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Transform Your Life

Inspiration and guidance to create the life you desire

This white paper is a guide featuring a UNIQUE process for changing your behavior so you see sustainable long-term results. It's a practical guide based on the most recent research related to behavior modification and life transformation.

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PART I

Wouldn't it be great if we always did what we knew was good for us? While knowledge (awareness) is an important step in the behavior change process, simply knowing something - even the benefit of something - isn't enough to cause sustainable change. Have you ever experienced that?

Let me illustrate with a classic example. Here's fact that almost everyone knows: ***exercise is good for your health***. Regular sufficient exercise does more to promote your health than any other thing you can do, assuming you're getting adequate sleep.

As the table below depicts, exercise reverses or improves all of the health indicators that naturally get worse with age. There is *nothing* else that you can do that has such a profound effect on your overall health.

	Aging	Exercise
Aerobic Fitness	↓	↑
Resting Metabolism	↓	↑
Blood Fats	↓	↑
Blood Pressure	↓	↑
Body Composition	↓	↑
Muscle Mass	↓	↑
Insulin Sensitivity	↓	↑
Joint Mobilization	↓	↑
Bone Density	↓	↑
Psychological Well-being	↓	↑
	↓ (deterioration)	↑ (improvement)

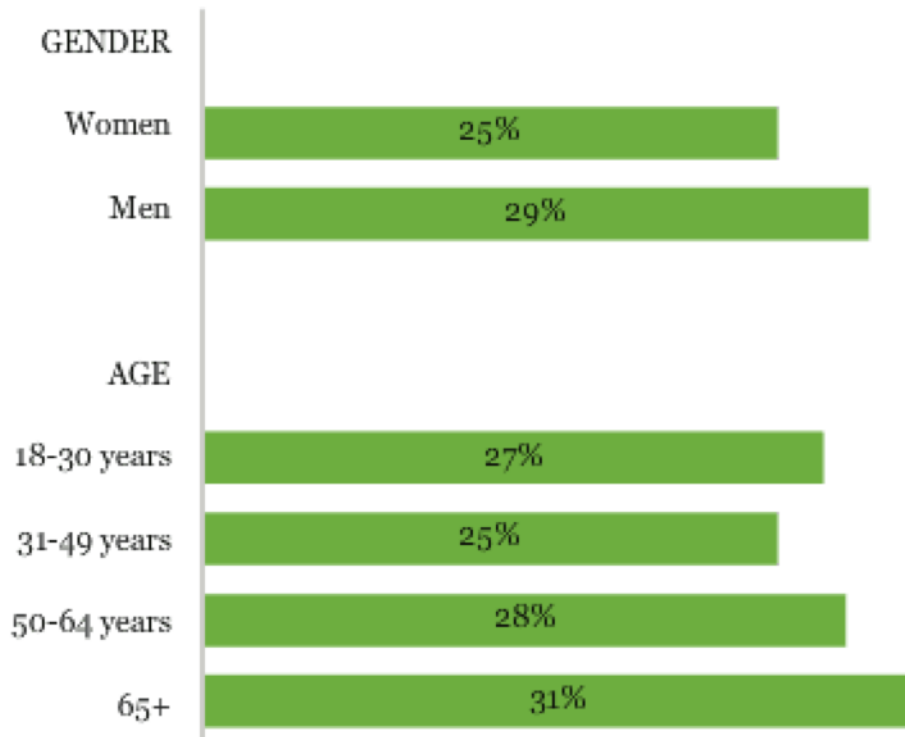
Barry Franklin, PhD

At speaking engagements, I've asked audience members if they know that exercise is good for their health. Practically everyone raises their hand. **They KNOW that exercise is beneficial.**

But here is what we also know. As the chart below indicates, the *majority of people don't exercise regularly.*

*Percentage of Adults Exercising at least 30 minutes per day,
5 days or more per week*

By gender and age



Aggregate of interviews conducted May 1, 2008-April 30, 2009
Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index

While the study cited is about ten years old, I've been following these data for over 20 years, and it hasn't really changed. ***If knowing was enough to initiate and sustain change, almost everyone would exercise regularly, right?*** Clearly, having knowledge does not equal long-term change.

Other examples abound that demonstrate that this is true as well. And, it doesn't seem to matter how successful you've been, how famous you are, how much money you have, or how intelligent you are.

Bad behavior initiated through poor decisions crosses all boundaries. You can't watch the news without hearing about some well-known person who makes a decision that permanently damages his/her reputation and career.

At this point, it's safe to say that knowledge does not equal change. As we've seen, *we can know what to do and still not do it*. We can know we should exercise and still struggle to do it consistently . . . or at all. We can know what to eat and still choose the cookie over the carrot. We can know that it's important to make time for those people who are the most important to us and still not do it.

So the biggest problem we face is acting on what we know.

[Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Wishing is not enough; we must do.]

Simply knowing something—even the benefit of something— isn't enough to cause sustainable change.

To repeat . . . simply knowing something—even the benefit of something— isn't enough to cause sustainable behavior change. No doubt, you've experienced this. As stated, **the biggest problem we face is acting on what we know**.

To make matters worse, have you ever fallen into the trap of only doing those things you "feel" like doing? No matter what it is, if you only do something when you feel like doing it, you will never be consistent. And, for all things that matter, **consistency is the key!**

So the question is, "WHY?" Why do we behave in ways that are not reflective of with what we really value? Why do we behave in ways that are not in our best interest? Why do we engage in behaviors that are self-defeating?

I'd like to share with you a ***proven strategy*** for making behavior changes stick. The principles are based on relevant research, my personal experience, as well as the success of my coaching clients who've fundamentally transformed their life.

Step One: Identify Your Values

What do you value most in life? I'd recommend doing a brain dump and just start writing down everything that comes to mind. Then, review your list. Narrow your list to the top five things you value most in life. Here are mine: faith, family, health, personal growth, and meaningful work.

Your values determine your priorities. Or, do they?

When you review your list, the values you listed should determine your priorities . . . the things that you do . . . the things that you take time for . . . the goals that you set . . . the things that make it onto your calendar.

Step Two: Examine Your Behaviors

As you review your values list, ask yourself this question, ***“Do my behaviors (what I do) support my values?”***

In almost every instance, when doing a values clarification exercise with people, health is identified as one of their top five values. So, if your health is something you value, for example, does your behavior reflect that you value your health? Are you eating well, getting adequate sleep, going to the doctor regularly, staying hydrated, and exercising?

Let’s look at exercise. If you say you value your health, then regular exercise is a non-negotiable. If you don’t exercise regularly or get enough regular daily activity, then you cannot truly say that you value your health. Why? As I noted, there is nothing that you can do that will give you the health benefits that regular exercise gives!

If you are carrying around too much weight—which is a definite health risk—and you’re not getting the help you need and engaging in the behaviors that would move you to a healthy weight . . . you can’t really say you value your health.

You can plug any value into this example and it remains true. For example, if you said you value your family or your marriage, are you properly investing in those relationships in a manner that would demonstrate you really value them? You can’t say you value your marriage if you don’t spend quality time together, take time for each other, or seek to serve your spouse.

If you say you value your faith, do you attend church, connect with a small group, read scripture and connect with God, tithe, and serve . . . or even one of those? If not, can you honestly say you value your faith?

So, it’s your **ACTIONS** that identify your **TRUE** values. Or, you could say your actions REVEAL your true values. It’s the things that you actually do . . . the things you spend time on . . . the things you spend money on . . . the goals that you set . . . even the things that you say. Those are the things that identify what your real values are.

Whether we like it or not, our behavior is ALWAYS communicating our values . . . always, always, always.

So, we bump up against this question?

Do your behaviors support your values? That’s the million-dollar question, right?

Review, one more time, each of your values, and ask yourself, ***“Do my behaviors REALLY support what I say I value?”***

Step Three: Creating Alignment

Maybe you've identified some things you say you value, but you really don't, based on how you're spending your time, money, and energy. So, make up a new list of the things you really do value. What is REALLY most important to you? Only then, when you've identified your true values, can you *assess whether your behaviors support and uphold your values . . .* those things that are most important to you.

Whatever values you have identified, what behaviors must align with and support those values?

Wherever there are incongruences, what will it take for you to align your behaviors with what you value?

You'll find that when you align your behaviors with what it is you value, you'll be more likely to find the day-to-day motivation you need to ***stick to the changes*** you're seeking to make. ***Your values are the WHY that brings meaning and purpose to your life.***

Moving forward, you'll be well served to evaluate your list regularly. Each day will present its urgent challenges and temptations pulling you in one direction or another. But, *when you evaluate your behavior over time, assess whether the choices you're making support those things you value . . .* if they don't, get the [help](#) you need to change.

In my experience, life becomes easier and more enjoyable, and you'll feel more fully alive when you live according to your values. I'm confident you'll experience the same.

Self-Reflection Notes: _____

PART II

Most changes we're looking to make or goals we set are because there's something in our life we're not happy with and want to change. A problem we want to fix.

Unfortunately, we all do things that are not in our best interest. **Many of these are habits that unintentionally developed over time.** But, do we continue to do them, or do we face our faults and learn from them? Do we allow them to *prevent* or *accelerate* our growth? Those choices are ours.

Previously, I highlighted some initial guidelines for changing how you behave. Now, let's look at a simple but important method for implementing change, improvement, and growth . . . permanently! Whether you're looking to lose weight, improve a relationship, make more money, reduce tension, or have more fun, this process will work!

Phase One: Awareness

Assess what needs to change. **Awareness is the first step in behavior change.** You cannot change what you're unaware of. Beginning today, go on an awareness adventure by tuning in to the *messages* you're telling yourself. Also, become aware of *habits* you know are not serving you well.

Here are some questions to get you started:

- What messages are you telling yourself throughout the day . . . are they positive and in your best interest? Or, **is your self-talk self-defeating** and undermining your ability and your best self? Are the thoughts you're having even true?
- What **habits do you do repeatedly that do not serve you** (and perhaps others) well? It might be something you say or how you say it. It might be something you do or how you do it.
- What is it others hear you say or see you do? Involve the people in your household or at work—who you know will be supportive—and **ask them to provide insights** about what they hear you say and do.
- **Are you struggling to live up to someone else's expectations?** Are you trying to prove to a parent or partner that you have value and worth? Do you realize that engaging in this type of effort is unproductive, unwarranted, and unjustified?

- Be honest. ***How does thinking negative thoughts and doing detrimental things benefit you?*** That's right, how do they BENEFIT you? Does it give you a way out? Does it provide an excuse for not trying? Does it garner sympathy? Is it safer? Do you realize that behind every self-defeating belief and behavior is a story . . . a lie you've been telling yourself?
- Are there activities you regularly engage in that ***drain your energy***? If so, you'll be performing less than optimal. Is someone else you can ask to help or a different way to get the activity done? Or, does it have to be done at all? If it does, *how can you limit the amount of time you spend in that space?*
- Are there ***people*** you're around who drain your energy or bring you down? Are you able to spend less time in their presence? Do you have a choice if you spend time with them? If no, can you have a conversation with them to increase their awareness about how they affect your mood and energy? Can you eliminate them from your life?
- What activities do you do that energize you? Perhaps playing the piano or other musical instrument, talking to or helping a friend, going for a walk, writing a letter, reading, listening to music, serving others, drawing or painting, planning a vacation, taking a nap, etc. ***Are you scheduling those things that GIVE you energy into your day on a regular basis?***
- Do you unintentionally get sucked into surfing the web or social media sites or watching a show and then ***feel guilty about the wasted time***? Do you need to set up parameters or schedule times for these activities so you can better manage them?
- Do you find yourself in settings or situations or environments that encourage you to ***engage in behaviors you're trying to avoid***? For example, a person wants to quit smoking but goes into a bar, which is a place associated with smoking. Are their similar scenarios that you put yourself in that are self-sabotaging?
- Are you focused and expending energy on trying to change someone else, or working on changing you? Do you know that any effort spent ***attempting to change someone else in your life is worthless*** and actually may be counter-productive?
- ***What messages have you been told by someone else that damaged your spirit, but you still believe it?*** And what *unwarranted and unwanted experiences* have you had with someone that left a deep-seated mark on your soul?
- What's one change that, if you made it, would dramatically improve how you think, feel, or function?

As you can see, the discovery and awareness process, is just that . . . a process. The journey can seem overwhelming. I said at the beginning, this step-by-step process is simple, but it will require a desire to change. It will require being open to honest feedback. I will require being vulnerable. And, it will require being plugged-in to the “real” you . . . realizing that the “new” you is waiting in the wings. It will involve work. It will require you to be intentional.

Allow time to go through the discovery process and write down what you are learning. I’d recommend focusing on this one exercise for a solid week or more, if needed. A common mistake I’ve witnessed in the people I’ve coached is that they want to skip over this step or don’t take it seriously. Often, it’s because they’re afraid of what they will discover.

But ***this is a time for complete humility, honesty, and transparency.*** Staying where you are will only keep you stuck. Take a chance and move beyond your comfort zone. It’s where your future lies.

Phase Two: Choosing to Change

The second phase in changing your life, which might sound obvious, is ***choosing to change.***

In reality, often people say they want to change, but they never truly make an intentional decision to change. *Is the fear and uncertainty of changing preventing you from making changes, even though you know they will be to your benefit?* **The secret to transformation is learning how to make yourself accountable to your own commitments.**

It starts by taking *small steps* and keeping each commitment you say you're going to do (or not do). When you do, you'll gain confidence and gain momentum! You will start believing in your ability, which will impact how you feel about yourself. Your past failures don't matter, regardless of what your negative self-talk might want to say. The past does not equal the future. It's time to move forward by *choosing to change!*

Now that you’ve identified what you think needs to change, choose what you’re willing to change. Keep in mind, there’s a BIG difference between feeling like you “have to” change and “choosing to” change.

We can often feel we have to change to please someone else. In truth, you don’t *have* to do anything. *Choosing* to do something empowers you, whereas *having* to do something enslaves you.

So, you’ve committed to changing; now it’s time to get started:

1. To begin, pick one thing. Write down what change you are choosing to make.

2. Now determine and write down *how* this change will *benefit* YOU.
3. Also write down why these benefits are important and meaningful to YOU.

Next, it's time to put emotion into action. You've just identified the emotional reason behind your decision; now identify what specific steps you're going to take to change.

For example, let's say that you identified that you want to improve your relationship with your spouse or kids. You decide that on Sunday you will review your schedules for the week and then put on your calendar the times you'll spend with your spouse or kids.

The more specific you make your goal the better. Let's say you decide you want to spend 15 minutes of uninterrupted time, four times during the week, with each of your kids. On your schedule, that's what you plan. And, you tell your kids when it's going to be, so they can expect it and put in on their calendars, too. That's it . . . you've just initiated the change.

Here are some reminders to help you work through the change process:

- No positive change happens without growth. And, *no growth happens without change.*
- In order to change, you have to be willing to step outside of your comfort zone. No growth happens inside your comfort zone. You can do it . . . you've done it before.
- When the temptation comes, or you get tired and the urge comes to skip the date, review in your mind what you wrote down for the top three steps above . . . your "why."
- Do you struggle with control? You may have to ***relinquish the feeling of control in order to get what you really want.*** It may not be safe, but safe has kept you where you are.
- You want to be able to see yourself doing it. If you can't see yourself spending 15 minutes with each of the kids, how about 5 or 10 minutes? Start there.
- Keep your *focus on the outcome you desire.* As was mentioned, it'll be easy to come up with an excuse or reason to let the new behavior slide. That's why identifying and focusing on your "why" is a critical step.
- Always keep a ***solutions-focused mindset*** versus a problem-focused mindset. Focusing on the problems keep you stuck in the past. Solutions-focused thinking allows you to move beyond your past or current circumstances and become creative in finding solutions.

- Find a coach or a mutual accountability partner. Change can be difficult. Often a coach is the best way to help you see what you can't see, so you can become what you didn't think you could become. It's worth the investment.

If you've read this far, you must be interesting in changing something in your life that isn't working. Or, you may have a sense that things can be better and that desire is what's driving you.

Nevertheless, at this point, ***fear is often the biggest obstacle***. And, doubt is probably another stumbling block. That's ok. Acknowledge the fear and doubt and be "OK" with it. If you're not sure how, try to think of a situation or an obstacle in the past that you've not been able to overcome. Since you're still alive and reading this . . . THERE ISN'T ANY . . . is there.

Phase Three: Supportive Environments

Have you ever started making progress toward a goal or change in your behavior only go find yourself back where you started? When that happened, who'd you blame? This discouraging scenario is played out over and over again in home after home and year after year.

The problem for many people isn't lack of desire or failure to take initiative. The problem is after they get started, something happens to interrupt their progress and they get off track. Thus they revert back to the behaviors that caused the problem in the first place.

To prevent this from happening, it's essential to create a ***supportive environment***, so you can stick with the changes you've started. ***You make a new behavior stick by creating a supportive environment . . . this is the most critical ingredient.***

The ultimate desire we have is that the positive behaviors we're adopting stick for the long haul. Right? It's frustrating and defeating when we revert back to doing things that are not in our best interest. Have you ever lost weight and regained it? You know the feeling.

Most of us have achieved "success" at short-term change. However, in order to achieve sustainable change, *creating an environment supportive of your changes is just plain smart.*

Creating sustainable change only happens with intention. Ignoring the influence of your environment will guarantee frustration and failure. And, it's really habitual cues and triggers in your environment that either support or defeat your long-term behavior change goals.

To repeat . . . in order for the changes you're working on to last, create an environment supportive of your efforts. To do so, you're best served by working on both your ***internal*** and ***external*** environments.

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT [IE] - Simply stated, your IE is what goes on inside your head. It's the thoughts you think and ***what you believe to be true*** about yourself, people, and life.

Here are five ways to set your IE up for success.

First, focus on a future that inspires you. If you don't have a vision, create one. Outline a picture of what you'd like life to be like three years from now. What does that look like? How is your health? What's the vibe of your key relationships? How are you spending your time and are you doing those things you love?

- At this point, it's not essential for you to have it all figured—to know how you're going to get there. It is vital that you have a vision of what it will look like. That is where you want to focus. And remember, your focus determines (guides) your behavior.
- On a daily basis, keep your vision at the forefront. When you get stuck in the day-to-day, focus on your brighter future. Connect how the things you're doing today are leading you toward the vision, and be renewed in that hope.

Second, establish the habit of positive expectation. Intentionally feed your mind with positive information on a daily basis. Zig Ziglar said, "*People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing—that's why we recommend it daily.*" His clever words are worth applying.

- When you get up in the morning, and before you go to bed at night, read the vision you created of what you'd like life to be three years from now.
- Before hitting the sack, write down three "wins" that happened to you today and what three "wins" you're expecting tomorrow.

Third, cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Gratitude is the strongest of human emotions. It's virtually impossible to be despondent or depressed when you're sincerely focused on those things for which you are grateful. Again, since your focus determines your behavior, when you focus on what you're grateful for, your behavior reflects and attracts more of the same.

- I worked with a woman who was going through a tough stretch. To help her re-focus, I asked her to write out a list of everything she WAS grateful for in her life. Her list ended up filling more than two pages. Those things then became her focus and her life changed. Try it.
- In addition to writing down your three "wins" for the day, also take moment every night and write down three things for which you are thankful.
- Be conscious, as you go through your day, of those things you're thankful for as they occur.

- When you're going through a tough stretch, you may need to focus on the small things, but you will find them. And, be assured . . . what you focus on expands, and you'll experience more of them.

Fourth, possess the precious present. Sounds simple, but it's not, is it? How often do you catch your thoughts completely removed from where you're at, what you're doing, and whom you're with? Often our thoughts are caught up in worrying about something in the future; instead of enjoying and appreciating the moments were in right now. Remember, ***wherever you are, be all there*** . . . it's the best place to be.

- A telltale sign you're not fully present is when you find yourself easily upset or irritated by those you're with, whether at work or at home. Many times, it's because you're thinking about something else you'd rather be doing, other than what you're engaged in at that moment. When that happens, refocus on just enjoying what you're doing and whom you're with in that instant.
- Also, as much as possible do one thing at a time. This is a mental mindset. You have to allow yourself to get there mentally, and allow yourself to believe it's most beneficial, before you will transfer this skill to your external environment.
- Do you have outstanding projects that never get done? If so, it'll inhibit your ability to live in the present, because those things are always in the back of your mind tugging on your psyche. Try putting them on your calendar. Transfer them from your mind to your planner. You now have assurance that those things will get done, so you don't have to think about them.

Fifth, find the fun. You're going through life anyway, right? Why not enjoy it? There are going to be tough and challenging times, granted. Which means you must be intentional and put enjoyment and fun into the activity and events of daily life.

- Fun isn't based on what happens to you. It's *how* you choose to respond to whatever situation you're in.
- Fun isn't based on what the task is that you're doing. It's the *way* you perform the task, no matter what it is. Most tasks you're going to do anyway, so develop the habit of putting fun into the task, whether it's washing dishes, pulling weeds in the bean field, working at your job, playing with the kids, or writing a blog post.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT [EE]: Your EE is your physical environment. *It's everything you can see, feel, hear, taste, and touch.* The key question is, "What in your EE can you orchestrate so

that it works in your favor?" Are there things you can change in your external world to put you in the best position to win?

For the purpose of this paper, we'll briefly look at three areas: *health, productivity, and relationships*. There are a few examples provided to get you thinking *and* to start taking action.

Health: What changes to your environment can you make, so it is more conducive for you to make healthy choices?

- Are there food products in your kitchen that need to leave and never return? If so, take time to go through your cabinets and refrigerator and start tossing. Do worry; whatever you eat that you don't need either goes to waist or waste.
- Have you adapted to using smaller mugs and dinner plates, which automatically limits your portion sizes, so you are less likely to overeat? Put the big plates and cups in the upper cabinet and the smaller plates and cups within easy reach.
- Do you leave the food on the counter instead of setting in on the table where it's within arms distance? Keeping it on the counter makes it less convenient; so you are less like to have second . . . or thirds.
- Do you have proper clothing and footwear you enjoy wearing when you exercise? If not, it's time to go shopping.
- If you exercise in the morning, do you set out your workout clothes the night before, so they are ready and waiting for you when you get up?
- Do you pack your lunch and take it to work instead of hitting the closest convenient food place? Doing so limits your choices and makes it more likely you'll be eating a planned meal, which is usually healthier.
- Have you scheduled your workout time on your calendar or do you workout with a friend to increase accountability? If not, put it on your calendar or phone a friend.

Productivity: What environmental habits or hang-ups have developed that may be limiting your efficiency and effectiveness?

- Do you have a countdown timer that keeps you focused for 45-90 minutes while you work uninterrupted, if you're doing office work? You can use your wristwatch or one of the online programs as your guide. Watch your productivity soar.
- Do you only open up the browser tabs that you need for the work you're doing to prevent unwanted surfing? Less choice equals more productivity.

- Is your desk or office space clear of clutter and conducive for concentrating? Take time to clear, straighten, pickup, file, and toss.
- Is your inbox a storage depository or kept to zero? Sort through, respond, relocate, or delete on regular basis.
- Is there clothing that is creating clutter and creates feelings of confusion and chaos? Go through your closets and donate whatever you haven't worn in one year and invest in closet systems that make you feel great when you look at your room.
- Do you need to put your alarm clock on the other side of the room, so you have to get out of bed to turn it off? The extra sleep you get by pounding on the alarm clock has proven to be poor quality sleep anyway.
- Do you have one place where you toss or hang your keys, so you know exactly where to look when you need them again? Find a convenient spot and get in the habit of putting your keys there every time you come into the house.

Relationships: Have you examined how your environment is limiting or preventing your ability to form deeper relationships with those who matter most to you?

- Is the TV on during dinner hour? If so, just know that instead of being entertainment or education, it's a distraction that limits conversation and connection.
- Do you have dinner around the table regularly throughout the week? It's proven to be one of the best ways to build a family bond, along with many other benefits.
- Do you have a TV in your bedroom? Not only does it inhibit sound sleep, it's an intimacy killer. Remove it or leave it off.
- Do you check your phone while you're talking to someone in person? Not only is it rude, you're sending the message that the person you're speaking to isn't important, no matter if it's your child or your mother. Leave it in your pocket or purse.
- When you get home from work, is your smart phone still begging for your attention? Every time you respond to its pinging you're telling those who yearn for your attention that they're not as important as work. Turn it off.
- Do you allow the kids to jump in the car and pop in their ear buds or turn on their smart phone immediately? Time in the car with your kids is an excellent time to engage in conversation, but not if they're otherwise distracted.

- Have you scheduled time on your calendar for those people who you want to build relationships with, such as a regular date night with your spouse? Make sure to turn your phone off and enjoy the time just being together.

Obviously, focusing on all of the IE and EE changes that are listed (and there are many more) seems daunting. So, it's not recommended. Instead of doing them all, just pick those you're willing to begin with and start there. Pick one or two that you feel would make a significant difference and are doable, but also choices you see yourself committing to and accomplishing.

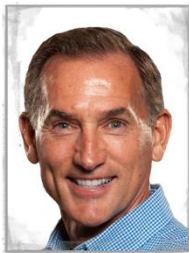
Once you've achieved a level of accomplishment you're satisfied with, pick another and another. Now, you're on your way to transforming both your IE and EE to the level that is helping you live your best life . . . FULLY ALIVE!

Since this is a process that is cyclical, it'd be a good idea to print out this white paper and put it in a binder where you can easily and regularly reference and review the content to help keep you on track.

Don't let past failures keep you from trying again because the only real failure is to quit. You CAN make changes you can stick with and that will stick with you!

Resource: <http://milesmettler.com/selftalk> Cut and past the link into your browser, if it doesn't activate.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Miles Mettler, PhD inspires organizations, leaders, and individuals to realize their virtually unlimited potential. He uses multiple strategies to help clients identify core values and develop positive habits that are reflective of those values. While the concept sounds simple, the reality is that most people struggle to live a life or make decisions that are aligned with their most deeply held beliefs.

When core values and behaviors are not congruent, our level of happiness, satisfaction, self-confidence, productivity, and influence are all diminished. On the other hand, when people learn to identify and align their behavior with their values, they experience a level of freedom, enjoyment, happiness, and positive influence that is life changing.

Miles has a doctoral degree from Arizona State University and a master's and bachelor's degree from South Dakota State University.

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