organizations to build on rock-solid principles and a firm foundation. Tifphanie is a State Certified Licensed General Contractor. She has a bachelor's degree in Architectural Engineering and is currently pursuing her master's degree in Executive Management. She owns and operates her own construction company, Mega Construction Team, Inc. She and her team build and renovate homes.

Tifphanie has a passion for impacting others. Aside from her involvement with building construction and renovation, she is a pastor's wife and serves as the coordinator of women's ministries. From her professional experience and involvement with women's ministries, she has been inspired to encourage and support other women as they strive for professional, personal, and spiritual success. Each presentation, seminar, and workshop is captivating. You'll take with you unconventional, but successful strategies that you can apply immediately into your own life.



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## CHAPTER SIX

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### Why You are the Master of Your Fate: A Formula to Help You Change Your World

An Interview with . . . **Earl Davis**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Earl Davis. Earl is a powerful and passionate speaker and success coach who is sought after by organizations such as Hilton Hotels, IBM, the United States Army, not to mention numerous schools, colleges, and trade organizations. He is the creator and host of the television radio program *The Winner's Circle*, which will soon be featured throughout Tampa Bay and across the nation. His company, Create Winners Inc., works with corporate professionals, entrepreneurs, small business owners, network marketers, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), and individuals who want to bring out the very best in themselves and others.

Earl, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

EARL DAVIS (DAVIS)

Hello David, it's a pleasure to be with you.

WRIGHT

So what do you think about the title, *Stepping Stones to Success*?

DAVIS

Oh, I actually love the title and I'm glad to be a part of this project because it's important, especially in times like these, that people have direction in their life, have a focus, an inner-knowing of where to go, and a plan of how to get there.

I like it because I think of my grandmother. She had a flower garden and in that flower garden she had these little steppingstones that would meander through it, making a pathway—a course that would take you around the garden. You could see all these visually stimulating flowers and smell amazing floral scents; it was beautiful. So when I think about the title *Stepping Stones to Success*, I think about the pathway that one gets on in order to get there (success), as well as some of the things one will see along the way.

Additionally, I think that in our industry—the personal development industry—we see many people who will go out and try to target success; it becomes something they do. As you know, in our industry, success is not something that you can do nor is it a destination; it's more of a journey. It's a matter of achievement versus attraction. You can achieve a goal but success is something you attract by the person you become. I think that success is more about knowing yourself and becoming complete in yourself and becoming fulfilled.

I work with a lot of people, as you said in the introduction, who have “succeeded,” but they aren't fulfilled. That's the danger—you can work so hard your whole life, you can accumulate a lot of money, own or manage a lot of properties, have an obscene portfolio, and accomplish a lot of things that people would perceive as successful, but if that feeling of fulfillment is not there, then you're empty.

Personally, I believe that success without fulfillment is failure. So I really think this project is something that is going to give a person a complete view of what success is, a pathway of how to get there, and a plan of how to enjoy the journey.

WRIGHT

So where did it all begin for you?

DAVIS

I was born in Southeast Washington D.C., in a section of town that most people really wouldn't want to go into. It was a very seedy area, but that's where I grew up. It's amazing that right around the corner from the White House was my house, and what I still find interesting today is the vast amounts of wealth in the area. Even as a little boy, you could see the varying degrees of wealth that was evident in certain areas of the most powerful city in the world (in my opinion). Then you would see various neighborhoods on the outskirts of those areas and there would be utter poverty. I remember being surrounded by the graffiti-covered walls and the constant smell of urine. I remember wondering what can I do, how can I help my parents who were struggling at the time; it was a very tough environment.

At that time, Washington, D.C., was the murder capital of the world; it was like that for a number of years. I remember thinking, "Man, I wish I could just help my parents," but I was a little kid, there wasn't much I could do.

But there was a way I could escape. There was a television show that was called *The Millionaire*. In it, a very wealthy industrialist, who had accomplished a great deal in his life, would give a million dollars away to someone. He would have his assistant go to a house, knock on the door, and deliver a million dollars in the form of a cashier's check to the resident.

Now this was before reality television and I didn't understand that those shows were reruns and not actually taking place. I thought those things were actually happening, so I faithfully watched this television show. Anytime there was a knock on the door, I'd run over to the door. One time, my mother took her little shoe and threw it across the room hitting me in the back of the head, saying, "Boy, what are you doing running in the house?"

"Didn't you hear the knock at the door?" I asked.

"Yes, but you can walk."

"But mom," I said, "I'm hoping it's the guy with the million dollars!"

"You fool," she said. "Nobody is going to come into the projects and give us a million dollars."

But that was what I believed back then. I wanted to figure out what I could do to actually get to the level where the millionaire was, not so much because of what I could get from it, but for what I could do for my family and other people. That was the thought process in my mind, although it was not voiced or communicated that way because of my youth.

So from the outset, I wanted to find a way wherein I could really make a difference in the world. What's happening at the time of this interview that is dominating the airwaves is Michael Jackson's death. We can definitely say that he had a profound influence on the world, be it positive or negative. What I find that is so interesting about this is that on the same day that Michael Jackson died, Farrah Fawcett's death was announced. She was a very talented actress and I was a very big fan. I used to watch the program that made her famous, *Charlie's Angels*. I wondered why Michael's story was more prominent than hers. And then it hit me—the difference was the level of influence. So even as a kid I wondered what I could do to influence others and to make a difference in this world.

With that thought in mind, the first major goal I ever set for myself was to become the kind of person who would have streets and buildings named after him. That's a very big goal; some people might say it's obnoxious, but that's the goal I set for myself. It's important to understand that it wasn't because of ego. EGO to me stands for Edging God Out, and I don't want to do that. I've learned that I can do more with Him than I can ever do without Him. I wanted to have streets and buildings named after me because of the kind of person I would have to become to accomplish that. You see, you cannot *be* what you are not, but you can *become* what you are not. The secret, David, is in becoming.

WRIGHT

So those were some of your earliest dreams?

DAVIS

Yes, that was my earliest dream and goal. Right there in D.C., I'll never forget that we used to have to catch the bus to go places because we didn't have an automobile for transportation. At that time D.C. had a government program that gave little "care packages" away. I don't know if they still do that or not, but they

would give out powdered milk, peanut butter, and cheese. To this day I don't know if it was really milk because no matter what you did to it, it still didn't taste like milk. The cheese would never melt, even at the oven's highest setting. The peanut butter came in a silver can that just said "peanut butter" on it—no brand name. The peanut butter was so hard that you generally had to melt the peanut butter down before you put it on bread because otherwise it would break up your bread. It was very, very tough living back then.

So I set goals and began looking for ways that I could first help myself and my immediate family, and then help other people because of the impression that John Beresford Tipton and Michael Anthony in *The Millionaire* television show made on me. I wanted to become a philanthropist. I didn't know the word "philanthropist" back then, but I wanted to be someone who could give things away to help encourage people to change their lives, and help provide a source of hope. I think that as long as the challenges of life exist, hope will be needed. David, a lot of people need hope today.

#### WRIGHT

So what would you say was your single most defining moment?

#### DAVIS

My single most defining moment? Hmm, I would say that the single most defining moment for me probably would have been the day when I discovered that I was a miracle-worker. You see, there's something that all achievers have. I suspect that many people who will read this book are going somewhere. They have something deep inside them—a higher call.

We who are achievers have it within ourselves. Often we don't know how we're going to do it and to me that's the strange part of it all. You see an image of where you want to go, but you don't know exactly how to get there. You try a number of things and you fail at a number of things, and then sometimes, the people in your life—sometimes those closest to you—don't understand exactly what it is that you're doing; they walk away or begin to lose confidence in you. So the relationship gets strained. Sometimes you begin to doubt yourself. And sometimes you feel like you're out there by yourself, wondering how in the world you can get to where you



want to go. But when you finally arrive and you look back at the journey, what you actually find is that what you've accomplished is a miracle.

I learned this concept from my dad. Dad was working in a factory where they made boxes. He'd work sixteen hours a day and he'd come home exhausted. Often he didn't have the funds to buy the things we needed. The people at his job liked him and so they would give him clothing. These were brand new clothes to us, even though they were someone else's hand-me-downs.

One day my dad brought a pair of Buster Brown shoes home. The company still exists today. The Naturalizer shoe brand was created by that company and in 2004 Buster Brown Shoes celebrated its one hundredth anniversary. But back when I was a kid, nobody wanted to be caught in a pair of Buster Browns. The neighborhood children would tease you mercilessly, but at the same time they were better shoes than I had. Dad brought these shoes home and he told me to put them on. The shoes were too small for my feet, but my dad knew that if I didn't wear them it would be months before we could get a newer pair and I already had holes in my old shoes. Dad knew that I really needed to be able to wear those shoes. I remember complaining that I'd never be able to get the shoes to fit. Dad is really a tough guy. He told me, "You'd better put these shoes on or you're going to get a spanking." So I figured I had better put those shoes on.

After what seemed to me like hours I put my feet in the shoes and each toe was on the top of other toe; it was very painful. In the next room my dad was filling up a tub of water. He said, "Come and put your feet in this tub."

"But I've got shoes on, Dad," I said.

"Boy, just get in the tub."

So I went in the bathroom where the tub was filling up with warm water, I rolled my pant legs up, and I stepped inside the tub. My dad then told me to walk around. I was thinking this is crazy and I didn't really want to do it. Also, my feet were in pain because the shoes were really small. But after I walked around in the tub for maybe about thirty minutes or so, something miraculous happened. When those leather shoes connected with that warm water the leather began to stretch and mold to the contour of my feet. Now, shoes that were a size and a half too small perfectly fit my feet. That's when I realized that my dad was a miracle-worker.

Now how does that apply to me and our readers? I'm told that genetically, whatever is in your parents is often in you. I learned that if there was miracle-working power in my dad, then there had to be miracle-working power in me. I think this is something that is in all achievers. We have this miracle-working power in us but often we don't see it because we abort the dream too early. I believe it was Gordon Hinckley who said, "Never forget that you came to Earth as a child of the divine Father, with something of divinity in your very makeup. The Lord did not send you here to fail. He did not give you life to waste it. He bestowed upon you the gift of mortality that you might gain experience—positive, wonderful, purposeful experience—that will lead to life eternal."

So the defining moment for me was when I realized who I was, when I discovered that I was a person of value, that I had a story to tell, that I could be something, that I could get the things I wanted in my life and work, and that I had creative, manifesting power in me. I figured that if my dad could do those things then I could, too.

#### WRIGHT

So how have you dealt with doubt and fear through the years?

#### DAVIS

Well, I'm glad you asked that because yes, while you're going after your dream and while you're on your pathway to success, there are going to be many times when you will have doubts and fears such as Will they hire me? Will I get the contract? Will she say yes if I ask her to marry me? Can I do this? My favorite book says that faith comes by hearing, but so does doubt.

I've learned to feed my faith so that my doubt can literally starve to death. The ways that I have done that is by listening to positive messages like the ones in this book, going to seminars, interacting with people who have overcome tremendous adversities, and reading motivational books. I've often visited cancer wards in hospitals, not to look and say that I'm glad I'm not there, but to help me see that there is more to appreciate about life. I've watched how people who are going through difficult times have dealt with it. Some people didn't deal with it in a great

way, but I focused on people who dealt with those hard times and made the most of it.

I'll never forget what Crystal Cathedral founder, Reverend Robert Schuller used to say, "When life hands you a lemon, turn it into lemonade." That's the way I've learned to deal with doubt and fear.

One time I was talking with a great man in motivational circles, Zig Ziglar. He introduced me to a profound saying. I'm quite sure somebody else may have said it too, but I heard Zig Ziglar say it first. He told me that fear was false evidence appearing real. I said, "Wow," because at that time I'd never heard it so clearly stated before. FEAR is an acronym that stands for False Evidence Appearing Real.

There are many situations in life that illustrate this point, but none as clearly as the one I'll share with you. I used to work the grill at a fast food restaurant. I used to enjoy that job because it was my first sense of being able to go out and earn my own money; it gave me a sense of responsibility. Because I was very good on the grill, I gained favor and popularity with the managers and earned their trust. I loved that job. The downside was that I smelled like hamburgers all the time; even when I had taken a shower.

After school there was this little alleyway that I would have to ride my bike through. There was a dog that would chase me there. I think he could smell the hamburger on me, because, boy did he chase me! Embarrassingly, I must admit that it was a little dog that was harassing me. (It's not always the "big dogs," but the "little dogs" that give you all the problems.) Well, this dog was a terror to me; he knocked me off my bike many times. I'd come home late at night and the same little dog was there. Many times when this dog start barking, there was a chain reaction and every dog in the neighborhood would start barking. It was just a very bad scenario and it went on like this for weeks.

One day I had had enough and I determined that it was going to be either this dog or me; but I was afraid of that dog and that's why I was always hurrying to get out of there. And I was afraid. Somehow, within me, I intrinsically knew that I had to face my fears or I would run forever. So I decided to face my fear. (Eighty-five percent of people allow their fear of failure outweigh their desire to succeed.)

Now, I want to make a disclaimer because I don't believe in cruelty to animals, but this dog had it coming. So one day I took a stick and I put it in my little

backpack. I got on my bike and headed toward the alleyway. As I entered the alleyway at about 3:30 that afternoon, as expected, that little dog was waiting for me, but this time it was different—I had made an internal decision that I wasn't going to be afraid anymore. Instead of falling off the bike, I jumped off the bike, I took the stick out, and I began to chase that dog. The dog turned around and starting running. The faster he ran, the stronger I pursued and I finally caught him. I had cornered him between myself and a fence, and got ready to hit him with everything I had in me. As I describe what happened next, I want you to think about those words that Zig Ziglar shared with me—*FEAR is false evidence appearing real*—FEAR is nothing more than an illusion. As I was about to swing, I happened to look in the dog's mouth. That dog didn't have any teeth—he couldn't have bitten me even if he'd wanted to! When I saw that, I just put the stick down and I laughed and walked back to the bike. I learned that day that fear is truly false evidence appearing real.

Fear normally shows up when you're about to realize your potential, release it, and do something great. I think fear and doubt come to sidetrack you and to keep you from getting there, but when you hit it head on, that fear often vanishes like a vapor. But you should deal with fear intelligently and systematically. You don't just want to go out there unprepared, because you could be sidetracked. There are some real things out there that can get you if you don't insulate yourself properly, so investigate before you invest.

The way I deal with fear specifically is a three-step process:

1. I look at my situation and assess it as it is. I don't see it as being worse than it is, because that's what most people do.
2. I see my situation as being better than it is.
3. I make it the way that I see it, which requires consistent action.

Now, this reminds me of what Vincent Van Gogh said one time. Someone asked him how he came up with his paintings. He said, "First I dream my paintings, and then I paint my dream." Hmm, I like that. First I dream my paintings and then I paint my dream. I think that in order to deal with doubt and fear, you have to become a dreamer.

WRIGHT

I understand you had the opportunity to be an Olympic Torchbearer. How did that happen?

DAVIS

Oh wow, yes, in fact, the same Olympics that I participated in, Muhammad Ali was actually the first person to grab the flame. It was 2001 and we were in the process of going to the 2002 Olympics. My section of the relay happened on December the 7, 2001.

I talked about influence a little bit earlier. I'm a speaker by trade, and the speaking business is almost like a magic act, so to speak. People see a magician doing the tricks, but they don't know how the magician does it. I was just getting started and I wondered how those guys get out there on stage. I wondered how they were invited to speak, and then on top of that, how they managed to get paid to do it.

When I decided I wanted to speak professionally, no one knew who I was, but I knew I had a special message for people and organizations that would create success and have a profound affect long-term. So, I wondered what I could do, where I could I go, and how I could get people to notice me and embrace my message. I decided to go to places where most speakers aren't going. I went to day care centers, jails, detention centers, and prisons. I knew there would be some room for me to grow as I went to those places and there wouldn't be much competition.

So I went to those places with a few thoughts in mind: 1) I could get the practice and 2) they were a captive audience and couldn't go anywhere. They wouldn't know if I messed up because they didn't have a point of reference to compare me with. Then the third reason, which is probably right in the middle of all of this, was that I really cared and wanted to help people. I figured that I could share something meaningful and could hopefully give those audiences a new way of looking at things. I would go for months and spend time with these inmates in prisons and youth detention centers.

The recidivism rate is just a fancy way of saying revolving door rate—when inmates come out of penal institutions they quickly go back in. I didn't know

anything about this. The numbers are very, very high. So I would go to correctional facilities, and when I did, the recidivism would come down by fractions of a point, which is very high given what those numbers are like, but I didn't know that.

During this time the Olympic Committee was looking for torchbearers, and they saw me as doing something inspirational and helping people out, so they decided to give me the honor of bearing the Olympic Torch for a certain distance. I was happy to do it, because not only did I get a chance to participate in one of the great events in history, especially that particular year (it was shortly after 9/11 when the world needed some encouragement), I also got the great opportunity to share an excellent message on a larger platform. The experience was truly tremendous.

During the torch relay, I had the opportunity to meet some of the firemen who were actually involved in rescue efforts after the 9/11 disaster. I met Jeremy Glick's wife (Lyzabeth). Jeremy was one of the people who died on flight 93. The last words he spoke to his wife were, "We're going to rush the hijackers." Just think—I had the chance to participate in the Olympics with Christopher Reeve and Lance Armstrong, which was pretty nice. All these phenomenally inspirational people participated, and right beside these honorable names, my name was right there. It was the first time that I realized I was living my dream. To participate as an Olympic Torchbearer in the relay you have to be somebody who is an inspiration, you have to overcome extreme adversity, you must be a positive force, and then someone has to nominate you.

#### WRIGHT

A man told me one time years ago that if I were ever walking down the road and saw a turtle sitting on a fencepost I could bet that he didn't get up there by himself. You often talk about leadership and the importance of mentoring; who have been some of the mentors in your life and what attracted you to them?

#### DAVIS

Oh wow, that's a good question. One of the biggest mentors I've had in my life is my friend, Les Brown. Les has been great for many, many years and he's done a lot of good for a lot of people.

One day, my electricity was turned off and I didn't know how in the world I was going to pay the bill to get it back on. I heard a voice inside that impressed me to get Les Brown's tape series titled "It's Possible" and listen to them right then. So I went into the next room and took my Walkman out (thank God it was battery powered). I popped the tape in the player and I started listening to the happy words, the hopeful words, the encouraging words of Les Brown saying it's possible. Something welled up within me that said, "Yeah, if it's possible I've got to do this—I must do it. I've got to work on myself, and I've got to get better at sharing my message with people."

I knew I was going to need help because I was by myself. People often think they can do it on their own, but really it's the help of teamwork that gets things done a lot faster. In my life I've tried to position myself within a team type of an environment. You can always get things done faster with the help of others than you can ever do alone. The book of life (the Bible) says it this way: one can chase a thousand, but two could put ten thousand to flight. Simply put, there's power in partnerships.

So I wanted to get Les Brown to be on my team. At that time, however, I didn't know him, I had no idea how to reach him, and I didn't know anyone who knew him—those tapes were all I had. So what I ended up doing was using the address and phone information that was on the back of the tapes.

Before I began attempting to reach him, I prepared myself so that when I eventually did meet him, it would not be a waste of time. The guys who are out there achieving do not have time to waste. I knew that if I was going to get their attention and get their time, I couldn't be a person to waste their time—if I was ever fortunate enough to get it. So I prepared myself. You see, preparation is an indication of your expectation. Kenny Rogers said that preparation is the highest form of faith. So I started preparing myself because I expected to one day meet Les Brown.

I went to the library and I started reading more of his books and put my hands on anything that spoke about him. I made a simple plan and I carried out that action plan faithfully. On Monday, January 1, 2001, I called his office in Brighton, Michigan, where he was at that time. I asked for a meeting and his secretaries told me no and hung up on me. I called back on a Thursday—I would call twice a week,

on Mondays and Thursdays. I said something like, “Hello, I’m Earl Davis. I’m an aspiring motivational speaker. Do you think you could help me set up a meeting with Les Brown?” They would always tell me no, every time I called.

To make a long story short, twelve months later they finally gave me the interview and the rest is, as they say, history. So to me, finding a good mentor is number one. Identifying those people who give you inspiration, and selecting people who are the leaders in their chosen fields is important. Before you try to meet them you should get their books and their tapes, so that when you do get their time you’re not going to talk about what is already in their books and tapes—you really want the time to be productive. The next thing is that you want to educate yourself about what it is that you teach or practice and then be clear about what you specifically want. Then look for ways you can help your potential mentor achieve his or her goals and dreams.

Most people say, “Well, how can I help the guy or the woman I’m interested in recruiting to my mentoring team?” My answer is that everybody needs help. What I do is get well versed with what I want and I look at what I could do. I then I try to imagine ways that I can possibly help them.

I knew Les Brown had books and tapes and I figured that he would probably want more tape and book sales. I also figured that he would probably want more people to know about his message. So if I could introduce ten or fifteen new people daily to his material, I’d be helping him on some small scale. But I thought there had to be a better way than that.

When I finally met Les, during our conversation he told me that he was interested in looking for speakers to train, and that this was one of the biggest goals he had. I said, “My goodness, I’m a speaker, can you train me?” And that became the way I began helping him. You could say it was actually a match made in heaven.

I’ve had many mentors throughout my life and I’ve looked for various ways that they could help me, but I’ve always also looked for ways I could help them. I’ve attracted many high profile mentors by following this strategy.

So don’t wait, identify your mentor and the ways that you can help him or her, then go and introduce yourself. It won’t be long before you begin attracting high profile mentors, too.



WRIGHT

Many of our values come directly from our childhood and upbringing. What are the most important values you feel you still carry today from your parents and other family members, friends, teachers, and folks like them?

DAVIS

I was in high school and had a chemistry and physics teacher by the name of Harry Welsch. Mr. Welsch was that special person for me. He looked like a mad scientist—he wore a white lab coat. He had a salt-and-pepper beard and steel-rimmed glasses. I don't know why I was taking this class, but I think the *MacGyver* television episodes that were popular back in those days must have been what prompted me to want to learn about physics and chemistry.

It was my senior year and I was in Mr. Welsch's physics class on the first day of school. He walked down the center aisle and said something that caught everyone's attention. Mr. Welsch said, "With all the information I possess I could blow up every school in this county." Now, I don't know if he could get away with that these days with security as tight as it is because of the violence in schools, but I think that he was trying to grab the students' attention—and he successfully did that. During the course of that year I became endeared to him.

I was a troubled student and I had a troubled past; I was wrestling with a lot of issues in my childhood. You see, I was molested on a bi-weekly basis between the ages of three to five and I was still dealing with that. I didn't really know how to voice that to people back then, so I skipped school a lot. This one particular semester I had skipped a total of forty-five days and when I came back to the class, Mr. Welsch said, "Earl, I need to see you after school." Of course I knew I was going to hear some type of reprimand and I didn't really want to hear it. A few thoughts crossed my mind. I thought, "He's an older guy, I could probably outrun him. I'm not going to stay after school." Then I remembered that my parents always taught me to be respectful, and I thought I'd go ahead and hear what he had to say.

So after school I went to his classroom. Mr. Welsch looked at me and said, "You're a pretty good student when you're here; but, man, you've got to be here. I'm only going to say this once and I want you to learn from it. The mark of

greatness is on you, but the sad thing is that you can't even see it. Earl, what's the formula for force?"

I said, "Mr. Welsh, force is equal to mass times acceleration ( $F=MA$ ).

"Yes," he said, "that's correct. While that's the physics formula for Force, it's also the formula for success in life. Mass has to do with weight. Knowledge is the weight of everything that you know. If you take your knowledge and equate it with mass and then multiply your knowledge by acceleration—the speed at which you're able to solve other people's problems—you'll be a *force* that cannot be reckoned with."

That's one of the greatest values and lessons that I have ever learned and I've tried to apply it to my life and career. I often think about that day and I still remember my thoughts and feelings as I shook his hand. I was hoping and praying that he was right. I believe that when Mr. Welsh looked at me, he looked at me through the eyes of infinite wisdom—wisdom that says, if you look at a man the way he is, he only gets worse, but if you look at a man the way he could be, then he becomes what he should be.

#### WRIGHT

So what is your favorite quote?

#### DAVIS

Oh wow, there are so many of them. I think one of my favorite quotes, at least in this season of my life right now, is a quote by Marianne Williamson from her book *Return to Love*. "Our deepest fear is not that we're inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are we not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. . . . We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

WRIGHT

That is a great quote.

Now that you're realizing and manifesting your dream, what do you wish your legacy to be?

DAVIS

"Legacy" is a powerful word. I believe that success without a successor is not really success. You have to find a way to keep your message—your story, the thing that you've worked on your entire life—to continue to live on. As I think about it now, I want to be remembered not so much for what I gave, but for what I inspired other people to give. I want it to be known that I was the catalyst who inspired someone else to get out there and tell their story, to get out there and make a difference, to go out and serve the masses of people.

One of the ways in which we're able to do that now is through philanthropy. Philanthropy is a very big part of my life. I've been able to start a scholarship fund called the Earl Davis Dream Fund. We help people get their dreams going. A primary focus for the fund is academics because the cost of education is going up and getting out of reach for so many people. I think that education is *a* key to compensation, it's not "*The Key*" but it is a key. If you're not educated, you're not able to get a great start. And you've got to get started if you want to be great. So I really want to keep my foundation work going. It's not limited to the area of academics, it's there for anyone, and we really like helping people get their dreams going.

The economy is another issue that is affecting a lot of people. Many people are losing their homes and their jobs. Stress is causing people to have health conditions and hearts are failing because of fear. I think these are times that try men's souls. We are in very daunting and very strange times.

For example, Lehman Brothers Holdings, Inc. was able to survive the Great Depression but they weren't able to survive these times. Founded in 1850, they survived until 2008 when they filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Many people are comparing these times with the Great Depression. There were a lot of losses and tragedies during that time. Many people were jumping out of buildings and committing suicide back then. But the era of the Great Depression

was when some of the greatest innovations were made—the electric dry razor, car radios, the concept of a supermarket, xerography and the company that developed and commercialized the process (Xerox), and Tampax. Out of necessity came some of the greatest innovations in history known to man that are still affecting us and making life easier today. I think that we're at that pivotal time again—the time when people have to dig in deep. I want to be a catalyst who gives people the ability to say, Hey, if that guy can do it, man, I know I can do it.

There is a little fireball of an inspirational speaker by the name of Sean Stevenson. He is a great motivational speaker and friend of mine. Sean suffers from Osteogenesis Imperfecta and he's about three and a half, maybe four feet tall and sits in a wheelchair. When I saw this little powerful guy out there changing people's lives, I thought, "Man, if Sean can do it, I can do it." That's the kind of spirit I have. I want to be a positive catalyst and force. I want to be remembered not so much for what I gave, but for what I inspired people to give.

#### WRIGHT

Well, Earl, what a great motivational conversation this has been today. You've given me a lot to think about, including some new concepts. I'm sure that our readers are going to enjoy reading this chapter. I really appreciate the time you've taken with me to answer all these questions. I know how busy you are and I really want you to know that I appreciate your being a part of our project.

#### DAVIS

Well, David, I really appreciate you.

I will end on this note; it's something that I'm known for and it doesn't matter if I'm abroad, in the Caribbean, or here in the States. I like to end everything that I do—interviews and even projects like this and conversations such as the one we've had today—with the following advice:

*Follow your dreams wherever they lead.  
Don't be distracted by less worthy deeds.  
Shelter them, nourish them, help them to grow.  
Hold your dream deep—down deep where dreams grow.  
Follow your dreams, pursue them with haste,  
Life is too precious—too precious to waste.  
Be faithful, be loyal in all that you do,  
The dream that you follow will keep coming true.*

*It's been my pleasure, thank you very much.*

#### WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Earl Davis, a powerful and passionate speaker and success coach. Through his company, Create Winners, he works with corporate professionals, small business owners, network marketers, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), and individuals who want to bring out the very best in themselves and in others.

Earl, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

#### DAVIS

Thank you.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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EARL DAVIS, JR. is one of America's most respected voices on human potential and the psychology of winning. The creator and host of the television/radio program *The Winner's Circle*, his clients have included Hilton Hotels, IBM, the U.S. Army, statesman, professional athletes, and entertainers. His company, Create Winners, Inc., works with corporate professionals, entrepreneurs, and more to bring out the best in themselves and others.



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## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### Surrender Activates Miracles:

How to Befriend the Unknown and  
Walk the Brightly Lit Path of Your Soul

An Interview with . . . **Saskia Röell**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking with Saskia Röell. Saskia lives with her husband, five children, and five animals in a small lobster village on the ocean in New England. As a Transformational Life Coach and the best-selling author of *A Suitcase Full of Faith*, she empowers others to live from the heart, finding the courage to follow their dreams and express their life purpose. In 2001, Saskia, her husband, and their five children took a daring leap of faith. They sold their house in Holland and gave up their thriving businesses to explore new possibilities in America. With little money, no job prospects, no contacts, and five children who didn't speak a word of English, they trusted that they could reinvent their lives in the moment.



Saskia found her passion for empowering others while teaching at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands as a member of the faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences in the Department of Experimental Psychology. She has extensively studied the conscious mind, the subconscious mind, the superconscious mind, and how our unhealed emotions affect our destiny. Her clients live all over the world and come from all walks of life. She travels internationally presenting seminars, conducting workshops, and facilitating sessions for individuals.

Saskia, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

SASKIA RÖELL

Thank you so much, David. I'm happy to be here.

WRIGHT

You wrote a best-selling book titled *A Suitcase Full of Faith: How One Woman Found Her Dream Trusting the Compass of Her Soul*. Why did you choose that title?

RÖELL

*A Suitcase Full of Faith* is a pioneer adventure story about taking risks in life and living fearlessly when going after your dreams. Often, we let go of a dream because we think we don't have enough time to wait for it or we need to control the process of when or how something manifests. The how and the when are not our business. When we "Let go and let God," miracles happen.

Faith and trust are key factors in manifesting your dreams, and I've been a dreamer from my first breath. I can't remember a time when I didn't dream or fantasize about a grandiose future where everything was possible. At young age I decided to go after my every dream. I felt like a spiritual adventurer in a world that stretched her arms wide open to welcome me and steered me in the right direction. Life felt safe and soulful.

I dared the Universe and commanded her help. I said, "If you want me to walk the path of my highest purpose, I will, but be aware that I rely on your support." This conversation started out as joyful play. It became a win-win game.

However, as I grew older, the challenges grew accordingly bigger. I took many daring leaps of faith in order to stay truthful to my path. I followed the compass of my soul. I strengthened my faith by the challenges I met. I let go of control and learned how to live fearlessly and befriend the unknown. I gave up my home, my country, my marriage, my best friend, the job I dearly loved, and found the life of my deepest dreams by following the compass of my soul.

My life is a demonstration of the Law of Attraction in action. I've learned that the Universe supports me—always—when I follow the compass of my soul, when I live from my heart. I've made extraordinary choices and, therefore, met extraordinary challenges, but I've been led to an extraordinary life in the process.

Our choices determine our destiny, but often we'd rather stay in our comfort zone than jump into the unknown. I agree with the French poet Andre Gide who said, "One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time."

The title *A Suitcase Full of Faith* came from the chapters about being on the brink of moving our family of seven from Holland to America for good. In doing so, I was following the whispers of my soul—the deep place of inner knowing—that said, "Saskia, it's time to leave Holland, to pack up and go and leave everything behind. Go live in the land of opportunities."

I knew, deep down, that I had to follow that voice because its guidance resonated with my whole being. I felt very passionate about the idea of letting go of everything and starting anew. However, to do that we had to give up our thriving businesses, our wonderful social life, our lives near our extended family, and our friends. We had to trade all of that for the big unknown. We had no jobs waiting, the kids did not speak the English language, and we had little money. Truly, we didn't have a single secure thing when we arrived except hearts filled with joy. The challenges were as big as the miracles that occurred. When I told a friend we were planning to leave for America, he looked at me in disbelief and said, "You must have suitcases full of money." I replied, "No, I've got a suitcase full of faith."

When the decision was made to move to America, the Universe showed up and cooperated immediately. The day after my husband and I first talked about

the idea, the phone rang. A friend in America was calling to invite us to come to the East Coast to stay in her renovated barn. I thought, "I can have this dream." To my soul, the solution was easy, but since I was with seven people, I said, "Let's go on this vacation first and, if all of us resonate with this country, then we'll move."

We booked our plane tickets to New York, we rented an RV in the United States, and we toured around. There was no set plan of where we would go. We said, "A house will find us." We had no clue where on the East Coast or where in one of the fifty states of America we would live. When you give over in such a deep way, the Universe responds.

On one of the last days of our trip we visited a little lobster village on the Atlantic shore. I said, "Let's find our dream house here." Less than ten minutes later, while driving around, we saw a beautiful, big, old Victorian house with a For Sale sign in the yard. I knew I had to see more of this fairy tale castle that had appeared out of thin air, so I went to explore. I tried one of the doors and it was unlocked. I'll never forget my husband standing in the yard yelling, "No, you can't go in there!" But I simply had to. I walked into the house and fell in love with it immediately.

To make a long story short, we flew back to Holland and then bought the house, months later, over the phone. We had no money in the bank to buy it with, but the Universe heard my call when I asked for people to lend us the money. In less than eight hours, I manifested the whole amount of money to buy the house with. Things fell in place. This move was in sync with a bigger plan. I've now lived in that house for eight years and my rose-colored glasses are still firmly in place. The love with this house is still going strong.

*A Suitcase Full of Faith* is not a "how-to" book but a "how do" book. Using my experiences as living proof in the real world, the book reads like fiction and feels like an adventure. You walk in my shoes. By the time the last page has been turned, my faith and courage are yours. Many books speak to people who only want to take baby steps and make small life changes. That's not what I do. I speak to people who are ready for a push toward a giant leap of faith. I show them how to shed their baggage and I give them the map to use for making big life changes. I use my own stories as inspiring examples of how to live fearlessly

and how to befriend the unknown. Teaching by example, I live my message every step of the way. And you can, too.

WRIGHT

I'd like to know more about how you think of the word "faith" in the title *A Suitcase Full of Faith*.

RÖELL

I don't refer to faith in the general religious sense. By "faith" I mean the positive quality of trust one has in a positive outcome. And yes, I have a tremendous amount of faith, which, of course, has been strengthened over the years through my experiences in trusting it. The beautiful thing is that when your faith is strengthened, you learn that you no longer need to control everything because things will flow as they will, and you will flow with them. With faith, you can bridge the gap between having an initial dream and making it manifest.

In order to learn, I'd rather follow the deep undercurrent of my heart's desire and stay on course with the compass of my soul than be sucked into the undercurrent of doubt caused by a fearful mind. When I'm in tune with the divinity within me, my life purpose will unfold because my heart and soul are in sync with the Universe. If I am in the flow with my authentic self, I observe that synchronicities are part of my life. Often the outcome is different from what I'd expected and that is when I learn that there is the slow way—my way—and the fast track, which is the Universe's highway. Letting go of my way takes practice.

WRIGHT

During the big change of moving your family of seven from Holland to America with so few steppingstones, how did courage fit into the equation?

RÖELL

The steppingstones were subtle, but the leap was giant. There was no safety net in place. When you take an enormous jump and leave the past behind, you have the best chance of allowing the Universe to show you the way and help. When you make a bungee jump, you feel great because for a moment you think

you can fly. You wouldn't feel as blissful if there was a platform halfway down where you could stop for a moment to contemplate whether or not the bungee cord will snap. Instead, you dive into feeling weightless and free. You realize that you're safe because you're attached to a cord that keeps you from crashing into the ground. In my life I want to have that feeling all the time. I want to be free, to travel lightly and walk the brightly lit path of my soul—that's what I am after. I don't want to be weighed down with the baggage of the past. So I strengthen my faith by jumping without a safety net in place because it's only then when I can feel that my faith pulls me up instead of down. God's "umbilical cord"—our divine thread—is the bungee rope from which we soar, and ultimately, we are safe in the Universe's embrace.

In moving to America, there were so many little steps. We put one foot in front of the other. The first steps were to set out to buy that big, old Victorian house without knowing if we could come up with the amount of money they asked for or to see if we could sell our house in Holland or get visas to enter America. The next step was to thank the Universe and allow the reality of our plan to manifest. The rest of the steps followed soon after. We simply kept going, no matter what. A lot of friends laughed at us, saying, "You need a backup plan because where will you go if you've burnt all your bridges behind you and it doesn't work out?" But we had no room for doubt. We gave up everything and trusted that we'd be successful anyway.

To me, success means that your heart is full, even though your bank account may not be. The word "courage" comes from the French word *coeur*, which means heart. The heart is never fearful. The heart is full of love and that is where our true intelligence lies. To navigate your life from your heart shifts your life from survival mode to passionate living. In my coaching sessions, I ask, "Imagine following the truth of your heart—where would you go?" and, "What stops you from going there?" I know we are all unstoppable if we are passionate about our purpose. That's why I am here—to spread that knowing to others and to show people that if I can do it, they can too.

## WRIGHT

Have you always been full of faith or did you go through a process to get here?

## RÖELL

As a young girl growing up in family of seven in Holland, I was blessed with parents who trusted their gut instincts to raise me by stimulating and praising my uniqueness. They pretty much let me walk my own path. They placed very few limits. I had a lot of freedom to express myself the way I wanted to. They trusted my feelings about what was right for me. Therefore, at young age I learned to trust myself and to make decisions about what's right for me. I've danced my way through life as a feeler, sensing my way into every decision. I asked myself how I felt about this or that. My logical mind has not been in the way. I've dreamed big and thought everything was possible, as long I trusted the compass of my soul. That deep place of inner knowing has guided me safely, leading me to the fulfillment of many dreams.

Over the years, as my faith grew stronger, I've made extraordinary choices that led to extraordinary challenges and extraordinary results—without regrets. What tools did I need in my suitcase for that journey of the soul? They would become obvious along the way.

In the outer world, I used the *Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit* series to guide me to what was worth seeing and where to go. In my quest to find the answers I sought, I traveled through Africa, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Singapore, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, America, and all over Europe. I lived in Asia, in a kibbutz in Israel, with the Bedouin in the desert of Egypt, and in other exotic, far-away places. I traveled on a shoestring. I learned that the Universe supports my dreams always. That belief became rock solid and supported me in many ways. I let go of the baggage of my past and stepped onto the inner trail where I found the brightly lit path of my soul. I filled my suitcase (of course I only had a small duffel bag) with faith and trust. I discovered what was worth seeing and where to go—inside. My life's path is a reflection of me following the bigger journey of my soul.

WRIGHT

Say more about what it means to follow the compass of your soul.

RÖELL

It means recognizing that life is a journey and that directional help comes from inside of us because we are part of the Universe. When we look outside of ourselves for direction, we get lost in the outer world with all its many possibilities.

To follow the compass of the soul also means taking responsibility for showing up and saying yes when guided from within to take certain steps. In life, we encounter roadblocks and crossroads. Those moments are times to stop and look at the script we're using to direct our life. We can ask ourselves, "Where am I going?" and "What is my destiny?" If we dare to see them as opportunities for growth, roadblocks are usually a prelude to transformation. What holds us back is a suitcase full of baggage from the past. It weighs us down and makes it hard to travel the brightly lit path of the soul. Following the compass of the soul means shedding limitations and trusting in the wisdom of the Universe.

WRIGHT

How does our suitcase weigh us down?

RÖELL

During life we gather a lot of stuff—extra baggage. We gather not only material stuff, but mostly emotional stuff in the form of limiting beliefs and stories about who we are and how life works. Most of that old baggage is based on past experiences and the conclusions we made based on what happened to us. We often misinterpret events and carry those false conclusions through life. Rather than taking the time and care to lighten our load, we go on feeling burdened, carrying a heavy suitcase of unnecessary and false assumptions. To dare to open that suitcase is an adventure! What's in there? What can be let go of? Imagine what you'd ideally like to pack for the journey of your life. You'd better bring your dancing shoes! If you navigate from the compass of your soul, you'll certainly dance and have fun.

## WRIGHT

Have there been moments in your life when it was difficult to follow the voice of your heart (or the compass of your soul) because the voice of the mind made more sense?

## RÖELL

In a way, yes, though I always have only one choice because my life's path is to listen to the voice of my heart. My soul communicates through my heart. Through my feelings I know what is right or wrong for me. Yes, I've had challenging moments, but no matter how much my faith has been put to the test, I've been consistent in my choices.

At times, when following your own compass, you go against the stream of doubters who don't understand you or who think you're out of your mind when making certain decisions. But that's okay. They'll learn that when you go after your heart's desire and take risks, in the end the reward is very sweet. However, many times I've had to decide which voice to follow. I encounter situations that trigger fear, but I know that I always have a choice about how to respond.

Often, we choose fear over faith because it's more familiar. Fear brings us nothing but worry. Faith brings us peace of mind. I avoid the road that leads to a dead end when I face my fears with the strength that comes from choosing to follow my heart.

Once, at a fire walk in New Mexico, I was really put to the test about what voice to listen to. Before the walk, we had a ceremony to prepare ourselves. During the preparation we all sat in a circle and meditated. We were instructed to ask our Higher Self (the wise part of the self or the megaphone of the soul) to give us a symbol or a sign about whether or not we were to walk on the hot coals. We were told that walking only from a place of courage would not be allowed. My world shattered when I heard them say this because I am generally good with courage—I often let it carry me along. But the instructors said, "Only if your Higher Self gives you the green light you can walk. On some days you are not supposed to walk. Courage will not do the trick tonight. If you walk only from courage you can completely burn your feet. So look within and ask whether or not you will walk." When I looked within, my Higher self said, "Walk four times with ease and grace."



I stared into hot wild fire. The yellow flames touched the sky. Scared and shivering, I stood under the pitch-black starlit New Mexico sky. Snowflakes were falling and I could almost hear the flames kissing the white flakes when they met in the air. After a while, my turn to cross the fire to the other side came. Without focus, moving from courage only, I ran across the fire. I burnt my feet. As I stood at the other side of the fire and cooled my feet in the snow, I was horrified. My soles were badly burnt because I'd neglected the wise advice I'd received to walk with ease and grace. Instead I ran with courage and no focus. Now what?

I considered my situation and wondered why anyone with burnt soles would walk the fire again. My mind was making a point. It wanted to keep me safe. That's what the mind always wants—safety and security. My body felt pain and the idea of going over the burning coals again made me cringe. But I checked in with my Higher Self. Was it wise to go again? “Yes. Go,” was the answer I received. So I had no choice—if I wanted to live my life from the place of my soul, I had to listen.

I walked through the fire three more times. I walked with ease and grace. Amazingly, after each turn my feet felt better, though I didn't dare to look at my soles again. That night, before I went to bed, I put pure Aloe Vera on my feet, squeezing the juice from a living cactus plant growing on the side of the desert road. I told my feet they had been kissed by the fire. The wounds healed overnight. Miraculously, I had soft, new, pink skin on both of my soles the next morning. It was obvious that I'd made the right choice for me—I'd followed through on the advice of my heart, no matter what!

Another example is from when I lived in Singapore with my first husband, to whom I was married for a year and a half. One day I went to a hockey tournament in Indonesia and was introduced to a Dutch man there. I shook his hand and immediately heard the voice deep within myself telling me, “This man is the man of your life.” My mind argued, saying, “But you've only just been married.” So which voice should I listen to? I had no other choice than to trust my soul. It wasn't easy. The Dutch man lived in Taiwan and I lived in Singapore.

We parted ways after less than forty-eight hours of playing hockey under the sizzling sun. We'd danced for one long romantic night under the millions of

stars visible above the equator. And that was all. In my fantasies I imagined meeting him again, but I didn't even know his last name until he was waving good-bye to me. I wasn't sure I would ever see him again.

People asked me how I could know for sure that he was the man of my life. They wanted a logical explanation. They said, "You don't know him and you already have the best life imaginable." I already had it all in the eyes of others. To them, I didn't know what I was doing. But deep down I knew enough.

In order to enter the Taipei castle of the Dutch man, I'd had to give up everything. I became homeless in the period of time between leaving my life in Singapore and flying to Taipei. I went after my prince. That was twenty years ago. I married him in Taiwan and over the subsequent years have given birth to our five beautiful children. Through that experience and many others, I completely trust that the voice of my soul guides me to my destiny.

#### WRIGHT

Would you say that you have had experiences in your life's journey that you would call miracles?

#### RÖELL

When you're open to the field of unlimited possibilities and allow things to unfold according to your heart's compass, you're in for quite a ride. I've experienced more miracles in a day than some people have in a lifetime. I've experienced miracles small and large, all of them great.

Miracles have to do with appreciating the unexpected. When someone smiles at me in a busy train station and I realize that we are all connected, that is a miracle to me. When my schedule is crazy and the phone rings and someone unexpectedly offers to take care of my children for a while, I'm amazed that the Universe supports me in getting my writing done. I practice gratitude by being very conscious about all the good things I have in my life. I wake up and offer gratitude as soon as I open my eyes and I maintain that awareness of being grateful until I go to sleep. That certainly increases the amount of miracles in a day. And, yes, I've had quite a few experiences of unexpected things happening that were beyond the rational mind's logic or explanation.

A few years ago I was in Sedona on a shamanic quest. I set out on a walk in the Red Rocks with a friend. Before our walk I did a meditation, during which I was told to find a rock that had the male and female symbols imprinted on it. This rock was for the unborn baby of my friend. The rock would balance the yin and yang energy of the baby and had to be placed in his bedroom.

We walked for about fifteen minutes. We had no idea where to go or where to look for the stone. We climbed our way up through the sandy pathways trusting that the stone would show up. Suddenly, I stopped. "Dig in the sand right here," came the message from inside. With my hands I search through the red earth and uncovered a round rock. An incredible energy ran through my spine the moment I held the rock. I blew the sand off and was dumbstruck at what I saw. The stone had the sign of a big heart on it and inside stood a warrior with an arrow in his hand. It must have been there from ages ago, when someone carved those symbols into it. But there was another miracle yet to come.

I walked alone for a while and was mesmerized by the overwhelming beauty of the Red Rocks. I vibrated with the power of the earth and I felt my life purpose strongly present. I knelt down and prayed to the Universe. I said, "Please, will you let me know that you hear me and, if you do, will you show me a rainbow in the sky?" Who knows why I wanted that proof. I looked up in the sky but saw nothing. My mind considered it impossible, but when I looked up again, I saw a rainbow halo all around the sun, right above my head. At first I thought I was hallucinating. I sat motionless on my knees until my friend came to look for me. She'd been worried that I was taking so long. I asked her to tell me what she saw. She looked up, her eyes flickering in awe, and said, "A rainbow around the sun." I'd gotten my answer. I knew the Universe heard me.

Another example is from when I lived with a tribe of Bedouin in the Sinai Desert of Israel. I once went for long walk with my friend, Faith (what else could my best friend be named?). We started our hike early in the morning and because we thought we'd easily be able to find our way home again, we set out without much water and without a compass. Our home was where we'd left our sleeping bags under a palm tree close to the beach. I still wonder if it was stupidity that prompted us to take off without even thinking about the

possibility of getting lost in the vastness of the desert or if it was deep trust that all would be well no matter where we went. We set out with no worries projected into the present or future.

In that desert, the hills and mountains all looked alike to us. After a few hours of hiking we were totally lost. The desert seduced us, constantly encouraging us to keep going because of its constant changes of color. We wanted to see more, to explore further. The landscape misleads.

The sun shone high above our heads and suddenly we realized that the way back was unrecognizable. We'd used all our water and were dehydrated. We sat down on the top of a hill to discuss our options. The beauty was mesmerizing but bittersweet once we had nothing else on our minds but finding water, food, and shelter. Nobody knew we'd left camp and even if they'd known they had no way of finding us. We could only move on and pray for the best. I whispered to the Universe that we would love some melons. I tasted their sweetness in my mouth. After that, we continued to walk, not knowing whether we were drifting farther into the desert or back toward camp. We were so thirsty that the dazzling water mirages made us run down the hills toward them. We saw false pools of water as the heat danced above the sand. And then suddenly a brown canvas bag appeared on the sand before us, seemingly out of thin air. Carefully, we approached the bag, as if we were predators, intent on prey. There were three delicious melons inside, and we then found our way back to camp. Our prayers had been answered.

#### WRIGHT

What do you do when you lose your faith, or misplace it? And why do you think people lose their faith in times of change?

#### RÖELL

Although there have been moments—and there will be moments—when I can't find my faith, I can't really lose my faith because it's part of my essence. I only lose my awareness of it momentarily, and I have to dig a little deeper to find it again. I've always known that the path of the soul can be challenging. Attitude matters if we want to keep moving. I can be impatient with my own progress, but I have learned that divine timing is not my business. I'd better

stay out of the way or I could mess things up. I've experienced tough times when nothing went the way I expected. Usually in those moments I wasn't aware of the bigger picture. I learned to trust that everything turns out okay at the end of the day.

Whereas fear is a figment of the mind, faith is a virtue of the soul. Because we are human, we have a wide range of feelings and emotions in our repertoire. Especially when things don't go our way or life requires change, fear is a more familiar response than faith. We generally don't like change. We'd rather stay stuck in a way of life we don't like than change. We don't realize that change is life's intention to sustain itself and move on. To move out of the comfort zone feels dangerous, even though there's nothing more exciting than discovering something wonderful and new. If we knew we were always safe, no matter what, because the Universe or God watches over us, we'd take more joy in letting go of the old and moving into the new.

We create our own reality. We have the power of free will regarding how we respond. There's always opportunity in the midst of adversity. Even in this time when people are losing their jobs and homes, there are still opportunities. The old must fall away to make room for the new. As long as we don't lose our dreams, we win. We choose to go through fear with faith.

#### WRIGHT

You've traveled all over the world; what experiences have most strengthened your trust and faith?

#### RÖELL

I traveled all over the world in my quest to understand what my life is all about. On my journey, the trail into the outer world was my starting point; my inner journey brought me full circle. My life has been a roller coaster ride and still is. I'm in charge, although sometimes the speed is little fast. Life gives me what I ask for, and more.

The "unexpected more" is especially where my growth happens, but it's also where miracles show up. The extraordinary choices I made have brought me to where I am today. From a young age I knew I had a mission in this life. My quest was to understand what my life was all about and how to live fearlessly

and have faith in a loving Universe that supports me to express my divinity in full. I strengthened my faith that I was not alone, that we are one, that the Universe supports my highest dreams, and that I am safe—no matter what. I always listened to my gut feelings and let them lead me to the best places for me. I exercise my faith daily by listening to my inner voice when facing challenges and by watching miracles occur when I stay true to my path.

#### WRIGHT

You seem adept at listening to the compass of your soul. Will you give our readers a few more examples of how that has served you or saved you?

#### RÖELL

Following the compass of my soul has always served me. And it saved my life in Egypt. I was in my early twenties when I visited the pyramids in Egypt. I was very excited to see the tombs and the Sphinx with my own eyes.

Three men accompanied me on that journey and, while walking around at the site; an old Egyptian man approached us and asked if we wanted to see a grave that was still hidden. He said he'd lead us to a sacred and secret place behind the pyramids. He seemed a bit creepy, but my curiosity to see the grave of an old king made me disregard my instincts at first. We followed him until he stopped and told us to be quiet and wait. He dug in the sand with a spade for ten minutes and uncovered a hole. Inside the hole were steps down into a cave. My sense of adventure was tickled to the max. He then told us to descend. With each step down I felt that something was not right, but I kept going, down into the beautiful grave of a pharaoh. Not one king but three kings were buried here. The creepy man raised his candle over the bones to light them. One of my friends gathered some of the bones from the tomb. I thought I'd like to do the same thing, to show my friends back home something about where I'd been. Within a split second of having that thought, I heard from inside myself a deep "*No! Get out now!*" I basically ran out of the tomb as if my life depended on it and as I stood outside in the fresh air, trembling, my mind said, "Oh gosh, don't you want to go back in there and grab some of that stuff and take it home?" My heart clearly said no, though, so I didn't, and I was to find out that that leaving the bones behind saved my life.

Back on the kibbutz in Israel, the man who'd taken the bones from the tomb became very sick and bad things started to happen to him: he got run over by a truck, his girlfriend died right in front of him, and on and on. The list of his misfortunes grew very long. The kibbutzniks became worried because it was obvious that something wasn't right with him.

He spoke with the psychic of the kibbutz and she said, "It seems that you've been cursed by an Egyptian pharaoh through the seventh generation, but why?" He told her then that he'd taken the bones out of the tomb. She told him that—through all kinds of shamanic rituals—he had to try to get rid of everything related to the bones, to burn all he had that was associated with them, even the clothes he'd been wearing that day, and the cupboard where he'd kept the bones. He listened and followed her instructions, but without total success. I met him a year later when we both returned to the kibbutz. He had bone cancer and a brain tumor. To me, my willingness to follow the voice from inside kept me from a similar fate.

#### WRIGHT

What is the most courageous thing you've done?

#### RÖELL

You would think that moving to America in the way we did would be the most courageous thing, but truly it's not. The most courageous thing I've done was to write the book *A Suitcase Full of Faith*, which exposed myself. It took a lot of courage to step into my own spotlight, and show who I am, to come out of hiding and let my own light shine so brightly.

I let go of the voice of doubt that whispered in my ear, saying, "Maybe you're not good enough" and "Maybe you'll be ridiculed." I can tell you now how freeing it's been to embrace my flaws and imperfections and also to see the perfection within myself. I'm now glad I went through the process of claiming myself in more of a public way to honor and share my gifts and talents with the world. Being fully self-expressed and doing so in my unique way has been the most courageous thing I've done—and still is, but that's what I help others to do now.

WRIGHT

How can life's purpose be revealed through faith?

RÖELL

We all have a unique purpose to express in the world. If you don't express it, the world will not have it. We may not be aware of our purpose or may not want to step into the responsibility of it, but I guarantee that life is more fun when we do. If you believe in yourself, in your dreams, and in a loving Universe that connects the dots for you from where you are now to where you want to be, your life purpose will be revealed. You will be, do, and have what thrills you.

We vibrate at a level of attracting toward ourselves what's in sync with our soul. The Universe gives us signs to follow. There are crossroads or roadblocks, but when we commit to our own path, we move through them and past them with ease.

Don't aim for survival, but for a feeling of passion and purpose that pulsates strongly through your veins. Follow your inner compass as best you can to build the muscles needed for recognizing and strengthening the voice of your heart.

WRIGHT

What quest currently captivates you?

RÖELL

The journey of the soul. How can I embrace and express my divinity with full force in this life? I'm fascinated by the idea that my purpose is not about me, but about the divine in me. The last phrase of my book, *A Suitcase Full of Faith*, is "walking on the bare feet of my soul, fearless and free," which is about saying, "Yes, here I am, and expressing my unique purpose—no matter what."

What else captivates me? The way our inner world always reflects our outer world; the way faith bridges the gap between our aspirations and the manifestations of our dreams; that my five children have such a zest of life, living with endless faith and trust in the goodness of life; the way gratitude brings us into the highest vibration; how to look at the world through the eyes



of my heart and how to be compassionate and non-judgmental; how to leave the lightest footprints on the Earth; and how to serve.

WRIGHT

How do you help others in their journeys to create their own extraordinary lives?

RÖELL

The most powerful tool I use is the example of my own life. Through my storytelling, I love to ignite courage to help people make extraordinary choices, which are key to letting go and moving out of the comfort zone, for only then can we grow.

Through my writing, coaching, and speaking I teach people the art of shedding baggage—how to let go of the past and step into their own spotlight. I help people connect to their unique purpose, passion, and joy. I focus on life purpose issues and on supporting women in the journey of fertility, motherhood, and birth. As a Transformational Life Coach I help people to birth their dreams and I also help women to birth their babies.

The way I help people to give birth to their dreams is the same way I help women give birth to their babies. When I give someone that final push to step into their dreams, and they dare to take that leap of faith, my heart is fulfilled.

WRIGHT

You've given birth to five children and to many dreams. In your counseling, you help people to birth their dreams as well as their babies. How do faith and trust relate to both?

RÖELL

During the birth of my first child, I learned that fear contracts, creating resistance and pain. Instead, I learned to surrender completely, trusting the innate wisdom of my body. I let go and switched off my mind. When I had faith in my body, I found that I had no fear, only a deep surrender and a deep trust that my body knew how to do it. I watched my body perform the miracle. It's amazing to see how the body is fully equipped to function without the mind.

We've lost confidence in our bodies via the mass hypnosis that teaches us that birth is excruciatingly painful.

Look at the words this culture uses around birth. Contractions are, in fact, waves that wash over the body to open the uterus to allow the birth of the baby. But the word "contract" indicates a limitation rather than a flow like a wave. Because of fear, we call them contractions and therefore it becomes painful to give birth. We call the birth process labor. I call birth a sacred experience.

I sang my five children into the world with great joy and without pain. The births were no more than thirty minutes from beginning to end, not because I mastered an advanced technique, but because I stayed out of my mind and let nature run her course.

We can give birth to our dreams if we let our true divine run her course. Birthing your dreams or birthing your children are actually similar in that way. The way I help women with fertility issues and giving birth is the same as I help people to give birth to their dreams.

WRIGHT

What advice would you give to people who have decided they would like to live in a world of their own creation?

RÖELL

Be daring, be different, love and express your uniqueness. Let your heart lead the way. Move out of your comfort zone. Roadblocks and detours are opportunities for growth. You'll meet them, but greet them with an open heart. Focus on what it is you want to bring about in your life. Don't blame the circumstances. Empower yourself by taking action. Dare the Universe for support. Don't ever give up. Don't let time be an excuse in your creation of your life. Surrender because it activates miracles. Pack your suitcase full of faith!

WRIGHT

You have always been passionate about empowering others. What are the five steps you recommend that lead us to greater life empowerment and success?

## RÖELL

I'm not a big believer in "how to." I believe more in "how do." Here are the practices that have the biggest influence on empowerment:

**Practice Awareness**—Invest only in the map that leads you to the place you truly want to be. Watch your thoughts. Your beliefs create your destiny, so when you change your beliefs, you change your destiny. I love the Mahatma Gandhi quote, "A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes."

**Practice Moving Out of Your Comfort Zone**—Take a new road to get to a new place. Let go of the past and allow the new to come in. Instead of staying stuck in a situation where you don't feel joy, dare to take a leap of faith and expand your horizons.

**Practice Letting Your Heart Lead the Way**—When you tune in to and trust your heart, you always safely reach the destination of your dreams. Life is not only about survival. To live passionately, ignore the mental chatter that aims to hold you back and instead trust your heart to lead the way.

**Practice the Power of Choice**—You always have the power to take the road that leads to your heart's desire. Exercise your free will. There are no wrong choices, only different outcomes. No matter what your situation is, you always have the choice of attitude. Make the extraordinary choice to get the extraordinary result.

**Practice Surrender**—Your true destiny is reached when you surrender to being guided by the compass of your soul. When you choose surrender, you release yourself from the need to control. Feel the freedom of letting go. Embrace the unknown. It's the place where new possibilities arise and miracles happen.

## WRIGHT

Well, what an interesting conversation this has been and what an interesting person you are. I'm captivated by all of your world travel. I appreciate all this time you've taken with me today to answer these questions.

It's been fascinating and I've learned a lot, especially about introspection. Hopefully, I can apply some of your advice and our readers will as well.

RÖELL

Thank you so much, David. It has been such a pleasure to talk to you.

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Saskia Röell. Saskia is a Transformational Life Coach and the best-selling author of *A Suitcase Full of Faith*. Her clients live all over the world and come from all walks of life. She travels internationally, presenting seminars, conducting workshops, and facilitating sessions for individuals.

Saskia, you have my best wishes as you travel. Don't get lost in the desert! I really do appreciate this and I appreciate your being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

RÖELL

Thank you so much, David.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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SASKIA RÖELL “The Courage Coach” walks her talk. She teaches what she naturally knows—how to let the soul lead the way. In her bestselling book, *A Suitcase Full of Faith: How One Woman Found Her Dream Trusting the Compass of Her Soul*, she shows how it’s done, using the stories of her own rich life as teaching tools and thus making the learning fun. She teaches the art of shedding baggage—how to let go of the past and step into your own spotlight. She empowers others to live from the heart, find courage to follow their dreams, and live their life purpose.

Through her practice as a Transformational Life Coach, Saskia helps people get to the nitty-gritty of what’s in the way and to understand which way to go by using the powerful tools of faith and courage. She’s a master. And she firmly believes you’re a master, too.

Saskia found her passion for empowering others while teaching at the Rijksuniversiteit of Groningen in the Netherlands, as a member of the faculty of Behavioral Sciences in the Department of Experimental Psychology. She has extensively studied the conscious, subconscious, and superconscious mind and how our unhealed emotions affect our destiny.

Saskia travels internationally, presenting seminars and facilitating sessions for individuals.



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## CHAPTER EIGHT

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Discover Your Inner Resource

An Interview with...**Dr. Deepak Chopra**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking to Dr. Deepak Chopra, founder of the Chopra Center for Well Being in Carlsbad, California. More than a decade ago, Dr. Chopra became the foremost pioneer in integrated medicine. His insights have redefined our definition of health to embrace body, mind and spirit. His books, which include, *Quantum Healing*, *Perfect Health*, *Ageless Body Timeless Mind*, and *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, have become international bestsellers and are established classics.

Dr. Chopra, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

DR. DEEPAK CHOPRA (CHOPRA)

Thank you. How are you?

WRIGHT

I am doing just fine. It's great weather here in Tennessee.

CHOPRA

Great.

WRIGHT

Dr. Chopra, you stated in your book, *Grow Younger, Live Longer: 10 Steps to Reverse Aging*, that it is possible to reset your biostats up to fifteen years younger than your chronological age. Is that really possible?

CHOPRA

Yes. There are several examples of this. The literature on aging really began to become interesting in the 1980s when people showed that it was possible to reverse the biological marks of aging. This included things like blood pressure, bone density, body temperature, regulation of the metabolic rate, and other things like cardiovascular conditioning, cholesterol levels, muscle mass and strength of muscles, and even things like hearing, vision, sex hormone levels, and immune function.

One of the things that came out of those studies was that psychological age had a great influence on biological age. So you have three kinds of aging: chronological age is when you were born, biological age is what your biomarker shows, and psychological age is what your biostat says.

WRIGHT

You call our prior conditioning a prison. What do you mean?

CHOPRA

We have certain expectations about the aging process. Women expect to become menopausal in their early forties. People think they should retire at the age of sixty-five and then go Florida and spend the rest of their life in so-called retirement. These expectations actually influence the very biology of aging. What we call normal aging is actually the hypnosis of our social conditioning. If you can bypass that social conditioning, then you're free to reset your own biological clock.

WRIGHT

Everyone told me that I was supposed to retire at sixty-five. I'm somewhat older than that and as a matter of fact, today is my birthday.

CHOPRA

Well happy birthday. You know, the fact is that you should be having fun all the time and always feel youthful. You should always feel that you are contributing to society. It's not the retirement, but it's the passion with which you're involved in the well being of your society, your community, or the world at large.

WRIGHT

Great things keep happening to me. I have two daughters; one was born when I was fifty. That has changed my life quite a bit. I feel a lot younger than I am.

CHOPRA

The more you associate with young people, the more you will respond to that biological expression.

WRIGHT

Dr. Chopra, you suggest viewing our bodies from the perspective of quantum physics. That seems somewhat technical. Will you tell us a little bit more about that?

CHOPRA

You see, on one level, your body is made up of flesh and bone. That's the material level but we know today that everything we consider matter is born of energy and information. By starting to think of our bodies as networks of energy information and even intelligence, we begin to shift our perspective. We don't think of our bodies so much as dense matter, but as vibrations of consciousness. Even though it sounds technical, everyone has had an experience with this so-called quantum body. After, for example, you do an intense workout, you feel a sense of energy in your body—a tingling sensation. You're actually experiencing what ancient wisdom traditions call the "vital force." The more you pay attention



to this vital force inside your body, the more you will experience it as energy, information, and intelligence, and the more control you will have over its expressions.

WRIGHT

Does DNA have anything to do with that?

CHOPRA

DNA is the source of everything in our body. DNA is like the language that creates the molecules of our bodies. DNA is like a protein-making factory, but DNA doesn't give us the blueprint. When I build a house, I have to go to the factory to find the bricks, but having the bricks is not enough. I need to get an architect, who in his or her consciousness can create that blueprint. And that blueprint exists only in your spirit and consciousness—in your soul.

WRIGHT

I was interested in a statement from your book. You said that perceptions create reality. What perceptions must we change in order to reverse our biological image?

CHOPRA

You have to change three perceptions. First you have to get rid of the perceptions of aging itself. Most people believe that aging means disease and infirmities. You have to change that. You have to regard aging as an opportunity for personal growth and spiritual growth. You also have to regard it as an opportunity to express the wisdom of your experience and an opportunity to help others and lift them from ordinary and mundane experience to the kind of experiences you are capable of because you have much more experience than they do.

The second thing you have to change your perception of is your physical body. You have to start to experience it as information and energy—as a network of information and intelligence.

The third thing you have to change your perception on is the experience of dying. If you are the kind of person who is constantly running out of time, you will continue to run out of time. On the other hand, if you have a lot of time, and if you do everything with gusto and love and passion, then you will lose track of time. When you lose track of time, your body does not metabolize that experience.

WRIGHT

That is interesting. People who teach time management don't really teach the passion.

CHOPRA

No, no. Time management is such a restriction of time. Your biological clock starts to age much more rapidly. I think what you have to really do is live your life with passion so that time doesn't mean anything to you.

WRIGHT

That's a concept I've never heard.

CHOPRA

Well, there you are.

WRIGHT

You spend an entire chapter of your book on deep rest as an important part of the reversal of the aging process. What is "deep rest"?

CHOPRA

One of the most important mechanisms for renewal and survival is sleep. If you deprive an animal of sleep, then it ages very fast and dies prematurely. We live in a culture where most of our population has to resort to sleeping pills and tranquilizers in order to sleep. That doesn't bring natural rejuvenation and renewal. You know that you have had a good night's sleep when you wake up in the morning, feeling renewed, invigorated, and refreshed—like a baby does. So that's

one kind of deep rest. That comes from deep sleep and from natural sleep. In the book I talk about how you go about making sure you get that.

The second deep rest comes from the experience of meditation, which is the ability to quiet your mind so you still your internal dialogue. When your internal dialogue is still, then you enter into a stage of deep rest. When your mind is agitated, your body is unable to rest.

WRIGHT

I have always heard of people who had bad eyesight and really didn't realize it until they went to the doctor and were fitted for lenses. I had that same experience some years ago. For several years I had not really enjoyed the deep sleep you're talking about. The doctor diagnosed me with sleep apnea. Now I sleep like a baby, and it makes a tremendous difference.

CHOPRA

Of course it does. You now have energy and the ability to concentrate and do things.

WRIGHT

Dr. Chopra, how much do eating habits have to do with aging? Can we change and reverse our biological age by what we eat?

CHOPRA

Yes, you can. One of the most important things to remember is that certain types of foods actually contain anti-aging compounds. There are many chemicals that are contained in certain foods that have an anti-aging effect. Most of these chemicals are derived from light. There's no way to bottle them—there are no pills you can take that will give you these chemicals. But they're contained in plants that are rich in color and derived from photosynthesis. Anything that is yellow, green, and red or has a lot of color, such as fruits and vegetables, contain a lot of these very powerful anti-aging chemicals.

In addition, you have to be careful not to put food in your body that is dead or has no life energy. So anything that comes in a can or has a label, qualifies for that.

You have to expose your body to six tastes: sweet, sour, salt, bitter, pungent, and astringent because those are the codes of intelligence that allow us to access the deep intelligence of nature. Nature and what she gives to us in bounty is actually experienced through the sense of taste. In fact, the light chemicals—the anti-aging substances in food—create the six tastes.

WRIGHT

Some time ago, I was talking to one of the ladies in your office and she sent me an invitation to a symposium that you had in California. I was really interested. The title was *Exploring the Reality of Soul*.

CHOPRA

Well, I conducted the symposium, but we had some of the world's scientists, physicists, and biologists who were doing research in what is called, non-local intelligence—the intelligence of soul or spirit. You could say it is the intelligence that orchestrates the activity of the universe—God, for example. Science and spirituality are now meeting together because by understanding how nature works and how the laws of nature work, we're beginning to get a glimpse of a deeper intelligence that people in spiritual traditions call divine, or God. I think this is a wonderful time to explore spirituality through science.

WRIGHT

She also sent me biographical information of the seven scientists that were with you. I have never read a list of seven more noted people in their industry.

CHOPRA

They are. The director of the Max Planck Institute, in Berlin, Germany, where quantum physics was discovered was there. Dr. Grossam was a professor of physics at the University of Oregon, and he talked about the quantum creativity of death and the survival of conscious after death. It was an extraordinary group of people.

WRIGHT

Dr. Chopra, with our *Stepping Stones to Success* book we're trying to encourage people to be better, live better, and be more fulfilled by listening to the examples of our guest authors. Is there anything or anyone in your life who has made a difference for you and has helped you to become a better person?

CHOPRA

The most important person in my life was my father. Every day he asked himself, "What can I do in thought, word, and deed to nurture every relationship I encounter just for today?" That has lived with me for my entire life.

WRIGHT

What do you think makes up a great mentor? Are there characteristics mentors seem to have in common?

CHOPRA

I think the most important attribute of a great mentor is that he or she teaches by example and not necessarily through words.

WRIGHT

When you consider the choices you've made down through the years, has faith played an important role?

CHOPRA

I think more than faith, curiosity, wonder, a sense of reference, and humility has. Now, if you want to call that faith, then, yes it has.

WRIGHT

In a divine being?

CHOPRA

In a greater intelligence—intelligence that is supreme, infinite, unbounded, and too mysterious for the finite mind to comprehend.

WRIGHT

If you could have a platform and tell our audience something you feel would help them and encourage them, what would you say?

CHOPRA

I would say that there are many techniques that come to us from ancient wisdom and tradition that allow us to tap into our inner resources and allow us to become beings who have intuition, creativity, vision, and a connection to that which is sacred. Finding that within ourselves, we have the means to enhance our well-being. Whether it's physical, emotional, or environmental, we have the means to resolve conflicts and get rid of war. We have the means to be really healthy. We have the means for being economically uplifted. That knowledge is the most important knowledge that exists.

WRIGHT

I have seen you on several primetime television shows down through the years where you have had the time to explain your theories and beliefs. How does someone like me experience this? Do we get it out of books?

CHOPRA

Books are tools that offer you a road map. Sit down every day, close your eyes, put your attention in your heart, and ask yourself two questions: who am I and what do I want? Then maintain a short period of stillness in body and mind as in prayer or meditation, and the door will open.

WRIGHT

So, you think that the intelligence comes from within. Do all of us have that capacity?

CHOPRA

Every child born has that capacity.

WRIGHT

That's fascinating. So, it doesn't take trickery or anything like that?

CHOPRA

No, it says in the Bible in the book of Psalms, “Be still and know that I am God”—Psalm 46:10.

WRIGHT

That’s great advice.

I really do appreciate your being with us today. You are fascinating. I wish I could talk with you for the rest of the afternoon. I’m certain I am one of millions who would like to do that!

CHOPRA

Thank you, sir. It was a pleasure to talk with you!

WRIGHT

Today we have been talking with Dr. Deepak Chopra, founder of The Chopra Center. He has become the foremost pioneer in integrated medicine. We have found today that he really knows what he’s talking about. After reading his book, *Grow Younger, Live Longer: 10 Steps to Reverse Aging*, I can tell you that I highly recommend it. I certainly hope you’ll go out to your favorite book store and buy a copy.

Dr. Chopra, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

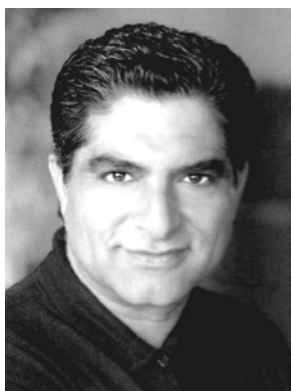
CHOPRA

Thank you for having me, David.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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DEEPAK CHOPRA has written more than fifty books, which have been translated into many languages. He is also featured on many audio and videotape series, including five critically acclaimed programs on public television. He has also written novels and edited collections of spiritual poetry from India and Persia. In 1999, *Time* magazine selected Dr. Chopra as one of the Top 100 Icons and Heroes of the Century, describing him and “the poet-prophet of alternative medicine.”



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## CHAPTER NINE

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### Secrets of Heart-Based Time Management

An Interview with . . . **Paula Eder**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Coach Paula Eder, PhD, "The Time Finder Expert." For more than thirty years, she has taught solopreneurs and small business owners how to successfully align their time choices with their life goals and core values. Paula is the Founder of Finding Time, LLC, and creator of the Finding Time Heart-Based Time Management System. Through this system, she mentors her clients to address their time management challenges by integrating their compassion, values, and problem-solving abilities. Her energy and insights help busy people to make authentic time choices that lead to business and academic success, personal growth, vibrant health, and positive life changes.

Paula, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

PAULA (EDER)

Thank you very much, David. It's a pleasure to be here!

WRIGHT

So, will you tell our readers what the steps are that brought you to become The Time Finder Expert?

EDER

I certainly will, David. Thanks for asking. It really began for me when I was very young. I learned from my family just how important it was to put each moment to its best use. Making every minute count was a value they put into practice in all aspects of life. I saw it modeled daily. So I learned at an early age how to be as productive as possible. And I've applied and expanded on those lessons throughout my life.

Over the past forty years, I've worked with hundreds of individuals ranging from preschool and elementary school children to college and graduate students and adults. Through my work over the years, I've seen the difficulty that people of all ages can encounter as they strive to master time challenges. Now, this may be demonstrated in a wide variety of ways. Obviously, the preschooler will manifest it differently than the adult. But ultimately, everyone's issues in this area present different faces of a universal struggle—how to use time most effectively. I came to realize that this topic, which had fascinated me since childhood, was really a universal issue experienced by people in all walks of life and at all developmental stages. I realized that I passionately wanted to help people make deeply fulfilling time choices.

I've always been fascinated by time. It's like a blank canvas! It's pure potential. And it's also a vehicle, in that every human experience occurs within the frame of time.

Just imagine! At the same moment when you or I might be doing something very mundane or fundamental like eating, someone else in another part of the world is experiencing a death or a birth. Hundreds upon hundreds of profound and life-changing events are taking place around the globe as we make our way through each of our days. I find that synchronicity fascinating.

So clearly, all events arise within time, and time holds everything. As I often say to the people who work with me, "The way you use your time is the way you live your life!"

## WRIGHT

Paula, would you describe the foundation of your successful approach to time management?

## EDER

The foundation of my approach involves two key components: the total person, and the total package of time management skills that I can provide.

First, as a teacher and mentor, I engage the total person. This includes the mind, the body, and the spirit. I work with each person's full range of potential, coaching him or her to make fresh, powerful, grounded time choices. To encourage self-reference, I focus on my clients' inner energies in this first stage. They explore and learn ways to listen for their voice of wisdom, and they explore and clarify their internal values. This helps people resolve inner conflicts, so that they can create a sustaining vision of what they want to work for.

Often a great deal of energy is bound up in people's unresolved questions about what is truly most important. It can take courage, compassion, and persistence to stay with these questions! But as my clients work toward finding their unique answers, and as central priorities emerge, an enormous amount of vitality is released! People report that they feel "more like themselves," and of course this is very inspiring.

I mentioned the idea of engaging the total person. I consider this to be very important, and I'd like to explain how "engaging the total person" benefits those with whom I work. Here's an example:

1. When I teach time management skills to an individual or a group, I'm really engaging their minds or their cognition. They develop better analytical and problem-solving abilities, and can make important decisions more efficiently and effectively.
2. When I focus on how clients can take excellent care of themselves through eating healthfully, exercising, getting enough sleep, and developing stress management skills, I'm really talking about their physical selves. People feel more connected with themselves as they work on this area, and they take measures to avoid burnout.

3. When I refer to the heart, I'm talking about the spiritual components and attributes of our human selves. These are capacities that can help keep people resilient and open, even in the harshest of circumstances. For example, by encouraging those I work with to focus on compassion and gratitude, I help them develop and refine their heart-based, spiritual energy. This is something that can deepen each and every moment, and that no person or circumstance can ever take away from them!

In my work, I gradually introduce my clients to new challenges that they can embrace using their developing range of skills and energies. To do this, they select from the “total package” of skills and strengths that I teach for effective time management.

My approach is organic and totally individualized. No two clients use the range of tools I offer in quite the same way. What develops as our work unfolds is a fascinating exploration of what makes individuals the people they are, and then an equally fascinating exploration of how to carry this wonderful essence into the world in rewarding ways. As people directly experience their power to be proactive, they develop a whole new understanding of and relationship with time. As they learn to exercise positive control over their lives, time's potentials become vastly more interesting.

There can be many pleasant surprises along the way! Taking one step at a time, people learn how to safely explore beyond their comfort zones, moving past fears and beliefs that have become restrictive. Then, as they validate themselves with each success, their sense of what they can accomplish grows and grows. Often, people lack confidence because they haven't yet learned how to sustain their best efforts. I help people reframe self-discipline as a way to say “yes!” to their top priorities with strength and consistency.

I love seeing the ways that making progress in one area reawakens enthusiasm for very different challenges in other areas! Sometimes, in the process of their work, people reclaim dreams they had set aside long ago, because they have now developed the skills to move forward.

## WRIGHT

Interesting! Paula, what are the avenues you use to teach Heart-Based Time Management?

## EDER

I work with people to help them learn to tap the power of their mind, body, and spirit in a wide variety of ways. After working off-line for forty years, I decided several years ago that I really wanted to extend the benefits of my practice and experience to more people through working online, as well. My online work builds on the foundation of my coaching practice and includes tele-classes, my Time Finder blog, articles, and time-related products. As I expand my work, it continues to include personal contact with people, too. It's not just a matter of saying, "Here, you can read this article, and that will answer your question." I work with people individually, in small groups, and in large groups, employing a variety of techniques to help them succeed in ways they want to succeed.

I envision my "total package" of services as a buffet—you have many choices to select from. Some select what appeals to them from many tables. Others gravitate to just one platter.

So it is with the work I do. One person might say, "I just want to learn time management skills." And that would be fine. Another might say, "I really want the total package." In that case, we would work with all the components of the Heart-Based Time Management System. Because the work stimulates people's appetites for new challenges, clients often return to select more and more from the buffet!

So, my practice includes quite a range of activities and types of engagements. I may work sequentially with some people, helping them create a series of action steps for a complex challenge. And I may help others hone in on one facet of the program. Either way, an open-ended approach leads to many more benefits than people can ever imagine at the outset!

I've mentioned inner and outer energies, and I'll share more about that in a moment. They work together in each aspect of the Heart-Based Time Management System. The System itself includes six modules:

1. SKILLS,
2. SELF-CARE,
3. ENERGY,
4. VALUES,
5. VISION, AND
6. RELATING TO CHANGE AND TRANSITION.

To clarify how inner and outer energies work in unison, I use the analogy of these modules being like six spokes of a wheel. The center of the wheel, or the hub, is really the metaphor for the essence of the self, or the heart. The rim is about the outer momentum, groundedness, movement, and actualization. And the strength and integrity of all the spokes helps to keep the wheel rolling.

Each module can be fully integrated into the current work a person is doing, or one can work the program in its entirety. It totally depends upon the needs of each individual and where he or she is at a specific point in time. And of course, it goes without saying that some periods of our lives are easier than others! Whether we like it or not, current situations can take center stage and we adapt the work we do accordingly.

#### WRIGHT

What are some unique ways that the Finding Time Heart-Based Time Management System helps people successfully confront the challenges of tough times?

#### EDER

Well, David, we certainly are having tough times now; so many examples spring to mind when you raise that question! As I mentioned earlier, I feel deeply committed to helping people enhance their innate strengths and discover their own wisdom. Three of the most important things I do in this specific area are to teach people how to become proactive, how to be grounded in the moment, and how to reduce stress for themselves.

In tough times, people can get frenzied and fall into panic mode. The more stressed they become, the more tempted people may be to simply grasp for any answer. Yet the ultimate answers to our most pressing questions and

challenges usually lie within, and they are arrived at through an organic process. So I encourage people to turn inward so that they can access and learn to trust their own answers.

I also suggest that people work with a community of like-minded folks. I have learned that this is so important! Through the years, I have had the pleasure of facilitating several ongoing groups. Every one of them has been unique, with a special pattern of growth and evolution. I bring my experience from these to my tele-classes. All of my weekly and monthly coaching groups develop a special sense of community. This is the kind of experience I'd recommend to anyone facing difficult challenges.

There are certain qualities that all cohesive groups share. Each participant provides support and feedback. Others can ask clarifying questions and share what works for them. Offers of help and sometimes concrete connections with others, like accountability buddies, can emerge from these exchanges. I see the creation and nurturing of a trusted community of support as a fundamental resource that can help people in all circumstances, but especially in tough times. For me that's probably the heart of it.

I also help motivated individuals create customized, personal time paradigms. These are time guides that I co-create with clients to help them align their time choices with their values and their visions of what they would like to accomplish. Once they've created their time paradigm, they possess the specific tools and action steps to move from where they are to where they want to be.

I remind my clients that tough times can be catalysts for developing new strengths and letting go of what is not essential. Like people at sea in a terrible storm, people often feel freer after they rid themselves of nonessentials that weigh them down and hamper their ability to maneuver and respond to changing circumstances. Difficult as the experience can be, several clients of mine now affirm that crises they successfully weathered, using my process, brought them to new and far more rewarding ways to live.

As you can see, David, there are many different methods I use to help people go through tough times successfully and emerge with added skills, increased support, and deeper confidence in themselves.



No matter what the individual stories, these positive outcomes growing out of tough times form a broad arc of progress that I have been privileged to witness time and again.

WRIGHT

Paula, what are the specific ways that the Heart-Based Time Management System expands possibilities for living a fulfilled life?

EDER

There are a number of specific ways that the Heart-Based Time Management System can help someone live a fulfilled life. As I mentioned, the system is organic and individualized, according to each client's specific challenges and goals. Think of the six-spoke wheel I referred to earlier. Each spoke must be strong to support the integrity of the entire wheel, yet the content of each person's particular spokes is highly personal and unique. So my Heart-Based Time Management System focuses on strengthening every spoke (skills, self-care, energy, values, vision, and relating to change and transition) for the particular person with whom I am working.

If I worked with you, for example, I would customize the paradigm to help you live the life that will be most fulfilling to you personally. We could explore both your external and internal values, and I would encourage you to make time choices that are fully congruent with your values. One thing that often happens as a part of this process is that you might discover and let go of conflicting goals that are "leftovers" from other periods of your life. That, in itself, can free up quite a bit of energy, as well as time!

This is a highly practical, as well as a spiritual process. Becoming clear on values and priorities is one thing. Successfully putting them into action is another! Within this system, another area you could choose to explore might be enhancing your ability to create assertive boundaries and learning to communicate them effectively.

Through the Heart-Based Time Management System, I would also work to help you develop and use validations, affirmations, and gratitude on a daily

basis. These simple but profound exercises empower you to appreciate yourself, appreciate others, and fully occupy every moment.

#### WRIGHT

So, what role does creating community play in implementing and succeeding with your unique time management system?

#### EDER

Earlier, I mentioned how community builds support in tough times. Creating community also enhances growth and momentum as fresh opportunities arise. I think it's really fundamental for success. It is possible for a person to work and grow in a vacuum, but when you're working with other people it becomes a much fuller experience, creating a synergy and a resonance. You can learn so much when you are receiving and giving support and feedback. There are so many different permutations and configurations, including the possibility of working with small groups within a larger group or one-on-one within the larger group.

Community creates a forum where people develop a common language through their participation. This creates a shortcut to understanding and helps foster and then deepen connection. My group participants sometimes describe the communities they create as "learning labs." Here you can experiment—try things out and get feedback you can trust—in a safe and supportive environment.

The transformative energy of the group can't be underestimated. It moves people beyond where they could go on their own. As a facilitator for forty years, I have been privileged to witness this extraordinary synergy and movement over and over.

Through community, you create a safe, respectful, supportive place to explore networking possibilities. It provides a powerful antidote to the feeling of isolation, which can sometimes take hold in our highly mobile, fast-paced age. And such groups help affirm what really matters, as people work to bring their best selves to each encounter and cheer on each other's explorations and risks.

As people gain skill and confidence, they don't just "deal with" change, they feel empowered to initiate positive change! I love seeing how these lessons translate into many successfully completed projects in all areas of my clients' lives!

WRIGHT

Paula, will you explain just how you help people succeed when they're working on a long-term project?

EDER

I'd love to share some specifics about how I work with people around that! What gets in the way of success with long-term projects is confusion over where to start, how to stay focused and maintain momentum, and how to wrap up the work and bring it to a successful conclusion. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and immobilized when trying to simultaneously hold and navigate your way through something very large, before you have broken it down into manageable pieces.

One way I help clients keep their energy moving is by having them identify their fear-based roadblocks. Each stage of an undertaking presents specific challenges. So, for starters, let's think about how roadblocks can interfere with the three main stages of a long-term project.

- The first stage (and challenge) is getting started. Often people feel ambivalent about beginning. Perhaps the project is not of their choosing, or perhaps the demands feel overwhelming. Whenever feelings are mixed, we are all tempted to procrastinate.
- In the next stage comes the challenge of staying focused. This stage includes the challenge of maintaining momentum, too. When scheduling, it's helpful to remember that each task in a big project demands its own special measure of time and energy. For example, the effort, mindset, and time frame necessary for researching are very different from those needed for writing or editing.

Learning to stay focused also involves learning how to ignore distractions. I encourage clients to assess the environment in which they are working. Is it as conducive a setting as it can be? How can they prepare in advance to facilitate their work? Will certain preparatory rituals enable them to step into

their work more effectively? What do they need to do to discourage interruptions?

- The third stage and final challenge is that of letting go. How do you say goodbye to something you've put your heart and soul into—a project you've worked on for a really long time? And how do you work toward excellence while avoiding the pitfalls of perfectionism? It's a matter of learning about when and how to stop, when and how to let go, and ways to recognize when a project is complete.

There are lots of other things that come into play when working on long-term goals. For example, an important element of pacing oneself throughout a big project is working in harmony with your personal biorhythms. Let's say that you're a "morning person." The best time to schedule the creative aspects of a project would be in the morning. If, by the end of the day, you feel less creative and a bit less focused, that might be the best time to do the tasks that demand less energy and concentration.

These ideas are applicable to any kind of project. They enhance your ability to concentrate, to be productive, and to succeed.

#### WRIGHT

So, how do you work with someone who is very successful and whose biggest time challenge is simply working too much?

#### EDER

That's a really good question because it's quite a common issue. There are several effective approaches.

First, I encourage my clients to explore, from a non-judgmental, feelings-based perspective, what drives this behavior. I ask powerful questions like, "What are your fears about working less? What makes it hard to stop? What would it look like to work less?" And, "What does working keep you *from*?" These kinds of questions help create a frame and a direction for new understanding. We also explore values—what values either *aren't* getting actualized or are *driving* that kind of intense work ethic?

Another area that can be very fruitful and freeing to explore is the whole issue of family scripts. Often people carry a legacy of inherited messages that conflict with their current values. This can be immobilizing. So I ask, “How do you manifest this conflict through your time choices?” This not only affects goals, it also shapes how people conceptualize their work and how they see their role in its success.

I often use an end-of-life visualization. It is very powerful to compassionately see yourself at the end of your life and to ask yourself, “Is this the way that I really wanted to be? Am I satisfied with my choices?” This exercise helps clarify values and illuminates what you see as vital. And the great news is that, since you are still alive, you have the opportunity to make changes!

As a practical adjunct to this values work, I encourage an exploration of delegating. Developing delegation skills is fundamentally important for those who may be working too much. The challenge is letting go of control and allowing others to help.

Ultimately, those who have lost themselves in their work can find themselves through this heart-based exploration. By aligning their time choices with their deepest values, they free themselves up to live with power and integrity.

#### WRIGHT

In our fast-paced world, we juggle competing time priorities. How do you help people succeed around that?

#### EDER

That’s another really good question. Over the course of my forty years of teaching and coaching, I’ve seen competing priorities become a larger issue in people’s lives. The typical question is, “What happens when *everything* feels like the most important priority?” In response to that, I might ask focused questions like, “What would be the most important thing for you to get done in the next ten minutes?” Then we gradually extend the time frame out. “What’s

the important priority for you today or for tomorrow?” This way, the larger priorities emerge.

Because of the finiteness of time, it is essential to recognize that saying “yes” to any activity usually requires saying “no” to another.

So to handle priorities, look to your values. And once you clarify your values, your next step is to protect them with effective boundaries. Finally, delegate frequently and well.

#### WRIGHT

In your “Finding Time Heart-Based Time Management System,” you talk about how people create new relationships with time. Would you say more about this?

#### EDER

I will, David. This is such a fundamental question. If you were to work with the Heart-Based Time Management System, you would develop a unique relationship with time as you came to directly experience how *every* choice is a time choice. Every single time choice that you make, no matter how small or large it may seem, shapes your overall relationship with time. In the same way that the quality of your personal relationships depends on how thoughtful your choices are, the quality of the energy you bring to making time choices affects your relationship with time (and therefore with your own life)!

Your relationship with time becomes organic and internal as you develop self-intimacy. I am not talking about frantically juggling elements of your life that you have not prioritized. No, this is about placing yourself in the moment, being fully present, and feeling and expressing gratitude for your environment, your choices, and your life.

You deepen this relationship as you convert your best time choices into rituals. They promote your priorities and help safeguard your boundaries. Creating rituals to begin or complete significant activities also helps frame their role in your life.

As you can see, developing a relationship with time is inseparable from deepening your relationship with yourself. By working to integrate and align your values, you come to appreciate the gift of life more and more profoundly.

It is a back and forth journey. You travel inward to align your values into a hierarchy of priorities. Then you apply those priorities as time choices to your daily life. As you do this over and over, you develop a congruence/steadfastness that is deeply satisfying.

#### WRIGHT

So, what changes occur in your clients' approaches to time and, therefore, in their lives, as they utilize your time management tools?

#### EDER

I really appreciate the expansiveness of the question. As I've described, the changes are both internal and external.

The external ones are the easiest to quantify. For example, my clients integrate specific skills such as identifying goals and intentions, prioritizing activities, and converting large projects into a sequence of workable action steps. They create their optimal working environment through establishing boundaries. These boundaries help to focus their own activities as well as protect them from outside demands and interruptions. To help them articulate and manifest these boundaries, they develop assertive communication skills.

To understand the internal benefits of my approach, let's return to the issue of values. I emphasize this because it is often a totally new idea for people to work to develop congruence between their values and their time choices. It's through this process that my clients become much more self-referenced, responsible, and self-confident.

This deep work creates a fundamental shift in how they view the world and themselves. Their decision-making improves because they understand about the finiteness of time. They know deep in their bones that change is constant and that everything they need is inside. So they go inward and ask themselves the important and challenging questions that they might have previously avoided.

As they develop more autonomy, their approach to life becomes more unified and less fragmented. This introduces a spiritual depth and perspective. Increasingly, those I work with act from a place of compassion and gratitude. This, in turn, influences the quality of their energy and their resilience. Ultimately, it is really a process of developing maturity and gaining wisdom.

WRIGHT

Interesting! I really do appreciate your taking the time this afternoon to answer these questions. I've learned a lot about the Heart-Based Time Management System, and I'm sure that our readers will, too. This will be a great addition to our book.

EDER

Well, thank you. I really appreciate being able to share all that I did.

WRIGHT

Today, we've been talking with Coach Paula Eder, The Time Finder Expert. She is the founder of Finding Time, LLC, and the creator of the Heart-Based Time Management System. Paula mentors her clients to integrate mind, body, and spirit in addressing their time management challenges. Her passion is helping busy people make authentic time choices that move them toward success, personal growth, vibrant health, and positive life changes.

Paula, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

EDER

You're welcome, David. It's been my pleasure.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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PAULA EDER, “The Time Finder Expert,” is the founder of Finding Time LLC and the creator of the Heart-Based Time Management System. Known for her integrity, compassion, ability to solve problems, and her fervor for teaching and learning, Paula is fascinated with time and its ability to hold the most profound moments and the most mundane moments simultaneously. Living on a working farm for over thirty years, she is fundamentally connected to time through the vitality and resiliency of the seasons. Paula shares her life with her husband, two cats, and two dogs, and loves to spend time walking, gardening, and reading.



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## CHAPTER TEN

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### Social Media and Self-Empowerment Tools for Success

An Interview with . . . **Kathy Perry**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking with Kathy Perry who is a professional speaker, author, mentor, coach, and social media specialist. She is the Founder of iWomanLife.com, a social networking site connecting women everywhere to share, nurture, and learn. She is also the Founder of PeakPerformanceWomen.com, a resource on enhancing body, mind, and spirit.

She leads and motivates women entrepreneurs and professionals who want to grow their businesses while growing their lives. Kathy helps them traverse the social media maze and also assists them in creating a vibrant business and living an empowered life. Kathy has created self-empowerment tools to use when mentoring and coaching clients. Her book, *Reality TV & You—8 Secrets to Being the Director in Your Life's Reality TV Show using the Law of Attraction*, illustrates how the emotional choices we make create our lives. Kathy climbed

the corporate ladder to Vice President of Sales and Marketing in technology prior to launching her own business, and her terrier-like determination and never-give-up-attitude is the driving force that propels her to success.

Kathy Perry, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

KATHY PERRY (PERRY)

Thank you so much, David.

WRIGHT

So it looks like you do a lot of work with women with a social networking site for women at iWomanLife.com and you also have a resource site for women at PeakPerformanceWomen.com. What motivated you to focus on mentoring and coaching women?

PERRY

I've always had a passion to help women and share what I've learned along life's journey with them. As a woman working in the technology field, which is predominantly male, and having a great deal of success, I felt that it was important to share the lessons I'd learned with other women. As a thought and knowledge leader, I assist women, in both their personal life fulfillment areas and the business aspects of their lives, to achieve success. My life's purpose is to inspire and motivate women to achieve their unlimited potential and my vision is to significantly influence thousands of lives as they awaken to their unlimited potential and enjoy living an empowered life.

I was the President of a local chapter of the American Business Women's Association in Lakeland, Florida, for two years and mentored a lot of women. I lead mastermind groups to empower women in overcoming obstacles and I provide success principles for their life and business. Sometimes when we look back on our childhood it gives us clues and insights into those things that we find ourselves doing as an adult. Recently, when I looked back on my childhood, I remembered that as a little girl I loved to create clubs, organize groups, and be the leader or catalyst for them. It is something that I find myself doing all the time now as an adult and it gives me a great deal of joy.

## WRIGHT

So tell our readers a little bit about this new social networking site for women you created called iWomanLife.com and the purpose in creating it.

## PERRY

I had a great vision for what I wanted to create for women and I was searching for the right vehicle to create it in. As I was researching, I looked at membership software to take PeakPerformanceWomen.com and create a membership site. While it seemed like the logical thing to do, it wasn't resonating with me. (I try to do those things that really resonate with my heart.) I heard about a new software program to create a social networking site and I became very excited about the potential it held. When I looked at it from the perspective of my vision, it made sense to me.

PeakPerformanceWomen.com was created to share my journey with my friends and a membership site would have been an extension of that. I would be creating a lot of content for the site, whereas, a social networking site is about community—it's about everyone sharing and creating content together. The purpose and vision at iWomanLife.com is that we are changing the world by providing a positive platform to help thousands of women share, nurture, and learn from each other in a safe and non-threatening environment, which will then have a massive effect on the world, ultimately making a tangible difference to millions of people, families, and children worldwide.

Within the site there is an "Expert's Corner" where experts in all areas of life share their tips and information on their particular expertise. This is a great place for women to be able to dialogue with the experts and find answers or solutions to the issues they are facing. Additionally, we're providing teleseminars and webinars with the experts to add more value in the community.

## WRIGHT

I see you're also a social media specialist. What does that mean and how do you combine such diverse fields as technology, the Internet, and personal development?

PERRY

Having been in technology for most of my career in the sales and marketing capacity, I've worked with many different solutions. The Internet is an amazing new frontier for many small businesses trying to stay competitive in the Global online community. The Internet is the future and it's becoming the social communication tool of choice. In the beginning it was very static and you just presented information, then it became very transactional and sales focused. Now, the trend-taking place on the Internet is social communication and I call that *Virtual Social Interaction*. I evaluate and advise businesses on how to tap into the power of social media to grow his or her business. My *Hub Socializer* system is known for taking the fear and confusion out of marketing on the Internet and putting my clients on the right path. The three core components of *Hub Socializer* are: Qualified Relationships, Brand Visibility, and Social Interaction. The *Hub Socializer* system is the most economical way to save my clients both time and money, which is a win-win. In addition, are able to increase the visibility of his or her products and services to their target audience faster, in a more cost effective way and achieve a much greater return on investment. I guide my clients through the what, why and how to simplify and quickly discover a guaranteed way to grow his or her business without any fear of getting left behind in the social media maze. I bring a holistic approach to Internet marketing that includes individual empowerment and personal accountability along with the appropriate marketing strategy and tactics.

I've always been a student of personal development and have spent a number of years learning various energy healing techniques in my quest to enhance my own body, mind, and spirit. My journey has been one of tremendous change, uprooting old belief systems that didn't serve me and replacing them with new ones that bring me inner peace and joy. I'm one of those rare people who blends marketing and energy healing to assist clients in not only their social media marketing and general business marketing strategies, but I also show them how to release negative energy and blockages in their personal lives and businesses that might be keeping them stuck.

I become a mirror for my clients. Weaving social media and Internet marketing with personal growth and energy work is a natural thing for me to

do, since I don't believe you can separate the person from his or her business or work.

WRIGHT

Will you share with us information about your book *Reality TV & You*, how it came about and how it helps people?

PERRY

Absolutely, David. I was in a training program to learn how to create digital products for online distribution and each morning I would meditate before writing. One morning, after meditation, as I sat writing down my thoughts, *Reality TV & You* began to flow onto the paper. It was such a clear metaphor to me in relating our lives to Reality television. In essence, we are all living our own reality television show every day, we probably just don't have a camera crew following us around and recording every moment.

Over the several weeks and months that followed, more information flowed and the end product was a personal development tool in the form of a new book and companion workbook as a Law of Attraction guide. The book provides insight into how our life mirrors that of reality television and it demonstrates how we are in control of what's playing out in our lives. It helps people see their lives from a different perspective and shows them how they can make changes that will empower them.

When your life is like a bad reality television show, you can learn how to change the channel and rewrite your script. Here are the eight secrets to being the director in your life's reality television show:

**Secret number one:** *Your thoughts and emotions are the script for what is playing out in your life.* Your thoughts are very powerful; your thoughts shape your emotions, which then become your reality. Thoughts are things and your emotions put them into action. Most of us are controlled by our unconscious thoughts and are on automatic pilot more than not.

**Secret number two:** *You have emotional channels that serve you in life, and you have emotional channels that don't serve you.* So just imagine that you are like a television set with a lot of channels and each channel is a different emotion. Picture in your mind all the different emotional channels you have on your television set of life. We often classify our emotions in two main categories: good or bad. You have emotions that make you feel good, and you have emotions that make you feel bad. For example, some emotions that make you feel good are: happy, excited, creative, powerful, loving, thoughtful, and confident. When you're feeling these emotions, life is rolling along a little easier. Here are some examples of emotions that make you feel bad: insecurity, inadequacy, insignificance, inferiority, and isolation. Life is a little tougher on those emotional channels.

**Secret number three:** *Throughout each day you are constantly changing emotional channels with your thoughts.* You launch your dreams or your nightmares every day with your thoughts and emotions. Our minds are supercomputers and they are continuously recording every input that is happening around us. Every sound that we hear, even the background noise we aren't paying attention to is being recorded. Everything we see, including what we see on television or at the movies, even if we're not paying attention to it, is being recorded. All of our senses—touch, smell, sound, sight, and taste—are recording data. We have all this data that has been recorded into our minds and we begin to create stories with our thoughts. One thought leads to another thought, and another and another and pretty soon we've created this whole story about something. Your story is the collection of all these random thoughts and you form an opinion or a theory about the data you've been collecting from all your senses. As each thought is creating an emotion, you have just switched to a different channel and as your thoughts are triggering the change to another channel, you are creating the reality television scenes of your life by whatever thoughts you are projecting.

**Secret number four:** *You can stay in control of your remote by controlling what emotional channels you are on.* This one is the tricky part—who is holding the remote control? Do you have it? If you do, that means you are able to change channels when you recognize the effect that your emotions have on your life. Or does someone else have your remote control and is that person pushing your buttons to change your

emotional channel? When you allow someone else to hold your remote and push your buttons, it's also causing you to change emotional channels and it puts you in the victim role. You now feel like saying, it's their fault or they're causing it. It's so much easier for us to blame others for what is happening in our lives. Remember, whoever holds the remote has the power. You have the power to control your own remote by controlling your thoughts and emotions.

**Secret number five:** *Your emotions are attracting whatever is happening in your life.* It is very important to understand the Law of Attraction, since every moment you are either sending out a positive or a negative signal or vibration through your emotions. These signals come from your thoughts and the words you speak, which act like a magnet. The Law of Attraction states that like attracts like and thoughts become things. That signal or vibration is what is attracting the results you are getting. When you are on the emotional roller coaster of life and flipping emotional channels, you are actually interrupting the universal flow of your life's script, and there is no continuity.

**Secret number six:** *The mirror reveals the truth of what you have created with your thoughts and emotions.* You must see and identify what is happening in your life so you can make changes or you will keep attracting the same things you've always been attracting. Remember back in secret number one, your thoughts and emotions are the script for what's playing out in your life.

**Secret number seven:** *You are the scriptwriter, actor, and director in your life's reality television show and only you can take back the control and live your life as you choose.* How can we rewrite our own script when so much of our lives seem to be out of control? We might have some old scripts or reruns that just keep popping up from some of the erroneous data we have recorded and collected over the years. To clean out the old scripts or reruns that don't serve you, acknowledge that you no longer need them in your life and replace them with positive new scripts that do serve you and are reflective of your goals and dreams.

**Secret number eight:** *You can rewrite your script any way you choose to attract what you want.* Whatever we focus on we draw to us. By taking control of our own



thoughts and emotions we can dictate how we live our lives, and we are then rewriting the script of our life.

#### WRIGHT

I would like to learn a little bit more about a couple of the self-empowerment tools you created and use in your mentoring and coaching practice.

#### PERRY

One of the main tools I use is the *Mirror Factor* as a reflection into you and your business. It's a tool that was given to me when I was meditating and working on my book, *Reality TV & You*, and the *Mirror Factor* became a chapter in the book. "*Someone looking in from the outside always sees things that aren't visible from within,*" is my quote that I use when explaining the *Mirror Factor*.

We often think of it as a great tool to use when looking at our physical bodies in the mirror to reveal what we believe about ourselves. Like those old beliefs that make us critical of ourselves, beliefs like I'm too fat. Remember that these thoughts and emotions will attract more of the same. So if we're always obsessing about how fat we are, then we're going to attract more fat to us. At a conscious level we're saying we don't want to be fat, but at an unconscious level, only fat is being registered. Most people dwell upon what they don't want, rather than what they do want and they wonder why the Law of Attraction isn't working for them. It's always working—we're always attracting what we are focusing on with our thoughts and emotions.

While the *Mirror Factor* is a great tool to use on the physical you, it's equally important to use it on the emotional you. Everything that is happening in your life is a reflection back to you of how your thoughts and emotions have shaped your life. You would use the mirror to see if there are recurring patterns or themes happening in your life or if there seems to be emotional blocks that are causing pain and distress in your life. These outward signs that show up in our mirror of life are a reflection of what is happening on the inside of us. These are the subconscious beliefs that we have and we will keep proving them to be true unless we see the pattern and break it.

Deep-seated core beliefs that are formed at childhood from an emotional incident may take some time to work through. But the first step in the healing process is to see it and recognize it for what it is. Many times it is a belief we formed as a child. We spend a lifetime trying to prove them right or prove them wrong, and the mirror is a tool to clearly identify those thoughts and emotions that are causing distress in your life. You must first recognize and acknowledge what is happening, before you can change it. If you don't identify the truth so that you can make a change, you will keep attracting what you've always been attracting.

Having this information will make you more aware of what effects your thoughts and emotions have on your life in the choices you make, and it will give you a huge advantage in taking the steps toward making a change. We all know the fairytale that has the phrase: *mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest one of all?* But your life isn't a fairytale, its reality. Life isn't about who looks the best or who has the biggest house or the fastest car, even though people would like to keep you in that game. But rather, it's about finding out your truth and where you are with peace, love, and joy in your heart and in your life, and that includes being happy with who you are. That means loving yourself so you can love others, and that means having joy in your life because you are alive and breathing the air around you.

That was really magnified for me when my husband passed away unexpectedly. All the trivial things that I thought were important suddenly became unimportant. We come into this life with nothing and we leave it with nothing; everything in between is really about how we lived our lives, the relationships we created, and if we made a difference.

I believe the fairytale should go like this: *mirror, mirror on the wall, reveal to me the truth in all.* If you look in the mirror and see a victim, then you must examine all your thoughts and emotions to reveal the truth behind it. This is not easy, but it's essential if you want something different in your life. You may not even realize that you are in the victim role. But if you find yourself complaining about this or that and blaming someone else for the things that are happening in your life, then you are playing the victim. When we find ourselves indignant or trying to justify why we are right, then we really need to

look into the mirror and see what truth is being reflected back to us. We must consciously change our emotional channels to those that serve us in attracting what we do want in our lives. This is a moment-by-moment choice that you make, either consciously or unconsciously, in creating your life's reality.

The *Life-Work Balance Tree* is another tool I use in interactive group workshops and for individual coaching sessions. We first draw out a tree with five branches and each branch represents a main area of life. The first branch is Family, the second is Relationships, the third is Health and Fitness, the fourth is Career and Job, and the fifth is Spiritual and Personal Development. The bushes and leaves at the end of the five branches are where you would list those things you are doing in each category or branch. You would then write down how much time you are spending on each thing you're doing in that category or branch. You'll easily see those areas that are out of balance and you can quickly assess the affect it's having on your life and what it's costing you in regards to your health, your relationships, or your career.

We then look at the roots of your life-work balance tree and we see foundational things like your beliefs, values, traditions, history, experiences, vision, mission, and education. We all know what happens to the tree if the roots aren't strong and grounded—when the storms of life come up, they topple over.

Next we review those attributes that represent the sunshine and the rain—things like our attitude, thoughts, emotions, energy, and passion. We discuss different ways that you can increase the sunshine and rain and strengthen the roots such as gratitude exercises, energy medicine, emotional freedom technique, the Mirror Factor, and many other techniques.

Finally, we look at the fruits of your life-work balance tree and, of course, the goal is to have the fruit be peace, love, and joy in your life. With this graphical view of your life-work balance tree you can clearly see what areas of your tree of life need to be pruned or nurtured. You can zero in on those areas that have the greatest potential for your success and do more of those things that are working for you and stop doing the things that aren't. It's a simple, but great tool to see those areas that need help and to create an action plan that makes sense for you.

## WRIGHT

Have you used the *Mirror Factor* and the *Life-Work Balance Tree* as personal growth tools in your own life?

## PERRY

Absolutely! Actually, that's how they were created. Because I'm such a visual person I learn better from pictures, versus just looking at numbers on a spreadsheet. With the tree metaphor, it first began as a tool for me to use in my business to view my marketing efforts and then I expanded it to view my life-work balance. And it showed me those areas where I was out of balance and where things needed to be pruned or nurtured in my life. The tree metaphor grew into workshops and presentations that I share with clients and organizations to provide an easy tool they can use in any area of their business or life.

The *Mirror Factor* came to me when I was writing *Reality TV & You* and I clearly saw that the things happening in our lives and our businesses are just mirrors of those areas that are re-emerging patterns we need to work on or reflections of things that need our attention.

## WRIGHT

You've had a lot of success in your career. Will you tell us about some of the highlights and what they meant to you?

## PERRY

It was very exciting to achieve top, regional, and national awards throughout my career in corporate America. I was number one in the United States twice in my corporate career, including one time while at a Fortune 500 company.

It was also very rewarding for me to work with the University of South Florida, where I was able to influence hundreds of lives. I guest lectured at USF for about ten years and I also had an internship program where I interned many university students over the course of those years.

While working with the University of South Florida, I had the opportunity to create a university certificate program to help bridge the gap between

marketing and technology. Because I hired so many marketing students through the internship program and they immediately understood how to apply the marketing theory they learned at the university into the marketing software, I realized that it would be a great addition to their curriculum if there was a course that would bridge that gap between marketing and technology. Once everything was approved by the faculty and legal department, I went to work putting together the certificate program as an online and in-classroom course. I worked with the professors to put their curriculum into the software and created the training program around it. This was a major honor and quite an accomplishment for me—the training I created became part of the curriculum at a major university.

#### WRIGHT

On the flip side of that success in your career, will you also share with us what major challenges you experienced, and perhaps overcame?

#### PERRY

Several years ago I had four major life challenges happen all in one year that threw me into a tailspin. Any one of them would be enough to cause serious issues, let alone all four at the same time.

First, I was an executive with a technology company, and had a lot of stock in the company when the dot bomb happened; many technology companies crashed, including ours. We downsized by 75 percent, the executives no longer were paid, and the stock became worthless. I finally left the company after several months of trying to help with a turn-around.

Second, my husband moved out of state to help his brother's manufacturing company with an implementation of a new accounting system and to be their chief financial officer. We thought it would be a short-term project—it wasn't.

Third, my son went off to college, which was about four hours away and I had empty nest syndrome.

Fourth, we sold our home of twenty years, downsized, and I moved into an apartment in a different city. For the first time in more than thirty years I was all by myself, all my family was gone, and I was lost.

Over the years I had tied my identity to my family and my career and they were all gone. I felt like the rug had been pulled out from under me and my world was turned upside down. I was starting over with a new career, in a new city, and was now living in an apartment. Not only did I lose the identity I had been attached to, I didn't even like the person I was looking at in the mirror. I remember feeling as though I was falling into a large abyss and I wasn't sure if there was something that would catch me or stop me from continuing to fall.

When a friend called and noticed that my words were not very positive toward myself and that I was struggling emotionally, he challenged me with it. It got my attention and once I was able to see what he pointed out to me, I realized I needed to make some changes. I began to listen to positive music, read uplifting books, and watch inspirational movies. The continual life-changing positive input that I was receiving began a transformation in my life.

#### WRIGHT

I notice that [PeakPerformanceWomen.com](http://PeakPerformanceWomen.com) is about enhancing body, mind, and spirit. Is there significance in why you created a resource site for women on that topic?

#### PERRY

As my life began to transform, I was sharing all the great information that helped me with my friends. I found myself writing down a dozen different Web sites for them to check out on the back of my business card and I thought this is crazy. So I created a Web site to share all the resources I was using with my friends and it expanded from there. It was my journey back to taking care of my body, mind, and spirit. I had been so wrapped up with climbing the corporate ladder that I forgot to take care of me.

I also had my identity wrapped up in my career and lost sight of who I was for a while. It was during that time of transformation that I learned some energy techniques, like EFT (emotional freedom technique). I also began to do more in the area of energy healing. I believe that whenever you go through life transformations, you naturally want to share what you've learned and be a resource for others.

WRIGHT

So what was the greatest personal challenge you have faced and how has that shaped your life and the services you provide today?

PERRY

I would have to say that my husband's unexpected death was the greatest personal challenge I have ever faced. It was the most painful and devastating time of my life. Because of my past experiences, I knew that I needed to continuously have positive input in order to survive. So I immersed myself in healing modalities to heal that gaping hole in my heart and I went through training on several different healing modalities. It took me a little over a year to come out of that space where I felt as though I was sleep walking or just going through the motions of life and not really being there. It's almost like you're in a dream and you want to wake up and everything will be better.

I am working on a new book, *3 Months to Heaven*, about those last three months of my husband's life. It was a part of my healing process to journal about all the miracles that took place and not focus on the pain I was in. Now I am able to see things in life from a totally different perspective and I live my life more in the moment with gratitude for each experience. As I am working with clients, I have greater insight to help them through their life and business challenges.

I have set up a Web page at [3MonthstoHeaven.com](http://3MonthstoHeaven.com) so that people can read about it and request to be notified when the book comes out. An excerpt from the Web page is: *In this original account of the last three months in the life of her late husband, Garry Perry, Kathy shares the story of his amazing transformation. Without any idea that he was ill and that he only had a short time to live, they experienced a miracle transformation as he prepared at the soul level for his passing. This touching account of the deep healing in his heart will bring a tear to your eye, warm your heart, and may even give you goose bumps as you hear his messages to Kathy from the other side and the significance of the Red Rose.*

WRIGHT

That's powerful Kathy. In closing, if there was one single message you could share with people about life, what would it be?

PERRY

I really understood how precious and fragile life is when I saw how quickly it can be gone and how we tend to focus on all the things in life that don't really matter. Most people spend their lives reflecting back on the pain in their past and agonize why this or that happened and why they made the choices that they did. Or they look forward into the future and project their fears into a set of scenarios that may or may not even become a reality. All we really have is this present moment—the Now. We need to live our lives in gratitude in the Now and see the beauty in each moment and be thankful for all that we do have, treasuring the relationships and the people in our lives. For when it's all said and done, we come into the world with nothing, we leave this world with nothing, and the only thing in between is the relationships we've nurtured and the peoples' lives we've influenced while creating our legacy along the way.

WRIGHT

Well, what a great conversation. I really appreciate all the insight we've garnered here in this conversation today and I appreciate the time you've spent with me answering these questions.

PERRY

Thank you so much, David. It was my pleasure and I enjoyed sharing with you.

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Kathy Perry. Kathy is a professional speaker, author, mentor, coach, and social media specialist, who shares her expertise and experience through interactive educational and motivational presentations and workshops, as well as through individual mentoring and coaching to inspire and awaken clients to their unlimited potential while motivating them to action.

Kathy, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.



PERRY

Thank you, David.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Whether Kathy is speaking to a group of women or spending time with friends, her authentic passion and energy shines through in all areas of her life. She has been honored as American Business Women's Association Woman of the Year—Liberty Chapter, Tampa Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Small Business Leader Finalist, and the *Tampa Bay Business Journal* Business Woman of the Year Finalist. Kathy's life purpose is to inspire and motivate people to achieve their unlimited potential and live an empowered life. She lives in Florida and has two grown children.



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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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### Clutter From the Inside Out

An Interview with . . . **Sallie Felton**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Sallie Felton. Sallie is living proof that people can go through a major life change and not only survive, but thrive. After years of frustration and searching for her purpose she decided to leave her proper Yankee upbringing, traditional education, and competitive sports career to pursue her true passions. It's been twenty years and she hasn't looked back. Now she is helping others do the same. Sallie is an international radio talk show host, fully certified CMC, PCC Life Coach, Transitional Specialist, and co-author who uses her clients' individual strengths to create and support their life goals. Through one-on-one and group coaching she has helped thousands; as she says to her clients, "let's start where you stand."

Sallie, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

SALLIE FELTON (FELTON)

Thank you David; it's great to be here and I certainly appreciate your taking the time to interview me.

WRIGHT

The title, *Clutter from the Inside Out*, is an interesting concept. We've heard you say that there are so many people who deal with this issue of clutter and that it interferes with their lives. How does it? When you think of clutter, what is it? What is clutter really?

FELTON

Let me first say that clutter, David, comes in three forms—it's physical, mental, and emotional. For example, physical clutter is all those items around your house, your office, or around your environment that have built up. You know all those piles? Mental clutter, for the most part, is lists, schedules, meetings, and appointments. It's that infamous to-do list that seems to be living in everyone's head. We all have those lists—those mental lists.

Emotional clutter is different. It's those feelings of past and present issues that have not yet been processed, worked on, solved, or nurtured. I believe it lives in the center of the heart. Clutter can very much affect people's sense of self and self-esteem. In their life they can feel overstressed, overburdened, and unbalanced. In the workplace they can feel as if they are less productive, less efficient, and less effective.

WRIGHT

You say there are specific areas in each of our homes where there should be no clutter. If that's true, then why?

FELTON

Here's why. There are places in our homes that we need to make sure there is no clutter. For example, the kitchen and dining room are the places where we get nourishment from, aren't they? They indeed are. These must be areas where we need to settle ourselves and take sustenance to keep us physically fueled.

Here's another one. The bedroom is where we get our rest. When we have this room cluttered there is no room for breathing, there is no room for resting, we see chaos, and it feels chaotic. This could be described as both physical and mental clutter. Physical clutter is represented by the "stuff" around us, the mental clutter is the constant tape that plays in our head—"what to do with all this stuff." That clutter also brings up the emotional part that is affecting us because it is all around us—in every nook and cranny in the room. Seeing all this clutter around us adds to any anxiety we might be feeling about it. How could anyone possibly sleep well when one has to get the extra clothes off the bed in order to make room to lie down and sleep? This room needs to be our peaceful sanctuary, David, it has to be.

Our home office is where we need to stay organized. This is where we focus. We need to stay on top of tasks and it's where we spend a large amount of time. Physical clutter rears its head when we find ourselves not doing, what I call, SDA—Small Daily Actions—such as filing, organizing the desk, taking care of paying bills, even answering our e-mails, writing our letters, tending to the job at hand, talking with clients/customers, whatever it is. It's easy to turn this station into a train wreck. This is an area that needs organization; you will work better and be more productive.

So we need to stay organized. You will be amazed at how this will carry on in other parts of your life. In addition to this I want to say that if I don't spend ten minutes toward the end of my day at least cleaning up the right-hand and left-hand sides of my desk, I don't know about you, David, but I really don't feel as focused when I come in the next morning. Notice, I said the word "feel better"—physical clutter affects my productivity. For me, I do better knowing there is some sort of a to-do list already on my desk; I need to have things pretty well cleaned up before I get started. I wish I could say it has always been that policy, but unfortunately it has not. There are days when I have been so busy my desk seems to have a mind of its own.

As well as being a life coach, I am an international radio talk show host with Contact Talk Radio and am heard live on 106.9FM HD3 out of Seattle, Washington; this is especially true in corresponding with guests and other authors. Much comes across my desk needing immediate attention, so it

behooves me to keep on top of things. That is easier said than done. I, too, am human and slip. Remember, Simple Daily Actions—we need to stay organized.

#### WRIGHT

I had no idea that there were three areas of clutter—physical, mental and emotional. So if someone is feeling disorganized and unproductive, which of the three forms you spoke about comes first?

#### FELTON

David, you have, I am sure, heard the phrase, “which comes first the chicken or the egg?” We all have. Well, this is a similar scenario when it comes to which comes first, the physical clutter or the mental clutter? When I work with a client, one of the first things I ask is:

- What is it like to get up in the morning and face your clutter?
- Where do you have clutter in your life?
- Where do you see your clutter?
- Where is it spinning in your head?
- Where do you feel your clutter?
- Where do you feel you are the most disorganized?
- We know clutter works from the inside out. How is it affecting you?

Using these series of questions, they usually tell me which one or all three of the forms of clutter are affecting their lives. Finally, I will ask, “What is the most difficult part about clearing your clutter?” The response, nine times out of ten is, “It’s all three.” Now we know where to begin and where to focus our energy to get them moving in the right direction.

“I believe if you stir up mindful clutter,  
You will have a recipe for a potent stew.  
By learning which herbs and spices to use,  
You create a gourmet feast.”—Sallie Felton

WRIGHT

I know you've been a facilitator for many workshops, and you managed to help those who are mentally and physically cluttered, but what are they looking for?

FELTON

It's interesting to hear you say that. I actually have a workshop tomorrow and I think we have over thirty people signed up. So it is a problem area. We're talking just on this topic, de-cluttering from the inside out.

When I conduct my workshops I always start by asking, "What are five things that you would like to come into your life?" Many of them are seeking relationships, family, friends, or family traditions. They're seeking peace, organization, some may want money, but most want time for self and less stress. Does this sound familiar? I'll bet it does!

WRIGHT

So what is the process of accomplishing de-cluttering? You say there are five things that people can begin to do right now. What are they and how do they do this?

FELTON

For some, David, this is not easy—it is not an easy process. But let me take you through these five things:

**The First:** One must be open to receiving what the universe has to offer, that can be really hard for someone. Or a person cannot even conceive of the concept. A person may feel paralyzed with all the paperwork on their desk and can't move forward. They feel unproductive and then procrastinate. They might feel unmotivated. They're definitely going to feel frustrated mentally. They're going to be anxious emotionally and they're going to feel the "weight" of the clutter physically. That's a guarantee. But here's something they can do. For example someone might want to find an item/tool to help them in de-cluttering. Let's say a file cabinet for their office; it can be as simple as that. Instead of being stressed that they don't have that particular item, change the



thinking. As they begin to think about what they need, really thinking about it, and are open to receiving what the universe has to offer. Who knows they might come across just what they need by finding it either in a newspaper or via friend. You never know.

Here is one great source that I use all the time and it's called [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) and another one is [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) Have you heard of any of those?

WRIGHT

I've heard of Craigslist.

FELTON

Freecycle is the same thing. It has everything out there for free that people want to pass along. I use it all the time and I've demonstrated using this process on my 2008–2009 blog, [www.salliefelton.wordpress.com](http://www.salliefelton.wordpress.com). I go through all the steps on how to declutter, reuse, and recycle by using Freecycle and craigslist

**Second:** People need to make physical space for what they want, be it a new interest, activity, or a hobby. What do you need to support this new interest, activity, or hobby?

Say, for example, you want an area to put all your books because you might be a member of a book club. Do you need to make space for a bookshelf; do you need a writing table or a place where can you put items to support that or other interests? What do you think this would do for your “inner” voice or your mind? It would be uplifting. Now you've begun a slow process of de-cluttering from the inside out, you've begun to think about a solution, and now you're going to begin to take action to support your needs.

**Third:** Create time.

Create time in your calendar, just as you make an appointment in your calendar for doctor visits, which we all do. You are just as important. The majority of us never cancel a doctor's appointment unless we have jury duty or

an emergency. I don't—I know what it's like to try and reschedule another! It's that important not to cancel an appointment with yourself. You mark in ink your appointment on a physical calendar or note the date in your BlackBerry. By listing all those appointments, meetings, or dates in your mind, you're clearing your mental clutter. Make sense?

WRIGHT

Absolutely.

FELTON

It really does.

**Fourth:** Be your authentic self.

Love yourself, just as you are. Do what you like to do and nurture your wants and your needs. Be gentle with yourself. If either in a relationship or by making space in your house for another person, you have to ask yourself, "Is there space in my heart?" Those are the hard questions. Sometimes there is so much mental or emotional clutter that people don't know what they really want in their heart. This is the perfect time in their lives to find what they want. How do you do it? You write it down in a journal: "*What is it that I want to come into my life?*" Be specific, and I mean be perfectly clear.

- What is it you want?
- When do you want it?
- What does it look like?
- What does it feel like?
- What does it smell like?

You've got to be drop dead clear. *What is your vision?*

**Fifth:** It's time to commit to action.

Keeping a journal is the first tool to keep you on track and committed. Every day, think of one small step you can take that will lead you to your goal. It can take as little as only five minutes a day, David. But here's the key: you will be

just that much closer to your goal by taking smaller steps than one huge leap. What do you think that would feel like? One step closer feels pretty good.

WRIGHT

You speak of the process; what about those individuals who can't stay focused on a project and continue to be frustrated with the clutter around them or in their heads? Is this mental or emotional clutter?

FELTON

I believe both to some degree—mentally and emotionally frustrating; which can bring about the anxiety of the emotion. De-cluttering is especially hard for those who have ADD.

We have a workshop each first Thursday of the month where callers will join us on a conference line to share their frustrations, problems, etc. By the time they leave the call, they have an action plan and are accountable to letting us know when they have completed the task. This has been so beneficial for those who need that extra support, advice, and accountability piece.

## Four Steps to Tackle the Clutter

**One:** Set some time aside.

It could be fifteen minutes, an hour, but no more than three hours. You might ask why do I say that? *We want success here*, we don't want failure—we *want success*. You can play your favorite CD, but only commit to clearing the clutter until the CD is over. Again, we want success. Usually it takes forty-five minutes to an hour before a CD is finished. It is absolutely necessary to limit distractions. So if you need to go to the bathroom, eat something before you start, or grab something to drink, do so. The point is we don't want you to look at your computer, your laptop, answer your cell phone, your landline, the doorbell, look at your BlackBerry, or do anything else. And don't even try texting! We want you to begin the project with no distractions at all.

**Second:** Where do you start?

If you have physical clutter, start and choose a small area, for example, one drawer. Don't look at the entire room. Look at one shelf, not the entire closet. Choose an area that, when organized, will give you the most relief or the most pleasure. By starting small you will have the satisfaction of completion. If you have time left over, you can move on to something else.

If you have mental clutter, begin to write down a list of all the things that are lodged in your head. What is that mental list? Write it all down; get it out. Now choose one thing from the list that you can begin to work on. Choose just one and *start where you stand*.

By releasing all the clutter in the mind, the emotional clutter follows. One becomes less stressed, less burdened, and more at peace. This is just the beginning, but it has lasting results.

**Three:** Make sure when you choose where you start that you have the tools in place.

What tools might those be, you ask? David, for dealing with physical clutter, if you're working on your bedroom bureau, you want a sheet or a towel to dump presorted things onto it. You will need more than three boxes to sort the items. *One* box is for the "giveaways," the *second* box is for "items that do not belong in this area/room," the *third* box is for "recycling," the *fourth* box is for "trash," and the *fifth* box is for items that you really want to keep— the "I love it" Items. (The next paragraph is going to show you how to make the decision of keeping or not keeping an item.)

If you're dealing with mental or emotional clutter, you want a notepad and a pen to write. You need to keep the emotional clutter running on that notepad; get it out and write it down.

Some examples are:

"I feel badly if I give away something Aunt Susan gave me, but I just don't like the necklace."

"This belonged to Joe, but I'm not with him anymore/we broke up, but we had some great memories."

The reality is that you do *not* dislike Aunt Susan by giving the necklace to someone else who might love it. She is still your aunt and you love her, it is the

*necklace you don't like.* So move the necklace along to someone you think might like it. Now you are de-cluttering.

I have been a fond believer in re-gifting instead of keeping something hidden in a drawer or hiding it in a closet—and for what? We have always asked our children that if we give them a present they really did not like, we want them to be honest enough to tell us. And in turn they have asked the same of us. They can exchange the gift(s) we have given them for something else and we can exchange our gift(s) for something we might prefer. I gave a sweater to my daughter once that was not her style *at all*. She gave something to me that was not the right color or size. There are those times when the present just doesn't cut it. *First rule: do not take it personally!* So instead of each of us having to go separately to the store to exchange the items, we had lunch together and made a day out of it. Now that's a win-win!

**Four:** Getting started.

The rule is that when picking up physical clutter, you've got just *three seconds to make a decision!* Most people are aghast when I say three seconds, but here's why. The first question you always ask yourself is: do I love it—does it make me smile, lift my spirits? To say “like it” is not a good enough reason, you have to love it! The second question is: do I need it right now today, (not maybe someday)? The third question is: is it useful or, most importantly, is it useful to me? Those are the three most important questions for de-cluttering. I then often hear on our conference calls, “But, Sallie, I paid good money for this” or “It was on sale.” I don't disagree, but is it serving your needs *now*? Not later, next week, next month or next season, *but right now, this very minute?* Sometimes we have to take a hard stand and be ruthless in order to move forward in de-cluttering.

WRIGHT

I see that de-cluttering both physically, mentally, and emotionally could even improve the safety of the house, especially where children are involved. How does it do that?

## FELTON

It does, absolutely—the less clutter, the fewer problems that can occur with accidents, tripping, and falling down. Everything has a home and everything in its place. I heard that from the day I was born. My parents said over and over and over, “There’s a place for everything and everything in its place.” Can you imagine your child in the middle of the night wanting something and tripping over all the toys in his or her room?

Teaching your children to pick up after themselves is critical to organizing and having them begin to take picking/cleaning up as their responsibility. It’s never too early, David, and it can be done together. It does depend on the age of the child as to how much he or she can participate in picking up. For the little ones, let them choose the colors of stacking bins and texture baskets. Make everything child-friendly and at their height level. You want them “to buy into the process.” In order to do that, you have to allow them to be a part of the process. When children have finished playing with their toys or an item, that’s the time they need to put their “finished” toys back where they found them. I doubt you ask your family to pick up after you, so it is only right we teach responsibility for caring for our own possessions or belongings. We have to model the same behavior if we want our children to do the same.

Again, speaking in regards to safety and clutter, what about towels left on the bathroom floor that could cause someone to slip? Have a hook at your children’s level. Now you’re fostering responsibility. What a wonderful value to be teaching them—letting them begin to care for themselves. This builds tremendous pride. This is empowering.

Also, David, cleaning the home office is totally different from organizing the rest of the house. Organizing the house is about putting everything back in its original closet, cubby, drawer, or shelf. Cleaning the home office is looking at an area from a metaview perspective. Visualize yourself being high above your office looking down (this is what I mean by a metaview). What would it look like?

Name everything that you would like to have in this room and why. Where would everything go and how would you utilize all the nooks and crannies of this space in your home office to maximize the space? For example, desk, chair,

computer, fax, phone, files, bookcase—where would all of these fit to suit your exact needs? That's organizing. Being forward-thinking and proactive is maximizing every inch of your home office to its optimal advantage.

This is the room where business is usually performed. If it's a home office business, it is crucial that this area be clean, neat, well lit, organized, and functional because isn't that the way you want to work? Use colors and textures that work for you, not for somebody else. You are the one in this environment most of your day. You'll be much more focused and willing to take on even the heaviest loads and tasks if this area is streamlined and flowing. How wonderful would that be? Now tell me how you might be feeling when you sit down to work!

It is all about balance. Do you love where you work? Do you love the space you're working in? What would you change to make it your own?

I work in a home office that overlooks my garden. It has a small lily pond, a waterfall, birdfeeders, and birdhouses. It has flowering trees and perennials that bloom and fill the air with their perfume throughout the season. So I get years' worth of pleasure from all my senses here in my office. This is *exactly* where I want to be. This is where I stay calm, focused, and rooted. Nature is very important in my life. So wherever you are, you need to make it your own. It's so important.

#### WRIGHT

Well I really appreciate what you've said. Now I understand how physical, mental, and emotional clutter are tied into each other. Do most people already know this or am I the only one who hasn't figured it out?

#### FELTON

No, there are a lot of people who aren't aware of this. They think that physical clutter is just physical and that mental and emotional clutter are one and the same, but they're not. They're intertwined to a large degree, but showing how to de-clutter makes people's lives so much easier, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

I strongly encourage any of your readers who wish to discuss their issue of clutter to contact me. I do and will absolutely be there to answer their e-mails

at [Sallie@SallieFeltonLifeCoach.com](mailto:Sallie@SallieFeltonLifeCoach.com). If they prefer to call me, they can. My number is at the end of this chapter. I would be more than happy to help them unload as I say, “their burden of clutter.” I’ve helped hundreds and I know I can help them too. I guarantee it. All they need are the tools and the support to get started. You never know what treasure awaits you—a clean space, a clearer mind, and a sense of peace. What else could you find in that treasure chest?

#### WRIGHT

So what are the latest or newest trends in products on the market in terms of home organization? Would that help those who are feeling mentally disorganized to be more physically organized?

#### FELTON

Here are some ideas: For the home office, there is a filing technique called “Taming the Paper Tiger” by Barbara Hemphill. Her Web site is [productiveenvironment.com](http://productiveenvironment.com). This is a tool for people who want to spend less time looking for information and managing paper. This is a great site and I’ve used it.

Another one comes from the Container Store and a lot of people like to use clear see-through containers and translucent totes. They’re about ten to fifteen dollars each. That Web site is [ContainerStore.com](http://ContainerStore.com). For great containers and bins, Ikea has some wonderful ones and their Web site is [Ikea.com](http://Ikea.com). For baskets, containers, and rugs, Target has some fabulous ones, and their Web site is [Target.com](http://Target.com).

What about for upscale containers or wooden buckets? I have found some beautiful ones at [www.PotteryBarn.com](http://www.PotteryBarn.com) and Crate and Barrel ([www.CrateandBarrel.com](http://www.CrateandBarrel.com)). And in our new e-book, *Clutter Free and Clear: Take Charge of your Time and Space!* a how-to book to simplify your life, we have two hundred and seventy pages of how to deal with physical, mental, and emotional clutter. It’s co-written by eight authors and myself; we are all experts in our fields. All your readers have to do is simply go to [www.clutterfreeandclear.com](http://www.clutterfreeandclear.com). Here they get a chance to read about the topic of clutter, what it entails, readers’ testimonials/reviews, and all the *free* bonuses given by each of the



authors. It has over twenty-five worksheets and exercises to help you deal with your clutter from the inside out. We guarantee you won't be disappointed—you even get your money back if you don't like it.

WRIGHT

Well, Sallie this has been a great conversation. I always enjoy talking with you. I always learn a lot and you always make me want to go in and clean up my office, which is too dirty now to start. You'll have to come and help me.

FELTON

I know the feeling, David; I so know the feeling.

WRIGHT

This has been a great opportunity for our readers to learn some great information and some specific information that will help them. I really appreciate all this time you've taken with me this morning.

FELTON

David, it has been my honor and pleasure to give back to the readers as much information as I can to get them started. Let me end by quoting from Brian Tracy:

“You will find it easier to do a single small piece  
of a large project than to start on the whole job.”

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Sallie Felton. Sallie is an international radio talk show host, a fully certified life coach, a transitional specialist, and co-author who uses her clients' individual strengths to create a support for their life goals.

Sallie, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

FELTON

David, it's always my pleasure to talk with you; thank you once again for having me.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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SALLIE FELTON is living proof that people can go through a major life change and not only survive, but thrive. After years of frustration and searching for her purpose she decided to leave her proper Yankee upbringing, traditional education, and competitive sports career to pursue her true passions. It's been twenty years and she hasn't looked back. Now she is helping others do the same. Sallie is an international radio talk show host, fully certified CMC, PCC Life Coach, Transitional Specialist, and co-author who uses her clients' individual strengths to create and support their life goals. Through one-on-one and group coaching she has helped thousands; as she says to her clients, "let's start where you stand."



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## CHAPTER TWELVE

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### Successfully Dealing with Multiple Generations

An Interview with . . . **John Morrissey**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with John Morrissey, a recognized expert in the field of generational diversity. He draws upon thirty-five years of teaching, corporate research, and training experience to understand the issues of today's complex workplace. John was an award-winning high school and college teacher for twenty-five years before he made the switch to the corporate world in 1999. Since then he has developed a passion for corporate leadership and management programs. A member of the National Speakers Association, John is a sought-after speaker and trainer across the country. He is also an avid speaker and wish-granter for the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

John, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

JOHN MORRISSEY (MORRISSEY)

Thank you very much David, it's good to be here.

WRIGHT

So just what are the different generations today?

MORRISSEY

For the first time in history, there are four generations in the workplace instead of just the usual three. In a nutshell, they are:

- **Traditionalists**—born pre-1946 (age 64 and older). There are 75 million of them in the United States, which is about 25 percent of the population.
- **Baby Boomers**—born 1946–1964 (age 45–63). There are 80 million, which is about 30 percent of the population.
- **Generation X**—born 1965–1980 (age 29–44). There are 46 million, which is about 15 percent of the population.
- **Millennials**—born post 1980 (28 and younger). There are 80 million, which is about 30 percent of the population.

Those people born in the first or last five years of any generation are called “Cuspers” (born “on the Cusp”) or “Tweeners” (born “in between”), and probably take on attributes of both generations.

WRIGHT

So why is this topic receiving so much attention now?

MORRISSEY

We're all looking for ways to get along, both inside and outside of the workplace. This is really another way to look at diversity. We're not trying to categorize people here—we're just trying our best to understand others. What is it like to be Irish-American or African-American? Are men really from Mars and women really from Venus? What are the ramifications of growing up in the Southern part of our country or the North or the East or the West? These are all potential indicators of behaviors, values, interests, etc. Now, understanding the generational mix can help us relate to each other. A diverse group will

outperform a homogenous group every time. We want a mixture of generations in our workplace to be successful. Different experiences and different perspectives breed higher success. That's why this topic is critical today.

This topic is also receiving a lot of attention today because we have people who are staying at work past age sixty-five and seventy and seventy-five. We also have younger people coming into the workplace at twenty-two, twenty-five, twenty-seven years old and that's creating quite a unique mix, so that's another reason why you'll hear a lot more attention paid to this topic lately.

WRIGHT

Will you sum up a "Traditionalist" for our readers?

MORRISSEY

Yes I'd love to. Demographers can't seem to agree on what to call this group. You will also hear them called Seniors, Veterans, Matures, Builders, GI Generation, Silent Generation, Great Generation, and more. Just realize that no matter what they are called, we're talking about the same generation. They were born pre-1946 so that makes them sixty-four and older in age and there are about seventy-five million of them. That's about 25 percent of our current population here in the United States, so they are a very large group—a group not to be dismissed.

As a matter of fact, the Traditionalists have perhaps the most discretionary spending today, more than any other group. They're spending money, not so much on themselves, because they never did spend much money on themselves, but they are taking great delight in spending money on their kids, and on their grandkids.

They are also staying in the workplace longer, past age sixty-five. Or they're going out and finding jobs that are more satisfying and less stressful than their careers. For example, instead of spending each day fishing, I know of a seventy-year-old who works part-time in a sporting goods store in the fishing department. I also recently met a sixty-eight-year-old former postal worker who works as a greeter at a Walt Disney World restaurant. His grandkids visit him twice a year from across the country and they get to go to Disney World for free—"Grandpa works for Disney!"

Traditionalists in the workplace have a tendency to be extremely loyal and dedicated. Think “Pearl Harbor,” which many of them remember from their formative years. Those times taught them sacrifice, honor, duty, vision, and values.

So in the workplace, even today, because of that experience, they have a tendency to be very loyal to the company, just like they’re very loyal to the country, and very hard-working people. They don’t waste, they save a lot, and many of the characteristics we find them using in the workplace today can be traced back to that World War II generation.

Finally, don’t dismiss this group as being “out to pasture.” They can still be active in the workplace for many years. For example, Mike Wallace, who founded the *60 Minutes* television news program, just went “part-time” last year as a reporter on that show, and he’s ninety-one years old!

WRIGHT

How about the Baby Boomers?

MORRISSEY

The Baby Boomers, sometimes called the “Me Generation” or the “Woodstock Generation,” were born between 1946 and 1964. After World War II, there was a boom in our baby population, which lasted eighteen years. There are eighty million Boomers, which is 30 percent of our population. For many years, most people assumed that this would be the largest generation, as the large families of the 1950s and 1960s got much smaller in the ’70s. But there will be another generation that matches the size of the Boomers (more on that later).

When thinking of Baby Boomers, think “JFK assassination,” and political unrest, the protests, the individuality, the “buck the system” attitude, change, etc. Because Baby Boomers came of age in those years, in the workplace today they have a tendency to be very active and very service oriented. Remember when John F. Kennedy first became president he started the Peace Corp, so this generation was a generation of volunteering and thinking “what can we do to make the planet better,” etc. It’s a very driven generation, very good at relationships at work (but not so good with relationships at home, as this

generation invented the term “workaholic” and reached a 50 percent divorce rate).

Today, Baby Boomers are great team players and love to form committees and have meetings, much to the chagrin of the younger generations, who are often prone to say, “Can someone please just make a decision? Why do we have to have so many meetings?” Baby Boomers will still be around the workplace for a while, as they are not naturally budget-minded, and perhaps lost the most savings in the recent economy woes.

WRIGHT

How about summing up the Gen X’ers?

MORRISSEY

Generation X, sometimes called the “Next Generation,” is the smallest generation in the workplace today. They were born between 1965 and 1980 and they make up only about forty-six million of the population. During this time, more people elected to have fewer kids, birth control was on the rise, and many young people waited longer to get married.

To understand Gen X’ers better, think “Challenger explosion.” When they came of age, particularly in the late ’70s, the system was broken. We had a poor economy, they were the first “latchkey kids” because both parents were usually working, interest rates were high, gas prices were high, etc. A lot of the kids of this generation had to fend for themselves. So this generation has a tendency to be cynical and sarcastic, yet at the same time, a highly independent generation.

I feel the most for this generation because they grew up during some hard times, but not many people seem to recognize this. The times weren’t as hard as the Depression of the 1930s, but this generation pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps and, as well as being independent, are now adaptable, techno-literate, unintimidated by authority, and highly creative.

WRIGHT

Will you sum up the new guys, the Millennials?



## MORRISSEY

Ah yes! Like the Traditionalists, nobody seems to agree on what to call this group. You hear them called Generation Y, Echo Boomers, Net Generation, Digital Generation, Dot.com Generation, and the iPod Generation. Just last week I heard them referenced as the first true Global Generation. So no matter what they're called, we're always talking about Millennials. There are about eighty million of them, similar in size to the Baby Boomers. They were born between 1980 and 2000.

To understand this generation in a nutshell, think "9/11" or the terrorist attacks. Because of that day, Millennials realize life is fleeting, live for today, help others, experience as much as possible now. They have a tendency to be very optimistic, they're ambitious, they've got multi-tasking capabilities, they're very technologically savvy, and they're very entrepreneurial.

This generation is the one we know the least about and it's the one that I find that I talk about the most as I make my presentations. It's the one that people have the most questions about. A lot of people expect this generation to be in trouble because of school shootings, strong "drug, sex, and rock and roll" influences, violent video games, etc. But my research has shown that this is a generation of new confidence, they're upbeat, they're full of self-esteem, and they're the most education-minded generation in history. Further, they're paving the way to a more open and tolerant society, and they're creating a new wave of volunteerism. I mentioned the Baby Boomers and Peace Corps earlier and, as a matter of fact, the Peace Corps is enjoying a resurgence today for the first time since the 1960s, and it's because of this young generation.

When you look demographically at them, teen arrests are down, drug use is down, drunk-driving accidents are down, teen pregnancy rates are down, teen abortion rates are down, and high school dropout rates are down. So this Millennial Generation may very well prove to be the best generation yet in the United States. This is good news to those of us who are older because we were starting to worry about this new generation.

## WRIGHT

So are the Millennials the same as the Gen X'ers?

MORRISSEY

You know, that's a mistake that a lot of us Baby Boomers and Traditionalists make. If you're over fifty, as I am, we have a tendency to think of young people as young people. But the reality is that they are two very distinct, very different generations. Gen X'ers have a whole set of experiences, expectations, and qualities, whereas the Millennials are a very different generation. When we understand that, we can look at them, relate to them differently, and understand them much more.

WRIGHT

So what about the generation born after 2000?

MORRISSEY

That's an interesting question I often get from Gen X'ers who now have kids who are six, eight, ten years old. I call the kids who were born after 2000 the "Aughts," meaning they were born in '01, '02, '03 and so on.

By 2018, which isn't that far away, they say we'll have five generations in the workplace, and more than any other generation, this new generation of Aughts are going to be very comfortable with diversity. A lot of the issues and problems we've had in the past will be ancient history to them, now that we have a black president and a Latina Supreme Court Justice.

Anything we say now about that generation is pure speculation, of course. However, it is generally expected that this upcoming generation can expect equal pay between genders as a norm, the time-clock-punch mentality will be a thing of the past, results will rule, and recognition and reward will flow naturally.

WRIGHT

Which generations do you think get along the best?

MORRISSEY

It seems that the further apart you are from a generation, the more you get along together. What I mean by that, for example, is that typically Traditionalists get along best with Millennials. I call it the "grandparent

syndrome.” Young kids often get along with their grandparents better than with their parents.

When a twenty-eight-year-old Millennial comes into the workplace, he or she is not intimidated by the sixty-three- or sixty-four-year-old or vice versa. The sixty-three-year-old will readily go to the twenty-eight-year-old and say, “Help me with e-Bay or Twittering.” The Millennial will readily go to the Traditionalist and ask, “What’s the real story about the workplace here, and how did it get that way?”

Now I’ll bet you’re going to ask me, if that’s true, what are the generations that don’t get along?

WRIGHT

Right, that was my next question. Except I had a grandfather with a great sense of humor and years ago I asked him why the grandchildren and the grandparents got along so well. “Because we have a common enemy!” he replied.

MORRISSEY

That’s great! That’s true isn’t it?

You know, I have a story that I love to tell about that. There was grandfather who was out in the backyard. He was babysitting his ten- or twelve-year-old grandson. It was during the fall and they raked a huge pile of leaves. The boy and his friends got up on top of the garage and they jumped into the pile of leaves. Grandpa was sitting in the backyard reading the paper (another thing young kids no longer do), and the kids yelled, “Grandpa, watch this!” So they got up on the roof of the one story garage and Grandpa watched them jump off into the pile of leaves. The kids laughed and Grandpa said, “That was a great jump—do it again!”

Just then, Mom came out, and yelled, “What are you doing on that roof? Get down here this instant!” So there is the common enemy, as you just mentioned. It’s funny, because Grandpa now winks at Grandson, and Grandson winks back at Grandpa.

When you transfer that to the workplace, the same thing is happening. It’s almost like sibling rivalry when we grew up. I hear from Millennials, “These

Gen X'ers are always looking over our shoulders, criticizing, or telling us to sit down, shut up, and pay our dues!" The Gen X'ers, on the other hand, often say, "These Millennials expect something for nothing and want to be promoted right away!" The same conflict often happens between Baby Boomers and Gen X'ers.

Nowadays, everyone really just wants a seat at the table. Do you remember, as a child, getting to sit at the big table for Thanksgiving and other holidays?

WRIGHT

Not very often.

MORRISSEY

No, and you know what? Almost every one of us was sent to the "kids'" table or the basement. As a matter of fact, I remember the adults being served first and then the kids being served. Most people over thirty can relate to that story. Well, Millennials can't. They have sat at the table ever since they got out of a highchair. Not only have they sat at the table, but they've made decisions—big decisions. Did you ever sit down with your parents and have them ask, "Where would you like to go on vacation this year?" No, most of us, Baby Boomers particularly, were told the day before we're going to the lake, to "just be ready"—you have nothing to say about it. Now, we bring the kids to the table, eight-year-olds, ten-year-olds, and ask, "What do you think—should it be Disney World or go to the ocean?" They have input on that. I have even heard that in a lot of families, kids have input on what the next family car purchase will be.

Now there is something to be said about that—making decisions as a family can be very healthy. But the reason I tell this story is that when you transfer that to the workplace, and twenty-four-, twenty-six-, twenty-eight-year-olds are coming into the workplace wanting to "sit at the table." We need to let them sit at the table because they have a lot to bring. They know a lot more than we do about a lot of topics, particularly in the area of technology. I think we really need to rethink the way we're doing things.

So getting back to the original question, the closer in age, the more arguments and disagreements we find. The further apart the ages, the more people have a tendency to get along in the workplace.

WRIGHT

So how can we best communicate with each generation to be successful?

MORRISSEY:

In a nutshell, here are a few suggestions:

**Traditionalists:**

- Focus on their knowledge, expertise, and experience.
- Emphasize your company's mission, vision, and values.
- They prefer formality, in both verbal and written communication.
- Your word is your bond, so focus on words rather than body language or inferences.
- You may sometimes have to draw honest conversation out of them, as they don't like to complain and are reluctant to disagree.

**Baby Boomers:**

- Focus on perks and public recognition.
- Reward their work ethic and long hours (at the same time, encourage work/life balance).
- Give them a chance to prove themselves and their worth.
- Speak in an open, direct style but avoid "controlling" language.
- Answer their questions thoroughly and expect to be pressed for details.

**Gen X'ers:**

- Use e-mail as a primary communication tool.
- Talk in short sound bytes to keep their attention.
- Talk about technology and how they can use it to their professional advantage.
- Ask them for feedback and provide them with regular feedback.
- Use an informal, conversational tone in your communications.

**Millennials:**

- Use action words and challenge them at every opportunity (they get bored easily).
- They will resent it if you talk down to them.
- Use humor and create a fun learning environment. Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Focus on their future and tie it to your training.
- Use their talents right away instead of making them "pay their dues" (e.g., engage them in reverse mentoring; let them mentor a Traditionalist or Boomer in a skill set they're strong in).

## WRIGHT

So have there been any new terms come out of the generation discussion?

## MORRISSEY

Oh, there are a slew of new terms! Some of them are getting to be common in vernacular and others are still pretty new. Here are just a few examples:

- **Helicopter Parents**

Parents who continue to "hover" over the lives of their kids who are now in their twenties. It started in school; now, parents are calling managers asking, "Why was my child passed over for that promotion?"

- **Sandwich Generation**

Many Baby Boomers are caring for their kids who have graduated from school and have moved back home. They are also caring for their elderly parents. The Boomers are the first generation who will care for their parents longer than their parents cared for them.

- **Boomerang Kids**

Kids moving back home after living on their own for a few years. Seventy-five percent of the Baby Boomer parents are happy about that.

- **Digital Immigrants**

Loosely, anyone older than thirty-five years old.

- **Digital Natives**

Anyone under thirty-five years old.

- **Old Boomer mantra**

“Don’t trust anyone over thirty.”

- **New Boomer mantra**

“Don’t trust anyone under thirty.”

- **MySpace/Facebook/Twitter/YouTube/etc.**

Isn’t it interesting that Facebook started out for just Millennial college students, but now is being taken over by Baby Boomers. Look for the Millennials to start something new. John McLaughlin, perhaps the oldest Traditionalist newscaster out there with his own Sunday morning national political show, takes great delight in announcing at the end of his show, “And you can Twitter me at . . .”

#### WRIGHT

So what do you say to those who would say age is just a number and not a distinguishing trait?

#### MORRISSEY

That’s a very good question because there has been some recent literature on that. Of course you can’t lump people together and age is just an attitude; we’ve heard that for a long time. You can’t say “all blacks this” or “all whites that” or “all women—” or “all men—” That’s just plain silly. There are now over 300 million people in the United States, and really, how can you lump any of us together? There are 300 million plus beautiful, wonderful souls and spirits in this country who inhabit the bodies that we inhabit. So yes, each and every one of us is creative and different and unique. But there is something in the human mind that wants to understand others better. So we do put people in groups for good or bad. For example, male versus female—let’s face it, there are some differences; we’re the same, yet we are different.

It’s the same with color and background and ethnicity. You can look at demographics and age because people are often very proud to say, I’m not just

an American, I'm an African American, I'm an Irish American, I'm an Italian American. You understand the person more when you understand ethnicity and background. We should revel in diversity, not ignore it. Diversity is wonderful. A diverse group at work will outperform a homogenous group every time!

So age is another way of getting our arms around understanding each other.

WRIGHT

Finally, what unique qualifications do you have to speak and write on this topic?

MORRISSEY

Well, as you already know, I taught high school and college for twenty-five years, and little did I know it then, but now, when I look back, I can see that during the '80s the students who came into my classroom were Generation X students. In the '90s, the students I taught were typically Millennials. When I look back now I can see two very different, distinct groups and characteristics that we now talk about in these generations. So I actually experienced them and saw them grow up, as well as being a Baby Boomer myself and having Traditionalist parents. I feel that I have a close relationship with and knowledge of all of the generations.

Since teaching in the '80's and '90's, I have worked with a lot of Fortune 500 companies and I've been able to see these groups and talk with these groups and do my own research and surveys as I travel the country. I've been able to gather information and have discussions before and after my presentations that really solidify a lot of the information and material I talk about. I believe this makes me unique.

WRIGHT

Well, what an interesting conversation. I can always learn from these different generations and you sure know how to put it in words that I understand. I couldn't help thinking that I've got a daughter who is forty-eight and a son who is forty-six and then I have a twenty-year-old. I had her when I was fifty. I used to announce maybe two or three days before vacation that we



were going to Daytona Beach, Florida, but I made the mistake of asking the twenty-year-old last month where she wanted to go and she said Italy. I should have had this conversation with you several months ago.

MORRISSEY

I could have cued you up on that one. They're never going to say where you think, or where *you* want to go. That's funny.

There is one other thing that I wanted to mention, David. A lot of the information I present within the age groups show that we are different, yet in many ways, we are all the same, especially in the workplace. We all just want a little respect, no matter what generation we represent. We all want people to listen to us, we want to “sit at the table”—to help make decisions—and we just want people to be fair and not to patronize us. So in that sense, there is no difference between or among the generations.

WRIGHT

John, I really appreciate all this time you've spent with me today to answer these questions. I have enjoyed it immensely, even though that's not why we're having this conversation. I'm sure our readers are going to get a lot of information from this chapter in our book, and I'm glad you're a part of this project.

MORRISSEY

Thank you very much David, I've really enjoyed it. Thanks for the opportunity!

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with John Morrissey, an expert in the field of generational diversity. He has a passion, as we have just found, for corporate leadership and management programs. He is a sought-after speaker and trainer across the United States.

John, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

MORRISSEY

It's been a pleasure, David.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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JOHN MORRISSEY is a recognized expert in the field of generational diversity. He draws upon thirty-five years of teaching, corporate research, and training, experience to understand the issues of today's complex workplace.

John was an award-winning high school and college teacher for twenty years before he made the switch to the corporate world in 1999. Since then he has developed a passion for corporate leadership and management programs.

As a member of the National Speakers Association, John is a sought-after speaker and trainer across the country. He is also an avid speaker and wish-granter for the Make-a-Wish Foundation.



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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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Life Balance:  
Small Steps will get You There  
An Interview with . . . **Indrani Goradia**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking with Indrani Goradia, author of *The Indrani Principle: Inhale Life, Exhale Joy*. Indrani is a Master Life Coach with Dr. Martha Beck Incorporated, a certified yoga therapist and a registered yoga teacher. She is a marathoner and at the age of fifty she learned to swim and competed in an Olympic distance triathlon. She holds a BA in Communications from Queen's College in New York City and has completed graduate work in organizational development and interpersonal communications from Kent State University.

Indrani, thank you so much for being with us today.

INDRANI GORADIA (INDRANI)

Thank you for having me.

WRIGHT

I want to get right into talking about your book, but just wanted to first focus on something I said in your introduction, which was that you competed in an Olympic distance triathlon at age fifty. I would immediately think such a feat would, of course, be a success, but would also take you out of balance. How was that for you?

INDRANI

Actually, the triathlon was what brought my life into focus, into balance. And that is what my life stands for—why I do what I do and what I can help others to achieve.

People look at their limitations in life instead of their opportunities. They see clearly the excuses “why I can’t” instead of the reasons “why I must.” “Excuses against” take you out of balance while “reasons for” validate your existence. With good reason, we find our balance in life and with that balance we find our inner success.

WRIGHT

You share personal stories in *The Indrani Principle*. Did you know you were going to write this book one day and would use all these illustrations as a formula for success?

INDRANI

It is a formula—steppingstones I would say—but I don’t even know if I like the word “success.” Yes, we want to be successful, but what you mean by the definition of “successful” and what I mean might be two different things. For many women, successful is being able to invest in themselves with quiet time, creating a hobby, or starting a business. It isn’t always about dollars and cents when it comes to living your dream.

When I came to America from Trinidad pursuing college, I worked in a major jewelry store located in New York City as a corporate sales person. I noticed at every lunch hour my coworkers were talking about the next best restaurant that they were going to and how good it was. I was always left out of the conversation because I did not have two dimes to rub together.

I really wanted to be a part of that world, that life. I wanted to belong. So I came upon a plan. I went to one of the nicer restaurants in the city and I looked at their dessert menu and figured that for \$10 I could order dessert and coffee, including tax and tip. I did that for many months and discovered, “*Voila!*” I was part of the conversation.

Would someone say that I was “successful”? I would say that I did achieve a level of satisfaction for myself by doing something that made me inclusive to the group while also investing in myself. So yes, to me that was a success. But my real success was finding balance in my relationship with my coworkers and balance within myself to know I was worth investing in. From that inner-balance came the feeling of achievement and success.

Success is an inside job not an outward collection of acquisitions that can keep you tossing and turning in the middle of the night. Not that you can’t have nice things, but the point of success is to live in balance and to live in freedom, and be in harmony with your “stuff.”

I didn’t know then that I would use my life experience as examples in my book, but in sharing my stories I can readily see both men and women who have similar experiences and similar desires. Moreover, they can clearly see the way to make the small steps turn into huge leaps in their life by using my anecdotes as well as their own.

#### WRIGHT

I’m getting inspired just listening to that, maybe because you make it sound so simple.

#### INDRANI

Well, it is simple...not to be confused with easy, but it is simple conceptually. We confuse our role in life. We tend to let life dictate to us what we can dream and what we can do. Instead, we need to put life on red alert to what our dream is and what we are doing about that dream. As John Lennon said, “You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one.” That is so true. Everyone has a dream, everyone is a dreamer; my job is to make you a doer of the dream—to achieve success, as you define it, and to stay in balance with that dream. A dream without a time line will always be fantasy.

WRIGHT

Tell me about the principles that help one achieve Life Balance.

INDRANI

People do not achieve their dreams and desires in life because they don't think it is a good idea. They don't achieve their dreams because they don't know how. Simple. So I devised eight principles for success that instill the inner confidence necessary for you to take hold of what you dream and what you want, and to manifest that yearning into reality while simultaneously keeping you balanced in mind, body, and spirit.

In my book *The Indrani Principle*, I systematically develop a bridge between you and the life of your dreams with:

- The Focus Principle—to see the destination
- The Intuitive Principle—to own what you know
- The Planning Principle—to create a roadmap
- The Intention Principle—to know why you want what you want
- The Creation Principle—to manifest the life of your dreams
- The Environment Principle—to get rid of toxic burdens that act like kryptonite to your dreams, like people, places, and clutter, and then finally,
- The You Principle—the audacity of creation
- The ultimate principle—to rejoice in *all* that you are.

All of these together actually create Life Balance. Every day we are moving toward something, whether it is closing the big deal or brushing our teeth. My strategies and my principles help you to achieve what you want in life but within balance and reason. With my principles it is impossible to get sideways and go out of balance even while chasing big dreams.

WRIGHT

Okay, so let's say someone has achieved his or her own life balance but others nearby have not. In fact, they are downright negative people. What does the person do then?

## INDRANI

I call these people “Toxic Burdens” and these people want you to stay right where you are. They want you stuck or sick or even failing. They don’t want you to thrive because then it puts pressure on them to do more with their life. So the easiest thing to do is to continually pull your chain, like a dog on a leash, to bring you back to the reality of who and what you used to be. But changing back is good for no one.

A toxic person to a hopeful achiever is like kryptonite to Superman.

Again, it’s finding the balance in your support circle that helps to influence your success in life. Show me someone who has very few supporters of their well-being and I will show you someone who will live in mediocrity or despair—and to me, mediocrity and despair are one in the same.

## WRIGHT

So I keep going back to the triathlon. That was an outward measure of success. How did balance even factor into something as athletic as that?

## INDRANI

To gear up to the daunting undertaking of the triathlon, I started doing yoga three times a week and along with the yoga came meditation, which helped me to be still and silent. Yoga and meditation together helped me to focus on my next best step.

This is the question I asked myself every day as I sat in meditation: “What do I need to do today?” The way that I know the answer comes from deep intuition and inner wisdom, which has no sense of urgency or impending doom. I feel free and light in spirit. A great spiritual leader said that “You always know the ocean, because it always tastes of salt; and you always know enlightenment, because it always tastes of freedom.” Most people are running about doing all sorts of things that they feel “have to be done” but they realize in the end that not much of it was truly necessary.

Now that I meditate, I hear the voice of reason and know there is time enough for everything.



WRIGHT

Do people need to do yoga or mediate to hear that voice of reason?

INDRANI

Both are helpful because the voice of reason is what they are hearing anyway. It is that voice that is urging them on to do something new, to do something adventurous, to take time for themselves, to create another layer to their life that is completely individualistic. That is the voice of reason. Yoga and meditation spur on the willingness to go inside and then the ability to recognize the inner voice of reason.

WRIGHT

Do you think now is a good time for a book like this? Don't people today feel skeptical and hopeless about living their dreams per se? Don't people just need to stick to the status quo? I don't think a lot of people feel like "success" is in their control anymore.

INDRANI

A wise person once said that the past is all about regret, the future is all about illusion, but the present is right now. Losing hope has to do with making things happen in the future, which is impossible. In that regard, it is hopeless.

Hope is all about operating in the present moment and not projecting ourselves into the future. When we can be still and ask to know the next best and right thing, then we immediately feel hopeful, because the answer has to do with where we are at the present moment—in the here and now. And it is about making those small steps that equate later to the huge leap of life. When I first started training for the triathlon, I had no idea that I would accomplish so many other things in the ensuing years, but staying present makes all things possible.

Maybe people are skeptical right now, so does that mean don't dream and don't find a better way? The way I see it, now is the perfect time to begin. Now is the best time to really listen to that inner voice of reason that propels you forward and compels your future. Now is the best time to think differently so that you can do differently in your life.

To think that “success” isn’t in someone’s control anymore is a very sad thought indeed. Again, it goes back to the definition of success and it goes back to the balance it is created from and lends itself to.

I don’t see much balance in the world right now. Everyone seems to be in reactionary mode. But if we get quiet and get still and listen to the voice of reason inside us, then the direction we are led to will be our own unique direction—it is for us. So in that regard, we are at last in balance and better able to pursue our road for success.

Frankly, now is the only time any of us have. And things might not be going entirely as we planned. And “status quo” right now is that there is no status quo. Many people have worked fifteen years at their job and are now being laid off. Everything is upside down.

So is now the time—absolutely! NOW is an acronym. It stands for No Other Way!

#### WRIGHT

So balance is centering holistically the mind, body, and spirit.

#### INDRANI

Absolutely, it is centering the mind, centering your body, and centering your heart and soul.

Our mind cannot be centered on one thing while our spirit is centered on another. We then wonder why we have not achieved our dreams.

For example, we center our mind for success defined as money in the bank, a fine car, and a larger home. Nothing is wrong with that. But if our spirit is centered on simplicity, altruism, and volunteering then it is highly likely that one will never find balance and will never attain that level of success. It isn’t that one or the other is good or bad—it is that they are conflicting. I talk about conflicted goals in my book and how, through mediation, yoga, and inner reflection, one can center on the whole person so that the outcome the person is wishing to attain is congruent on every level.

WRIGHT

What is the number one principle people need to resolve in order to achieve success in life?

INDRANI

To know—to believe with all their heart and soul—that they were created for greatness. Everyone was created for greatness, though few exercise that right. We look at other people and think, “Well, of course they have great success [or a great life, or great kids, or a great husband, etc.]. It’s because they are pretty [educated, charismatic—insert whatever you want].” People see the feature in everyone else and only see the flaw in themselves. Tragic! But if you see something spectacular in others, that quality is within you!

WRIGHT

Are some people genetically predetermined for success over others?

INDRANI

How many children of successful people have you read about who are strung out on drugs or alcohol? How many people have you read about who come from broken homes and derelict environments only to become raving successes? Again, it is what you believe about yourself that is true. It’s being centered in that positive belief of who and what you are and then finding that balance within.

WRIGHT

Lastly, you address self-forgiveness. How does that figure into success?

INDRANI

Everything. Self-forgiveness means to forgive yourself of your past. People sometimes think they can’t go forward with their dreams because in their past they were mean-spirited or drug abusers or practicing alcoholics or whatever it is they are ashamed of. People think they can’t achieve greatness because of their flaws. Well, we are all flawed! But we cannot let our flaws cast a shadow over our futures! So whatever it is in your past that might be holding you back,

forgive yourself and move on. Don't let that past mistake(s) tether you. What do you have to lose by forgiving yourself—nothing. What do you have to gain by forgiving yourself—everything. And for those people who want to stand around and remind you of your past transgressions, ha! Immediately remove them from your life!

WRIGHT

Indrani it has been a delight.

INDRANI

For me too!

WRIGHT

Today we have been talking with Indrani Goradia. Indrani is a master life coach and the author of *The Indrani Principle: Inhale Life, Exhale Joy*. Thank you so much for sharing your ideas.

INDRANI

Thank you.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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INDRANI NATHU GORADIA is a Master Life Coach, speaker, yoga teacher and yoga therapist. Indrani works with women who want to step out of the shadows and into the light of their dreams. Indrani teaches her clients that by honoring themselves they become a beacon of hope and possibility for their families. Indrani is creating a retreat in the Himalayan Mountains (The Shakti Center for Understanding and Growth) and invites you to follow its birth. Visit [www.indranilifecoach.com](http://www.indranilifecoach.com) for more details and to apply for a free 30 minute consult to determine your next best step on this incredible life journey. Visit Indrani's Web site (listed below) to sign up for the powerful teleseries: Live a Brighter Life, a transformational journey for women in cultural shadows. The class includes Indrani's book, recorded meditations, online coaching, and whole lot more.



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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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### Enlightened Living

An Interview with . . . **Rick Miller**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

We are speaking today with Rick Miller, founder of Choices and Success LLC, about his steppingstones to success. Rick has created a lifetime of success by making choices based on principles. As a self-described student/teacher, Rick draws from a wide range of work-life experience. He served as president of a multi-billion dollar world-wide business and as president of a start-up company. Rick has also successfully managed a fulfilling personal life despite challenges with type 1 diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. These experiences, all supported with the love of others, led to the creation of a simple and powerful guide for self-exploration, *Five Points of Light: Enlightened Living*.

Rick, why did you write this book?

RICK MILLER (MILLER)

David, there are so many great books on this subject and virtually volumes of material available to help people make choices that will lead to success. Yet many people still find it challenging to understand it all and how to integrate it all into their lives. They also struggle to understand the basis for the recommendations and how to get started.

*Five Points of Light: Enlightened Living* is a simple pocket guide that offers straightforward ideas to help you understand and choose *what* to balance for you to be healthy, *where* to spend time to balance your life, *who* you are, *how* to create your best, unique life, and *why* it all works for you. My goal with the book was to help people with a simple, yet powerful tool that would help them “connect *all* the dots.”

WRIGHT

Is there a single definition of success?

MILLER

I don't think so. Everyone wants to be successful, but each of us defines success differently. For some, success equates to wealth. Others define success as fame and notoriety. For some, relationships determine success, while others find success in themselves. In fact, we all have our own definitions of success because we are unique beings. As distinctive individuals, we have different views and different paths to live our best, unique lives.

Most would agree, however, that success in some way involves living the life we *choose* to live. A key part of success is choice. I developed the Enlightened Living concept and the choices framework to help individuals realize their distinctive success through their unique choices.

WRIGHT

Will you describe Enlightened Living and the choices framework?

MILLER

Enlightened Living is defined as “*courage to DO, serenity to BE, and wisdom to CREATE by connecting the two.*” The Enlightened Living Choices framework (See Exhibit 1.) is offered to help people reach their own success.

**Exhibit 1****Enlightened Living Choices****Five Points of Light**

WRIGHT

Would you describe the components of Enlightened Living, starting with courage and the “courage to do for health”?

MILLER

*Courage* can be defined as the *quality of fearlessness or bravery; the attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as challenging or difficult instead of withdrawing.* Enlightened Living begins with a focus on courage and the choices available to each of us to positively affect our health and our life. These choices are the first steppingstones to success.



Ralph Waldo Emerson said that “the first wealth is health.” Enlightened Living begins with healthy choices. The good news is that more research is occurring that helps us understand what to do to take care of ourselves. We have both traditional and natural alternatives available to us to support good health.

The challenge is that health issues seemingly affect an ever-increasing number of people. For some of us with severe and/or chronic health issues, much of life is dominated by the hour-by-hour focus required to do the best we can with health challenges.

In all cases, we can learn from these challenges and make choices in five areas to enable us to live as healthy a life as possible. The persistence necessary to maintain the right balance both within and between these five areas absolutely requires courage and is an important part of true success. (See Exhibit 2.) Here are five important “do for health” choices that require courage:

**Exhibit 2**

**Enlightened Living Choices**



**Food**—The quantity and quality of the nourishment we choose is an opportunity to help ourselves feel great and reduce the chances of illness. If “you are what you eat,” then many of us have an opportunity to improve who we are.

**Exercise**—The benefits of a consistent low-impact training regimen (e.g., walking thirty minutes a day) are significant to all age groups. Aerobic training for the heart and stretching/strength training for muscles enable all of us to get the most out of our bodies. “If you don’t use it, you lose it.”

**Stress Management**—Many believe that the single biggest factor in shortening our potential life span is the prevalence of stress in our lives. While many conditions exist that are outside our control, our ability to manage our reaction to those conditions is critical to our health.

**Sleep**—Rest is the only way for the body and mind to renew and rebuild. You can employ strategies to “borrow” time in the short-term, but it comes with the added risk of illness as the immune system can be compromised. Optimal long-term health requires seven to nine hours of sleep, depending on age. Ben Franklin was right. “Early to bed and early to rise makes one healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

**Wellness Support**—Thankfully, there are often many people and products available to help us when we need them. Doctors, nurses, nutritionists, coaches, and professionals of all kinds can support us when we decide to make good choices. It is important to listen to those voices. With their support, appropriate products of all types can be integrated into our daily lives when we need them.

## WRIGHT

Will you describe the Enlightened Living concept of the “courage to do for life”?

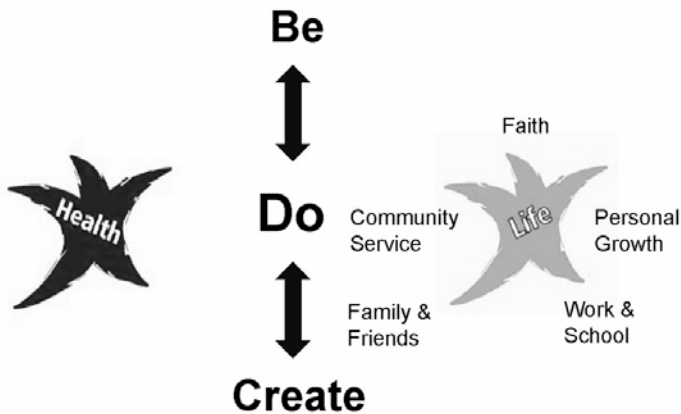
## MILLER

Absolutely. Anais Nin said, “*Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.*” Life can be terrific and life can be a struggle. Most of us would choose to live a life full of rich experiences and deep relationships with people we care about. Life offers us a seemingly limitless set of opportunities to learn and grow personally as well as to help others grow.

It takes courage to succeed in life and to boldly explore all that life has to offer; and it takes persistence to accomplish great things. It also takes courage to face life’s many challenges, particularly when sacrifices are required. In both good times and times that are not so good, we need to maintain courage to

balance within and between five areas of life's challenges and opportunities to learn and grow. (See Exhibit 3.) Here are five important “do for life” choices that require courage:

**Exhibit 3**  
**Enlightened Living Choices**



**Personal Growth**—Personal or individual growth often begins with a choice to learn and then a choice to create. The courage to take advantage of opportunities to expand our knowledge and strengthen our mind, body, and spirit grows as these positive choices are reinforced with the excitement of renewal. We are also presented with opportunities to grow when we face adversity or tragedy. Our personal ability to learn and grow is virtually unlimited.

**Family and Friends**—Relationships with a spouse or significant other, family members, and friends offer wonderful choices to love and to be loved. These relationships offer many chances for acceptance and forgiveness. Each also offers an opportunity to provide support as well as to be supported.

**Work and School**—Work and school activities often consume a majority of the waking hours for many people. Some find they can choose the type of work in which they engage, but everyone can choose the attitude they bring to work. Each offers an opportunity to do our best as an individual and as part of a team.

**Community Service**—Community service is our chance to help others, whether they are across the street or around the world. Those who choose to sacrifice for others find that the givers often receive the most. While there is much suffering in the world, when we work to help others, we see and feel a cooperative spirit that unites us all.

**Faith**—Belief in a higher order and/or belief in others and ourselves provides opportunities to live a more complete life. Among many blessings, faith brings hope. When we choose to strengthen whatever we choose to believe in, we also become better at eliminating needless, limiting self-doubt. Remember, you don't always need to see things to believe in them; sometimes you can choose to believe in things to see what really matters.

The good news is that when it comes to making the best health and life choices, there is courage in all of us to do so.

#### WRIGHT

Will you describe the Enlightened Living concept of serenity and the “serenity to be”?

#### MILLER

*Serenity* can be defined as *the quality or state of calmness and tranquility*. Enlightened Living includes a focus on serenity and the positive choices available to everyone to find their own peacefulness. These choices are the next steppingstones to success.

An anonymous author wrote that “*Serenity is not freedom from the storm, but peace amid the storm.*” Where does this peacefulness come from? In the prayer that begins, “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,” author Reinhold Niebuhr offers a partial recipe.

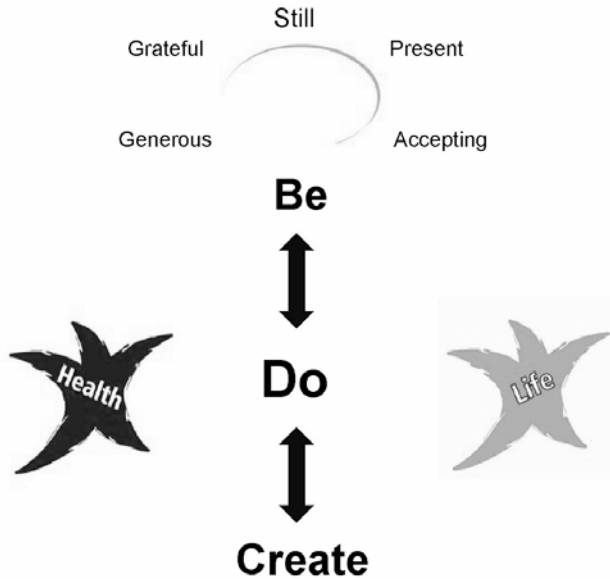
The inner composure often demonstrated by truly successful people goes beyond the ability to simply accept certain things. This peacefulness actually comes from self-understanding. We all seek to understand who we truly are. We are not what we do, neither are we our past. We are not what others think of us, neither are we the things we accumulate. The Buddha offered his version of the ultimate challenge: “Know thyself.” This seemingly simple goal can be challenging in a world that includes many “storms.”

Life appears to move faster and faster and each day is filled with challenges, opportunities, and seemingly endless to-do lists. Many people long for

peacefulness. Thankfully, many of us are choosing to take the time necessary to learn more about ourselves. We are remembering that we are more than what we do and we are taking time to simply *be*. We are opting out of the often noisy world that surrounds us to enter a quieter place inside where we can listen. With a clear mind, we can make five choices to be to help us learn about the unique people we are. (See Exhibit 4.) Here are five important *be* choices that will lead to true serenity:

**Exhibit 4**

**Enlightened Living Choices**



**Be Still**—Contrary to many Western cultural norms, perhaps our most important choice is to develop the deeper understanding and truth that comes with the inner balance of being still. To maintain inner balance, we need to choose the tranquility and peace of stillness. In that peaceful state, we come to understand the pure and unlimited potential of our unique human spirit. With all the external noise that surrounds us regularly, we have a wonderful opportunity to listen to the only voice that really matters—our own. Our ability to develop a trust and confidence in our own voice—a voice that we choose to listen to regularly—will offer us our greatest opportunity to learn about our personal truth and who we truly are.

**Be Accepting**—When we choose to accept people and circumstances for who and what they are, we can escape the necessity to change either and to simply be, living in and learning from the moment. Since we cannot change the past, we can choose to learn from it and not dwell on it. When we choose to be nonresistant to current circumstances, we relax and see more clearly.

We also have a wonderful opportunity to accept people and forgive them for what we may view as their past mistakes that, similarly, cannot be changed. When we choose a nonjudgmental approach to people, we open ourselves to a potential for deeper relationships.

Perhaps the most important decision in acceptance is choosing to accept and love ourselves, just as we are, and forgiving past mistakes.

When we choose to accept the past, remain open to circumstances and people, including ourselves, we open ourselves to the possibilities of learning from all situations and from every individual. When we choose to accept our current reality with a certain degree of detachment, we find that things come to us with a fraction of the effort otherwise required.

**Be Generous**—When we choose to be charitable with our possessions, our money, and our time, we experience inner satisfaction. We learn that we can be nonattached to things. When we choose to be kind, helpful, encouraging, and gentle with others, we fulfill a higher purpose. It is just as important to be able to balance giving with receiving. When we achieve this important balance, we eliminate much of the possibility of arrogance. We choose to remain genuinely and truly humble.

**Be Grateful**—It is easy to be grateful when things are going well. It takes serenity to remain grateful when facing one of life's truly difficult periods. The grace required to face tough times and remain thankful is a blessing. Remaining appreciative of the opportunity to learn lessons from the challenges we are asked to face is a choice. We also can choose to be grateful for the opportunity to ask for help, knowing that we all rely on others for support. Help is always available.

**Be Present**—When we are totally aware and conscious, we can use all of our senses to embrace and experience the joy and beauty of the current moment. We are not focused on the past or the future. Living in the present allows us to give our total focus to the tasks at hand and enjoy the quality of experience that results. Giving 100 percent of our attention to the people with whom we are engaged, listening intently, and fully understanding the opportunity to communicate effectively with others is truly a choice. Our ability to be totally attentive and in the moment energizes any activity we choose to focus on and on any reality we choose to create.

## WRIGHT

Will you describe wisdom as the last piece of Enlightened Living and the wisdom to create by connecting the two?

MILLER

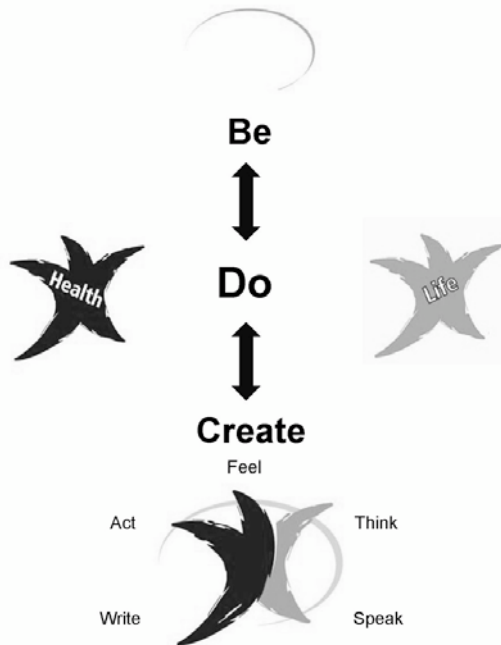
Wisdom can be defined as the quality of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action, based on knowledge, experience, and understanding. Enlightened Living concludes with a focus on wisdom and the positive choices available to everyone to create their very best, unique lives. These choices are the last steppingstones to success.

Author Frank Outlaw offered a great summary of the path we each take in creating our own future. “Watch your thoughts, they become your words. Watch your words, they become your actions. Watch your actions, they become your habits. Watch your habits, they become your character. Watch your character, it will become your destiny.” Once we link all the ways we create, and choose to actively and consciously utilize all that is available to help us construct our lives, we can make health and life choices with a clear intention that is aligned with our personal uniqueness. We can choose where to focus our attention and energy. Based on our serenity and confidence, our unique and personal intentions transform our health and life choices and our energy grows. We look at opportunities to grow with joy just as we look at challenges as opportunities to learn. We learn to trust our internal voice and judgment about when to persist and when to surrender.

We can also choose a healthy detachment from the results of what we create with the wisdom that true control is an illusion. As the expression goes, “We learn to care, but not too much,” as we recognize how much of life is outside our direct control. Once we develop confidence in our own unique voice and in an understanding of who we truly are, we realize that we alone are in the best position to create our best, unique life. The wisdom to create by connecting what we do to who we are is powerful. When we practice this connection and combine it with the five different ways we can create our future, we demonstrate the wisdom of understanding. (See Exhibit 5.) Here are five important create choices that come with true wisdom:

## Exhibit 5

## Enlightened Living Choices



**Feel**— Perhaps our strongest energy and our greatest truth come from our emotions. Feelings provide a great window into our unique and personal truth; they are our best personal barometer. Our bodies do not mislead us. When we choose to trust our instincts, our intuition, and our “gut feelings,” we learn that we can all be perceptive. Listening to our sixth sense enables us to engage in the creative process aligned with our personal truth.

**Think**— As evidenced by Frank Outlaw’s quote above, thinking is creating. Active thinking is the conscious awareness of the creative process that begins with thought. Choosing to manage our thoughts, changing negative patterns when we first become aware of them, and training ourselves to use optimistic future scenarios, while focusing on the positive nature of what is happening now, all build energy that can help us create our future. We can also choose at any time to ask for help.

**Speak**— Spoken words have inspired and incited. The spoken word has always been an effective tool to influence people. Relationships can be strengthened or weakened based on the care used with the spoken word. When we choose our words carefully, we acknowledge the energy behind the important practice of verbal



communication and the influence words have on the future we are creating. With the same care, we must also be aware that we “speak” with eye contact, facial expressions, and body posture.

**Write**— People have long understood the power of the pen as a creative force to influence others. The energy created by the written word to influence others and its influence on life are indisputable. Examples include the Tao Te Ching, the Koran, and the Bible. Less well understood is the power of the written word to positively influence our own behavior and to create our own future. When we choose to write down our goals, connecting the courage to do and the serenity to be, we increase the probability of reaching those goals with the energy created by writing them down. Similarly, when we choose to write down our fears and concerns, we release the hold these negative emotions can have on us. Writing at both the reasoning and intuitive levels can help us as well. Writing positive affirmations can also apply valuable energy to create a future aligned with who we want to be.

**Act**— How we act offers the most visible form of creation. Conscious action follows the feelings, thoughts, speech, and written energy that precede it. We are held accountable for our actions more than we are for the other forms of our ability to create. Action is powerful. When we are having trouble creating the future we want, sometimes simply choosing to act the part will help us find the feelings, thoughts, and words. We all know people who seem to have “tailwinds” that help them in everything they do. When we act in a fashion synchronized with who we truly are, we find that things seem to happen more easily. Although we experience an increase in the intensity of our effort (with corresponding increases in quality and quantity), we find that our happiness increases as well. Our choices lead more directly to our unique successes.

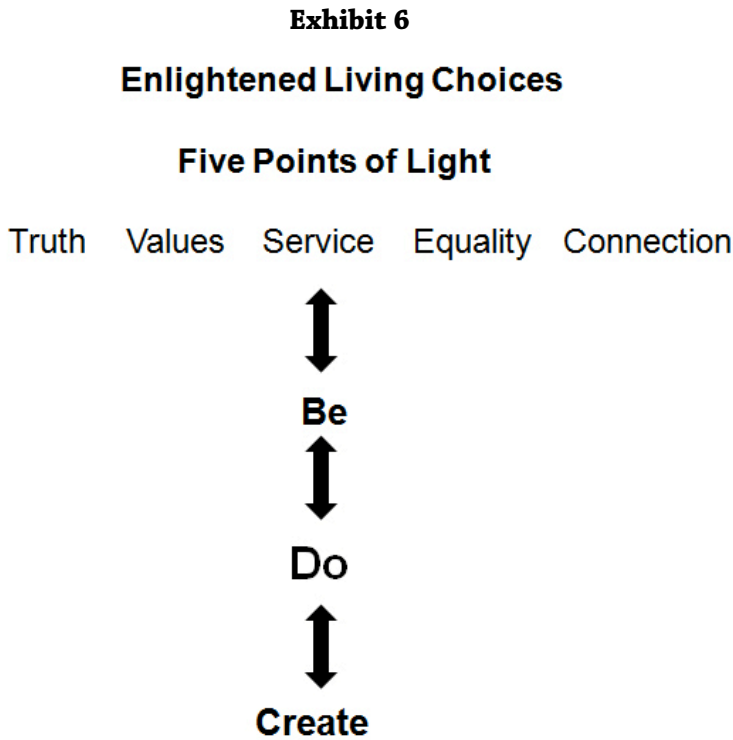
WRIGHT

I see now that your framework connects a lot of dots. How does Enlightened Living connect to the principles you refer to as the Five Points of Light and will you describe them?

MILLER

Yes, I will. The Five Points of Light are the overriding universal and natural laws that govern all forms and provide support to all of us when we choose to align with them to live our best, unique lives. Enlightened Living is about the choices we can all make to live with courage for health and life balance, with serenity to understand our unique selves, and with wisdom to craft the life we were meant to live.

The Five Points of Light are principles or laws that provide the “tailwinds” for us and our stepping stones to success. (See Exhibit 6.) Here are the Five Points of Light:



**Truth**— Truth is *the quality of being in accordance with an original constant*. We find truth in listening, learning, and feeling. The inner peace that comes from truth brings with it wisdom and understanding. We must learn to live honestly and always act with sincerity in our relationships, regularly seeking the truth through stillness.

**Values**— Values are *the standards of great relationships*. True and lasting wealth is found only in relationships. Relationships grow through the exercising of kindness, patience, forgiveness, gratitude, generosity, and a willingness to receive. We receive what we give. We must learn to accept responsibility for our choices, our relationships, and our opportunities to help others.

**Service**— Service is *the act of meeting the needs of others*. It is our responsibility to sympathize with and care for those in need. To serve another, we must listen carefully first to understand their needs. Those administering aid must also be open to receiving from those being aided, guarding against arrogance with the understanding that we are all the same.

**Equality**— Equality is *the condition of having the same courage, ability, power, and capacity*. We all should have empathy and respect for every other human being. Every individual has an ability to teach and to learn. We must learn that any hierarchy is manufactured and can be disassembled when we understand that what connects us is more powerful than what separates us.

**Connection**— Connection is *a group of people who are joined together*. We are all one. We are linked together as part of one community, made up of many smaller communities. We must learn that when we feel joy, it is felt by all; when we feel pain, it is felt by all. We must bring compassion into our community and look for support from others to strengthen our connections. Our past, present, and future are all linked by a connection to a common thread of energy and a search for the truth.

WRIGHT

Are there any tools to help people with Enlightened Living?

MILLER

Yes. Individuals have had a lot of success with the Enlightened Living self-assessment. The simple assessment helps individuals evaluate where they are currently with their health, life balance, self-understanding, and creative choices by answering twenty simple questions. The second part of the exercise asks participants to assess their satisfaction with their own answers. The third part of the tool provides sample “tips” or places to start to improve upon their score. The last part provides a simple SMART (Specific, Measurable, Actions with a Result that is Time-bound) form to facilitate weekly goal-setting. (See Exhibits 7 and 8 at chapter end.)

WRIGHT

Will you share the tips for people who aren’t happy with their scores on the twenty questions?

MILLER

Yes. I’ve listed them below:

1. *I maintain a healthy diet. Know your own food targets—calories, carbohydrates, or points. Eat early—breakfast is a must, larger lunch, early dinner, nothing after 8:00. Get fresh fruits and vegetables. Enjoy snacks but keep them*

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small/healthy and don't let yourself get too hungry. Keep track—write it all down.

2. *I follow a fitness plan.* Take a thirty-minute walk daily, and stretch for a total of thirty minutes one session each week. Strength/resistance train for at least thirty minutes one session each week. Stamina/cardio train for at least thirty minutes one session each week. Mix it up—cross training isn't just for professional athletes, it helps us all.
3. *I keep an even-keel perspective.* Let it out—keep a diary, talk. Schedule smarter—manage time, minimize interruptions, take a break. Take a deep breath and meditate. Flex and release—use your muscles to feel relaxation. Turn on some music.
4. *I feel rested.* Learn how much sleep is right for you. Establish a regular nighttime routine. Create the right environment—cool and distraction free. Bring it down a notch—no exercise, caffeine, or big meals before bed. Set the mood—read a book or listen to soothing music.
5. *I make informed decisions on the people and products I need for my health.* Get annual checkups and follow up consistently with any medical issues. Talk regularly with those who can help you with food, exercise, stress, and sleep. Take your medications—the right products can make a difference. Write down your questions. Read to learn.
6. *I enjoy learning new things.* Take a class. Meet new people. Read more. Take up a new hobby. Travel and explore new places.
7. *I make it a priority to spend time with family and friends.* Remember birthdays. Practice patience and kindness. Offer support frequently. Ask for support when you need it. Share thoughts and feelings.
8. *I do my best at work and/or school.* Commit to do your best. Work well with others. Practice good time management. Look for opportunities to lead. Practice persistence.
9. *I make time to help others.* Learn about opportunities to serve. Choose a cause that you are passionate about. Use a skill you like or develop a new one that interests you. Team with others. Follow through on your service opportunities.
10. *I maintain faith in a higher order and/or faith in myself.* Hold on to hope. Listen to yourself and regularly use a quiet place to think. Rely on your feelings and your gut instincts. Choose what to believe. Trust yourself and learn more about yourself and what you believe in.

11. *I can quiet my mind to listen to the voice inside me.* Find a quiet place to listen. Relax your body. Eliminate the chatter of your thoughts. Choose a single word to repeat gently in your head when your mind drifts. Practice in ten-minute sessions, two times per day, building to thirty-minute sessions.
12. *I accept people and circumstances as they are, and forgive all, including myself, for past mistakes.* Forgive yourself for past mistakes and dissolve self-doubt. Forgive people for the past and accept them as they are. Remain detached from today's events as well as projections for tomorrow. Suspend judgment. Acknowledge that there are always more things you don't know than things you do know.
13. *I am generous with my time and possessions.* Emulate someone who has been generous to/with you. Balance giving and receiving. Ask for help. Offer your time and attention to others in need. Offer a sincere wish of good luck to all you meet.
14. *I am grateful for life's many blessings.* Take time to regularly say thank you. See beauty. Feel joy. Recognize the cooperative spirit in others. Share blessings with others.
15. *I live in the current moment.* Give the people you are with your complete attention. Witness nature around you. Become aware of your breathing. Consciously choose your intentions and actions. Use all of your senses.
16. *I trust my feelings as truth and guidance.* Use all of your senses. Acknowledge your body's reactions to situations. Trust your gut instincts. Rely on your heart as well as to your head. Accept your internal guidance.
17. *I take responsibility for my thoughts and can stop negative thinking when I become aware of it.* Think consciously, optimistically, constructively, about the collective good. Think kindly as opposed to cleverly.
18. *I choose words consciously when I speak because words are powerful.* Speak after you carefully listen to yourself and others with responsibility for your word choice. Lead compassionately and humbly.
19. *I write to express my feelings and thoughts and to assert positive affirmations.* Buy a journal/diary. Set aside time to write. List goals in the present tense. Log how you want to feel in the present tense. Review past journal entries.
20. *I choose to act from the flow of feelings, thoughts, speech, and affirmations.* Act consciously, with conviction, to learn with balance to serve others with a link to your feelings, thoughts, and affirmations.

## WRIGHT

Where did these concepts come from?

## MILLER

I am truly blessed. Throughout my life, people have chosen to help me learn and grow by assisting me with challenges and by giving me opportunities. I am indebted to many individuals and groups of people who have helped me develop a personal understanding of courage, serenity, wisdom, and the Five Points of Light. Certain people stand out.

It was Dr. Donald Barnett who helped me understand the importance of choices. As a teenager, I contracted type 1 diabetes and I was fortunate to have Dr. Barnett in Boston, Massachusetts, as my physician. Dr. Barnett taught me about the hour-by-hour choices that would be required to achieve balance and manage this chronic disease and a lot more.

Understanding balance in life came to me from several sources. My parents and brothers had a very positive influence on me. My best friend, Dom D'Alessio, and my first girlfriend, Pam Hanley, grew up in strong families where I learned that success in life comes from a balance of faith, personal growth, community service, and accomplishment at school and at work, with strong relationships with family and friends.

I learned about serenity from my wife Diane, the single most important person in my life. Over our many years together, Diane has taught me about presence, generosity, and gratitude. Diane's mom Dot taught me about acceptance and stillness.

My first boss, Dick Laferriere, taught me the most about the many ways we create. When I entered the workforce as a sales trainee at Sperry Univac in 1980, Dick trained me how to think, speak, and write to create compelling scenarios for potential customers. He also taught me to walk the talk and act consistently with my words. Finally, Dick told me to always trust my gut and use how I feel as a good gauge for any situation.

The Five Points of Light have been reinforced in my life many times and by many wonderful people. In particular, Diane taught me about the truth. My dad taught me about values. When I think of service, I think of my friend, Dr. Phil Anderson, once a Marine and always a Marine. A very special little girl taught

me about equality. Finally, when I think of our connection, I think of my close friend, Mary Anne Walk.

WRIGHT

Are there any other areas where people could benefit from using your Five Points of Light?

MILLER

Yes, in fact I am currently working on a book that will be titled *Five Points of Light: Enlightened Leadership*. The book will outline elements of enlightened leadership based on the same principles of the Five Points of Light and offer examples of where I applied these principles in my prior professional life. Specifically, I will share stories from my own leadership assignments ranging from a startup company to a worldwide, multi-billion-dollar business where principles made all the difference.

WRIGHT

Rick, do you have any final thoughts?

MILLER

At a time when struggles seem widespread, thankfully there are many places to turn for guidance. Still, many people are looking for help simplifying their lives or connecting all the dots or both. The choices you make with Enlightened Living will create success for you as a unique individual. Your health and your life are full of opportunities and challenges. You have the opportunity to live with enjoyment, enthusiasm, fulfillment, and positive energy. Success requires both courage and serenity. Many people serve as teachers and offer a virtually unlimited set of what often seem like competing ideas. The challenges of the yin and the yang of life have been around for centuries. Seemingly as long, people have debated the merits of logic or faith, rationalism or mysticism, science or spirituality. What to do and how to be seem similarly disconnected for many of us. The wisdom to create by connecting the two is the answer and it starts with a choice. Choose to align with the Five Points of Light. Choose to

listen to your own voice, to set your own goals, and to start small. You can start to create your best, unique life at this very moment. It's your choice.



### Exhibit 7

### Enlightened Living Self-Assessment – 20 Choices

(Key: Always – 5, Consistently – 4, Often – 3, Sometimes – 2, Seldom – 1, Never – 0)

- 1. I maintain a healthy diet \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. I follow a fitness plan \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. I keep an even-keel perspective \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. I feel rested \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. I make informed decisions on the people and products I need for my health \_\_\_\_\_

**My courage to do for my health total score:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 6. I enjoy learning new things \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. I make it a priority to spend time with family/friends \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. I do my best at work and/or school \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. I make time to help others \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. I maintain faith in a higher order and/or faith in myself \_\_\_\_\_

**My courage to do for my life total score:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 11. I can quiet my mind to listen to the voice inside me \_\_\_\_\_
- 12. I accept people and circumstances as they are and forgive all, including myself, for past mistakes \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. I am generous with my time and possessions \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. I am grateful for life's many blessings \_\_\_\_\_
- 15. I live in the current moment \_\_\_\_\_

**My serenity to be total score:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 16. I trust my feelings as truth and guidance \_\_\_\_\_
- 17. I take responsibility for my thoughts and can stop negative thinking when I become aware of it \_\_\_\_\_
- 18. I choose words consciously when I speak because words are powerful \_\_\_\_\_

- 19. I write to express my feelings and thoughts and to assert positive affirmations \_\_\_\_\_
- 20. I choose to act from the flow of feelings, thoughts, speech and affirmations \_\_\_\_\_

**My wisdom to create total score:** \_\_\_\_\_

Key: For any score that seems lower than you would like it to be, make the choice to set a goal and start to make small changes in that category.

**Exhibit 8**

**SMART Enlightened Living Goals for Week of \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_**

Set **S**pecific, **M**easurable **A**ctions with a **R**esult for **T**his week

**COURAGE TO DO**

**1. Health** – Food, Exercise, Stress Management, Sleep, Wellness Support

**2. Life** – Faith, Personal Growth, Work and School, Community Service, Family and Friends

**3. SERENITY TO BE** – Still, Present, Grateful, Accepting, Generous

**4. WISDOM TO CREATE** – Feel, Think, Speak, Write, Act

**Truth**

**Values**

**Service**

**Equality**

**Connection**

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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RICK MILLER'S career began at Sperry Corporation and included roles at Unisys as VP/GM, AT&T as President of Global Services, startup OPUS360 as President, and Lucent as President of Government Solutions. These assignments shared challenging business conditions and the need to deliver consistent results for employees, customers, and shareholders. In each case, Rick led teams that built track records of success based on principles. In 2007, Rick founded The Balance & Stretch Center, a non-profit to support other non-profits. Rick founded Choices & Success in 2008. Rick received a bachelor's degree from Bentley University and a MBA from Columbia University.



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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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Live up to your Potential

An Interview with . . . **Lyn Jeffress**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Lyn Jeffress. Lyn is Founder and President of Imagined Future Incorporated, a coaching, consulting, and training organization. Her passion is helping others discover and release their potential and live the life they've only dreamed of. Lyn holds both a master's degree in Leadership and an MBA. In addition, she received her coaching certification from The Hudson Institute and has had the honor of studying with visionary thinkers such as Martin Seligman, Stephen R. Covey, David L. Cooperrider, as well as movie producer Stephen Simon.

Through the work of Imagined Future Inc., she helps individuals, teams, and organizations discover and maximize their performance. Her work with teams results in increased understanding of the potential of each member. She also helps to shift paradigms within organizations in order to improve the contribution of each team to the organization.

Lyn, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

LYN JEFFRESS (JEFFRESS)

Thank you, David.

WRIGHT

Let me start by asking you, how do you define success?

JEFFRESS

David, I believe that success comes from knowing yourself and living up to your true potential.

WRIGHT

I have a feeling that that is easier said than done.

JEFFRESS

Yes, you're right. What I've observed is we live in a culture that teaches people to develop by modeling themselves after someone else. We do not effectively teach people to first understand their own unique selves. In my experience, people evaluate themselves by *looking out of the window* instead of *looking into the mirror*. This is further reinforced by our systems of training and development. We use comparison and competition as the guideposts for how we're doing. As a result, people can tell you how they are similar or different from others, but not how much of their own potential they're using.

WRIGHT

This book is titled *Stepping Stones to Success*, so how would you describe those steppingstones?

JEFFRESS

I believe there are four basic steppingstones:

1. **The first is to become an *observer of yourself*.** Each day, pay attention to what gives you energy and what drains you of energy. Those activities, environments, and tasks are all clues to your natural strengths.
2. **The second steppingstone is to *listen to your own self-talk*.** What you are saying to yourself is either affirming what is best in you or it's deepening a belief in your own weakness and failings. You can never be your best if you belittle and criticize yourself. You will always live up to the picture that you paint for yourself, whether that is attainment of success or limiting your growth.
3. **The third steppingstone is to *check your judgment*.** Recognize that your view and perspective of others is made through your own lens. Therefore, until you really seek to know another person, you are only evaluating him or her based on what the person's actions would mean if you were the one doing the acting. One of the greatest concepts I came across during my studies is one that I hold up for myself daily. This concept comes from philosopher Ken Wilber's explanation of the psychological term of "projection." In summary, what Wilber tells us is that if something *informs* you then it's new to you. However, if it has an *affect* on you it's actually a reflection of yourself. So, when I find myself having an emotional reaction to someone else, I'm aware that I am tapping into something I myself am doing, have done, or am capable of doing. When something surprises me, I realize that I'm learning something I've never experienced before. The mantra I follow is: If it affects, it's you; if it informs, it's new!
4. **My fourth steppingstone is to *seek true dialog*.** David, I think this is a lost art. In conversation, if only one person is speaking then really truly nothing is being learned. We are each very unique. We must take time to hear and to be heard. I encourage our readers to fully open themselves up to this experience of true dialog in their lives.

#### WRIGHT

Of the four things you talked about—becoming an observer, listen to your self-talk, check your judgment—those three out of the four are really working on yourself.

JEFFRESS

David, you are right. The pathway to success is in your control. It requires you to know yourself and to work on removing barriers to that success.

WRIGHT

Fascinating. So how do you see these steps applying to teams and organizations?

JEFFRESS

I think the steps are the same for every entity. Whether you are talking about an individual, a team, or an organization, you can see the value that would come from being very, very clear about your capacity, talents, and strengths. Knowing this, as the team focuses on the goals the organization or the team has set, that self-knowledge would determine the pathway to take toward achieving those goals. The creation of open and honest dialog allows for each member of the team to contribute his or her maximum toward the goals.

I believe the same four steps can be written as values or behavioral norms for any group or organization:

- Know yourself
- Listen to your self-talk
- Check your judgments
- Encourage open and honest dialog

WRIGHT

So what processes or techniques do you recommend that people follow?

JEFFRESS

I have quite a few that I guide people toward. I'll offer our readers five ideas that I believe work well:

- The first is *journaling*. Journaling is always powerful. I recommend to my clients that they begin to capture their thoughts on a daily basis. It's not necessary to be fancy about this. Simply set a pad of paper in a place that will catch your attention every day. Pick one time each day to reflect—either first

thing in the morning or toward the end of the day. Over time, what will happen is our readers will begin to see that patterns emerge. This is especially helpful in determining what's happening with your energy and your enthusiasm.

- A second technique that I use comes from Martin Seligman's work. It's called "The Three Gratuities" and this is a fantastic exercise. The way that this works is you set a pad of paper on your nightstand and shortly before retiring for the evening, write down three things that occurred during the day for which you are grateful. Then, pick the one that was most important to you and think about that in detail. While you're falling asleep, relive it exactly as you recall it and think about the role that you played in bringing this event about. What you will find is that your spirits will be very high when you wake in the morning and you begin to feel in control of bringing good things into your life.
- A third approach is to work on the skill of *listening*. Listening is a difficult and amazing art. To just be there for someone else, to stay focused on what the other person is saying, and to be able to reflect back on what you've heard goes a long way in building relationships. More importantly, it teaches you about yourself. You will begin to recognize when something is affecting you or informing you. As I mentioned previously, this will help to expand your awareness of the opportunities presented to you. You have to remain present and open to the conversation occurring in front of you.
- My fourth technique is called "*mind mapping*." For anyone who has not done this, I will tell you it is great fun. Just take a great big piece of paper and begin to capture ideas, thoughts, fears, and dreams—just as they pop into your mind. Once you have those things on your paper, begin to catalog them, group them, and tie them together. What emerges is a picture of your soul's greatest desire. For those who are not artistic, it can be fun just to get a stack of magazines and cut out pictures, words, and/or images that capture your attention. Arrange them on your paper and you will begin to see your own picture emerge from the collage.
- The last process I recommend is that of staying in curiosity. Use the *technique of inquiry*. Ask others for their thoughts and their impressions. You will already have your own thoughts and impressions. As you listen to others, you will find



yourself growing and adjusting your awareness, your thoughts, and your own actions.

WRIGHT

So how would you summarize your philosophy of success?

JEFFRESS

My philosophy is to know that you are truly unique, honor the uniqueness of others, and seek synergy rather than separation.

WRIGHT

Would you tell our readers more about synergy versus separation?

JEFFRESS

I am aware that the word “synergy” is often overused. What is interesting to me is that the word *synergy* has its origin in ancient Greek and it means cooperation and working together. If you look up the definition of synergy in the modern dictionary, you’ll find a description that states, “The interaction of two or more forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual parts.” Separation is just the opposite. Instead of combining efforts for a greater outcome, with separation, each person, each team, each organization, holds their efforts apart. Therefore, the most you can hope for is the maximum contribution of each separate piece. With synergy you get one plus one equals *three or more*. With separation you get one *and* one, or if you’re lucky, one *plus* one equaling *two*.

WRIGHT

So do the steppingstones that you have outlined apply in both personal life as well as in the workplace?

JEFFRESS

Yes, I believe they do. Whether you’re talking about family, friendships, school, work, or hobbies, life will be enriched by following these steppingstones. Imagine what can be created by individuals, each bringing their

best to a partnership or to a team or to the organization for which they work. You can see that action would bubble up to an incredible contribution if potential was fully unleashed. Some of the more popular buzzwords in today's workplace are *employee engagement* and *empowerment*. When people are able to connect with what and how they do their best work, and fully utilize what they bring into the workplace, full engagement and empowerment are realized. This becomes a win-win for everyone.

#### WRIGHT

Would you share a couple examples of successes from your coaching and facilitation practices?

#### JEFFRESS

Thank you, David, I would love to. I have three examples that come to mind and I'm going to tie them back to my steppingstones.

- The first is around the concepts of *being an observer of yourself and monitoring your self-talk*. What comes to mind for me is an individual I worked with who believed that she was being overlooked in the workplace and not being allowed to participate and grow fully in her work. Her belief was her reality. She could give me example after example of how something that she was interested in was given to someone else to work on. Once she became clear on how and what she wanted to contribute, opportunities miraculously began to appear. Her self-perception and self-talk were attracting the experiences and opportunities she wanted. Her awareness, her body language, and her interaction with others communicated clearly what contribution she wanted to make. She found herself provided with those opportunities.
- My second example is related to *checking your judgment*. I have a favorite story about this. I had an opportunity to work with a team that had experienced a senior leadership change and the team was not responding well to that change. A great deal of comparison was being made between the new leader and the previous leader. People on the team had become very critical of the new leader's style and the team was floundering in performance. The team felt that the leader took too long to make a decision. The leader felt the people were acting without fully evaluating the impact of their actions. In working with

this team, I was able to help each member of the team understand his or her unique contribution and also to see that each of the other members had a unique contribution to make. By coming to appreciate the approach that each member of the team used for analysis and action, they were all able to create agreement on the team's approach and thereby gain the most from each member's style.

- My last example is around the art of *true dialog*. I was very fortunate to be given the opportunity to do some work with a newly seated, all volunteer, board of directors. This group of individuals was going to be together for one year. They came from different places—geographically as well as organizationally—and each held different positions in his or her home organization. What was important was to discover the best way for this varied group to come together, to make contributions, and to serve the greater organization in the year ahead. By opening awareness and creating dialogue among the members, the board was able to better understand how to work together. Despite distance and differences they were able to achieve maximum combined effort for the organization they were going to serve.

#### WRIGHT

I understand that you are also a student of brain physiology. How does that course of study fit with the work you're doing?

#### JEFFRESS

David, my study of neuroscience is perfectly aligned with my philosophy for success. What we know from extensive brain research is that there are four quadrants in the brain and each quadrant controls a different type of thinking and behaving. For each of us, there is one of these four quadrants that is highly efficient. The other three are less efficient and therefore require more energy. PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scans have shown that when a person is using his or her preferred mode of thinking, that quadrant of the brain shows up on the scan with the color blue, which means that it is cool—it is operating efficiently. To use any of the other three modes of thinking shows up on the scan as red, or hot. Literally, the effort and the amount of oxygen diverted to the non-preferred quadrants of the brain is a strain on the individual. The

results of operating in those non-preferred quadrants include exhaustion, depression, anxiety, and burnout.

With many of my clients, I have used an instrument developed by Dr. Katherine Benziger. This instrument determines which quadrant of the brain is most developed and most efficient for each person tested. I use this assessment with individuals who report that they feel inauthentic in some way or that they believe they are pursuing the wrong path in life. This often presents itself toward middle age or during a mid-life transition.

However, I believe this instrument is of incredible value to people as they are beginning their careers. The information helps individuals to understand what works best for them. How this applies to my philosophy for success is exactly the same as I described earlier in our conversation—if you try to be like someone else, if you are not aware of your own self and your own gifts, you may actually be doing damage. Most certainly you are not living up to your own potential.

#### WRIGHT

Your company is called Imagined Future. What is the future that you imagine?

#### JEFFRESS

David, the future I imagine *begins today*. As each of us strives to attain our true potential, and as we learn to appreciate differences around us, we will pass that learning on to future generations.

I envision a future where people are allowed and encouraged to grow into their own potential, where children who arrive in this world are encouraged to be curious about life, and where children are raised with love and are nurtured to embrace their uniqueness. When we allow children to grow up understanding that they are unique and to value that everyone around them brings different gift, then we will have true diversity.

I'm reminded of a song from the Broadway play *South Pacific*. The song is titled, "You've Got to be Taught." Many of our readers may be familiar with this poignant song, which reminds us so clearly that divisions, fear, and biases are not something with which we come into this world as a child. Those things are

taught to us. So, in my imagined future, we will teach people to value differences and to bring each difference into the weaving of a beautiful tapestry, full of unique colors, patterns, and threads.

WRIGHT

Well, what an interesting conversation. I've taken so many notes here. I was promising myself that I was going to start journaling and get into the three gritudes, and listening, and mind mapping, and inquiry as you were talking. I have really enjoyed this conversation. I've learned a lot and I'm sure that our readers will. I appreciate taking all this time you've taken to spend with me this morning answering these questions.

JEFFRESS

Thank you, David. I have also enjoyed our time together.

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Lyn Jeffress. Lyn is the Founder and President of Imagined Future, a coaching, consulting, and training organization. She helps individuals, teams, and organizations discover and maximize their performance. Her passion is helping others discover and release their potential. Listening to her today, I think she knows what she is talking about.

Lyn, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

JEFFRESS

Thank you.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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LYN JEFFRESS is Founder and President of Imagined Future, Inc™, a coaching, consulting, and training organization. Lyn's passion is helping others discover and release their potential and live the life they've only dreamed of.

Lyn holds both a master's degree in Leadership and an MBA. In addition, Lyn received her coaching certification from the Hudson Institute and has had the honor of studying with visionary thinkers such as Martin Seligman, Stephen R. Covey, David L. Cooperrider, as well as movie producer, Stephen Simon.

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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### Develop a Disciplined Life

An Interview with . . . **Dr. Denis Waitley**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking with Dr. Denis Waitley. Denis is one of America's most respected authors, keynote lecturers, and productivity consultants on high performance human achievement. He has inspired, informed, challenged, and entertained audiences for more than twenty-five years from the boardrooms of multi-national corporations to the control rooms of NASA's space program and from the locker rooms of world-class athletes to the meeting rooms of thousands of conventioners throughout the world.

With more than ten million audio programs sold in fourteen languages, Denis Waitley is the most listened-to voice on personal and career success. He is the author of twelve non-fiction books, including several international bestsellers. His audio album, "The Psychology of Winning," is the all-time best-selling program on self-mastery. Dr. Waitley is a founding director of the National Council on Self-Esteem and the President's Council on Vocational Education. He recently received



the “Youth Flame Award” from the National Council on Youth Leadership for his outstanding contribution to high school youth leadership.

A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy Annapolis, and former Navy pilot, he holds a doctorate degree in human behavior.

Denis, it is my sincere pleasure to welcome you to *Stepping Stones to Success!* Thank you for being with us today.

#### DR. DENIS WAITLEY (WAITLEY)

David, it’s great to be with you again. It’s been too long. I always get excited when I know you’re going to call. Maybe we can make some good things happen for those who are really interested in getting ahead and moving forward with their own careers in their lives.

#### WRIGHT

I know our readers would enjoy hearing you talk about your formative years. Will you tell us a little about your life growing up in the context of what you’ve achieved and what shaped you into the person you are today? Do you remember one or two pivotal experiences that propelled you on the path you eventually chose?

#### WAITLEY

I believe many of us are redwood trees in a flowerpot. We’ve become root-bound by our earlier environment and it’s up to each of us to realize that and break out of our flower pot if we’re going to grow to our full potential.

I remember my father left our home when I was a little boy. He said goodnight and goodbye and suddenly I became the man of the family at age nine. My little brother was only two, so I had to carry him around as my little shadow for the ensuing years. To this day my kid brother has always looked at me as his dad, even though there is only seven years’ difference between us. He’ll phone me and ask what he should do and I’ll tell him, “I’m your brother, not your father!”

Our dad was a great guy but he drank too much and had some habits that took a firm hold on him. He never abused me and always expected more from me than he did from himself. I had a push-pull—on the one hand, I felt inadequate and

guilty when I would go to succeed but on the other hand, Dad kept feeding me the idea that he missed his ship and I'd catch mine. The only thing I could do to get out of that roller coaster impact was to ride my bicycle twenty miles every Saturday over to my grandmother's house. She was my escape. I would mow her lawn and she would give me such great feedback and reinforcement. She told me to plant the seeds of greatness as she and I planted our "victory garden" during World War II. She told me that weeds would come unannounced and uninvited—I didn't need to worry about weeds coming into my life, they didn't even need to be watered.

I said, "Wow! You don't have to water weeds?"

"No," she replied, "they'll show up in your life and what you need to do, my grandson, is model your life after people who've been consistent and real in their contribution as role models and mentors."

She also told me that a library card would eventually be much more valuable than a Master Card. Because of my grandmother reading biographies of people who'd overcome so much more than I was going through, I thought, "Wow! I don't have any problems compared to some of these great people in history who really came from behind to get ahead." I think that was my start in life.

I went to the Naval Academy because the Korean War was in force and you had to serve your country, so the best way was to run and hide in an academy. If you earned enough good grades you were put through without a scholarship or without money from your parents. Since my parents didn't have any money, it was a great way to get a college education.

I became a Navy pilot after that and learned that if you simulate and rehearse properly you'll probably learn to fly that machine. But much of it has to do with the amount of practice you put into ground school and into going through the paces. As I gained experience being a Navy pilot, I eventually decided to go on and get my advanced degree in psychology because I wanted to develop people rather than stay in the military. I pursued a program where I could take my military and more disciplined background and put it into human development. That's basically the story.

I earned my doctorate, I met Jonas Salk, and Dr. Salk introduced me to some pioneers in the behavioral field. Then along came Earl Nightingale who heard just a simple taped evening speech of mine and decided that maybe my voice was good

enough, even though I was a “new kid on the block,” to maybe do an album on personal development, which I did in 1978. It surprised me the most, and everyone else also, that it became one of the bestsellers of all time.

WRIGHT

Being a graduate of Annapolis and having been a Navy pilot, to what degree did your experience in the Navy shape your life and your ideas about productivity and performance?

WAITLEY

David, I think those experiences shaped my life and ideas a great deal. I was an original surfer boy from California and when I entered the Naval Academy I found that surfer boys had their heads shaved and were told to go stand in line—everyone’s successful so you’re nothing special. I found myself on a team that was very competitive but at the same time had good camaraderie.

I realized that I didn’t have the kind of discipline structure in my life that I needed. I also discovered that all these other guys were as talented, or more talented, than I was. What that shaped for me was realizing that the effort required to become successful is habit-forming. I think I learned healthy habits at the Academy and as a Navy pilot just to stay alive. To perform these kinds of functions I really had to have a more disciplined life. That set me on my stage for working more on a daily basis at habit formation than just being a positive thinker only.

WRIGHT

In our book, *Stepping Stones to Success*, we’re exploring a variety of issues related to human nature and the quest to succeed. In your best-selling program, *The Psychology of Winning*, you focus on building self-esteem, motivation, and self-discipline. Why are these so crucial to winning and success?

WAITLEY

They’re so crucial they’re misunderstood. I think especially the term “self-esteem” is misunderstood. We’ve spent a fortune and we had a California

committee on it—we formed the National Council on Self-Esteem. What has happened, in my opinion, is that self-esteem has been misused and misjudged as being self-indulgence, self-gratification—a celebrity kind of mentality. We've put too much emphasis on the wrong idea about self-esteem.

Self-esteem is actually the deep down, inside the skin feeling of your own worth regardless of your age, ethnicity, gender, or level of current performance. It's really a belief that you're good enough to invest in education and effort and you believe some kind of dream when that's all you have to hang onto.

What's happened, unfortunately, is that we've paid so much attention to self-esteem it's become a celebrity and an arena mentality kind of concept. Most people are "struttin' their stuff" and they're celebrating after every good play on the athletic field, whereas, if you're a *real* professional, that's what you do anyway. A real professional is humble, gracious, and understands fans. I think that what we've done is put too much emphasis on asserting one's self and believing that you're the greatest and then talking about it too much or showing off too much in order to make that self-esteem public.

The real self-esteem has two aspects: 1) Believing that you deserve as much as anyone else and that you're worthy. Someone may look at you and tell you they see real potential in you. If you can feel that you have potential and you're worth the effort, that's the first step. 2) The second step is to start doing things to give you confidence so that when you do something and learn something it works out and you'll get the self-confidence that comes from reinforcing small successes. That combination of expectation and reinforcement is fundamental to anyone who wants to be a high achiever. That's what self-esteem is really all about—deserving on the one hand and reinforcing success in small ways to get your motor running and feel the confidence that you can do better than you have been.

Fears crop up and get in the way of our motivation. In my case I was afraid of success. Nobody had ever succeeded in our family and because they hadn't, I felt inadequate to be able to succeed. Whenever it would show up around the corner I would think, "Well, this is too good to be true for me—I don't deserve that." So I would feel a little bit doubtful of my abilities. When I would succeed, there would be an attendant, "Yelp!" I would feel because I would not believe I deserved what I had achieved.

I think fear is the thing that gets in the way of our motivation because we're all motivated by inhibitions and compulsions. You should be motivated more by the result you want rather than the penalty. That's why I've always said that winners are motivated by reward of success rather than inhibited or compelled by the penalty of failure. If you get this conviction that you're as good as the best but no better than the rest—I'm worth the effort, I'm not Mr. Wonderful, I'm not the center of the universe but I can do some things that I haven't done yet—and then apply this motivation to desire rather than fear, that is when self-discipline comes into play.

I'd have to say, David, I could spend the entire interview on self-discipline because I missed it as one of the most important ingredients in success. I've always been a belief guy, an optimism guy, a faith guy, and all the self-esteem things but I think, as time went on, I forgot the amount of discipline it takes for anyone who is a champion in any endeavor. I think I'm back on that track now.

#### WRIGHT

I can really appreciate the Flame Award you won from the National Council on Youth Leadership for helping high school leaders. I've got a daughter in college and I know how difficult and important it is. But in some circles, self-esteem has gotten a bad reputation. For example, in many schools, teachers won't reward high achievers for fear of hurting the self-esteem of others in the classroom. Many people feel this is not helpful to these children.

In your opinion, where is the balance between building healthy self-esteem and preparing kids and adults to cope and succeed in a competitive world?

#### WAITLEY

I think that there has to first of all be some kind of performance standard. A good example is the Olympic Games. The idea of the Olympic Games is to set a standard that you've tried to live up to in your own way as a world-class person, realizing that there can only be so many Olympians and so many gold medalists and so on. I think, on the one hand, it's really important to have standards because if you have a standard, then you have something tangible to shoot for or to measure against.

I think there's a problem, however, in that only so many people can be medalists and win medals at the Olympics. One of the reasons that the high jump bar, for example, is set so that everyone can jump over it the first time, is to experience the feeling of success that first jump produces. The feeling of success is working in the competitor before the bar is raised to world record height and to much higher standards than even the normal Olympian.

I'm one who believes in testing. It's difficult when you have a "No Child Left Behind" concept because many times today we're going pass/fail. We're moving people up through the grades regardless of their performance simply because we don't want them left behind and therefore feeling that they're not able to function simply because they can't compete with some students who've been given many more opportunities to succeed than others.

Having said that, I'd say that healthy self-esteem is gained by giving specific stair-step, incremental, bite-sized pieces; perhaps there needs to be several different standards set. Usually the grading system does that and the point system does that where you have someone who has a four point three grade average because of all the extra credits they're taking. Then you have those with a three point eight and then those who are just barely passing. Unfortunately then, what that does is enable only a few people to get into universities and the others have to go to community colleges.

What I will have to say, however, is that we in the United States have to be very careful that we don't dumb down or lower our standards for excellence in our schools. Traveling as much as I do, I have discovered information about this. For example, there are 300 universities in Beijing alone—just in one city in China. The way it goes internationally is that the public schools in Japan, for example, are much more competitive than the private schools. If you're in Japan going to a public school, you have to really perform up to the highest standards in order to ever think of qualifying for any kind of university. You'd have to go into a vocational school if you didn't compete in higher standards in public schools in Japan. The same thing is true in Singapore, China, and in the developing nations.

We have a situation brewing here where we've got global developing countries with really high standards in English, mathematics, engineering, and science. And we have educators in the United States who are more concerned about making

sure that the self-esteem of an individual doesn't get damaged by this competitive standard. I think we have to maintain standards of excellence.

I wish we had kept dress codes in schools. I have found schools that have marching bands. A certain amount of uniformity not only encourages greater athletic performance but higher academic standards as well. The same is true globally. There's an argument that if you put kids in uniforms, you're going to limit their creative thinking. The truth is, if you can standardize the way people appear in their style, then you can focus more on substance—their experience, imagination, contribution, and their study. The core of an individual rather than the surface of an individual can be developed much better. It would be great if we could combine the more disciplined aspects of the developing countries with the more entrepreneurial, creative, free-thinking aspects of our society, which means we're critical thinkers (i.e., you throw us a problem and we'll try everything we can possibly think of to solve it). In the developing countries they'll use a textbook or an older person's experience rather than using critical thinking.

We're very entrepreneurial here in America, but I'm very much concerned that our standards are being lowered too much. If we're not careful, we're going to take our place in the future as a second-rate educational country and therefore forfeit the idea of being a technological and market leader.

#### WRIGHT

I also hear grumbling about motivation. I'm sure you've seen business people roll their eyes a bit at the mention of listening to "motivational" tapes or CDs. Some tire of getting all hyped up about change or sales goals, for example, only to lose their excitement and fail to reach their goals. Are they missing something critical about the nature or application of motivation?

#### WAITLEY

I really believe they are, David. I think they're missing the idea that what you *want* in life turns you on much more than what you *need* in life. Too often business managers even today focus on the hard skills because they say that the other skills are "soft skills." Well, there's no such thing as a hard or soft skill because you can't separate your personal from your professional life anymore. You get fired more for

personal reasons—for being late, for your habits, for your hygiene, your behavior, your anger. This idea that technical training as opposed to motivation is the way to go is misguided.

I have found that employees are excited and are full of desire and energy because management listens to them, reinforces them, is interested in their personal goals, and is interested in keeping them inspired. That inspiration is what we remember. So, when we go to a meeting we remember how we felt about the meeting, not the specifics of the meeting.

I think this emotional component—keeping people’s energy and desires foremost and doing a desire analysis of employees rather than just a needs analysis—is very, very important. I often think this is lost in the idea that we’re giving a pep talk, or a quick fix, or a Band-Aid when, as Zig Ziglar has mentioned so many times, “Motivation is like taking a bath. You take a bath every day and you might say why take a bath—you’re going to get dirty anyway.” But the very nature of doing it, and doing it on a habitual basis, makes this positive energy continue to flow and motivation becomes habit-forming. I think you need a lot of it to keep these habits of excellence or else you’ll just be running scared—you’ll be afraid not to do well because you’ll lose your job.

Believe it or not, we have a lot of employees in America who are working harder than they ever have before so they won’t be fired. That’s not really the way to go after a goal—constantly looking through the rear view mirror trying to cover your behind.

#### WRIGHT

If you don’t mind, I’d like to change the focus a little to the topic of self-discipline. People seem to know what they should do and how they should change, but they just can’t discipline themselves to take the necessary steps to do so. What is the secret to becoming a disciplined person?

#### WAITLEY

I think the secret is to get a team, a support group, a mastermind group because not only is there safety in numbers but there’s accountability in numbers. When we are accountable to one another to maintain a certain standard of



discipline, it's much easier to work out if someone else is getting up at six-thirty in the morning with you. It's much easier to have a support group if you're interested in maintaining a healthier diet, for example, because the temptations are irresistible to procrastinate and to fall off the wagon. That's why I believe you need a team effort.

It also has to be understood in an immediate gratification society that there is no "success pill" that you can swallow. There is no quick way to get rich and get to the top. There is this steady ratcheting to the top and that's why I think leaders need to say it's going to take us about a year to get any permanent change going. So, I think we should all understand there may be a little dip in productivity as we start this new program of ours—a little dip at first and a little uncertainty—but over time, over about a year, we're going to become like an astronaut or an Olympian. We need to engrain these ideas so they become reflexive. It takes about a year for an idea or a habit to become a reflex. This idea of being able to do it in twenty-one days is misguided. I don't think it takes twenty-one days to learn a skill. It may take twenty-one days to learn to type, it may take twenty-one days to begin to learn a skill, but it takes a year for it to get into the subconscious and take hold.

I think we have to learn that discipline is practicing on a daily basis for about a year so that it will become a habit—a pattern—that will override the old inner software program.

#### WRIGHT

I'm a big believer in the greater potential of the individual. I remember a fellow—Paul Myer—who helped me a lot when I was a young guy. He was in Waco, Texas, with a company called Success Motivation Institute. You may know him.

#### WAITLEY

I know him very well. Actually, he's one of the icons and pioneers in this entire field. He and Earl Nightingale were the first ones to ever have a recorded speaking message other than music. Earl and Paul were pioneers in audio recording and I have still a great respect for Paul. I spoke for his organization some time ago.

## WRIGHT

He personally helped me a lot when I was younger and I just really appreciated him. In your book and program, *Seeds of Greatness*, you outline a system for nurturing greatness. Will you give us a brief overview of this program?

## WAITLEY

It's taken me thirty years to get this thing to where I want it. I wrote the book twenty years ago titled, *Seeds of Greatness*, and sure, it became a bestseller but so did *One Minute Manager*, *In Search of Excellence*, *Iacocca*, and every other book at that time. I have trouble keeping that thing pumped up.

Over the years I've found that *Seeds of Greatness*, for me, has been a system. What I've had to do is go back through all the mistakes I've made as a family leader. I knew I was a father and not a mother *and* father so I had to find a mother who was also a good clinical psychologist and who had worked with every form of behavioral problem. We put our efforts together so that we had a man and a woman as family leaders with clinical and other experience who could give parents or leaders of the day a certain track to run on where they could coach their small children and adolescents on a daily basis.

I provided a perpetual calendar that gives coaching tips of the day—what I call “sign on the day” and “sign off the day”—for parents to use to communicate with their kids. Then I had to put nineteen CDs together—audio tracks—that covered these “roots and wings,” which I would call the “core values” and the more motivational or, if you will, ways to set your kids free.

The idea of parenthood should be to lay the groundwork, make it safe to fail an experiment, and then send them off on their own as independent, not codependent, young adults so they can reach their own destiny. I divided it into “roots of core values” and “wings of self-motivation and self-direction” and tried to balance the two so that whether you're from a blended family, or a single parent family, and whether you're structurally religious or whether you're spiritually religious, it would work, regardless of your personal core belief system.

I'm very happy that we've finally put together a self-study program that can be taught by the authors or by people who are licensed facilitators. It's something that a family leadership group could take and work on their own at their own

speed by watching, listening, interacting with their kids, and using a combination of a written book, the audios, the DVDs, and this coaching calendar to maybe put it all together so that over a period of six months to a year they might be able to effect some changes in the way they interact with their kids.

#### WRIGHT

Sounds great! Before our time runs out, would you share a story or two about your real life coaching and consulting experiences? I know you've coached astronauts and Super Bowl champions as well, haven't you?

#### WAITLEY

Well, I have. I've been lucky to work within the Apollo program in the simulation area. I found that simulation prevents failure of the first attempt. In other words, if you're going to go to the moon and they're going to shoot you up a quarter of a million miles up and back in a government vehicle, you had better have your rehearsal down and really pat. The astronauts teach you that the dress rehearsal is life or death. The Olympians teach you that at the moment you go to perform, you need to clear your mind so you can remember everything you learned without trying—you develop muscle memory and reflex.

Twenty-one years ago when Mary Lou Retton was doing the vault, she needed a nine point nine five to tie the Romanian for the gold medal in women's all around gymnastics. I asked her what she was thinking about when she went to vault and she said, "Oh gosh, I guess what everyone thinks about—speed, power, explode, extend, rotate, plant your feet at the end. When the pressure is on I get better just like drill. 'Come on, Mary Lou, this is your moment in history!'"

I thought, "Wow! That's not what everyone thinks. What everyone thinks is, 'Thank God it's Friday,' 'Why me?' 'Don't work too hard,' 'Countin' down to Friday,' 'Looking to five P.M.,' 'Romanians are better trained, probably on steroids,' " So I get these stories of Olympians who have internalized this wonderful running the race in advance and simulating as well.

I guess the one story that I'll share is about a ten-year-old boy. In about 1980 this boy came to a goal-setting seminar. He told me that none of the people who had paid their money were really working on their goals. They were really thinking

about what they were going to eat and golf. I gave him a work book and told him to go back and do what they were supposed to do and write down his abilities and liabilities, what he was going to do this year and next year and five years from now and twenty years from now. He got all excited because he thought it was this wonderful game that you can play called, Write the Future, or Describe the Future.

So he ran back and worked on the project and forty-five minutes later he astounded the adults in the audience by saying he was earning money mowing lawns and shoveling snow so he could go to Hawaii on the fourteenth of July to snorkel on the big island of Hawaii's Kona Coast. Then he said next year he'd be eleven going into the fifth grade and he was going to build models of what was going to be a space shuttle and he was going to begin to learn more about numbers and math. In five years he'd be fifteen and as a tenth-grader. He said he would study math and science because he wanted to go to the Air Force academy—he was all excited about that. I asked him what he was going to be doing in twenty years and he said he'd be an astronaut delivering UPS packages in space.

I forgot all about him and twenty years later, sure enough, I saw him on the *Today Show* as they showed a picture of an astronaut on a tether line pulling the satellite into the bay of the space shuttle. I thought, "My gosh! This kid did what I only talk about in the seminars." He was a living, breathing example of someone who was focused on this. I said to my family, "Look at what he did!" And they said, "What have *you* been doing for the last twenty years?" I said I was a goal tender. They told me I should be a goal achiever too.

#### WRIGHT

What a great conversation. I always enjoy talking with you. It's not just uplifting—I always learn a lot when I talk with you.

#### WAITLEY

Well, David, I do with you as well. You've got a great program and you do a lot of good for people who read and watch and listen. I think you give them insights that otherwise they would never get. I'm just grateful to be one of the contributors and one of the members of your global team.

WRIGHT

It has been my sincere pleasure today to visit with a truly great American, Dr. Denis Waitley.

Denis, thank you for taking so much of your time to share your insights and inspirations for us here on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

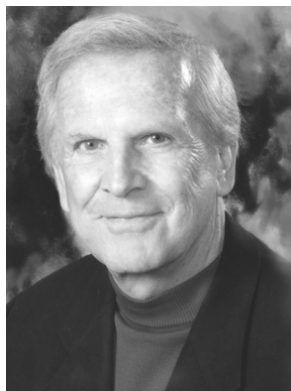
WAITLEY

Thank you very much, David.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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DENIS WAITLEY is one of America's most respected authors, keynote lecturers and productivity consultants on high performance human achievement. He has inspired, informed, challenged, and entertained audiences for over twenty-five years from the board rooms of multi-national corporations to the control rooms of NASA's space program and from the locker rooms of world-class athletes to the meeting rooms of thousands of conventioners throughout the world. He was voted business speaker of the year by the Sales and Marketing Executives Association and by Toastmasters International and inducted into the International Speakers Hall of Fame. With over ten million audio programs sold in fourteen languages, Denis Waitley is the most listened-to voice on personal and career success. He is the author of twelve non-fiction books, including several international bestsellers, *Seeds of Greatness*, *Being the Best*, *The Winner's Edge*, *The Joy of Working*, and *Empires of the Mind*. His audio album, "The Psychology of Winning," is the all-time best-selling program on self-mastery.



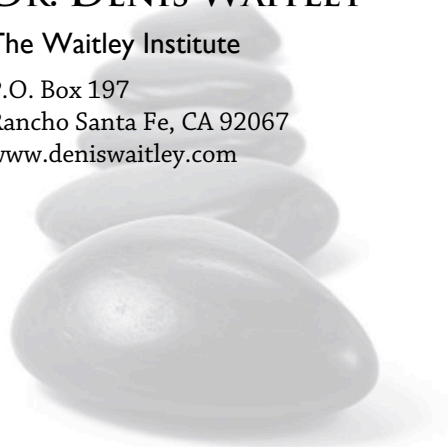
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## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

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So you want to be a Professional Speaker,  
Now what?

An Interview with . . . **Linda Meeuwenberg**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we're talking with Linda Meeuwenberg. Linda is founder and CEO of Professional Development Association Incorporated. She is a member of the Chamber of Commerce where she served on a small business development council and has been an active member of the International Rotary. She volunteers with RSVP in Florida and Michigan. Linda holds the rank of Professor Emeritus at Ferris State University in Michigan. She holds a first-place award from the American Association of Dental Schools and was inducted into the Dental Hygiene Honor Society, Sigma Phi Alpha, for her outstanding contribution to dental hygiene education. She serves on the Crest/Oral B guest lecture board. She is a fellow with the Association of Dental Implant Auxiliaries, serving as a contributing author, advisory board member, and frequent lecturer. Linda served as a consultant to the West Michigan Migrant Health



Services where she has delivered oral care for over twenty-five years to migrant families.

She has published several professional articles, a short story, and is currently authoring a children's book. She is an internationally recognized speaker, author, and educator with over four decades of professional experience. Linda's expertise, combined with her enthusiasm, ensures that she delivers a powerful presentation that motivates participants to action.

Linda, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

LINDA MEEUWENBERG (MEEUWENBERG)

Thank you, David.

WRIGHT

So what is your greatest accomplishment?

MEEUWENBERG

I'm often asked this and I continue to answer, my education. I came from a family where no one had been to college. In fact, my mother and father had not graduated from high school. Later in life they both went back to school and received their diplomas. I went on to college and completed four degrees. I love learning!

WRIGHT

Many participants ask you questions following your presentation indicating that they would like to pursue speaking. What advice do you give them?

MEEUWENBERG

Well, David, getting into speaking was a natural movement for me. I had a terrible fear of speaking coming out of high school/college. After working as a registered dental hygienist, I began adjunct teaching at my alma mater—Ferris State University in Michigan. I supervised students while they were treating patients. This was a very comfortable one-on-one encounter.

I was offered a full-time faculty position and I almost turned it down because of my fear of standing up and lecturing in front of students. The

Program Director encouraged me to apply and said she would mentor me. I accepted that position and worked on my anxiety by becoming an expert on my topics.

As a new professor, I was required to be involved in professional development activities. It was a natural leap into professional speaking. I began by giving presentations at my professional organization meetings.

I also was engaged with volunteer work. There is so much need for oral health education. I found places within my community that could use my speaking skills and my oral health education background.

I would advise people that if they want to speak, to look at volunteering as a way of training and prepping yourself. Record yourself and ask for feedback. I always give my own personal speaker evaluation forms to my audiences. I review these forms to improve my skills.

I also enlisted the help of a former student as my assistant at my events. She tended to all the annoying little things that can distract a new speaker. This should be a person you really trust and one who can be self-directed or work with very little direction. This person takes care of details such as adjusting lighting, getting water for the speaker, etc. That way I am free to interact with my audience prior to speaking, which helps build rapport with them.

The other thing that helped me was the National Speakers Association. I was a member for several years and they really helped me jumpstart my speaking career with their conferences, monthly publications, and tapes.

The bottom line is—volunteer, seek input, and get involved with other speakers. I know people who have had a lot of success working with Toastmasters. You are with your local community with friendly faces giving you feedback. It's a very safe environment to practice.

I'm currently a member of the International Speakers Network. Both the National Speakers and International Speakers Network offer credentialing that can add credibility when seeking speaking engagements.

#### WRIGHT

How did you get started in public speaking?

MEEUWENBERG

As mentioned, I was already teaching so it was a natural for me to go on to do more speaking. I've been a "talker" my whole life. I figured that if you can get paid for doing it and have the opportunity to travel to some wonderful places, why not?

Another impetus was when my marriage ended making me a single parent. I needed a way to supplement my income and the opportunity to take my child places that I could not afford on my teacher's salary. (However, I'm not advocating divorce as a means to develop your speaking business!)

I invested \$100 in business cards, stationery, and sent out some notices that I was available to speak on topics to the local dental organizations within my state. I went from teaching to volunteering, to purchasing business cards, and finally soliciting engagements. Amazingly, people responded and I was on my way to building my speaking business.

WRIGHT

Your enthusiasm is contagious; I remember hearing you quite some time ago. How do you maintain such a zest for your topics?

MEEUWENBERG

If you're excited about what you're talking about, it just comes through—you can't hide it. I also have a highly expressive personality style. I enjoy life and find it fascinating. I only speak on topics that I'm very passionate about. It's that passion that comes through to my audiences as enthusiasm. On my speaker evaluation form, my highest marks are usually for my enthusiasm toward the topic.

WRIGHT

You've faced challenges and adversity in your life; would you describe those challenges for our readers and how you managed them?

MEEUWENBERG

Sure, there are a few things. Everybody has or has had some adversity in his or her life. You can choose to let it destroy you or let it be a power to move you into different arenas.

An issue that I've been struggling with the last several years is degenerative disk disease of my spine. I had to take an early retirement from university teaching. That was scary. Fortunately, I had a Long Term Disability policy through the university. Dealing with chronic pain and limitation has been extremely challenging. On the other hand, it has taught me so much about creating balance in my life. Being a Type A personality is a huge challenge. On days that I am feeling good, I have a tendency to overdo it, putting me back into pain and fatigue.

Like many people in this country, I had a broken marriage leading to single parenting. I had a child with special needs who was ill much of the time. I was building my career as an aspiring professor while managing the challenges of single parenting. That taught me a lot of things about life and how to be successful. I had to be very organized.

Being the provider and having a dependent child propelled me to go back to school. I went back to college at forty with a five-year old in tow to get a second master's degree in Communication. The education has helped my speaking career in many ways. Understanding communication science and its many applications has certainly added more programs to my repertoire and helped in the delivery of the courses I already presented.

WRIGHT

So what was the straw that broke the camel's back—what made you decide to become a speaker?

MEEUWENBERG

It was nothing I planned. I had a tremendous anxiety about public speaking. I know you've probably heard there is no greater fear than public speaking. Even fear of burning alive isn't feared as much as standing up in front of an audience and speaking. For me it was the same. Once I faced that fear and was able to get up in front of sixty students, the hurdle was manageable. I attended

lectures in continuing education courses and imagined how I could be up there doing the same thing. I challenged myself, “If you know more than they do about this topic, then it’s time to get up and do it.”

I started presenting scientific papers at my professional association meetings on educational techniques and theories. I would wait for somebody to say, “But wait a minute, what about—” and challenge me, however, it rarely happened. In fact, what did happen was that people met with me afterward. They wanted to talk more about the topic or wanted me to come and share my information with their faculty.

I was presented with a First Place award at the American Association of Dental Schools, in competition with all the major dental schools in Canada and the United States. I presented my paper on teaching patient-centered counseling techniques. Amazingly, I was the first-place winner. I wasn’t even hoping to place. I was just excited that I was accepted to compete in a very prestigious organization.

Those things just kept propelling me to find more speaking engagements.

#### WRIGHT

So what role has networking played in building your speaking business?

#### MEEUWENBERG

Networking is huge; it is so very important. When I go back to the previous question: what advice do I have for people who would like to go into speaking, my advice is network everywhere you can. Be nice to people, be friendly, extend yourself. It’s important to collect as many business cards as you can, make as many connections as you can, and to always contribute.

When I’m contributing on a committee or when I’m involved with the Chamber of Commerce, the International Rotary, or one of my professional associations, I’m constantly seeking to meet new people. They enhance you as a person and who knows, down the road they might be able to put you in a position where you can speak or offer some kind of service to their organization.

Networking is a major factor; I could not have built my business without networking. I also have to add that networking is not easy to me—I grew up a shy girl in a rural community in Michigan. I was not very outgoing, but that has all changed.

Now I can “work a crowd” with ease—getting to know people and exchanging business cards and ideas. The key to being a successful speaker is to get exposed to as many people as possible in many venues. Most organizations employ speakers. Do not limit yourself! I speak on many topics other than dentistry and now most engagements happen from referrals or someone in my audience who invites me to speak to his or her group.

WRIGHT

I know that you have volunteered for most of your life. How did you get started and why do you continue to volunteer?

MEEUWENBERG

I have to contribute this to my parents; in particular, my mother. I grew up as a child in the fifties. In that generation people helped each other. As I mentioned previously, I grew up in a rural community in Michigan. I can remember my mother taking my brother and me to older (widowed) ladies in the neighborhood who had farms. We would go in and clean their house or help them pick and snap their beans. My mother would do some cleaning or do their dishes. That’s how volunteering started for me. We were also very active in our church community. My parents were the youth directors. We did many volunteer activities in the community. So it was a way of life for me from the time I was a child. Volunteering enables you to give so much back. How can you not want to give back when we have been given so many gifts?

WRIGHT

You often speak about wellness and creating balance. Would you tell our readers about your interest in wellness and how creating balance has become a cornerstone of your lifestyle?

MEEUWENBERG

I hinted about this earlier in your question. As a young woman at seventeen going away to college and becoming a registered dental hygienist started the journey. Oral health was the impetus to begin my journey into wellness.

Now we have so much science about how oral health is connected to the entire body. We've always known this in dentistry, however it's just been recently that the medical community and the scientific community is relating oral conditions to diabetes, heart disease, low birth weight babies, kidney failure, lung infections, and on and on. So oral health began my journey into wellness My Sunday school teachings had a significant influence on me as well—"your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

More recently, dealing with chronic pain and having a type A competitive personality, I needed to learn how to create leisure in my life. I had to learn to balance activity with leisure. Being a single parent with an ill child forced me to create balance to maintain my own health. I was in the hospital often long hours and had to learn how to find time to take care of me in order for my health to be good enough for me to help my daughter. This has been critical in my recovery. When I'm beginning to feel a little bit of fatigue and muscle spasms start, I need to stop right then, that's my signal—it's my body saying I'm out of balance, it's time to rest—and I needed to learn to let that be okay. I now take frequent naps without guilt.

WRIGHT

You have mentored hundreds of students and participants from your seminars; some students have referred to you as their teacher for life. Tell us about the role of mentoring and helping others become successful.

MEEUWENBERG

I have to laugh about this one. I have a very dear friend who graduated in the class of 1985. She lives in Colorado and has her own dental hygiene practice. We were just together recently with another one of her classmates as well. They chimed in about how they call me their teacher for life.

As a teacher you have such a powerful affect on your students, negative or positive. It's actually somewhat scary to know you can have the kind of influence that lasts a lifetime.

I mentioned earlier about networking and the idea of just being nice to people, being caring, compassionate, and showing empathy. I really practiced that in my teaching. I held students accountable to a very high standard, but I was also very compassionate with them and continually coaching them. I found it to be much more powerful than being critical. I have continued to do this inside the classroom as well as outside the classroom.

A number of women I have worked with have said, "Gosh, how do you do what you do? I would like to be a speaker too" or "I would like to go into teaching." I just continue to mentor these "students" who have been in my classroom as well as participants who are in my seminars.

I may have somebody in my seminar who is dealing with a chronic health condition and can no longer practice dental hygiene. That happens very often in our profession. We have back problems, shoulder problems, carpal tunnel, etc. Anything I can do to help guide them to another avenue to display their skills and earn a living is what I'm all about. I didn't get where I am in this lifetime without help from other people and I want to return that help tenfold whenever I can. I have assisted a number of women in owning their own businesses or transitioning from a position in clinical dental hygiene to another arena.

WRIGHT

Your success is intact I'm sure. So what's next for Linda Meeuwenberg—what's in the future?

MEEUWENBERG

Oh, David, there is so much life to live yet. I reached my sixtieth birthday in November and I said, "How did I get to be sixty years old? I'm a senior citizen!" There is so much left for me to experience and do. I'm very interested in going back to school again. I would love to complete my studies in the area of holistic health. I plan to continue writing, speaking, and volunteering. The Retired Senior and Volunteer Program (RSVP), has given me so many opportunities.



They keep opening more doors for me. I want to keep going and enjoying life every day that is given to me. I want to be more involved in international causes and will be traveling to South Africa as an ambassador with the People to People program in October 2009.

WRIGHT

Well, what a pleasure talking to you again. I really appreciate the time you've spent with me today to answer all these questions. You are, of course, not only enthusiastic but inspiring as well. I know that our readers are going to get a lot out of this chapter in our book.

MEEUWENBERG

Thank you so much, David, for your kind words, I appreciate that.

WRIGHT

Today we've been talking with Linda Meeuwenberg. Linda is a speaker, trainer, consultant, and CEO of Professional Development Association Incorporated. With over four decades of professional experience, combined with her enthusiasm, Linda delivers powerful presentations that motivate her participants to action.

Linda, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

MEEUWENBERG

My pleasure, David.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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LINDA MEEUWENBERG is founder and CEO of Professional Development Association Incorporated. She is a member of the Chamber of Commerce where she served on a small business development council and has been an active member of the International Rotary. She volunteers with RSVP in Florida and Michigan. Linda holds the rank of Professor Emeritus at Ferris State University in Michigan. She holds a first-place award from the American Association of Dental Schools and was inducted into the Dental Hygiene Honor Society, Sigma Phi Alpha, for her outstanding contribution to dental hygiene education. She serves on the Proctor and Gamble Oral B guest lecture board. She is a fellow with the Association of Dental Implant Auxiliaries, serving as a contributing author, advisory board member, and frequent lecture. Linda serves as a consultant to the West Michigan Migrant Health Services where she has delivered oral care for over twenty-five years to migrant families.

She has published several professional articles, a short story, and is currently authoring a children's book. She is an internationally recognized speaker, author, and educator with over four decades of professional experience. Linda's expertise, combined with her enthusiasm, ensures that she delivers a powerful presentation that motivates participants to action.



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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

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### The Art of Mastery: Inspiring Excellence in Work and Life

An Interview with . . . **Nancy Noonan**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are fortunate to have successful speaker, author, and human potential expert, Nancy Noonan, as a contributing author to *Stepping Stones to Success*. Nancy is based out of Louisville, Colorado, and travels the country speaking about *The Art of Mastery* to businesses and organizations. She is passionate about helping them reignite their people and move their organizations from *Mediocrity to Mastery*, improving morale, productivity, leadership, and bottom-line results. Nancy truly believes this: “In today’s world, mediocrity can’t be afforded. New and better ways of operating are mandatory. Excellence—in both our personal and work lives—is a requirement.” Nancy’s audiences consistently say she and her programs are definitely “out of the ordinary” and a refreshing blend of being “informative and inspirational, as well as entertaining!” She attributes the “entertaining” piece to her Irish

heritage of storytellers and humorists, as well as her own experience in improv. Nancy's authorship includes the internationally published college textbook, *The Art of Writing about Art*, and *How to Be a Super Achiever: 12 Strategies for Unleashing your Success*. She is also a contributing author to the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series. Guided by *Mastery* in her own life, Nancy earned the *Master Teacher Award*, known as the "Oscar" of academia, as well as the *Excellence Award* from the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development. She is a member of the International Federation of Professional Speakers and the National Speakers Association with two terms on the NSA/CO executive board. To bring spark and mastery into her own life, Nancy enjoys hiking, gourmet cooking, tent camping, fly fishing, reading, art museums, travel, and occasional tap dancing.

Nancy, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

NANCY NOONAN (NOONAN)

Thank you, David. I'm delighted to be talking with you.

WRIGHT

Let's begin our discussion by my saying I'm intrigued by the title of your business, *The Art of Mastery*. I'd first like to know what is *mastery* and then how does mastery relate to success—or does it?

NOONAN

David, I'll be glad to talk about mastery first and then we'll see how mastery does relate to success.

Mastery has a number of components to it, but its own *steppingstones* can be understood through a basic formula:

**Mastery = Skills + Knowledge + Excellence**

Put simply, mastery occurs when you use your honed skills and knowledge to continually achieve excellence in your goals and in your area of focus.

So the first *steppingstone* to mastery is to amass a substantial amount of skills and knowledge in your area of focus. Get the education, do the reading, make the connections, and acquire the experiential base needed to excel.

And then a characteristic of true masters—those who achieve mastery—is that they *never* stop adding to their arsenal of skills and knowledge. They don't see additional learning and acquiring new skills and knowledge as unnecessary or a burden—quite the opposite. They have a real passion for lifelong learning and become excited about it; they are willing to acquire new instruction and viewpoints to deepen their own knowledge. In fact, they proactively and continually seek out these learning opportunities and are not ones to sit back and rest on their laurels once they “have arrived.” They see the value in continuing to grow and learn.

Masters also often look to learn more *outside* of their own fields to inform their own thinking and work. Peter Paul Rubens, the Flemish master artist of the baroque style in the seventeenth century, was, in addition to being an accomplished painter, a humanist scholar and a strong advocate of lifelong learning. He continually studied philosophy, rhetoric, poetry, and history, using them to inform his mythologically and historically based paintings throughout his career. It wasn't enough for Rubens to just study *how* to paint, learning the techniques and idiosyncrasies of the oil media in which he usually worked. He also studied *what* he should paint, deepening his subject matter and in the process, making his paintings some of the most intriguing and dramatic works ever done.

The Japanese incorporate Rubens' approach to lifelong learning in their concept of *Kaizen*. *Kaizen* means continual improvement in all aspects of life. Masters intuitively live a life of *Kaizen* principles, continuously looking to improve all aspects of life and rigorously practicing the discipline necessary to do so.

The third *steppingstone* to reach mastery is excellence. Excellence implies a superlative ability, superiority in skills, knowledge, and achievements. Masters are not satisfied to just acquire *some* skills and knowledge. They strive to get the best and to be the best. They are not satisfied with mediocrity—they go for excellence. I talk about this in my keynotes and share my deeply held belief that

we were not put on this Earth to live mediocre lives, but to be excellent and to live the most extraordinary lives we can possibly live.

WRIGHT

So if we want to be masters in our lives and work, it seems we must go for excellence, too.

NOONAN

No question. And it's particularly important now because in the workplace and economy today, mediocrity can't be afforded. New and better ways of operating are mandatory. Raising the bar is not just a nice option, but essential. Excellence is a requirement. Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great*, was so well received because we need and want that standard of excellence.

Masters instinctively know that they must go for excellence if they want to succeed—and they do!

WRIGHT

Ah, so mastery *is* tied into success?

NOONAN

Absolutely. Success, in its basic dictionary-style meaning, has to do with having brought about a favorable outcome or achievement. Those who have reached a level of mastery have also brought about a favorable outcome or achievement and have, therefore, attained success. For masters, the success is great and definite.

The very *steppingstones* used by people and organizations to reach success are also used by masters to attain their goals and their success:

1. Define
2. Focus
3. Take Action

The first step here is a bit more subjective and has to do with asking yourself what your own definition of success is. Ask what is important to you—what do you *most* value?

- Is it important to you to spend time with your family and friends?
- To spend time in nature?
- To be healthy and fit?
- Is it important to contribute your time and energy to help others?
- How important is it to create financial resources?
- Are there things you really want to do—travel, study, act, become proficient with technology, enjoy your hobbies?
- Is it important to become a well-known expert in your field?
- Or to rise in your company or profession?
- How about giving your company the defining edge over the competition?
- Is it important to have a million dollars in the bank?
- To raise children who have a high degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-motivation?

How you define what you personally value determines how you create your vision and your goals, which leads to your success. Remember that since it is personal and subjective, your own values will make *your* vision, *your* goals, and *your* success look different from the next person's. And that's a good thing. Your success will not come about by applying a cookie-cutter approach or being a copycat, but by being creative and staying true to who you are and what you value.

I once heard Nido Quebein, President of High Point University in North Carolina and Chairman of the Great Harvest Bread Company, speak at a conference. In the question-and-answer section of the program, he was asked to what he attributed his success. He named several key factors and one of them was that he reads every night and he *never* reads fiction. I still remember feeling horrified at the thought. Having been an avid lover of fiction my entire life and been in a dynamic fiction book group for fourteen years, I can't imagine the huge void I would feel in my life if I didn't read good fictional literature. For



me, that would *not* smack of a life of success. But for Nido it worked perfectly. It is an *individual* process.

Once you have defined *your* values, vision, and goals, the second *steppingstone* is to *focus* on that vision and your goals. It is not enough to just define them. Writing them down on a piece of paper and stuffing it in a drawer might help you tidy up the top of your desk, but it will not lead you to success. Instead, focus on the most important steps you need to take to accomplish the objectives that came out of your values query. Then keep that focus in the front of your mind. Author Louise Brooks said, “Anyone who has achieved excellence in any form knows that it comes as a result of ceaseless concentration.” Ceaseless concentration or focus. So, let ceaseless concentration and focus be the engine that leads you to the third *steppingstone*.

*The third steppingstone to success* is to *take action*. Use your focus and take action to bring your vision and goals out into the world. Use the same action steps that the masters use to achieve their mastery, their success. Achieving success and mastery are not reserved just for innate geniuses. They are available to anyone as long as you apply consistent persistence. Continuing toward your goals in spite of challenges, obstacles, and distractions will allow you to unleash your fullest potential and use your greatest gifts to be your most excellent self.

WRIGHT

It sounds as if mastery and success are very closely linked. Is that correct?

NOONAN

Yes, they are. They are so closely intertwined that for our purposes today, when we talk about *mastery*, we are also talking about *success*.

WRIGHT

Nancy, where did your own interest in *mastery* come from?

NOONAN

I first have to give my mother credit for instilling in me that all-important component of mastery and success that we just talked about—excellence. One

of my family jobs as a kid in Rockville, Maryland, was that every Saturday I had to clean the bathroom. Now this was not just *a* bathroom, but *the* bathroom that was used by *all* of us—my parents, my two younger, stinky brothers, and me—every single day. Yuck! And you can bet that every Saturday, about ten minutes into this dreaded job, I started my usual whining to my mother.

“This is disgusting! It’s not fair. I’m not the *only* one who uses this bathroom! Why do *I* always have to be the one to clean it?” Yada, yada, yada.

My mother usually ignored my cleaning-the-bathroom whining, but one Saturday she had had enough. She sat me down and said, “Look. This might not be the most glamorous job in the world [‘no kidding,’ I was thinking], but it is an important one. And no matter what job you’re doing, what’s important is that you do it to the best of your ability. In this bathroom, make these spigots shine more brightly than anyone’s ever made them shine. Do it so well, so excellently, that you would feel proud to sign your name to the spigots, saying, ‘Nancy Noonan cleaned these.’”

You can bet that I still wasn’t thrilled to be cleaning the bathroom, but what my mother said did help me shift my attitude and feel some personal satisfaction for doing my best. That idea stuck that day and ended up carrying throughout my whole life. To this day, when I’m delivering a speech, facilitating a program, or writing an article, I still feel guided by my mother’s exhortation to “make it excellent so that I’m proud to sign my name to it!”

#### WRIGHT

Is that when the concept of “mastery” first came to you?

#### NOONAN

Probably, although at that age, I don’t think I actually thought of it in the term of “mastery.” I think it was really cemented, however, in 1964 when my family went to New York City to the World’s Fair.

As tremendously exciting as it all was, there was one experience that stands out above all the others. For the first time ever, the Vatican had shipped Michelangelo’s marble statue of the Pietà from its home in Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome to be on display. Amidst all of the noise and hubbub of New York and the Fair, when one entered the pavilion that housed the Pietà, there was

complete and utter silence. A palpable feeling of awe settled over the visitors as we glided past it on a moving walkway. Cool blue and white light surrounded Mary as she held the deceased Jesus in her lap. As a girl, I remember gasping at the magnificence, the beauty, the mastery of the statue. I had never before paid much attention to art, but on that day I was irretrievably altered by what a true master could do and the effect it could have on me and on my life. I experienced the true power of mastery firsthand.

Since that first exposure to Michelangelo and his breathtaking masterpiece, I have studied mastery and the masters—the master artists in particular—for over twenty-five years. I taught college art history for many years and was honored when my mother’s advice to “go for excellence” culminated in my receiving the highly respected “Master Teacher” award.

Along the way, I also had experience in the business world in corporate development, sales and marketing, and business ownership. Now I combine those experiences and knowledge in my business, *The Art of Mastery*. I teach people and organizations how to unleash their own full potential and experience success in their lives and work by using the same strategies of *mastery* that enable the master artists to start with a blank canvas and go on to create a masterpiece.

After all, with each of us, every day, every project, every challenge starts as a blank canvas. The question for us is “What will we do with it? Will we leave it blank? Will we just daub a few primary colors on it, if you will, and play it safe? Or will we do what it takes to make a masterpiece of it?” These are questions we ask of ourselves and the choices we make every single day, whether we consciously realize it or not.

#### WRIGHT

So what you’re saying is that there is a connection between what the master artists do to create their masterpieces, their success, and what the rest of us do to create ours?

NOONAN

A definite connection. Now, David, when you see a work of mastery—a masterpiece—where do you see it?

WRIGHT

Usually in a museum or a gallery or some kind of exhibition.

NOONAN

Exactly. We see the work when it is already *finished*, a *fait accompli*. What we don't see is the canvas as the master artist saw it at the beginning—blank—maybe even excruciatingly blank. We don't *see* the process that the master artist went through to take that blank canvas and turn it into a breathtaking masterpiece, but we do know, without a doubt, that a process was used.

When I was teaching art history, I taught about not only the end results—the masterpieces—but also about the artists as people. Through my own study, I found I was often able to somewhat get inside of the artists' heads to understand some of what they went through—some of their process. I shared with my students how many master artists did not have instant fame and success—they had to work for it. They were not afraid of “elbow grease” and hard work. Michelangelo said, “If people only knew how hard I work to gain my mastery!” It wasn't all fun and games. But it was all worth it. They had stick-to-itiveness, but they often had trials and tribulations along the path.

Well, as I was telling my classes about these trials and tribulations, I realized I was learning a lot of strategies and steps that I could take to improve my own life and work. The teacher became the student! The masters used strategies and principles that applied to me and my own life and work and they also apply to every person and organization interested in excellence and success. These success strategies and principles are universal.

WRIGHT

So, Nancy, what are some of the master artists' strategies and principles—*steppingstones*—that would be particularly helpful to our readers in bringing about their own *success*?

NOONAN

Well, the first thing is really the foundation for everything else and that is to listen to the *muse*. You know the concept of the muse—the guiding spirit that is thought to inspire poets, musicians, writers, and visual artists? A muse is the source of genius or inspiration. One thing the master artists do better than most of us is to really *listen* to their muse. They quiet themselves down enough so that the muse can actually come through. Now this is a real challenge for us in this day and age because we live in a virtual rat race, wouldn't you agree?

WRIGHT

You bet.

NOONAN

Our lives are fast-paced and noisy and with cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, and the like, we're connected in real time to someone or something almost constantly. Now, don't get me wrong, some connecting is fine. It's the degree to which we stay connected that is getting in the way of our muse's coming through. You've heard the saying, "I can't even hear myself think." Well, it's never been truer than now.

So if we want to get new and better ideas and ways of being and operating, we'd better clear the runway for them to come in. We should consciously do things to relax and quiet ourselves down.

I read once about a corporate executive who said he got his best and most frequent ideas while he was taking a swim, which he did daily once he got home from work. Get away from the routine, calm yourself down, go for a walk, meditate. Not only are these practices good for our health, often reducing stress and lowering blood pressure, but they allow for the spirit of inspiration to come floating in, taking us to our own next masterpieces, whatever they might look like.

WRIGHT

Sounds like a smart place to start.

NOONAN

Yes, and once we start quieting ourselves down more, we can better access the second mastery strategy I'd like to talk about today—to honor and activate our own creativity and the creativity of those we manage, teach, and lead.

We all started out as very creative little beings when we were children. Pablo Picasso said, “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.” How do we remain creative? Sadly adults, usually unintentionally, start putting lids on children’s creativity in order to get them to conform—to fit in. No wonder then that by the time we reach adulthood ourselves, we’ve had a lot of the instinctual creativity snuffed out in us. By then we also often have a skewed idea that creativity is just for the artists, not for the rest of us everyday people.

WRIGHT

So then what *is* creativity for us everyday people?

NOONAN

Put simply, creativity means envisioning something in your own unique, original, imaginative way—period. It’s a very simple concept.

WRIGHT

We often hear creativity and innovation used interchangeably. Is there a difference between creativity and innovation?

NOONAN

Innovation is usually considered to be the second step or aspect of creativity; it has to do with bringing what you envisioned out into the universe. How many people have regretted keeping that idea in their own back pocket while they “thought on it,” while the person down the road brings the same idea out and makes a killing on it or someone at his or her workplace proposes the idea and gets that promotion he or she was hoping for?

The innovation step is where not only individuals get tripped up, but organizations as well. If a company has a lot of people coming up with one idea after another, but no one to implement them, they’re dead in the water. If your

creators are not good implementers, it's often wise to have two separate teams—the creators and the innovators/implementers.

One basic thing that can help us activate our creativity is to consciously start looking at ourselves as creative beings and to acknowledge our own creativity.

In my keynotes and workshops I often ask audience members to think of something that they have done in the past or do in the present that is creative. I give them a little bit of time to think about this, because not everyone has a ready answer. In fact, some people are truly stumped. In that case, I help them expand the idea of what that creative activity might look like. Some people might do scrap booking or painting which, to many of us, are more obviously “creative.” Others, however, might have come up with a new operating system at work, written a company newsletter, or made the most awesome yard design in their neighborhood. These are all examples of their being creative, yet we often don't recognize them as such. The cool thing is that when we start noticing and acknowledging our own creativity, it spirals and we find ourselves doing more and more creative things. Creativity begets creativity!

#### WRIGHT

So, as you said, creativity is not just reserved for the artists, it's really for *all* of us!

#### NOONAN

Correct. All we have to do is change our mindset about creativity. In my programs, I am constantly amazed by the number of people who tell me point blank that they are not creative. Some even use the proverbial, “I don't have a creative bone in my body!” or “I'm not in the arts, so I don't need creativity.” That's when I point out that every single person has a creative side to his or her nature—*everyone!* That's when I tell them that traditional artists are not the only ones who do creative things—creativity isn't only about sculpture and paintings and musical scores. That's when I point out that every person and organization needs creativity if they want to be excellent and thrive.

The American Management Association conducted a survey of five hundred CEOs from many different fields. The CEOs were asked what was the number one component to ensure that their organizations would survive and thrive. Across the board the answer was to practice creativity and innovation. And, hey, five hundred CEOs can't be wrong, right?

This is when I tell my audience that many people have a limited vision about creativity. They think creativity is for “those others”—that creativity is mysterious and elusive. The fact is, creativity is simply about:

- Doing something differently from how it's been done before
- Envisioning something in your own unique, original, imaginative way
- Coming up with something when you have no budget for it
- Creating a totally new product, service, direction, or way of thinking
- Being energized and *in flow* by coming up with something new

Creativity can put fire into a stalled project and move it to completion. It can help you get unstuck! Creativity can save your company money. When your employees are being more creative, they will be more likely to find solutions to in-house problems. This is a bottom-line-solution approach because it then saves you or your organization the cost of hiring outside consultants to figure things out. These are very concrete outcomes to creativity.

So since creativity is such a good idea, I help my audiences recognize their *own* creativity and the results are astonishing! One businesswoman left my program in tears—of joy. She said for years she had it hammered into her that she was *not* a creative person. When the “ah-ha” went on for her in my keynote that she *was* creative, she felt she'd been given a new lease on life and couldn't wait to, as she said, “spread her creativity wings!”

It's important to ask yourself, “What price do you and your organization pay for *not* being creative, especially in this day and age? How many Michelangelos are in your organization, just waiting to be handed a ‘hammer and chisel’?”

One of the things I implore of my clients and audiences is this: “Unleash your creativity—do not go to your grave with any of your masterpieces still inside of you!”



WRIGHT

Nancy, that's a great concept for all of us to consider. What are some of the other *steppingstones* that the masters use?

NOONAN

Well, two things that are connected and that inherently run the master artists' engines are change and risk. Think of it this way—if the masters weren't comfortable with taking the risk to change things up, we would all still be looking at cave art. As wonderful as cave art is, picture how visually boring it would be if that was the only art created in the entire world all through the ages. Correspondingly, as an example in our modern world, if computer scientists weren't also willing to take the risks to make changes, our computers would still be the size of rooms! Hard to imagine with the nearly miniscule computers that we enjoy now.

WRIGHT

That's for sure.

NOONAN

The challenge with change is that we, as humans, are generally uncomfortable with change. It makes us insecure and so we often do whatever we can to avoid it. And yet, progress and growth only occur when one is willing to proactively embrace change. And to embrace change in spite of the risks that go along with change.

With the way things are going in the world nowadays, change is occurring constantly and in ways we could not have imagined, even a year ago. World markets are teetering, home loans are hard to get, people are losing their homes and jobs—change is all around us, whether we like it or not. So the question is, “How can we get more comfortable with change, since it's here?” One way is to proactively start making changes in our own lives on a regular basis. When we get into the flow of making changes regularly, then when change is imposed upon us, it is not so jarring.

Seth Godin talked about change and risk in his book, *Purple Cows: Transform your Business by Being Remarkable*. He said that in this day and age when the

things that used to work just aren't working any longer, it's now safer to be risky. Imagine that—safer to be risky! This is especially great news for those who are unduly safety conscious! In their landmark book, *In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peters and Robert Waterman pointed out that “a special attribute of the success-oriented, positive, and innovating environment is a substantial tolerance for failure.”

The master artists naturally know that it is safer to be risky. If they aren't constantly giving people something radically new to look at and think about, their art would be labeled “stale” and they would fall by the wayside. Finito. Out of business. Likewise, successful CEOs, administrators, business owners, professionals, educators, and others who succeed and stay in business know this, too.

For all of them, taking the risks to make changes is imperative to staying in business and thriving. If *we* want to “stay in the business” of living and working at our highest and best levels as our own masters of success, we need to change the perspective that the majority of people hold—that failure is a negative. A much better way to view failure is to see it not as a negative, but as simply a way to gather information. It tells us that “a” doesn't work, so we should try “b,” “c,” or “d.” No use crying over spilt milk! Gather your information, apply it to what you're doing, and move on. When artists paint what they deem to be a “bad” painting, what happens? They just paint over it! So can we! It's that simple. What a freeing concept that is, once we truly get it. Just paint over it!

The master artists know that it serves no one to stay stuck, staring incessantly at our “bad paintings” and our obstacles, instead of moving past them. Leonardo da Vinci's world-famous masterpiece, the *Mona Lisa*, did not always look as it does now, in its final form. Because of infrared technology, we can now see under the surface of paintings. Therefore, we know that at one point Leonardo had painstakingly painted a necklace on the woman. The Renaissance, the time in which this work was done, focused on classical simplicity and clarity, often bespeaking that “less is more.” Leonardo apparently realized that the necklace detracted from the painting and its simplicity and painted over it. A mistake? A failure? No. An improvement! And as one of the most purposefully visited works of art in the world, with millions

of people viewing it every year in the Louvre museum in Paris, it is an undeniable masterpiece and success.

WRIGHT

The true masters know when to fold it and move on, it seems.

NOONAN

No question. They also know that getting some distance from the work can be very beneficial. If you've ever seen an Impressionist painting by Claude Monet, August Renoir, or Mary Cassatt, you know that when you get up close to the work, it just looks like a bunch of little blobs. It's when you get a good distance from it that the whole painting comes into focus. And isn't that true in life? Sometimes we're so close to a problem or a challenge that we can't seem to see the solution. We need to step back and get a fresh perspective so it can all come into sharper focus.

In fact, one of the most effective things we can do is to put some actual distance between ourselves and the issue—move over and focus on something else for a while. When you come back to it, you often see it with a fresh vision, a new clarity. The famous fifteenth century Venetian painter, Titian, would commonly turn a painting facing the wall and not look at it for weeks or months. He said when he came back to it, he often knew immediately what the painting needed to be complete—knowledge he'd been struggling to get when he was “knee deep” in the painting earlier. When we see a problem with fresh eyes, we often see things in ways we couldn't see before and we end up with a much more successful outcome.

WRIGHT

Nancy, to become a master, does one need to take a solitary path?

NOONAN

David, everyone goes along the path or the *steppingstones of success* in his or her own way. However, through the ages, it has proven to be very beneficial to connect with others as you go along. You've heard stories about the artists, for example, congregating for hours in the Parisian cafés, talking about their art,

sometimes even getting into heated arguments about which style or technique was superior to others. Although I'm not suggesting we have to take it to the argument level, it is very helpful to get together with others in our fields. Joining associations, calling colleagues to meet for coffee, having a phone chat, or meeting with people who work in other departments can broaden our own knowledge base and spark ideas we might not ever have thought of on our own.

Mentoring is also exceedingly helpful in moving us toward our success. I come from a family where many of the men are electricians. They have established steps where they start as an apprentice, move up to being a journeyman, and ultimately graduate to become a master electrician. While they are going through these different phases (all the while applying the components of the formula of mastery:  $\text{Mastery} = \text{Skills} + \text{Knowledge} + \text{Excellence}$ ), they are working side-by-side with others who have surpassed them to a higher level, being mentored by them and learning from their wisdom and experience. Part of the training the master artists also went through was to be apprenticed to artists who were already Masters. For example, Michelangelo was apprenticed to the master artist, Ghirlandaio and Leonardo da Vinci to Andrea del Verrocchio; they also set up their easels in front of masterpieces and copied them. Learning how the master artists had laid down the paint, how they had approached light and line and shape and color and texture gave them a deeper learning they could then apply to developing their own styles.

You know, I think one of the mistakes we often make in the workplace or in our lives today is to get to a place where we no longer think we need mentors. Our pride gets in the way or we get too complacent and think we've pretty much learned it all. However, the truth is that some of the most successful people in the world are ones who continue to learn and be mentored from others. It's an important piece to mastery and part of the *steppingstones to success* process.

WRIGHT

Nancy, you've given us some great new strategies and insights as to how we can create mastery in our lives and work to generate our own success. Thank you for joining us.

NOONAN

David, it's been my pleasure. I look forward to hearing from readers to "continue" the discussion! My contact information will follow.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Based upon twenty-five years of studying mastery, human potential expert Nancy Noonan is sought out by corporations, associations, and organizations to reignite and refocus their people. She helps them develop their own sense of mastery (*Mastery = Knowledge + Skills + Excellence*) to unleash their greatest potential, achieving personal and organizational excellence to produce extraordinary results. Uniquely combining her corporate background with years of college teaching as an awarded “Master Teacher,” Nancy takes to the stage today as a professional speaker, author, workshop/retreat leader, facilitator, consultant, and coach. To ensure her keynotes and workshops are both *informative* and *entertaining*, Nancy draws on her Irish heritage of natural storytellers and humorists, as well as her own experience in improv.



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## CHAPTER NINETEEN

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### Happiness: The Subject Educators Overlooked

An Interview with . . . **JoAnne Veeck**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking to Joanne Veeck. Joanne is a credentialed teacher and a member of the National Speaker's Association. For over fifteen years she has devoted herself to the research and study of Positive Psychology and total-body-well-being, in addition to being the VP of a retail drug chain. Joanne's passion is educating people on the scientifically proven techniques and truths about complete and lasting happiness. Her mission is to bring out the facts that no matter who you are, where you are or where you have come from, you can be happier than you ever dreamed possible. Joanne, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*. What intrigues you about Positive Psychology and since it is a newer science, will you tell us a little more about it?

JOANNE VEECK (VEECK)

What I love and find so fascinating about Positive Psychology is the almost instant, positive effect it has on people's lives. In fact, it's quite infectious! Once



the scientifically proven techniques are introduced and applied to individuals, a new-found, internal energy is discovered and life-altering changes are made. Over the course of just a few weeks, these feel-good changes become habit-forming. This often results in the desire to acquire more knowledge and skills. It intrigues, excites, and gives me great pleasure to teach, observe, and be a part of this relatively new arena of science that involves the transformation of the mind, body, and soul.

Psychology is a science that deals with healing and repairing a mental illness and/or the worst things in life that people can endure, ultimately leaving an individual with lifelong emotional pain and suffering. It is the research of psychological disorders and the effects of a dysfunctional family life and/or a stressful environment. With psychological therapy, the goal or hope is to help the patient find a balanced peace of mind and function in a relatively normal and socially accepted capacity.

Positive Psychology, on the other hand, recognizes and deals with disease, dysfunction, and damage, but does not remain solely focused on its negative effects. The foundation of this new science was built on what is good, what is known about human strengths, and what is right. Over the last ten years, scientific methods have been discovered that can not only prevent serious problems from occurring in the first place, but that will also bring awareness to explosive personal strengths, courage, and drive. The “methods,” tried and true, will surpass mere contentment levels and generate feelings of joy and jubilation.

Simply stated, Positive Psychology is a gift to humankind. It can open closed minds, heal disease-filled minds, and bring awareness to all minds of the “happy” life we are meant to have and well deserve.

I particularly like Dr. Martin Seligman’s (Director of Penn State Positive Psychology Center) interpretation, “Positive Psychologists will make the world a happier place, parallel to the way clinical psychologists have made the world a less unhappy place.” ([www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/default.aspx](http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/default.aspx), accessed November 13, 2009.) So, while wiping out a bad thing is helpful, building a good thing is even better!

## WRIGHT

From your research of Positive Psychology and overall happiness, what do you feel is the single most important discovery you have made?

## VEECK

Without hesitation, based on over fifteen years of research and experience, the single most important discovery I have made is that happiness can be taught and it should be regarded as a subject in our schools and viewed equally as important as reading and writing. It should begin at an early age with on-going instruction and training at every grade level through high school and college. If you think this sounds crazy, as you continue reading, you may change your thought.

In an article, titled “Wellington to Give Pupils Timetabled Lessons in Happiness,” in April of 2006, it states “Wellington College is to give pupils timetabled lessons in how to lead happier lives.” The class, PSHE (Personal, Social, and Health Education), will give the students skills to “increase the likelihood of happiness with life and how to channel the emotional pains of setbacks en route.” It has also been reported that Cambridge and Harvard Universities have not only introduced classes on happiness, but at Harvard, in 2006, it became their most popular course.

It wasn’t difficult to arrive at the discovery that happiness can be taught. In 2001, at the end of a one-hour presentation I delivered to a classroom of seventh and eighth graders, titled, “Happy Hour,” I was pleased but not surprised by the favorable and energetic comments from the students. Some raised their hands to tell me they had learned more in that one hour than they had from previous, more formal, long-term, motivational-type programs.

What caught me completely off guard, though, were the comments from the teachers, staff members, and guests. In a note, one teacher stated, “From the very beginning of your speech I found myself fumbling around my desk in search of a pencil to take notes. A lot of your inspiring information was unfamiliar to me and I didn’t want to miss a thing.” Another teacher wrote, “I felt your message successfully reached people of all ages.” And a third teacher said to me personally, “I can’t even imagine how many lives you changed today, including

my own.” I was invited back to that particular middle school in Roseville, California, three different times to speak to their students and staff members.

From that day forward I branched out to different types of groups of all ages, but remained focused on the importance and effectiveness of “teaching happiness.” I have received countless letters from audience members and clients but one of the most thought-provoking was from a woman, S. Sanborn, from Sloughhouse, California, who wrote, “I am in total agreement with you that happiness needs to be a subject taught in schools! Just think how many billions of dollars our country would save in medicine and therapy! Seriously, it should be looked at as preventative medicine, with tax breaks to parents whose children attend the courses.” Ms. Sanborn felt so strongly about this matter, she concluded her letter with this statement, “If there is anything I can do in support of implementing your idea/passion into our educational curriculum, please let me know.”

Christopher Peterson, PhD, wrote, “The good life can be taught.” Yes, many experts and professionals in the field of Positive Psychology now know this to be true. Peterson continued with, “The good life is hard work and there are no shortcuts to sustained happiness.” This statement, my friends, in my opinion, is false. Although you must focus and stay on the right path during your journey to happiness, deeming it to be “hard work,” is strictly in the opinion of the beholder! My clients, colleagues, and friends find it to be uplifting, exciting, and positively challenging. I have even heard some say that over a period of time, they have found the process to sustained happiness to be fun and *easy*.

#### WRIGHT

You talk about giving lectures on your passion, the subject of happiness, through a one-hour presentation you refer to as “Happy Hour.” The last time I got “happy” in an hour, I didn’t feel very good the next day. Seriously, is it realistic to say someone can become happy in an hour without going to the local pub?

## VEECK

The answer to that question is, *yes!* I like to think of “Happy Hour” as being similar to watching a compelling preview for a movie—you can’t wait to go and see it. After experiencing “Happy Hour,” you can’t wait to go and live it. It is a very specific and informative overview/introduction to what will hopefully become the first day of the rest of your life. More specifically, one audience member had this to say regarding Happy Hour, “Joanne takes popular, conventional, traditional, and academic psychology and turns it all on its ears. After listening to her, I found myself leaving the venue feeling an inch taller than when I had entered.” (D. Cleland, Sacramento, California)

Happy Hour is a compilation of fifteen years of research and complete dedication to not only understanding happiness, but redefining it for modern day living. Quite different from how we’ve been conditioned to think, it does not advocate spending a lifetime pursuing it; rather, it emphasizes “Train, Retain, and Gain” (the Happy Hour motto) today, and spend the rest of your life living “happily ever after.”

For many reasons, the term, idea, perception, concept, definition, etc. of the word “happy” has become disjointed. A vocabulary word deemed simple and basic, “happy” has become, to most people, a mystery or a puzzle too hard to solve. The reason is that it is not “simple” or “basic.” Study after study has, in fact, led some professionals to believe that happiness is either not possible or not probable.

This is an old fashioned way of thinking and is based largely upon our nation’s past when factors of war, the great Depression, famine, disease, and simply struggling to survive were a way of life. Although the past is just that—the past—and we need to “get over it,” we can’t ignore that it was the “rock bottom” our country hit during those years that fueled the energy in our citizens to rebuild their lives and their country. And, what a success story it was! Their quest and due diligence to become the most powerful country in the world took hold. But as statistics tell us now, we have to ask ourselves, did we put our strength, energy, and determination to the best use?

In an influential academic paper, Martin Seligman, the University of Pennsylvania psychologist who launched the positive psychology movement, and

Ed Diener of the University of Illinois wrote, “Although economic output has risen steeply over the past decade, there has been no rise in life satisfaction during this period and there has been a substantial increase in depression and distrust.” So, the answer is obvious—apparently we did not put our energy to the best use.

Now, the question is, do we have any energy left for what’s most important—the rebuilding of hope, morale, self-worth, and emotional well-being? Think about it: how can the citizens of our nation wake up every morning and face their new daily challenges with enthusiasm and determination or make positive changes in society when “depression and distrust” are looming among them? And, if the feelings of hopelessness and despair are indeed “increasing,” how long will it take before our nation is filled with non-productive, non-caring, and lethargic individuals? Could it be that this is exactly what we’re experiencing right now? David Cameron, a British opposition leader, said in a speech in 2006, “It’s time we admitted that there’s more to life than money, and it’s time we focused not just on GDP, but on GWB—general well-being.”

Mr. Cameron has since organized a Quality of Life Policy Group “to examine ways governments can legislate to boost national contentment levels.” (*The Greenville Sun*, August 2007) Finally, the word got out somewhere in the world that there’s no fairy godmother and no magic wand. How many more businesses need to fail and how much more despair do “we the people” need to endure before the leaders of our nation realize our “contentment levels” could also stand a “boost”? Great strides could be made, once again, in this country with the help of our government. Financial support for on-going programs to teach and train the folks of this nation how to “boost their contentment levels” would be putting our money and our energy to its optimal use.

The success and overall effectiveness of such programs that stimulate minds and cause us to witness the rebirth of hidden energy throughout our country can only be imagined. In my one-hour session with the intent to “boost contentment levels” through the use of scientifically proven techniques, this is one of the responses I received: “Dear Joanne, I just wanted to thank you for sharing your incredible knowledge. You are a very inspiring woman. I know tonight has changed my life and I *will* pass it on to my children and everyone else around me.

I really hope you have another talk soon because I will invite everyone I know to come.” (J. Hankins, Loomis, California.)

So, once again, “yes,” with an open mind, you can actually begin a new life of happiness in an hour. With this known truth, what degree of greatness could be exercised world-wide if programs similar to mine took place on a scheduled basis throughout much of our lives? For now, unfortunately, we can only wonder.

#### WRIGHT

Who inspired you to inspire others?

#### VEECK

There have been a number of people who have inspired me. Two of whom, I’m proud to say, just happen to be my parents.

My mother, Penny Jeffers, grew up with an abusive and alcoholic father. At age sixteen, unable to convince her mother to take her three younger brothers and leave her father, my mother ran away from home. For the next three years she carried three jobs and made a new life for herself. As badly as she missed her mother and brothers, she knew she could never go back. At nineteen she met and fell in love with my father, George Jeffers, and a year later they were married. My father helped my mother turn her emotional “scars into stars” and uncover inner strength she never knew she had. (“Turn your scars into stars” is a phrase created and often used by Dr. Robert Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral.)

Not only was their marriage of fifty-six years full of love and respect, she spent her life giving generously and caring for others and raised two daughters to do the same. Not only did she set the standard for a selfless lifestyle, her message to her daughters was clear and led by example—when your life isn’t going in the direction you want for yourself, turn around!

My father—my friend, my boss, and my mentor—was one in ten million! He was able to successfully balance a flawless work ethic and personal life second to none. He had honesty, integrity, and an immense compassion for everyone who stepped in and out of his life.

At the ripe old age of thirteen, my father began his long-term career of thirty-four years with Walgreens. Later, he was scooped up by two other giant retailers

who, were also in awe of his quality and successful performance as a leader and as a genuine, sensitive, and caring man. Then, one day, at age fifty-five, he decided to leave the corporate world behind and he quit his job. But don't let that fool you; this wasn't the end by any means. In fact, it was just the beginning! In 1984, after fifteen-hour-days and eighteen months of researching a new concept of retail, he opened up the first of a five-store "deep discount" drug chain in Sacramento, California. For twenty-three years he owned and operated a successful business employing close to one thousand people.

To sum up why he was so successful outside of his determination and passion for hard work, in 2006, an article was written about him in the *Sacramento Magazine*. "Loyal, generous, caring, genuine, and friend aren't words usually used to describe someone's boss. Company CEOs are often thought of as aloof. This is not the case with George Jeffers. When people come to work for him they stay. It's common to find employees wearing fifteen and twenty-year pins." His message was clear: To experience success in its truest form, whether in our business, personal life or both, we have to permanently change and train our thoughts and focus on making everyone around us feel good. Then and only then will we get back what we have given out—success being just one small piece of our pie.

I was blessed to be employed and guided by a boss who shined the light for all who shared his path and who just happened to be my dad. If I could be half as inspiring as my father, I'd pat myself on the back and say, "Job well done."

#### WRIGHT

Outside of your parents, who would you say has had the biggest influence on your life and career?

#### VEECK

If you've noticed, there is more square footage devoted to the "self-help" section in book stores than most other categories. I would have to assume it's one of the largest because it's one of the most profitable. So, if this is the case, "help" being at our disposal, I've often wondered why there is so much emotional pain and suffering. Are the books being bought but not read or read but not

retained or retained but not exercised? Although I don't have the exact answer to that question, what I do know is that if the information in most self-help books was read, retained, and practiced repeatedly, a quality life would prevail and there would be less need for controversial and dangerous mood enhancing drugs.

To answer your question, those who have influenced me include every one of the authors of the several hundred books that encompass self-help, enhancement, and enlightenment. But, in narrowing the search, it is the following four men who have cast a permanent and positive spell on my understanding, attaining, and appreciation of the good life:

### **Dr. Robert Schuller**

Through the dozens of inspirational books written by Dr. Robert Schuller, minister of the Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, California, he was the one who first "taught" me how to *Reach Out For New Life*, the title of one of his books. This book was a gift that came to me at a time when I was "busy"—busy setting the wrong priorities in between raising a family and working full-time. I placed it on a bookshelf, along with the other books "I'd get to someday." Several years later, for no known reason, I blew off the dust that had collected on the book and automatically opened it to page six. My eyes zeroed in on these words: "In this book I want to share with you a process—the Possibility Thinking Process—which will lead to permanent, creative change in your life. You will begin by believing there is a more exciting life ahead of you, you will begin to see that there is more knowledge, more happiness, new opportunities, greater prosperity, richer self-esteem waiting for you. A new you will be born with unlimited power."

"Such a convincing message," I thought. "Is there someone who wouldn't read on?" Anxious for what I had read to take hold in my life, I not only "read on," I read every book he wrote. What I learned was "the process." What I've experienced, since, is the "permanent, creative change in my life," exactly how Dr. Schuller described it in that first paragraph.



## Gary Zukav

Gary Zukav, author of *The Seat of the Soul*, *The Heart of the Soul* and *Soul Stories*, through the combination of psychological insight and spirituality, has given me invaluable awareness into the many “whys” of what we do and answers to life’s questions. There is much to be gained in his books, but a strong emphasis is centered on learning how to become aware of our feelings—all of them all of the time because it is the part of ourselves that controls much of what we do. Although the process is both challenging and rewarding, it is a critical development of the mind for a greater human experience. Once you recognize and are in control of your feelings, Mr. Zukav reminds us in the *Seat of the Soul* that “Your life—good or bad—is your choice. As you shine brighter, as your light and power increase with each responsible choice, so does your world!”

## The Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet and a Nobel Prize winner, and Dr. Howard Cutler joined forces and wrote the book, *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living*. I would love to see this book used just like a daily planner for a purse, pocket, or briefcase because it teaches the reader, through a deep source of inner peace, how to defeat the daily and ongoing obstacles of anger, disappointment, jealousy, resentment, etc. He states and repeats time and time again, “Your state of mind is the key to happiness.” If there is a “lack of the inner discipline that brings calmness of mind, no matter what external facilities or conditions you have, they will never give you the feelings of joy and happiness that you are seeking.”

I believe *The Art of Happiness* should be required reading at high school and college levels because I agree with the Dalai Lama, “Even though our society does not emphasize this, the most important use of knowledge and education is to help us understand the importance of engaging in more wholesome actions and bringing about discipline within our minds . . . to effect changes from within to develop a good heart.”

## Dr. T. Colin Campbell

In my opinion, Dr. T. Colin Campbell should be regarded as one of America's heroes. He spent his entire working career researching the relationship between nutrition, health, and disease. He has helped many people turn their lives around, including mine, in his book, *The China Study*. Through tests and studies that he conducted world-wide, he informs us of foods that give us energy and make us look and feel good, versus foods, all too available, that take energy away, cause dramatic mood swings, make us fat, and eventually cause serious illnesses. With childhood obesity, diabetes, and cancer, on the rise, along with soaring health care costs, this is a book that should become a required textbook for our schools and their science programs. It explains the truth about diet and health. It will not only change lives, it may even save lives!

## WRIGHT

What are some of the obstacles people face in the pursuit of happiness?

## VEECK

If you asked one hundred different people that question, you'd get one hundred different answers, such as: unlucky, no friends, bad family environment, dead-end job, feelings of inferiority and despair, and so on. But in my book, there is only one obstacle. It's simple, we have never been told the truth about happiness. We've never learned how to attain it or even how to pursue it. We're hopeful that our parents, teachers, and leaders will guide our children down the road to success, but how can they do a good job at guiding someone else's life when they're having a hard time guiding their own? How can we feel, display, or teach a subject we know so little about? Based on the current statistics of overall discontentment levels in America, it appears we can't.

The truth about happiness is it's not luck or good fortune, success or fame, pleasure or satisfaction, good health or outer looks. It is attaining contentment through inner discipline and self-worth. Although the factors I mentioned can contribute to happiness, they must be built upon a good mental attitude and outlook so the state of happiness can remain solid during life's ups and downs.

Now, let's talk a little about how to "pursue" happiness. It's a process that requires learning how to transform our minds. Each and every one of us can accomplish this with focused training and by repeating certain exercises and techniques to familiarize ourselves with the beneficial aspects of positive emotions and behaviors. At the same time we must learn and be aware of the harmful aspects of negative emotions. Then, based on the natural desire to experience good emotional feelings, we must consciously and deliberately go after them. Neuroscientists have proven that the brain can learn from new, positive input and the wiring in the brain can actually change. With self-discipline, our minds can gradually wipe out self-inflicting negative thoughts and feelings.

As I stated, it *is* a process. You may not "get it down" overnight, but you will love being aware and in control of your thoughts and will experience positive results immediately. Living positively will not only change how you view yourself—the beginning of self-worth—it will change how others view you and will have a profound effect on the way you go about your daily life. We train hard for everything that is important to us. Isn't it about time we take those same training skills and apply them to what is most important for us—our minds?

Finally, how do we attain happiness? We attain happiness through the attainment of real, heart-felt feelings of self-worth. I think of self-worth as the trunk of the tree of life from which branches of love, forgiveness, good health, compassion, courage, selflessness, enthusiasm, perseverance, success, joy, and peace of mind grow endlessly and abundantly. Simply stated, self-worth provides the strength and determination needed to conquer our limitless potential.

Sure, it takes determination, time, and effort to develop the mindful habits that bring happiness. The good news is that throughout the training period, you will be rewarded. You will discover newfound energy, enthusiasm, and optimism and will have the ability to positively handle daily challenges that at one time in your life were regarded as "obstacles."

#### WRIGHT

What makes your message unique?

## VEECK

Some people think success brings happiness and others feel happiness brings success. What makes my message unique is that I believe happiness is success and both are readily available when you are. Just what do I mean by “ready when you are?” The day we make the decision to make long-term, life-altering adjustments in both our physical and emotional selves is the day we will begin to feel the positive effects of mind over matter. How can we make that change? It’s simple! It starts with a single thought.

Research has proven we have well over ten thousand thoughts a day. When we are seriously ready to experience happiness/success beyond our wildest dreams, the first step is becoming aware and learning the value of each one of our thousands of thoughts and the enormous role each plays on our lives. For example, when we think or say, “Oh, I could never do that,” we’re right—we never could do that because we are guided by our thoughts. Thoughts are our leaders and if our leaders convince us we can never do something, we’ll believe them and suffer a lifetime of consequences surrounding that one negative thought. In fact, our entire reality will be based on an illusory sense of who we are or what we can do. Our thoughts directly affect our feelings, which, in turn, affect our behavior, our words, and ultimately our environment.

As we become conscious of our thoughts, it might surprise us to learn that so many of them aren’t very positive. I just love when that happens! It proves we have the intellect and strength of character to admit that we have room and the desire for self-improvement. In fact, it gets us ready and anxious for the next step, which is questioning why we have so many negative and wasteful thoughts. Then we come to the realization that it is our thoughts, not someone or something, that are the cause of much of our emotional anger, agony, and suffering. This is a good thing! It’s an internal awakening that is both critical and essential to finally stop blaming others and begin accepting responsibility for our actions—both good and bad—and our own contentment levels. Once we’re conscious of our negative thoughts and their destructivity, we simply need to challenge ourselves and change our minds. If you think it’s impossible to change your thoughts from negative to positive on a spin of a dime, try redirecting that

thought, too. It's not only possible, it's easy, fun, and guaranteed to change your life!

Self-confidence, energy, and enthusiasm stem from a change of attitude: the winning ticket to sustained happiness and success. Success or failure begins with a thought—our thought—so, our choice. “Think” about that!

#### WRIGHT

If there really were “steppingstones” to success, what would you inscribe on the first stone?

#### VEECK

Before I answer that question, allow me to ask you one. Do you remember the last time you experienced a migraine, a backache, the flu, pneumonia, or worse yet, a more serious illness? Were you saying to yourself, “Wow, this is great! I'm so happy?” I doubt it. A journey to complete happiness—the ultimate measure of success—must involve the vehicle that is going to get us there. Therefore, in answer to your question, what I would inscribe on the first steppingstone is one word—*health*.

In the early '70s, when I began the quest to learn more about the mind, little did I know I would also be researching the mechanisms by which the mind influences the body. Study after study has proven that unhealthy psychological functioning can cause unrest and stress in our lives and can be a determining factor in our physical health as well. Patterns of physiological and emotional disharmony upset the chemistry of our bodies. Although there is virtually no question that thoughts, feelings, moods, and attitude are major contributors to our overall health, some scientists and doctors believe it goes much deeper and that the relationship we have to our thinking is the direct cause of both minor and serious illnesses. Therefore, if we take good care of our thinking, our aches, pains, and worries will disappear.

Although healthy bodies begin with healthy thoughts, proper diet and nutrition is needed to sustain a good balance, both physically and mentally, to avoid disease and illness. Unfortunately, one of the biggest misconceptions in our country is the definition of “proper” diet and nutrition. There is convincing

evidence that the “American diet” is not only failing us, but is a large contributor to the increase in the risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Many nutritionists feel we’re being misled in the truths about certain foods and ingredients. Experts think food companies should be required to state *all* of the “nutrition facts” including the facts about the health hazards in many of the ingredients. The fact is, if folks were educated about the harmful effects of the foods they consume, they’d switch to healthier foods, become more health conscious, look and feel better, and our nation’s healthcare costs would likely be cut in half.

Changing your diet can change your life and there’s no better proof of that statement than in Dr. T. Colin Campbell’s book, *The China Study*. Dr. Campbell is a distinguished professor at Cornell University and has spent nearly five decades researching the relationship of diet to disease. The effect of his findings could turn the psychological and physiological health care of our nation around.

And, finally, we can’t ignore the interconnectedness between physical activity and mental well-being in the overall concept of health. In addition to merely looking good, keeping our bones strong, and maintaining a healthy heart, research has proven combining regular exercise and good nutrition offers energy, good moods, alertness, and an internal motivation to continue a lifestyle of optimal health.

#### WRIGHT

What has been your greatest accomplishment as a motivational speaker and whole body wellness coach?

#### VEECK

I believe my greatest accomplishment is knowing the positive effect I have had on people—their lives and their destinies. People often come up to me at the end of a session and say, “Thank you. I know exactly what I need to do now” or “You helped me figure out what’s been wrong.” That alone is a true feeling of accomplishment. In addition, when I hear stories of dramatic life transformations, I feel blessed to have been the motive and cause of the turning point in that person’s life. The following are some examples:

An audience member who listened to my message on three different occasions stated, “There were six words that hit me like a block of cement—‘take control of your own destiny.’” He said that until that night, he had not realized he was just going through the motions of life like most people—waiting and watching to see what was to come next. He said, “I started to think that my life has been like a ride at an amusement park—slow and straight forward at some times, which is easy and comfortable but not necessarily satisfying and then too fast with sharp turns at other times, which creates turmoil and can be frightening. Even though you want to get off, you can’t. Now, I am no longer a victim of, ‘that’s just the way it is.’” He made a decision to take charge of his life and that he did. Today, this forty-five-year-old man has lost forty unwanted pounds and works out on a regular basis. He sought out the employment of his choice, has a hobby that is equally rewarding, and spends more quality time with his family than ever before.

I was fortunate to be able to speak to a group of students at the UCSB campus in Santa Barbara, California. Afterward, many of the students waited in line to talk to me. Some shared their individual viewpoints, and others their personal stories and situations. I was particularly touched by a young lady in her freshman year.

Lauren had been faced with first year college challenges beyond her expectations. Her dorm, personal, and academic lives were not going well. Every weekend she rehearsed a phone call in her mind telling her parents she was coming home. Just six weeks before the end of her first year, with no one to turn to, nowhere to go and no longer able to handle her depression, she made the decision to pack up and leave. Two days before she was scheduled to leave, a sorority sister asked Lauren to accompany her to “some random lecture on happiness.” Feeling obligated to help a friend out, she agreed to go.

At the end of my lecture, Lauren, too, waited to tell me her story. Trying to hold back her tears, Lauren told me she was finally able to make sense of her situation at UCSB. She realized the cause and knew what she had to do to turn her life around. Filled with emotions and an obvious abundance of internal thoughts and relief, she proceeded to tell me she felt it was her particular less-than-fulfilling environment in the dorms that was the cause of her despair. In

one hour in one night, Lauren made many new decisions. Not only did she stop reciting the words to a phone call she never made to her parents or leave school, she made arrangements to live with friends and colleagues she knew would enhance, not hinder, her environment during her sophomore year. Lauren has since graduated from UCSB with flying colors and has said they were the best “three” years of her life.

Another woman, married with two young children, took some of the books I had recommended on a trip she and her husband had planned to Hawaii. She told me the books inspired her so much that halfway through the trip she wanted to pack up, get home, and begin her new life. Although she didn’t cut her trip short, the day after she got home she resigned from her job of seven years and signed up for online finance classes. Today she is enjoying the independence and financial freedom of owning her own business. She told me she’s living the life she thought for so long was only in her dreams. Although I inspired her to recognize it’s not just a myth—you really can change the direction of your life—stories like hers and many others are what inspire me to continue my passion for teaching “Happiness”—the subject the educators overlooked!

#### WRIGHT

What is the main message you want your readers to take with them?

#### VEECK

There are two parts in answering this question.

*Part 1:* The research has been done and the facts have been documented. Most of the turmoil and personal hardships we experience, whether we realize it or not, are self-inflicted—day after day, year after year and generation after generation. Why do we inflict emotional pain and hardships upon ourselves? One answer is that many of us “think” we don’t deserve better or we are supposed to experience the same lives—good or bad—as our parents. Another is that many people perceive the “good life” as unrealistic and accept the notion they’re not going to be a part of the lucky few who will experience it. But the real reason is this: Most people do not know how or how easy it is to make positive changes in their lives, consequently, positively affecting the lives and environment around



them. If we don't know how to secure emotional well-being, self-worth, and happiness in our own lives, how can we teach these valuable life lessons to our children and/or our students?

*Part 2:* Through scientific studies and scholarly research, it has been proven there are methods, systems, principles, and techniques that can teach us how to look within ourselves and attain the ultimate goal of complete happiness. Information from this research is readily available and at our disposal in every imaginable format, now more than ever before.

My message is this: Humans are fluid—we are never just “one” thing, never stagnant. We can think, speak, and behave in any way, in any moment. It's our choice. So, if you choose to pursue, not perceive, the life you were meant to live, it starts with that one thought, that one choice! The next step is to learn the how to's by reading books, researching the Internet, attending motivational seminars, and then practicing the new techniques all day, every day! Gratifying changes occur almost instantly during this process, which make it quite thrilling. Over a short period of time, you'll become appreciative of the knowledge that founded your new fabulous life. You will be able to “teach” these skills to your family, share them with your friends, and take credit for a change toward an emotionally prosperous nation!

WRIGHT

Joanne, I have certainly gained a lot from this conversation and am sure the readers have as well. Thank you for sharing your wide depth of knowledge with us and being a part of this project.

VEECK

It's been my pleasure. Thank you!

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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JOANNE JEFFERS VEECK is a diverse and dynamic individual. Having both lived and studied abroad, she graduated from University of the Pacific, in California, earning her degree in Education. Joanne also completed a year of graduate school at San Francisco State University where she studied Psychology/Child Development and earned a lifetime teaching credential.

From 1984–2008 Joanne was employed as Vice President of a five-store drug chain in Sacramento, California. In 1990, still fascinated with psychology, she embarked upon a newer field of science, Positive Psychology, the understanding of “what it takes” and the methods used to make lives flourish and thrive.

In 2001, on her days off, Joanne entered the school system again, but this time as a motivational educator. Based on her years of research and dedication to the well-being of others, she successfully created a life-altering/one-of-a-kind session for both children and adults called, “Happy Hour,” which strategically teaches lessons on happiness, the subject the educators overlooked.

Today, Joanne has taken “Happy Hour” to a higher level and devotes her time speaking to a wide variety of groups of all ages on the complexities and the untold truths about the attainment of happiness. Her motto is “Train, Retain, and Gain the unbelievable life that awaits you!”



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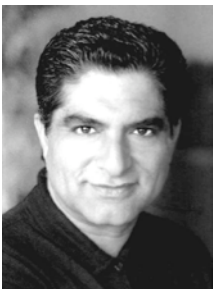
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Sevierville, Tennessee