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INSPIRATIONAL • HAPPINESS

Pursuit of Happiness
Many are overworked, overstressed.

by Leonid Sharashkin

EVERY JANUARY YOU SET NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS: I want to lose 20 pounds. I want to quit smoking. I want to get out of debt. Regardless of what spin you give it, you're really saying, "I want to be happy." And no wonder. America may be the land of opportunity and plenty, but it is also the land of constant worry, fierce competition, foreclosures, downsizings, stock market losses, and financial struggles.

Stress and dissatisfaction are high. The recession isn't helping, but the problem goes deeper. Too many of us fail to find joy in our work, in our relationships, in our communities—in every aspect of our day-to-day existence. In short, despite our national commitment to the pursuit of happiness, few of us seem to be happy.

As a society and culture, we buy into the belief that more equals happiness—more money, possessions, prestige, more, more, more. But when your life is built on a wealth-centric value system, perceiving the end of financial prosperity is deeply threatening to your shaky foundations.

We are grasping for solutions in self-help, spirituality, and enlightenment, and yet, peace and contentment continue to elude us. Clearly, we have lost the vital key to happiness. We need a practical path to sustainability and spiritual enlightenment.

I find answers in nine books, written by Siberian author Vladimir Megré, that chronicle the messages from Anastasia, a mysterious and powerful woman who has inspired millions of people worldwide to pursue a purer and more authentic style of living.

Observe Seven Insights

From these books, I glean seven insights:

1. Re-evaluate your work life. True, we are in the midst of an economic crisis, but the true crisis is less about your financial plitude and more about your general satisfaction. You don't have to love the job you have, but you should be doing something you don't hate! If you have a well-paying job that brings you misery, no salary level or list of fancy perks can

appease your unhappiness. You may work longer and harder, and yet your hard-earned money does not bring you genuine fulfillment. Recently, we have witnessed thousands of people with seemingly secure jobs lose them in an instant. Your job is not your identity; thus, neither it nor the income it brings should be inextricably linked to your happiness. Lighten up your views regarding labor;

you might be surprised to see that working fewer hours or even switching to a more appropriate career can change your view of the world. See that money and status are only an illusion and that the universe always provides for people in need. Once you free your ego from unnecessary attachment to money and power, you will be a more peaceful person.

2. Plant and nurture a vegetable garden. Develop a love and respect for the outdoors. Limitless well-being comes from working the soil and growing flowers and nourishing produce alike. You would be far happier if you spent more time with your hands and feet in the earth, working in your garden plots. You'd likely live longer and become kinder. You can

INSIDE

Table listing authors and article titles with page numbers, including Greg Hicks, Dallas Teague Snider, Robert Rosen, Alex Pattakos, Carol Kinsey Goman, Chris Edgelow, Monty Miller Deanna Phelps and Stephen Hager, Julie Fuimano, Barry Eisen, Val Gokenbach, Leo Kim, Joan Marques, Bob Eichinger, Guangrong Dai, and King Yii Tang, Patti Fralix, Andy Andrews, Tom Bloch, Alan Cohen, Terry J. Fadem, Joe Cala, Omar Khan, and Addison Wiggin.

cultivate your own garden. You don't need a large plot of land—most garden plots are rather small. Even city dwellers can grow plants in windowsills and on balconies. Plant a variety of vegetables and fruits and spend half an hour each day tending to what you grow. A small time in the garden yields bountiful results—in a delicious, healthful harvest and in your personal tranquility and joy. Gardening is a natural stress-reliever. Savor working the soil with your hands. The earth is vastly intelligent; this interaction is a divine form of communication with the planet.

3. As much as possible, expose your children to nature. Children today are raised in unnatural ways. By immersing them in a man-made world, you perpetuate the sense of unhappiness that comes from a disconnection from nature, alter the way they perceive the universe and their place in it, and limit their development in profound ways. Most children are raised in an artificial, sterile world created by a *technocratic* society. In infancy they learn the so-called value of material possessions and never comprehend that the natural world—trees, grass, dirt—is a more nurturing and educational playground than a nursery. The only way to counteract this is to get outside with your children as much as possible. Let babies roll around in the grass; let toddlers play with bugs and rocks; have older children join you in the garden.

4. Promote clean-peace (de-clutter your home). Don't hoard away clutter that you don't need (it's all a part of "the more stuff we have, the happier we are" mentality.) It all adds up physically and in the psyche, as clutter promotes mental disorder. Conversely, a tidy home promotes peace. And, learning to live without "extras" is beneficial to your wallet as well—which leads to its own peace of mind. People with few material possessions are often happier. Nature provides everything they could want, and they are content living a minimalist lifestyle. Perhaps you can't live so simply, but you can rid your home of excessive and unnecessary items. Don't try to keep up with the Joneses. Material possessions can't make or keep you happy. Get rid of old clothes, sports equipment, or anything you don't need. Once your home is clutter-free, you'll discover more creativity and peace.

5. Take a break from the technocratic world—artificial elements of society, such as television, computers, telephones, and radios. Such distractions waste time, sap your energy, and promote a sedentary lifestyle that can lead to depression. Start small. Instead of turning on the television, spend a night with your family or friends communicating meaningfully. You can

swap stories or share favorite memories instead of relying on a modern distraction for entertainment. Better still, listen to your child's (or your partner's) *heartbeat*, and let him or her listen to yours. You'll be amazed to see how powerful this communication is, as—instead of being distracted by music—you become aware of the pulse of the universal life-force throbbing through your loved one's heart. After doing this a few times, you may feel ready to go a month without television. You'll likely decide that you not return to your old ways.

6. Identify and cut back on your whims. Identify expensive or self-destructive "happiness crutches" and practice resisting them. You likely know your whims. Whether it's your twice-a-day coffeehouse lattes, drinking binges, reckless sex, or weekend shopping sprees that get you out of your slumps, such distractions don't bring lasting peace. On the contrary, the financial and spiritual price tag for even low-grade self-destruction is high.

No "quick fix" can take the place of a life built on an authentic, spiritually sound foundation. Thoughtless spending and acquisition is like sprinkling water on flower petals rather than feeding the roots. Spend a few weeks denying yourself of your "crutches." Your spirit will begin seeking the resources it craves to be content.

7. Imitate the earth's natural cycles to reduce unrest. One way to connect with nature is to mirror natural cycles. Wake up with the sunrise and rest when the sun sets. If you behave as if the sun and moon are interchangeable, you deny your body natural rhythms. Spend time outdoors when the sun warms you, and your mood is naturally elevated. You feel peaceful due to the healing effects of the sunlight. Nighttime also offers a chance to connect to the Universe. Try sleeping outside under the stars when weather conditions are favorable. As you let your gaze wander across the celestial bodies, you grasp the vastness of the universe and feel peace and oneness. Share this experience with your loved ones to enrich your bonds.

Your experience need not be a stressful, joyless rat race. As you move toward a more natural, harmonious, and sustainable life, you *will* discover the true inner happiness that is your birthright. You can reverse the damage caused by years of artificial living. As you change your unsustainable ways, life will change along with you—and you will find peace and happiness. PE

Dr. Leonid Sharashkin is editor and co-translator of The Ringing Cedars Series and founder of Ringing Cedars Press, the publisher of The Ringing Cedars Series in English. Visit ringingcedars.com.

ACTION: Enjoy your pursuit of happiness.

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Executive Excellence Publishing
Ken Shelton, CEO, Editor-in-Chief
Sarah Hayes, Circulation Manager
Nancy Low, Public Relations
Rob Kennedy, Business Manager
Geoff Pace, Sales

Marketing Offices:
Leadership Excellence
1806 North 1120 West
Provo, UT 84604
1-877-250-1983
1-801-375-4060

Contributing Editors
Bob Davies, Michelle Gall, Judith Glaser, Joan Marques, Brian Tracy, Denis Waitley

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Stress-Busting

Five steps to stay healthy.



by Greg Hicks

LIFE TODAY IS FRAUGHT WITH chaos and fear. As a leadership advisor, I encounter many stressed-out people. A stressed-out and depressed executive is not only ineffective as a leader of others, but is also physically unhealthy. High stress can wreak havoc by suppressing your immunity against viruses, bacteria, and cancer, exacerbating autoimmune diseases, affecting sleep, and worsening heart disease. How can you stay strong and protect yourself and your body during this era of extreme turmoil?

Luckily, you have an incredible stress-busting toolkit at your fingertips that has nothing to do with taking pills, changing your diet, or exercise. It's the power of your mind to generate positive thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Just changing a few key behaviors can influence how much you let threats trigger your primeval stress response.

In the 1990s, my partner, Rick Foster, and I spent three years traveling the world studying extremely happy people. We then distilled our research into the nine universal choices made by these people. We realized that those same choices were being made by the best leaders—those who motivated people and also got great results.

After presenting our system of choices to a group of 300 physicians, scores of doctors said, "You've just presented the behaviors of my most successful patients." We've done extensive research with medical centers and have discovered how positive thoughts and behaviors affect our bodies.

We've developed a system we call *Brilliant Health*. It identifies nine behaviors for making you healthier, reducing stress, and adding greater vitality—regardless of your circumstances. Though it takes a little creativity and flexibility, you can be happier and healthier!

Five Things You Can Do

Here are five simple things from the *Brilliant Health* system that you can do to reduce stress and forge ahead:

1. Start the day with a positive command to your body. Each morning, set an intention for the day. Even though you can't control what may happen that day, you can control your attitude and intentions. Some examples: "Today I intend to focus on the things I value most about my staff," or "Today I'll see my challenges as stimulants rather than as hardships," or "Today I'll leverage the great relationships I have to get things done." These internal statements prime the pump for an upbeat day. It sounds simple, but setting an intention is incredibly powerful. When you continually give yourself positive messages, you actually build new, healthy neural pathways in your brain. Just like physical strength training protects your joints against injury and ramps up your metabolism, this "positive attitude exercise" cushions you from future stressful events and makes it easier to remain optimistic in the present moment.

2. Watch out for the "victim" brain. Catch yourself each time you say something like, "Look what *they* are doing to me now," or "Why does this *always* happen to me?" If you continually frame yourself as a victim, you create an angry, hostile state, and give away your power to change it. Your blood pressure and heart

rate jump, your digestion shuts down, and your immune system prepares for battle even though there's no viral or bacterial threat. Worse still, you build neural pathways in your brain that reinforce the belief that you're a victim.

If you find yourself thinking "poor me," replace that thought immediately with a positive one such as, "What can I do to make things better?" or "What can I do now to prevent that from happening again?" Find ways to be in control and refuse to be a victim.

3. Tell stories about the "good stuff." The more things get tense, the more you need to focus on what's going well. With the economic world collapsing around us, it can be very easy to get drawn into "water cooler doom and gloom." This sends us into a com-

munal biochemical free-fall. Rather, share examples of success. When you tell a success story, or even a funny one, you not only savor the positive aspects of the event, you uplift and motivate staff and colleagues by allowing them to experience good times with you. This isn't just vicarious thrills. Studies show that simply thinking about a positive event is shockingly similar to actually experiencing it. When you do, you send healthy messages to your nervous system, which controls functions like heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration.

4. Build a "trust network." When feeling threatened by uncertainty, leaders often shut down and hold things "close to the vest." But we're social animals: withdrawal has a physical impact. It reduces your ability to heal from injury and impairs immune function. It may feel counter-intuitive, but the best thing for your body during stressful times is to reach out and strengthen your social networks. Find a group of colleagues who you can commit to help and who want to help you in return. This might come in the form of an offer to support someone's initiative, or help out in a staffing crisis. People who continually help others in non-monetary ways live longer than those who don't. They experience less physical pain, too.

5. Indulge your passions. Your interests and passions are often the first to go when you're overloaded. But this is when you need them most! Engaging in things that make you the happiest makes you more resilient. A high level of life satisfaction is associated with living longer. The trick is being satisfied *now*, not some time in the hazy future.

Make a list of everything you love to do and then make an effort to do one thing every day—even if it's small.

Most real passions are about relationships, creativity, and simple amusements. Few people list consumer items—new cars or stereos or computers—as something they love. If you love camping, pick a weekend to go sleep out under the stars. Walk on the beach. Read to the kids. If a vacation has to be postponed, get a book about the destination, read about it, and imagine yourself there. Don't listen when your mind tries to tell you that "It's not the same," or "It would be so much better if . . ." It's your choice how to feel about every activity in your day. And what you choose directly affects your health. **PE**

Greg Hicks teaches leadership and culture change and is author of four books: *Choosing Brilliant Health*, *How We Choose to Be Happy*, *LeaderShock* and *The Martha Is Mine*. Visit www.choosetohappy.com.

ACTION: Try doing these five things.

The 'KISS' Method

Keep it simple, savvy etiquette.



by Dallas Teague Snider

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE between two people who are competing for the same job, client, or deal and have similar backgrounds, educations, skills? The difference is in the attention to detail.

It takes three to five *seconds* to make a first impression; your appearance and verbal communication skills create an instant and lasting impression. By presenting a positive impression, you evoke a favorable reaction and also build self-esteem and confidence.

You rarely get a second chance to make a first impression, and a negative image can block your true potential.

Uncombed hair, casual attire, tattoos, piercing, and an arrogant attitude are inappropriate. You want your image to make people feel confident about your skills and knowledge.

By using proper etiquette, protocol, behaviors and manners, you set yourself apart. *Etiquette intelligence* guides you in communication and establishes effective interactions that build relationships. Regardless of your age, gender, income, education, or marital status, you will be judged based on your social skills and how you react in situations.

When you neglect these skills, you become the victim of your lack of vision, and this leads to lost revenues. Rudeness (a lack of etiquette, courtesy, and kindness) will cost you. By cultivating these social skills, you're seen as someone who can do the job and add value.

In its truest form, *etiquette* is the way you make others feel. Successful people tend to make you feel that you are the most important person in the room. They connect with people. Much of your success is based on your social skills—and these skills can be learned.

What Is Etiquette?

What's the origin of *etiquette*? To keep aristocrats from trampling gardens, the gardener put up signs or *etiquets* to warn them. Since the aristocrats ignored the signs, the King decreed that no one could go beyond the bound of *etiquets*. The meaning expanded to include all rules and regulations regarding what to do and where to stand at court functions.

Today, *etiquette* still means "keep off the grass". By practicing the guidelines

of etiquette, you can build better relationships and present yourself with confidence and authority. Etiquette and protocol intelligence is the key to building relationships and competitive edge.

What Is Protocol?

The term *protocol* is derived from two Greek words, *Protos* meaning "the first" and *kola* meaning "glue". Today, most organizations have their own rules of protocol as part of their culture. What protocols do you have? What is your code of ethics or standards of conduct?

The ability to handle yourself in social situations, have suitable table manners, know how to introduce people without stumbling, and be aware of simple rules of courtesy will build the bridge to success. With etiquette and protocol intelligence, you can make

your best impression. You can have confidence when meeting someone for the first time. By projecting a confident image, you lay the groundwork for mutually beneficial relationships.

To determine how your behavior impacts your personal brand, ask:

- Does my behavior offend, insult, ignore or interrupt another person?
- Would I consider this behavior rude, awkward, or unprofessional if I witnessed someone else doing it?
- Have I assessed the situation to clearly see the implications of my actions?

These questions will help you think before you do something that could hurt your career or relationships. PE

Dallas Teague Snider is founder of Make Your Best Impression and author of The Savvy Professional's Business Etiquette Survival Guide. Call 877-681-3111, info@makeyourbestimpression.com.

ACTION: Present yourself with confidence.

EMOTIONAL • ANXIETY

Embrace Change

Make friends with anxiety.



by Robert Rosen

YOU CAN USE ANXIETY AND uncertainty to close the gap between where you are and where you need to be. You can stop seeing anxiety as something to avoid, and start seeing it as a source of energy that propels you forward. You can learn to create *just enough anxiety* (JEA).

JEA enables you to embrace uncertainty and manage the ups and downs. JEA is productive energy that makes you want to do better—an optimal state of arousal that enables you to stretch beyond current reality into your desired future. You can embrace uncertainty, turn challenges into opportunities, mobilize people, optimize performance, and drive change.

When you see challenge as opportunity, you generate positive energy. You can create JEA in two ways:

1. Lead with an open mind and an open heart. When you *lead with an open mind*, you are self-aware, a life-learner, unafraid of change. You hold seemingly contradictory thoughts in your mind at the same time. You know what you can and can't control and consistently take charge of your life while remaining open to the unexpected and modulating the amount of anxiety you feel.

When you *lead with an open heart*, you exhibit emotional honesty, empathy, compassion, and resilience. You

experience the full range of human emotions—from pain and fear to love and gratitude—and express each emotion in healthy ways. You feel at home in uncharted territory and take risks to lead people through change.

2. Master three paradoxes. You can demonstrate seemingly opposite qualities by leading from the center of three paradoxes: *realistic optimism*, *constructive impatience*, and *confident humility*.

• **Realistic optimism.** *Realism* is all about seeking and speaking truth—for yourself and others. *Optimism* is all about dreaming the future. When you combine the two, you can generate the energy you need to move forward.

• **Constructive impatience.** Being *constructive* is about creating a psychologically safe environment. Being *impatient* is about challenging the limits—pushing yourself and others to expand capability. It takes both to succeed.

• **Confident humility.** Being *confident* means believing in your ability to master your environment; being *humble*

means you can admit that you don't know everything. By mastering both, you can build relationships of trust.

You too can become a JEA leader. You can see change as opportunity. You can face reality while dreaming the future. You can see people bigger and better than they see themselves. And you can play to your strengths while empowering others. You start by making friends with anxiety. PE

Robert Rosen is CEO of Healthy Companies Intl. and the author of Just Enough Anxiety (Portfolio). Visit www.justenoughanxiety.com.

ACTION: Create just enough anxiety.

Search for Meaning

Megatrend of the 21st Century.



by Alex Pattakos

THE SEARCH FOR MEANING IS a “megatrend” of the 21st Century. I make this claim based on my experience as a practitioner and academic. I have observed a “shift in consciousness” about what really matters to people in their daily lives. And this new awareness includes how people perceive and what they expect from their *work* lives.

Have you ever worked in a job that you really didn’t like? Or even if you were satisfied with your job—say because it paid well or seemed secure—you still didn’t feel fulfilled by the work that you were doing? More broadly, have you ever wondered if there was more to “life” than what you were experiencing? Have you ever felt like “bad” things just happened to you, challenging situations that were out of your control? If you answered *yes* to any of these questions, or even ask yourself such questions, you should know that you are not alone. It is natural to ask yourself such fundamental, “existential,” questions about the way you work and live.

It doesn’t matter how old you may be, how many academic degrees you may have behind your name, or what your job title and years of experience may be, if you *choose* to live and work on “cruise control” or “autopilot”—that is, if you are *unaware* of *why* you do what you do, *how* you effect (and are effected by) others, and *what* difference you are truly making in your life, in your work, and in the world. In this context, to be aware is to know meaning.

By nature, we are creatures of habit. Searching for a life that is both predictable and within our “comfort zone,” we rely on routine and learned thinking patterns. We create pathways in our minds in much the same way that a path is beaten through a grass field from repeated use. And because these patterns are automatic, we may come to believe that these habitual ways of thinking and behaving are “beyond our control.” Life, it seems,

just happens to us. Not only do we rationalize our responses to life, but we also fall prey to forces that work to limit our potential as human beings.

By viewing ourselves as relatively powerless and driven by our instincts, the possibility that we create, or at least *co-create*, our own reality becomes difficult to grasp. Instead, we effectively lock ourselves inside our own mental prisons and, as a consequence, lose sight of our own natural potential, as well as that of others. We become “prisoners of our thoughts.”

Through our search for meaning, in our everyday life and in our work, we can reshape our patterns of thinking, “unfreeze” ourselves from our limited perspective, find the key, and unlock the door of our “prison cell.”

Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who suffered through imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, found meaning because of, and in spite of, the suffering all around him.

His life’s work resulted in the therapeutic approach called *Logotherapy*, which paved the way for us to know meaning as a foundation of our existence. And the path to a life with meaning includes meaningful work.

Viewing life as inherently meaningful and unlimited in potential requires, along with a

shift in consciousness, *responsible* action. As Dr. Frankl said, the potential for meaning that exists in each moment can only be searched for and discovered by each of us individually. This responsibility is “to be actualized by each of us at any time, even in the most miserable situations and up to the last breath of ourselves.” When we seek and discover the authentic meaning of our existence and experience, we discover that life doesn’t happen *to us*. We happen *to life*; and *we* make it meaningful.

Viktor Frankl’s *Logotherapy* seeks to make us aware of our *freedom of response* to all aspects of our destiny, helps us to find concrete meaning in our lives, and strengthens trust in the unconditional meaningfulness of life and the dignity of the person. By applying this philosophy

to work, we can deeply humanize our working lives and bring deeper meaning to work. In fact, we can find *unconditional meaning* in our work/life situations and experience the *unconditional* value of our colleagues as unique human beings.

When we celebrate our differences as cheerfully as we celebrate our similarities, the result is a powerful synergy. When we bring this awareness to work, we are the catalysts for profound changes that enhance our ability to find meaning.

I believe that the *search for meaning* in life is the *primary, intrinsic motivation* of all people. It is not a “secondary rationalization” of instinctual drives, which effectively serves to *reduce* and marginalize human potential. Indeed, to know that we are blessed with meaning, that it graces every aspect and moment of our lives, is true freedom. At work, it frees us from the judgment of our bosses and co-workers, frees us to be in tune with what we know best—our own melody of life. It’s a melody that only we can sing; and when we do, no one can ever sing it for us.

When we live and work *with* meaning, we can choose to discover meaning, to see meaning, and to share meaning. We can choose our attitudes to life and work, choose how to respond to others, choose how to respond to our jobs, and choose how to make the best of difficult circumstances. We can transcend ourselves and be transformed by meaning. We can find connection to meaning at work in unusual places and with unexpected people. We can become meaningfully engaged in whatever we do and experience. Meaning is full of surprises. It defies our expectations and heightens our awareness—it becomes us.

No matter what your job, it is the *work* you do that represents who you are. When you meet your work with enthusiasm, appreciation, generosity, and integrity, you meet it with meaning. And no matter how mundane a job might seem at the time, you can transform it with meaning. Meaning is life’s legacy—and it is available to you at work as it is in your deepest spiritual quests. You breathe, therefore you are—spiritual. Life is; therefore it is—meaningful. You do, therefore you work.

The *search for meaning* is a megatrend of the 21st Century. Your quest for meaning, in your work and life, is yours now, at this very moment—as long as you are not a prisoner of your thoughts. PE

Alex Pattakos, Ph.D., is founder of Center for Meaning and author of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts* (Berrett-Koehler). Call 505-988-5235, visit www.prisonersofourthought.com or email alex@prisonersofourthoughts.com.

ACTION: Find more meaning in your work.

12 Ways to Thrive

Even in challenging times.



by Carol Kinsey Goman

WHEN YOU FEEL THE PAIN of an economic slowdown, you need to be aware of and proactive about possible changes in your life. While you can't control the economy or the other forces of change, you can position yourself to survive and thrive in these challenging times.

Here are 12 tips to consider:

1. Don't get caught unaware. See the early signs of looming layoffs, downsizing or shutdowns to avoid being caught by surprise. Keep your eyes open for signs of trouble: Notice if new competitors are crowding the market, or if demand for your product is dropping.

2. Imagine the worst-case scenario and make a plan. If you lost your job, what would you do? When you examine the situation, consider possible options. You'll feel that you have more control over your situation. Once you have a plan of action, stop focusing on the potential downside and start searching for potential opportunities.

3. Neutralize your fear. When fear is active, exploratory activity and risk-taking are turned off. You can neutralize fear by avoiding people who are all "doom and gloom" and by turning off the barrage of bad news from media.

4. Keep a positive attitude. You never know when a seemingly negative situation may turn out to be for the best. If your job changes or disappears, it's an excellent chance to learn something new, discover untapped skills, and meet new people. If you keep a positive attitude, you can rally your energy and further your career.

5. Stay in the game. In tough times, your first reaction may be to "hunker down." But this is a time to become visible and showcase your dedication to the mission and values. Volunteer for projects, take credit for your success, and speak up. And if you think of ways your organization can save money, now is your time to shine!

6. Watch what you don't say. Use positive body language in meetings: maintain good eye contact, sit forward, and lean slightly toward the person speaking. These nonverbal signals show that you are engaged and energized.

7. Read the body language of your boss. Only a small part of what you

interpret from what people say to you comes from the words they use. You get most of the message (and *all* emotional nuance behind the words) from vocal tone, pacing, facial expressions, and body language. Hone this innate but latent ability and turn it into a skill.

8. Get a life. When you have interests beyond your profession, you are more resilient under stress and more effective on the job. From art to music to sports to friends and family, you'll deal better with work-related trauma when your life includes a balance.

9. Never stop learning. Your value depends less on what you know, and on how quickly you can update your knowledge to respond to changing conditions. Join a professional association, talk with colleagues, and read magazines to update your knowledge.

10. Network. Social capital is the wealth (or benefit) that exists because of your social relationships. It's the value created by your connections to others. There is no more valuable commodity.

11. Take time to mourn. The start of anything new means the death of the old. Losing a job means leaving a workplace, friends, and mentors. It is natural (and healthy) to grieve for what you have lost. Doing so helps you let go of the past so that you can more quickly move on to whatever the future holds.

12. Go for it! An uncertain future can be stressful and traumatic. But it can also be exhilarating. Choose to embrace change as an adventure. Enjoy it! **PE**

Carol Kinsey Goman, Ph.D., is a speaker and author of The Nonverbal Advantage. Call 510-526-1727, email: CGoman@CKG.com, or visit www.CKG.com.

ACTION: Thrive in these challenging times.

PROFESSIONAL • RESPONSIBILITY

A Leader Awakens

Accept personal responsibility.



by Chris Edgelow

IGUESS IT IS UP TO ME.

These insightful words were recently expressed by a director at the end of a day-long discussion on leading change. I asked each member of the group to describe their day. He described the burden of responsibility he felt when he realized that if the changes in his division were to succeed, it was up to him to step up and lead out.

Most of his past training and experience had prepared him for management; but if his people were going to get through these changes, he would have to lead them.

Proactiveness is at the heart of personal excellence.

"True proactiveness comes from seeing how we contribute to our own problems," observes Peter Senge.

Being open to seeing how you create the situation you are in and then stepping up to do something different is essential. At the end of this day, that is exactly what this senior leader did.

He recognized his role in *engaging people* much more directly. He knew he needed to *communicate the direction* they were going and *why they needed to go there* more simply. He needed to *align his division strategy* with the organization strategy. He needed to cull out a few changes that didn't align with

everything else. He needed to ensure that the project teams were developing solid plans and that everyone knew what they had to do differently for the changes to succeed. He knew there were a few things he needed to ensure everyone could *stop doing* that would help ease the work load and facilitate key changes. These realizations did not come easily, but he did get it.

All too often I hear: *Someone needs to do something about all this mess.* That someone won't be anyone by the name of "they", "them", "the leaders" or anyone other than the person doing the speaking (you). This director had assumed that all the work of leading change was being done, by *someone*. By the end of our day together, he realized that no one was doing it—it was up to him to provide the leadership.

Taking personal responsibility for ensuring change is successful is an act of true leadership. Using "I" rather than "they", ensuring people know where the buck stops, being inclusive while

taking ownership is essential.

On this day, this director stepped up. And he did it in a public forum. There is no question in my mind that he will act on all of the commitments he made on his *Personal Action Plan*.

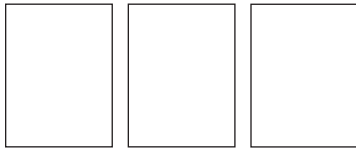
That is what personal leadership and excellence are all about: Speaking out and stepping up to the obligations of doing things differently to move forward. **PE**

Chris Edgelow is founder and principal of Sundance Consulting. Email chris@sundance.ca.

ACTION: Awaken the leader in you.

Brain Gain

Achieve top performance.



by Monty Miller, Deanna Phelps and Stephen Hager

NEUROSCIENCE MAY BE THE KEY TO lead more effectively and unleash your power. Every brain is “wired” differently based on genetics, learning and experience. Neuroscience focuses on leveraging sensory and cognitive strengths to achieve top performance.

Using neuroscience, you can experience the “unrecognized solutions” to long-term problems and opportunities.

Identifying the recognized problems.

Picture the costly problems that plague you today. Then go back 10 years. How many past challenges are still current problems? What’s on your list?

Approaches to the problems. What models, programs and assessments have you used to address your recognized problems and opportunities?

1. Models, principles and programs:

Many durable principles, processes, and practices of personal human development have established the foundation for business, leadership and organizational development. Mental models survive and create culture when they yield the desired outcomes while retaining motivated, productive, and fulfilled workers. How effective have these models and programs been in solving your recognized problems?

2. Psychology and assessments:

Assessments and tests measure personalities, behaviors, skills, competencies, intelligences, values, compatibilities, “team players” and “sales types.” These tools engender respect for the uniqueness and diversity of the workforce and help us understand ourselves and others. How effective have these tools been in addressing your recognized problems?

Do you perceive a gap to be bridged? What’s missing may be the *unrecognized solution* to your recognized problems.

Seven Principles

Seven principles impact how your brain is wired and how you perform.

1. Sensory and cognitive thinking strengths are unique and diverse.

Sensory information enters through five senses—sight (visual), touch/movement (kinesthetic), sound (auditory), smell and taste. The first three are reliably and accurately measured. To remember, make decisions and perform, two sensory modalities (usually your strongest ones) are required.

Sensory mode sequences (example: Kinesthetic, Visual and then Auditory) determine what you pay most attention to. Score intensities indicate levels of awareness and attention given to each sensory mode. Stored sensory information is the basis of memory and ability to think, solve problems, make decisions, express and perform in work and pleasure. Cognitive thinking is “how” you process sensory information in two hemispheres. The neocortex (thinking brain) has two hemispheres separated by a bundle of nerves (corpus callosum), the communication bridge between hemispheres. The *left brain* is the logical side that provides order, realism, sequence, and timeliness. The *right brain* operates thousands of times faster



and provides new ideas, possibilities, options, innovation, and systemic big-picture thinking. Most people have a clear preference or neuron pathways for either sequential (left) or global (right) thinking. Some people are integrated or more whole-brained; they use both hemispheres equally to stay engaged.

2. Sensory and cognitive thinking modes get stronger with use. Your brain contains 100 billion neurons—the building blocks for your unique neuron pathways that affect memory, performance and decision-making. Taking in sensory information and thinking about it (cognitive thinking) builds a neuro-network. All modes get stronger through conscious use.

3. Work and life activities have neuro-sensory and cognitive signatures. Identifying the neuro-sensory and cognitive “signatures” of what needs to be achieved is the basis to align neuroscience strengths to tasks, assignments and projects. *Sensory modes:* Visual—proof reading, assessing data, quality

control observations, reading instructions, visual arts; Kinesthetic—hands-on activities, operating equipment, physical action and movement; Auditory—listening, asking and answering questions seeking clarity, crafting language, hearing tone of voice, lyrics. *Cognitive thinking modes:* Sequential—analysis, timeliness, orderliness, logic, process and procedures, tactical; Global—open-ended, options and possibilities, systemic, exploratory, designing, ideating, strategic; Integrated: a combination of Sequential and Global activities.

4. Physical environments affect productivity. Each sensory and cognitive thinking mode operates best in its ideal physical environment for enhanced efficiency and performance. This principle applies to all modes, regardless of preference or strength. These environments maximize productivity based on the nature of work to be completed.

5. Effective communication and accelerated learning are connected to strengths. When you receive information through neuroscience strengths, (strongest sensory and cognitive thinking preferences), you understand more in less time, making more time available for productive work or pleasure. When learning resources and teaching methods are aligned with your neuroscience strengths, accelerated learning occurs.

6. Sensory creative modes and blind spots are two sides of the same coin. The sensory mode you pay least attention to is both your “creative mode” and “blind spot.” Your “creative mode” is the portal to “breakthrough thinking” and new insights. Simple methods permit you to access stored information. Awareness of your “blind spots” helps avoid costly mistakes. On teams, people’s strengths cover each others “blind spots.”

7. Default modes. When you’re under excessive stress (worry, anxiety, tired, frustration), your brain becomes less resourceful and defaults to its strongest sensory and thinking mode. Two of your three sensory modes and your least preferred cognitive mode operate at lower levels or shut down completely. Awareness of neuroscience strengths, how your brain functions under stress and methods to bring the brain back online, reduces errors and accidents.

Alignment of your strengths with what you know and have to do is the *unrecognized solution* to most recognized problems and opportunities. PE

Monty Miller is President of International Performance Solutions. www.InternationalPerformanceSolutions.com. Deanna Phelps and Stephen Hager are principals of The HADRON Group. www.TheHadronGroup.com.

ACTION: Recognize your strengths.

Thoughts and Choices

Align actions with values.



by Julie Fuimano

YOU HAVE THOUSANDS OF thoughts each day. How do you determine which thoughts are good ones and which thoughts lead you to good outcomes?

It's hard to know. You can become attached to certain thought patterns that bring you results that are not intended or desired. And yet you cling to these thoughts because you've been repeating them for so long that they've become habit; they are all you know. How do you detach from your thoughts and learn new ways of thinking? How do you know what thoughts to change?

You need to examine the thoughts that drive your behavior. The answers you seek to "why" your life is as it is, "why" things don't turn out the way you want, or "why" you are the way you are, can be found in your thinking. Your behavior and your emotional state are merely symptoms—a reflection or manifestation of your thoughts. Your thoughts create your reality.

Hierarchy of Value

Why do you make one choice over another? You do what you *perceive* will add the greatest value. This does not mean that your choice *actually* adds the greatest value but rather what you *perceives* will add value.

What is of greatest value? Is there a way to measure "value"? Dr. Robert Hartman delineated a *hierarchy of value* and created an assessment to determine how *your perception* of value differs from the *actual* hierarchy of value. Using this profile, you can pinpoint which of your thoughts serve you and which of your thoughts sabotage you.

Hartman identified three categories or domains of thought: 1) *Intrinsic*—thoughts that involve singular concepts whose elements are unique, irreplaceable, and infinite; 2) *Extrinsic*—abstract concepts whose elements are measurable, comparable, and finite; and 3) *Systemic*—mental constructs, ideas, and rules whose elements are absolute (right-wrong, all-nothing). Hartman also identified that we think in an external world where thoughts are about the world at large; and in an internal world where thoughts are about ourselves. Hence, there are six domains in which all of your thoughts can be classified.

Thoughts = Value

To think is to value. Your thoughts determine what you value and what choices you make. Your life is a reflection of what you value. For instance, when you learn that people are first in the hierarchy of value, that human life is of greatest value, you have to make an effort to *devalue* someone by screaming at them, putting them down, or judging them. When you learn how to value things according to the hierarchy and make choices based on what *actually* adds value, rather than what you *perceive* will add value, you make better choices and have less stress about it.

By recognizing the thoughts that trigger your reactions—emotional or behavioral—and then choosing different and better thoughts, you can create different outcomes. In fact, you can rewire

your brain when new thought patterns are adopted and consistent effort applied to the new pattern, allowing the old neurological connection to atrophy. You *can* learn at any age, and you *can* rewire your brain for success.

Your life and choices reflect your values. I invite you to think about how you live your life and the *choices* you make. There is *power in choice*. By questioning what you value, you arm yourself with better information so you can make better choices. Your choices create your life experience. If something in your life is not as you would like it to be, observe your thoughts and ask, *What am I valuing?* Align your actions with your values. **PE**

Julie Fuimano is a speaker and writer. Visit www.NurturingYourSuccess.com or email Julie@NurturingYourSuccess.com.

ACTION: Align your actions with your values.

Brainstorming

1 + 1 equals more than two.



by Barry Eisen

IF YOU'RE BLOCKED FROM A solution to a problem, your belief system likely created the block, and some shift in thinking is necessary. As Einstein said, "You can't solve a problem with the same mind that created it."

You need different perspectives that move you beyond your old beliefs and limited thinking. Otherwise, you keep doing what has proven not to work or produce desired results.

Done well, brainstorming enables creative thinking, camaraderie, loyalty, energy, synergy, and problem-solving.

Often brainstorming sessions are dominated by top producers or leaders. These sessions usually have an agenda and produce poor results.

Without viewing new or discarded ideas from different vantage points, the "brainstorming" session won't deliver.

A *real brainstorm session*—open to ideas of those invited and respectful of insights of those rarely heard who may perform menial tasks associated with the goal or project—can streamline old paths, promote better communications, identify new solutions, spark enthusiasm, and create team bonding.

Safety and warmth for each member can infuse excitement into a project and create a win for everyone. This

builds the team from its roots, its people, by creating a culture in which people work well with their companions.

Optimize Brainstorming

Here are nine ideas:

1. **Create a relaxed atmosphere** to encourage participation.
2. **Appoint a facilitator** who keeps the group moving and on point and writes ideas on a large board.
3. **Set a ground rule:** There are no *wrong* or *stupid* ideas.
4. **Include and respect people with different perspectives** who foster fresh thinking (new or low-level people see things from a fresh vantage point).
5. **Banish laptops and blackberries:** it's easy to hide behind note-taking tools, distractions, and digital helpers.
6. **Put people on the spot, gently.** Wallflowers suck the energy out of a room.
7. **Keep the meeting short.** Creativity tends to come in short bursts.

8. **Change the venue or seating.** The same seats tend to provide the same views and same drivers. Change the venue for upbeat camaraderie!

9. **Set regular brainstorming sessions.** It takes time for some people to express themselves comfortably, to recognize the safety of this environment.

Form your own Mastermind group of 3 to 10 people for a regular brainstorming. You will come up with new ideas and creative solutions. **PE**

Barry Eisen is CEO of Developmental Excelerations. Call 818-769-4300, email barryeisen@roadrunner.com or visit www.barryeisen.com.

ACTION: Brainstorm with a mastermind group.

Personal Rhythms

Understand and apply them.

by Val Gokenbach

OUTCOMES OF RHYTHMIC patterns can have a profound effect on your mind, body, and success. *Rhythm* is a strong, regular pattern of movement or sound. Examples can be found all around you, such as the hum of a machine, a person walking, weather or seasonal changes, and animal behaviors, like migration.

Your body is driven by rhythms, such as breathing, heartbeat, hormone secretions, and requirements for sleep, bowel and bladder habits. Maintaining these rhythms is a key to your success.

The origin of these rhythms begins with planetary changes that take place over a 24-hour period (Circadian rhythms). You can use these rhythms to your advantage. The rhythms in nature provide the basis for your personal behaviors. For example, you sleep at night and perform most of your activities during daylight hours. Life experiences and social contacts also influence personal rhythms in behavior.

Thought Rhythms

The most influential personal rhythms are likely those of the mind—the way you think and process information. What calls you into action in your life is desire, but what helps you achieve your goals is the belief in yourself that you can achieve the goal. This belief in success is generated through positive thought rhythms. Unfortunately, most self-talk is negative thought rhythms. This negative talk becomes habitual patterns of thought rhythms that affect behaviors, limiting the attempt at new goals or the achievement of current goals.

The process of thought is transference of energy fields (thought forms) that are sent out and react with other energy fields. Proponents of the law of attraction say that we receive what we think from the universe based on our intention, either positive or negative. Positive thought processes set you on a course to achieve what you believe you can. In response to this belief, you exhibit behaviors necessary to achieve the goal.

Thought Rhythms and Stress

Habitual thought patterns, societal pressures, and life choices contribute to the degree of stress that you experience. You experience some stress daily, and high stress on occasion. Illnesses such as cardiac disease, hypertension, and cancer can be attributed to stress.

Stress refers to any demand—either physical or emotional—placed on the body initiating the stress response and kicking the body into a state of “hyperdrive.” This state does not allow for rest and recuperation and severely limits the functioning of the immune system, alters hormone secretion, affects all body systems, and contributes to emotional depression.

Ironically, emotional stress is triggered by your thought processes secondary to a fear. “If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is due to your estimation of it. And this you can revoke at every minute,” said Marcus Aurelius. So, you need to identify stressors, compartmentalize them, and control the stress responses. The meditation moment (MM), a way to control stressful situations, helps identify and dismiss stress. There are four steps: 1) when you feel stress, ask what just happened; 2) identify what in the event is creating the stress; 3) identify why this is bothering you; and 4) adapt a quick strategy to deal with the stress and dismiss it.

For example, a common high stress event is being stuck in traffic. Here is the MM analysis and strategy: 1) What just happened? *Unexpected traffic.* 2) What is causing my stress? *Being late for work.* 3) Why is this bothering me? *Worried about my status with my boss.* 4) Strategy: *I have no control over traffic patterns and need to deal with them. The best I can do is to call my boss and explain the situation. Dismiss the stress and relax.*

Most stressors are minor, and you can dismiss them with less worry.

Trifecta of Health

There is more to a healthy life than simply thinking positively and reducing stress levels. Proper care of your

body increases your strength. I call these three components the *Trifecta of Health*: exercise, sleep and nutrition.

1. Exercise rhythms. Exercise is linked to good health and happier lives; yet few people engage in regular physical activity. Even exercise programs started late in life can yield phenomenal results with improved strength, body image, and quality of life. Not only does exercise improve your physical strength, but also boosts the immune system, promotes restful sleep, decreases stress and improves self-esteem and emotional well-being. Your body does not need an abundance of exercise to be healthy—30 minutes of cumulative exercise over the day is all you need. Two keys to success however, are regularity and overload. Exercise regularity means repeating your workout four times a week, and overload means working the body a little harder when activity becomes easy.

2. Sleep rhythms. When you are busy, you tend to remove sleep from your schedules, at the risk of your health. Half of all people are sleep-deprived regularly. Longer work schedules, longer commutes to and from work, family responsibilities and elder care are some reasons. Over 100,000 automobile accidents per year are directly related to lack of sleep. Road rage and societal violence increase in situations of hyper-irritability caused by sleep deprivation. Employers report a decrease in productivity, and many drivers report dozing off. Lack of sleep decreases the stress threshold and increases stress response.

Evaluate the quality and quantity of your sleep and improve it.

3. Nutritional rhythms. If you would chart your diet for a week you would find distinct, habitual patterns of eating that may or may not be good for you. You may even find that you eat the same menu over each week. Your dietary choices may be a factor of lifestyle and time availability—hence the advent of fast foods. To change your nutritional rhythms, you must first recognize the reason for your choices. It is helpful to keep a diet diary for a week, recording everything you eat, the times you eat and what you were doing at that time.

Where you notice excessive snacking or unhealthy meal choices, find an alternative. Cut back calories and increase activity. Start slow and celebrate success!

Focusing on personal rhythms guides you to healthy rhythms that keep your body strong and your mind sound. **PE**

Val Gokenbach is author of Tap Dancing Through Life (Advantage Media). Visit www.tapdancingthroughlife.com or call 313-510-8799.

ACTION: Create your own healthy rhythms.

Win the Big Ones

Utilize scientific spirituality.



by Leo Kim

LIFE IS LIKE A COLLAGE OF vignettes from your personal contacts, professional aspirations, your needy passions, and dealing with the “hygiene” issues of handling all the details of your life. Often rifts develop between competing demands for your time, attention, and commitment. *Winning the big ones* involves wise juggling of all the needs and prioritizing the “wants” while healing the rifts. I believe that the use of scientific spirituality is the surest method for hitting the jackpots in your life.

Scientific spirituality seems like an oxymoron; however, you can use a scientific method to find your true self.

Meditation is but one of several methods to access the spiritual realm. Having been an executive for 20 years, I find scientific spirituality invaluable in accessing the part of me which is best able to resolve conflicts, prioritize my time, and illuminate the path to success.

How often do you act out of extreme emotion—then realize the error after relaxing or sleeping? When anger or fear strikes, imagine the presence of a spirit watching you. This “spirit” could be a loved one, living or deceased, whose presence will help you find the “wise one” in the recesses of your mind.

Often you might feel overwhelmed by a problem or issue. The expression “sleep on it” is excellent advice. I’ve experienced tremendous insight on key issues at 4 a.m. in a half-sleep state.

During meditation, specific brain functions cease and access to creativity occurs. Stress triggers the opposite in the brain where “scream-like messages” drown out the logical and creative. Meditation is quieting the mind so that the best of you can be heard and recognized. Accessing your true self surfaces wise priorities and creative solutions.

If you think that the patterns you develop for handling stress, fear, and anger can’t be changed, I want to change your mind by rewiring your brain.

Use your mind to change your brain. For two decades, I’ve used meditation to help people “rewire” their brains. For example, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) patients who practice meditation can rewire their brains and reduce or eliminate the OCD urges to incessantly

wash their hands or worry if they left a door unlocked. In a meditative state, if they focus on an enjoyable activity such as sitting in their garden, the brain is rewired, diminishing the OCD impulse and strengthening connections to alternate thoughts and behaviors. In this sense, the mind can change the brain.

Similarly you can rewire the brain to have the spirit of a loved one sit on your shoulder. In a meditative state, recall a time when fear or anger triggered a regrettable response. Then imagine your loved one sitting on your shoulder. Suddenly, you are calm. Now imagine the appropriate response and insert the new response. Recall other situations you wish to reframe and repeat this exercise. You’ll win more of the big ones if, when anger or fear strikes, your spirit soon arrives and you show the new response.

PHYSICAL • RESILIENCE

Your Life

It’s what you make it.



by Joan Marques

YOU CAN MAKE YOURSELF as happy and healthy as you want. It all depends on what you reflect on, and who or what you compare yourself to.

You may reflect on mishaps and mistakes, and consider yourself the *biggest loser* of all time. Or, you may reflect on your victories, and consider yourself the *biggest winner*.

In life, you make choices. Some of your choices are great; others are mediocre or stupid. The art is to decide what you will do with the memories of your decisions. Will you allow them to drag you down, embarrass you, and guide you to make even worse mistakes? Or will you learn from past mistakes, feel relieved for being over them, and use the lessons to progress?

One mistake is to place time limits on your dreams. You may want your dreams to materialize when *you* are ready. If they don’t get realized then and there, you tend to give up on them and settle for less, or for nothing at all. You may become bitter and depressed. You may consider yourself a *lost case*.

There is an alternative. Your dreams may not come true at the time when—or how—you picture them to, but who says that it is too late after that? You have creativity, and flexibility. You can always modify your dreams at differ-

Let food help you become a winner. Your optimum physical health is when you properly nourish your body and brain with a positive omega 3 to omega 6 fatty acid ratio. Avoid sources of processed fat such as oils (except flax seed oil), butter, milk, cheese, and cream. Carbs should be mainly sprouted grains in moderation which do not spike blood sugar. Eat whole natural foods, little meat, mainly vegetables and a serving of fruit. In time you’ll approach an ideal physique—you’ll feel better with improved appearance and energy.

Now that you’ve tuned up you mind and body, you can heal the rifts in your life and win the big ones. **PE**

Leo Kim, Ph.D., is a CEO in biotechnology, spiritual healer, and author of Healing the Rift. Call 760-448-2859, email leo@healingtheriftbook.com.

ACTION: Win more of your big battles.

ent stages of your life and still work on realizing them in a different manner. So, refuse to give up on your dreams. Develop the creativity, perseverance, and ingenuity to reshape your dreams to new circumstances, and then do what it takes to realize them, no matter how long it takes.

Dreams keep people alive. Viktor Frankl, holocaust survivor, credits the dream of publishing his book to surviving the Auschwitz concentration camp. The original manuscript was destroyed, so Frankl set out to rewrite his book on scraps of paper found in the camp without knowing whether

he’d ever get out. But he got out in 1945, published his book, and then wrote *Man’s Search for Meaning*.

You’ll always have stress in your life. As one issue is resolved, another emerges. If you let these things get to you, you risk becoming lethargic, disheartened, passive.

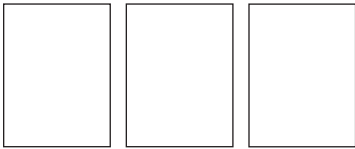
You can also decide to think of possibilities. You can think of people, like Frankl, who go through extreme situations and emerge stronger. You can use your gifts and talents. You can reflect on your circumstance and realize that it could be worse, and that *you* can change it for the better. You can *plan*, set attainable goals, and take small, doable steps that lead to a bigger plan—achieve small victories that lead to a major win. This is your life, and life is just what you make it. **PE**

Joan Marques is author of The Awakened Leader and founder of the Academy of Spirituality and Professional Excellence. Visit www.joanmarques.com.

ACTION: Think of your possibilities.

Leverage Strengths

And build new ones you'll need.



by Bob Eichinger, Guangrong Dai,
and King Yii Tang

YOU LIKELY HAVE A FEW STRENGTHS around which you can build a great career; you likely have some of the most mission-critical skills for your job, have no big shortcomings in the mission-critical skills, and have no glaring derailers. Moreover, you aren't expected to have all of the competencies listed on a "success profile." Success is not a matter of perfection. To succeed, you only need certain core competencies.

The so-called "strengths movement" advises you to find your strengths, build on your strengths, fashion a career around your strengths, find a place and a role that plays to your strengths, and work to make your strengths stronger. It seems that there's less need to address weaknesses. It seems to be "all strengths, all the time."

Should you use the strengths you have and mold a career around them? How many strengths are enough?

What is Strength?

Strengths might be the talents, skills, and competencies you do best. If you need five strengths to succeed, these are the five things you do better than anything else that relates to your work.

Is finding your five strengths and going with them enough to succeed? How strong do your strengths need to be? How good do you have to be in those five strengths to be successful?

While everyone has five "personal best" strengths, the question is whether your five personal best strengths are strong enough to build a career around.

To answer that question, you must compare and contrast your five personal best strengths with others you are competing with doing the same work. Perhaps it's enough to be in the top 10 percent of the competitive population.

When you are out to create the best team, what level of talent do you need in your key positions? How good does your team need to be? Do you look for the best of 10? Among the top three of 10? Anyone above average?

You can look at strengths in two ways: 1) what you are personally best at, independent of how strong you are compared to others; and 2) compare your strengths to relevant other people (how strong you are relative to an appropriate norm group). We refer to these two ways to define a strength as "personal best" and "competitive."

Now, how many people have five competitive strengths, five skills at which they excel compared to their peers? If you have to make a career out of five strengths, you better first make sure you have five strengths that stand out relative to your peer group.

Most people don't have five competitive strengths. So, if they have high career aspirations, they'll likely be disappointed. Hence, *you need to leverage your competitive strengths.*

What competitive strengths are we talking about? How common are these strengths? How important are these



strengths to your success? It is better to *leverage things that you are uniquely good at*, rather than those things most people are good at; otherwise, your strengths are merely commodities. If you have five competitive strengths, but they are the same ones most others at your level have, they won't set you apart. If you have five competitive strengths in areas that few people are strong in, you are more distinctive. We call this third type a *distinctive competitive strength.*

What strengths differentiate the people who possess them? In addition to personal best, competitive, and distinctively competitive strengths, there is a fourth type: *distinctively competitive and aligned.* This refers to what you do better than your peers and is also central to succeeding in your job or career.

Ask yourself, "Are my five top competitive strengths the right ones? Are those the strengths I need to excel? To have a fulfilling career?" It isn't enough to have five competitive strengths—unless those strengths are key to your being effective in your work.

Since two out of three people do not have a single *competitive and aligned*

strength, it's a good idea to bank on your strengths—if you have five and they are strong relative to your peers and they are the right five.

Advancement involves several transitions, each one leading to a change in skill requirements. What works in previous positions will not guarantee success at the next level. The strengths required for success are different at different levels. If you select five strengths to concentrate on early, chances are that those skills will no longer be the essential ones required as you move up.

The Take-Home Message

Few people have five strengths at the competency level. Also, it isn't likely that a constant set of strengths will help you build a progressive career path.

Again, there are at least four ways to think about strengths: your *personal best*—which may not be enough to succeed; *competitive strengths*—skills stronger than most of your competitors; *distinctive competitive strengths* that distinguish you from everybody else, but may not be the keys to success in your job, role, or career; and *competitive and aligned strengths*—the best bet for long-term success.

If you plan to succeed by focusing on your strengths, make sure you do more than just discover and build on your strengths (your *personal best*). You will also need your strengths to stand out compared to your peers (*competitive strengths*). If you want to stand out and have a better chance for promotions, make sure your strengths set you apart (*distinctive competitive strengths*). Finally, hope that your five distinctive and competitive strengths include the ones that make a difference in long-term success (*competitive and aligned strengths*).

You may not have five strengths that are competitive and aligned, much less distinctive. That might have something to do with why you stumble, derail, and fail. So, if you aspire to career growth, *start developing things you're not good at now.* The way to succeed is to *leverage current strengths that matter*—as you build new ones that matter now and down the career path.

Discover your strengths; then gauge how you compare to the people you compete with; find out which strengths you need to fulfill your career dreams; and work on ones that are not up to par. Use your strengths if you have them, and build them if you don't. **PE**

Robert W. Eichinger is Vice Chairman of Korn/Ferry Intl. and cocreator of Leadership Architect tools. King Yii Tang is a researcher at Lominger Intl., a Korn/Ferry Company. Guangrong Dai joined the research team.

ACTION: Leverage your distinctive strengths.

Bad Economy

Get your house in order.



by Addison Wiggin

PANIC ON WALL STREET! Confusion in Washington! Recession? Depression?

Inflation? Deflation? Turn on any news show, read your favorite blog, or pick up the paper and you'll be inundated by information on the economy. But who knows what's really happening? You owe it to your country and your future to find out the truth—and don't expect the government to be much help.

It's amazing how poorly the bailout plan and our economic situation were explained to us. In their haste to pass the plan, our leaders either ignored or glossed over the long-term implications.

The outburst of elation and pride that came with electing President Obama was refreshing, but we can't let the excitement blind us to a sobering reality that threatens our nation. While we were glued to the election and inauguration coverage, the Treasury Department borrowed \$550 billion, hoping no one would notice.

Our economy is still in shambles, and all of us—our government, new president, and we as citizens—have much work to do to return to fiscal soundness. We must change our mindset about debt.

There's no better reminder than the \$.5 trillion the Treasury borrowed in January and the \$380 billion more they said they'd borrow in the first quarter. We can't keep trying to borrow our way out of this financial mess. President Obama and his team have their work cut out for them—as do we all.

President Barack Obama ran on a campaign centered on the theme of *hope*. And so far, he seems to be making good on his promise. As he selects his cabinet and lays out his plans, Obama seems to be sparking much-needed economic hope—market rallies being one indication of some short-term (gasp!) *good* news.

Recently we've seen the market rally on the heels of Obama's announcements regarding job creation, the nation's infrastructure, and economic stimulus. But while these rallies will provide a reprieve from relentless selling in the stock market, they likely won't last through the first quarter. We may be in for another round of pessimism.

Our problems are much bigger than the current recession—they have been building for decades. We keep hearing a

lot of talk about getting our economy "back on track." In truth we don't *want* our economy to be on the same track it was on before it fell apart. If we don't address the real issue facing the economy—spending beyond our means—these short-term market rallies will be the only ones we see for a long time.

There is still a huge elephant in the room in the form of unfunded entitlement programs. Sadly, President Obama is following the conventional wisdom and spending to stabilize the economy. That's worrisome because irresponsible spending is what created this mess.

Rather than trying to spend our way out of this mess, I'd ask the president to pressure Congress to renew tough budget controls and to cut spending, balance the budget, and start paying down debt.

We should enjoy the stability result-

ing from these short-term gains, but we are headed for more economic hard times—and now is not the time to slink back into our irresponsible habits. We face four serious deficits: the budget deficit, the personal savings deficit, the trade deficit, and the leadership deficit.

We need to hold our leaders accountable for their decisions and actions. But we also need to get our own financial house in order. Individually, we need to save more, invest wisely, expect less from the government, and pay for the services we expect. Doing so is the only way we can come out of the recession into a brighter economic future. **PE**

Addison Wiggin is editorial director of The Daily Reckoning, executive publisher of Agora Financial, and coauthor with Kate Incontrera of IOUSA: One Nation. Under Stress. In Debt. (Wiley) and with William Bonner of Empire of Debt. Call 800-225-5945.

ACTION: Get your financial house in order.

Thrive in Life

In spite of mess, stress and less!



by Patti Fralix

THESE ARE DIFFICULT TIMES. It seems that "mess, stress, and less" are at epidemic proportions. We all face a severe financial crisis that will impact all of us, regardless of our resources.

These conditions create stress, financial and otherwise. In response, you may *be* too much, *do* too much, and *spend* too much (as if you were Warren Buffet instead of an already overcharged, underemployed and soon-to-be unemployed wage earner).

Stop this madness! Self-imposed stress can be controlled. Do your best to stay "normal" (whatever that is!) in spite of all of the craziness around you.

Being too much, doing too much, and spending too much are dangerous this year. How much stress can you take? What can you do to help yourself?

Five Timely Tips

These five tips will serve you well.

Tip 1. Be kinder. Smile more. Give others the benefit of the doubt more. Do not "sweat the small stuff," meaning, do not "major on the minors." Accept that you likely won't get the best from others during these times.

Tip 2. Focus on the most important things, minute by minute. A phrase I

use when referring to problems is, "It isn't cancer!" Some of you *are* dealing with cancer, and I'm in awe of your courage. The rest of this stuff is miniscule in comparison. If you are dealing with any serious health condition, you can teach the rest of us important lessons about living minute by minute.

Tip 3. Hold tight to those you love, and spend as much time with them as you can. Support each other, and when this other mess is gone, the ones you hold most dear will still be there with you and for you. Spend as much time as you can with your children and grandchildren—your most impor-

tant legacy. Let them see your best, so they have a good role model to follow.

Tip 4. Spend as much time on self-improvement as you can. Recognize that you take yourself wherever you go. If there is an area of self-improvement that you need to work on, do it. Don't make excuses. Be harder on your-

self than you are on others. Set your bar high—then jump over it. Then reset it even higher! You will be amazed at what you can accomplish when you just commit to what you want, and develop the daily disciplines to accomplish it.

Tip 5. Relax. Don't take life, or yourself, too seriously. Enjoy whatever life you are privileged to have. Isn't that all any and all of us should do?

Be *your* best self in difficult times. **PE**

Patti Fralix is a speaker, coach, and president of The Fralix Group. Email pfralix@fralixgroup.com.

ACTION: Take these tips and thrive.

Service Value

Know what you're worth.

by Andy Andrews

WE'RE ALL IN THIS RECESSION mess together. As Hamlet said: *To be, or not to be, that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or take arms against a sea of troubles And by opposing, end them.*

When situations change, the rules sometimes change as well. What was red one day might be green the next. What was down is up, right is left, and we can become so discouraged and confused that we are tempted to simply lie down, cry, and resign ourselves to a lifetime of *slings and arrows*.

Truth, on the other hand, never changes. Life's principles remain steadfast in good times and bad. So, I'm reminding you that now is not the time for fear or inaction—now is the time to “take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing . . . end them.”

Yes, you will need to act. But first, think. Prospering today requires you to examine your personal commitment to “the truth” as it relates to your life and career. Often, you do not make decisions according to what *is* true, but according to what you *want* to be true. Or what you *wish* were true. This is usually a recipe for disaster.

Remember the 11th commandment: *Thou shalt not kid thyself.*

In today's economy, what is your value? How much are you worth? The question is worth the time you might take to get an accurate answer. Most folks are asking the questions “How much can I get?” or “What can I persuade someone to pay me?” or “How much can I charge?” or “How much do people like me usually make?”

The question that will lead you to the best decisions, however, is this: **“What is my value to this situation, to this person, to this business?”**

The only people who will never fail—even in bad economic times—are the people who accurately discern their value or the value of their product and can prove that value to their customers. Yes, sometimes value is a perception, but even perceived value can be agreed upon by millions of people at once.

As an author and speaker, I must know the value of my books and speeches. I need to know the truth

about my value. Can people pay the price of *The Traveler's Gift* and feel sure that they got their money's worth? Was the value there? Was what they learned and applied worth \$20 dollars? If so, the books continue to sell.

If a company pays me to speak or do a seminar and tracks the production and profit that occurred after I spoke, does that benefit me or is it a harbinger of bleak times to come? Did they ultimately make more money with my information and direction than they paid me to speak? Was the value there? If so, I will continue to be booked.

In tough times, organizations can't afford to have a speaker merely as en-

tertainment or tradition. I must honestly ask, What's my service worth? Am I providing value well beyond cost?”

We want to provide value in our lives. We should strive to provide value as a neighbor and friend, as a member of our church or civic organization, and to our families.

I must continue to show value to my wife. So far, she has stayed with me for 20 years and seems to be happy. There must be value to her in our relationship beyond the vows we took. (Frankly, I am thrilled with the value Polly continues to show me!)

Obviously, I don't know enough about your life to guide the specific questions you must ask. I only know that you must ask questions. Seek the truth about yourself, your product or service. The quality of your answers is determined by the quality of your questions. If you want good answers, ask good questions. And start with this one: How much am I worth?

Proof of Hope

I have experienced more than 18,000 dawns in my life. Many of those

mornings have been spectacular. I know what it is like to wake up full of joy and gratitude. I remember my first morning as a husband and my first new day as a father. Only five years ago that I sat in my living room and watched the “Good Morning America” team reveal *The Traveler's Gift* to the world. I've had some awesome mornings.

I've also had some days that did not begin well—and got worse. The mornings after my parents died were tough. Waking up under a pier or in a stranger's garage is not fun. Three and a half years of rejection by 51 publishers was a discouraging start for *The Traveler's Gift*. I know what it is like to wake up full of doubt and fear, achingly despondent and demoralized.

I've “begun again” the day after a hurricane destroyed our house. I've gotten out of bed the day after my gas and electricity were cut off because I couldn't pay the bill. I've started mornings hungry because I didn't catch anything and couldn't steal. People have broken promises, business plans failed—I've had some wretched mornings.

Yet, one string of thoughts helps me function during the worst of times. First, knowing that tough times are normal seems to help. And they aren't exclusive to one person or group. We're all in a crisis, coming out of a crisis, or headed for a crisis.

Also, I've discovered proof of hope that has lifted my heart, mind, and spirit to a point of forward motion. Even in the worst of times, I must remember that I am still breathing. If I am still breathing, that means that I am still here. If I am still here, that means that I have not completed what I was put here to do. If I have not completed what I was put here to do, that means that my purpose has not been fulfilled. If my purpose has not been fulfilled, the most important part of my life has yet to be lived—and it doesn't really matter how old I am or how broke I am, how long I've tried or how depressed I might be. Here is proof that the best part of my life is ahead of me! Without doubt, there is more laughter to come, more success in my future, more children to teach, more friends to influence. There is more. And the promise is proven by the fact that I am still breathing. I am still here. For now, no matter what you are experiencing, it is enough to take a deep breath and remember: I am still here. There is more. PE

Andy Andrews is the author of *The Traveler's Gift*. Visit www.andyandrews.com.

ACTION: Know your worth as a service provider.

Tough Love

How you can teach children.



by Tom Bloch

IF YOU'RE A PARENT OR TEACHER you have a daunting job. I was the CEO of H&R Block.

I left to become an inner-city teacher.

Here's what most teachers want to know: what concrete actions can I take to make all of my students pay attention, show respect, *want* to learn, and achieve at high levels? I have some answers—ones I have personally tested.

I work with kids who display many behavioral and academic problems. They are the products of low-income, broken families, growing up in the spirit-crushing inner city. They lag far behind children in the suburbs. And yet, when these children are placed in classrooms with caring, competent, and dedicated teachers, they thrive. To prove this point, I co-founded University Academy, a college prep charter public school. In five years, all but two graduates from UA have attended college!

All urban schools can learn from this prototype. But my larger message is aimed at teachers in *all* classrooms—not just those steeped in cultures where drug abuse, violence, and poverty reign.

All kids need and want the same things, including a sense of hope for their future and relationships with adults who truly care about them.

To help kids achieve academically, apply these eight ideas:

1. Provide order and structure. Many children have little structure in their lives, which explains their often chaotic behavior in school. A regimen helps children understand expectations and follow procedures. They are more likely to learn and succeed when they know what to expect each day.

2. Teach core values. Schools must teach values—kindness, compassion, respect, and responsibility—to offset the corrosive aspects of our culture. Teachers, along with parents and ministers, must teach these values. There are fewer disruptions in class when there is an emphasis on moral development.

3. Set high standards and maintain them. Low expectations promote low performance. Social promotion won't prepare them for real life. Sadly, many parents believe their children should be rewarded whether they do the work or not. This *entitlement mindset* rubs off on

the children. Teachers must refuse to give Cs or even Ds when Fs are earned.

4. Practice tough love. Teachers must spell out the rules and expectations for each class and be clear about the non-negotiable consequences of inappropriate conduct. Once the students know the price of unacceptable behavior and see that you enforce the rules, they will value and respect authority.

5. Insist on parent involvement. Some parents expect schools to do all the work or fail to take an active role. At University Academy, we spell out specific parental responsibilities to ensure that they are directly involved.

6. Be a manager, motivator and content-master. Effective teachers know the

subject and are managers and motivators. It's one thing to know algebra—it's another to motivate youth to learn it.

7. Teach respect by respecting yourself and others. Apathetic, defiant, and disrespectful students are a challenge. To *teach* respect, you must *show* respect.

8. See teaching as a calling. Teaching requires you to be multitalented and multitasker; manager and law enforcer; surrogate parent, therapist, mediator; cheerleader, caregiver, judge, and educator. Teaching is not just a job—it's a calling. If you accept the calling, you're a *hero*. **PE**

Tom Bloch is a middle school math teacher and president of the board at University Academy, and author of Stand for the Best (Jossey-Bass/Wiley). Call (828) 325-4966.

ACTION: Serve challenged kids.

SERVICE • LEVERAGE

Law of the Vital Few

Leverage it to change your world.



by Alan Cohen

DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE wasting time, energy, and money—spinning your wheels with little or no results? Do you wonder why some people just keep winning, while others can't get onto the boards? Would you like to maximize your social, financial, and spiritual returns on investment while minimizing your effort?

If so, you need to know the *80-20 Rule*: for most events, 80 percent of the effects proceed from 20 percent of the causes. This is also known as *The Law of the Vital Few* or *The Pareto Principle*, named after Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, who discovered that 80 percent of Italy's income is in the hands of 20 percent of the population.

In business, 80 percent of income derives from 20 percent of clients. At church, 80 percent of donations come from 20 percent of parishioners; in publishing, 80 percent of book sales derive from 20 percent of the books; in marketing, 80 percent of sales income come from 20 percent of the accounts. You might wear 20 percent of your favorite clothing 80 percent of the time, and spend 80 percent of your leisure time with 20 percent of your friends.

How can you apply this principle to boost your personal effectiveness? You might note which 20 percent of activities generate 80 percent of your results, and focus on those elements.

I suggest that 80 percent of your progress and success comes from 20 percent of your thoughts. Counterproductive thoughts that ramble through your mind tend to be circular, leading you back to where you began, with no results; plus, you feel worse when mired in a mental and emotional rut. Most of your thoughts do not take you where you wish to go. So, ask: "Which thoughts take me to places I value, and how can I capitalize on them?"

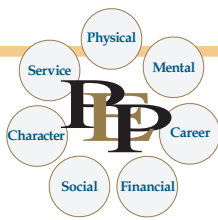
Only thoughts in alignment with universal truth (creations of light) have any power—all else is "miscreation," according to *A Course in Miracles*. Note that 20 percent of your thoughts are creative—the other 80 percent are miscreative. In 250 B.C., the Greek mathematician Archimedes declared, "Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough, and I can move the world." One good thought that extends itself into positive creation is more meaningful than 1,000 thoughts that ramble.

So, let go of the 20 percent of your worrisome thoughts that take up 80 percent of your energy. When you think bothersome thoughts, they are blown out of proportion in your mind or emotions. If you give no attention to such thoughts, you liberate your mind and energy to do more things you enjoy.

Make a list of your service projects, social interactions, and thought patterns. Note which activities fall within the 20 percent that gets results, plunge into the Vital 20 percent, and you'll have your hand on the crucial lever with which you can move the world. **PE**

Alan Cohen is the author of I Had it All the Time and All About U. Visit www.alancohen.com, email info@alancohen.com, or call 1-800-568-3079.

ACTION: Leverage your service investment.



GOAL GETTERS

Have you made another set of resolutions this year? If you're like most people, your goals will be forgotten. So how do you make your resolutions happen this year?

First, keep in mind that goals are dreams; but don't stop at just dreaming. Turn your dreams into bite-sized pieces that will create a big event in your life. If you are waiting on an outside variable to change your life, *you* have a long wait. You have to do something to fix *your* life—so sit down, make some goals, and take control.

Goal setting is how you win. Once you make your resolutions, they drive you forward. Your goals motivate you to seek activities that help you succeed. It may not always be fun, but those exercises bring you closer to your goal and make you a winner.

You need to make goals in seven areas of your life: career, financial, spiritual, physical, intellectual, family, and social.

If you want to achieve your goals this year, apply these six tips:

1. Find your strengths. Just because you are *good at something* doesn't make it a *strength*. You also must have a passion for it. According to Marcus Buckingham, a strength is an activity that makes you feel strong. In areas of strength, you are effective, you instinctively look forward to the activity, you grow when you concentrate on it, and the activity fulfills you.

2. Be specific. When setting goals, be specific in what you want to achieve. Vagueness will cause you to feel overwhelmed, and you will give up. Write down three goal statements that are specific enough to incite your passion.

3. Make your goals measurable. Measurable goals give you a clear marker for success. If you want to lose weight, don't simply write down "lose weight" as a goal. How much weight? Or don't just write "spend more time with family." How much time?

4. Make sure that the goals you set are your goals? Only you can set your own goals. If your spouse, co-worker, or friend sets a goal for

you, then you won't achieve it. Taking ownership will give you more incentive to meet your goal. Determine your strengths and goals—and then sharpen the skills you need to achieve your goals.

5. Give yourself a time limit. Setting a time frame helps you create realistic goals. For example, if you want to save more money, list out how much money a month you want to put into your savings account. A deadline helps you turn your dreams into reality.

6. Put your goals in writing. Writing your goals will make you much more likely to achieve them. List your goals and review them often. This gives you the motivation you need to make them a reality.

Reassess your life and start living intentionally—in writing, on paper, on purpose—to make your goals and resolutions a reality.

—Dave Ramsey, dcemails@daveramsey.com

What will you do this year to stick to your resolutions? What are your resolutions? Here are five that are easy to stick with. When put into practice, each can help you feel more satisfied.

- **Reduce the number of times you check email.** When you are constantly interrupted, your thought is fragmented and your time wasted. Turn off the email dinger. Be the master of email, not the slave.

- **Say "no" more often.** "No, I can't join that committee now. My time is taken with other things." "No, I don't have a minute. Let's schedule a time to talk?" Spending more time on the things that are important to you will make you healthier and happier.

- **Get your reading piles under control.** A stack of unread reading material can cause mess and stress. Ensure your reading pile consists of those things important to you.

- **Pay more with cash** when possible to prevent credit card balances and high interest charges.

- **Make regular appointments with and for yourself.** Take time each week for yourself. No one will make this time for you but you.

—Abby Marks Beale, www.thecorporateeducator.com

PersonalCOACH

The Art of Asking
Become a more effective leader.
 by Terry J. Fadem

INQUISITORS ARE PEOPLE WHOSE QUESTIONS seem to only scare their victims, sending them into a "freeze" mode or putting them on the offensive. Questions should be intended to get honest answers, lead to real solutions, make you more successful, and create an environment where no one is afraid to tell the truth, even to those in power.

To ask the right questions in the right ways, you need to avoid questions that guarantee apparent, ineffective answers. Help people give you the information you need; and ask innovative or ignored questions that uncover real issues and solutions.

I invite you to consider how many great things are missing from your life simply because either you never asked for them or you asked for them in the wrong way.

Questions are tools to leaders, just as a stethoscope is to a doctor or a hammer is to a carpenter. You can use a basic set of questions—in any situation, anywhere in the world, and in any language—as leadership tools. The manner of the question—the *way in which it is asked*—and the actual communication of the question, are just as important as the substance of the question.

Apply These 10 Tips

Here are 10 tips on how to ask questions in a more productive manner:

1. Speak clearly. You fumble when you mumble; clarity bespeaks confidence.
2. Display confidence in your question.
3. Maintain good posture and pay careful attention to your body language.
4. Avoid overstressing of certain words, unless you mean to stress them.
5. Avoid superlatives, unless you are leading to a conclusion.
6. Avoid exaggeration and hyperbole.
7. Use humor for a purpose, not just to be humorous.
8. Be brief; get straight to the point.
9. Know when to stop asking questions.
10. Listen carefully to the response. You may need to follow up or probe immediately.

Gain all the insight, tools, and techniques you need to become a more effective questioner, which may be the most powerful thing you can do right now to improve your leadership effectiveness. **PE**

Terry J. Fadem is Managing Director, Corporate Alliances at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and author of The Art of Asking (FT Press) an imprint of Pearson Education. Visit www.pearson.com.

ACTION: Ask the right questions in the right way.

The E3 Formula

Evaluate + educate = elevate.



by Joe Cala

AS YOU MAKE IT A HABIT to evaluate and educate yourself in every area of life, you will experience being elevated to new positions, promotions, and higher responsibility.

Evaluation. To *evaluate* means to ascertain, appraise, or fix the value or worth of something—to examine and judge carefully. For example, in the car industry, we appraise a customer's trade. We examine, evaluate, and look over the trade carefully to see the condition, mileage, and real-time value of it. The appraisal shows us the trade as it is, valued in the condition we see it. Now, if the trade has a dent in one door, is high mileage, and has a cracked bumper, the value of the trade decreases.

There will be deductions made for each area. But if the bumper is not cracked, the mileage is low, and there are no dents on the vehicle, the trade will be valued higher. The appraisal reveals to the one evaluating it, and the one who owns it not only the actual value of it in the condition it's in now but also the reasons why it's worth what it's worth.

What about appraising yourself?

Have you done an appraisal on yourself lately? Have you taken time to evaluate yourself? Have you taken time to evaluate, examine and look over your life to see the condition, mileage and real time value of it? Have you been so busy working and evaluating things for everybody else that you've let yourself fall apart and haven't had time to take proper care of you? Take the time to evaluate yourself today so you can fix and improve the areas that have caused you to lose self-value in your life.

Here is a sample self-appraisal you can do now: Am I happy with the overall condition of myself? If no, state why. Is there any exterior damage? If yes, list defects. Is there any interior damage? If yes, list areas affected and the cause of damage. Do I need any bodywork? If yes, list areas. Have I been in any accidents? If yes, list areas. This is just a sample but I trust you get the idea of how you can use this to evaluate your present reality whatever it may be.

You might also consider appraising your emotional, physical, spiritual, social, and professional condition.

Education. Evaluation is necessary to expose your current condition so you can correct and adjust the value of what you see. This is where education comes in. To *educate* means to provide with knowledge or training in some area or for a particular purpose. After evaluation, you can fix, correct and adjust certain areas. "The great aim of education is not knowledge but action," said Herbert Spencer. Once you receive the knowledge, you are to act on it and make necessary changes. This is true education: *Knowledge + Corresponding Action = Education*. When you are truly educated in an area, you're no longer ignorant in that area.

Elevation. When you have education, you have the know-how to fix, change and adjust yourself into a higher

place than where you were without your education. This is called *elevation*. To *elevate* is to move or raise to a higher place or position; lift up. To raise to a higher state, rank, or office; exalt; promote. The end result of *Evaluation + Education = Elevation*. This is always the result of someone who practices these principles in any area of life. Whether it is the workplace, the sale, the close, life, leadership, management, relationships or anything else this formula will hold true.

As you evaluate and educate yourself in every area of life, you will experience being elevated to new positions, promotions, and greater responsibility. **PE**

Joe Cala is an author, minister, seminar leader, and founder of Joe Cala Ministries. He can be contacted at 732-504-7475, or by email at revjoecala@aol.com.

ACTION: Experience the exhilaration of elevation.

Real Communication

Go from bullshit to straight talk.



by Omar Khan

WHAT IS BULLSHIT AND how does it differ from lying or manipulation?

Lying is misrepresentation—knowingly making a statement that is incorrect to gain some personal advantage. It involves a measure of malice and awareness. *Manipulation* is choosing when and how to say something to produce a desired impact. It is not to be confused with persuasion—making a case out of relevant facts. Manipulation involves selecting facts and often creating smokescreens to keep the full truth hidden from sight.

Bullshit is a blend of lying and manipulation, involving distortion of truth and selective presentation or omission of facts to evoke emotional impact.

Candor is sharing known, relevant facts—what we think and feel.

Authenticity is sharing not only our agendas, but also the full range of feelings and motivations behind them—in short, where we're coming from.

Straight-talk combines candor and authenticity in presenting facts, conclusions, rationale, hopes, and beliefs.

Real communication occurs when we express ourselves through straight-talk and are open and curious about the conclusions, concerns, priorities and agendas of others. Only an exchange of straight-talk can lead to real communi-

cation, intensive listening, effective partnership and imaginative bridge building between differing positions.

When we pretend that we occupy a noble, self-sacrificial, selfless perch, bullshit is unavoidable. Most of us start with self-interested, fearful, ego-defensive, political vantage points. If we see that a broader perspective must be created, one commitment at a time, we have hope. If we pretend that we're already there, we'll need several shovels to deal with all of the bullshit.

Another barrier is assuming the best of yourself and the worst of others. In conflicts, this involves rushing to create an airtight case for yourself while tearing down other people. People gifted at cross-examination and self-justification thrive on this. Those

who are not as glib may feel victimized, and bunker down with rancor. Although less vocal, they too feel wronged by the others, confirming within their own cabal the intrinsic rectitude and justice of their position.

The antidote is to assume that we all have our own perspective, adopted in self-interest. You may have to transcend your narrow agenda on behalf of a larger vision or aspiration.

Unconfessed, your secret agendas, feelings, and concerns remain cankers. Their pernicious power comes from their concealment. When revealed, you can either honor them where they are helpful or uproot them as needed so you can move forward, beyond them, toward what you wish to achieve. **PE**

Omar Khan is founder and senior partner of Sensei International and author of Synergy. Visit www.sensei-international.com or call 212-295-2191.

ACTION: Engage in real communication.